Gazette Project

Interview with

Margaret Ross,
Little Rock, Arkansas,
7 February 2000

Interviewer: Roy Reed

Roy Reed: . . . Okay, this is Margaret Smith Ross and Roy Reed, and it's the 7th of February, 2000, in her home in Little Rock. Margaret, before we start, Let me just get it on tape that . . . the University has your permission to do this interview and turn it over to the Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History.

Margaret Ross: Oh, all right, I didn't know exactly what its [formal name?] would be. . . .

RR: That's . . . I think I've got . . . well, I never have gotten the name down right.

MR: That's close enough; I know what you mean.

[Laughter]

RR: You and I have known each other a long time, but, mainly, in the context of the Arkansas *Gazette*. I wonder if you'd start by filling in some background on yourself.

MR: Oh, well, I came to the *Gazette* August 5, 1957.

RR: Before that.

MR: Oh.

RR: Yes. Start at the beginning.

MR: I thought that was a [?]

[Laughter]

MR: Well, I've had in my life three jobs, and I didn't apply for a one of them. And I turned all three of them down the first time they were offered. But, this is the thing that makes me say that I didn't have much to do with anything that ever happened to me! The first job was answering the telephone in my father's office when I was a teenager, so it doesn't count.

RR: Okay, in your father's office, and he was . . .

MR: He was C.B. Smith; he was a wholesale dealer for Quaker State Motor Oil.

RR: Okay, that's C.B.?

MR: . . . wholesale distributor.

RR: B as in boy?

MR: Yes, B as in Byron, actually.

RR: Okay.

MR: My brother was Byron Smith.

RR: Okay.

MR: And . . . he . . . then, that was the summer between my sophomore year in college and my junior year in college. And my first two years had been at Arkansas Tech, and then, the next year, I went to the University. And the next year I got married. So I don't have a degree of any kind. And . . . in fact, I'm . . . I think the last count was something like twenty-three or twenty-four hours away from a Journalism degree.

RR: Oh, okay.

MR: I was a journalism major. I hated history. [Giggle] Sorry!

[Laughter]

MR: I thought it was boring!

RR: [Laughs] That's funny.

MR: Well, I had a history professor at Tech who, I think, was fascinated with history. But he was a little gray fellow. He had a . . . he always wore a gray suit, and he had gray hair and sort of a gray complexion and a <u>really</u> gray personality. He talked about the noon news every time, and he kept his two fingers over his mouth like that, so you couldn't understand what he was saying anyhow. I'll never forget the day when I was asked to make a talk to the Arkansas Historical Association in Little Rock, and I was sitting in the second row, waiting for my turn to talk, and he was behind me. I had seen him, but he hadn't seen me. [Laughs] And I turned around as I went up to the podium, just in time to see the shocked look on that man's face when he realized that I was the one talking. He didn't know my married name. But, anyhow, . . . I had worked as . . . of course, you don't want a whole biography on me, you just want enough to know how . . . how come they wanted me.

RR: Yes.

MR: And I had really been a housewife until then, but history was my hobby. After my husband was killed, I only had this little boy to raise. That was the only thing I had to keep [laughs] me out of the pool hall. And I needed something to really be

interested in so I wouldn't just throw all my attention on him. That wasn't fair to him. And, all of a sudden, local history grabbed me. I was fascinated by it. And, eventually, after I'd gotten . . . I'd written . . . I was editor of this little Pulaski County thing, and that's where, I think, Mr. Heiskell noticed.

RR: The historical quarterly?

MR: No. It was a Pulaski County thing, the *Pulaski County Review*. It was a quarterly, mimeographed sixteen pager.

RR: About history?

MR: Yes. Pulaski County history.

RR: Yes.

MR: Editor. I use that word very loosely. But when I wrote the copy, did all the research, cut the stencils. Putt-Putt Atkinson had it mimeographed out at UALR. What was then U . . . I don't . . . [I] forget what they called it that week.

RR: Putt-Putt Atkinson?

MR: J.H. Atkinson. [Laughs]

RR: A-T-K-I-N-S-O-N?

MR: Yes. He was sort of the local cheerleader for local history.

RR: Okay.

MR: And that was about it. He'd written his master's thesis on the Brooks-Baxter War, and about every two years he offered it to one newspaper or the other, and, usually, they bought it And [laughs] that was it, you know. But he was very active in the organizations.

RR: Yes. . . . Back up just a minute and tell me a little about your husband.

MR: Oh. I married . . . his name was Edwin Lee Ross, and . . .

RR: Edmond?

MR: Edwin.

RR: Edwin.

MR: Edwin. E-D-W-I-N

RR: Lee.

MR: Lee Ross.

RR: Okay.

MR: He was from Claremore, Oklahoma, and . . . of course, I met him and married him in 1942. It was right after my junior year at the University, and [I] followed the army around for the next year and a half or so. And then he got foreign duty, and when the invasion came on, you know, the German West Wall, he was killed.

RR: You mean at the invasion of . . .

MR: Normandy.

RR: . . . at Normandy.

MR: And he was killed on, would you believe, the fourth of July. You know, we celebrated all kinds of holidays in our family, but I don't celebrate Independence Day to this day. I got a little more than I bargained for on that one.

RR: Was he in the infantry?

MR: Yes. He was a captain and a company commander. And . . . but I'd followed the army around, and my son grew up thinking that Austin, Texas, was where all good

boys go when they die. ‘Cause I loved that town!

RR: Yes.

MR: And . . . when we were there, he was the senior aide to Major-General Louis A. Craig. His brother was the Army Chief of Staff.

RR: Lewis?

MR: Louis A. Craig.

RR: L-E-W-I-S?

MR: I think it’s O-U-I-S. I’m not sure. He was Mahlon Craig’s brother. Mahlon Craig was the Army Chief of Staff at that time. And he was regular army and a no-nonsense type of fellow. You know, he really didn’t like the idea of the families being with them. His family was not with them, but ours was. And it was good training, you know, and . . .

RR: So, you were not married very long.

MR: About two years and a couple of months.

RR: Yes. And then you found yourself with a son to raise and . . .

MR: Well, actually, not quite. I was . . . when Ed was killed, I was pregnant. And he had shipped over on Easter Sunday --- I told you we celebrated holidays [laughs] --- and I had gone with him to Baltimore, the port of entry, the port of exportation . . . [Fort Meade].

RR: Embarkation.

MR: Yes. We called it . . . I couldn’t remember what the real word was because we called it “exportation.” [Laughs]

RR: Exportation?

[Laughter]

MR: Yes. And, you know, [it's] funny how those facetious things you pick up on stay with you.

RR: Yes.

MR: But he . . . it's the strangest thing how my son acted like he knew him when he was a little boy. He would get his picture and put it down by . . . while he played, you know.

RR: Aww.

MR: And, damned if my grandchildren won't do similar things. In fact, they're having a fight now over who gets his dog tags. And, of course, I . . . they don't realize there's two sets of them. I've got one set, and their daddy had one. So, only two of them are fighting over it, so we can take care of that.

RR: I interrupted, you were telling me about how you got into the history . . .

MR: Well, . . . that . . . I bought a book. It was WPA guide to the state, published in 1942, do you remember that?

RR: I've got a copy of it.

MR: I bought it because it had such great pictures in it of the [nintendary?] and all that stuff. [Laughs] But here was a picture of the Tebbetts' House in Fayetteville.

RR: Which house?

MR: Tebbetts

RR: T-E . . .

MR: T-E-B-B-E-T-T-S. And I had walked past that house many times when I was a student. . . . And now, of course, it is the headquarters for the Washington County Historical Society. It was just down the street from Uncle Walt Lemke's house, but I had no idea that it dated back before the Civil War. It didn't look that old. And what it said there was that it had bullet holes in the wood works from the Battle of Fayetteville. And it mentioned a book, *Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove*; it was written by a fellow that had a connection with the house --- not Tebbetts but his friend. And I didn't know any better than to go down to see about how you go about buying that book. And I went to Allsopp and Chappell; I didn't know how you bought rare, out-of-print books. I knew it would be out of print, but I thought maybe they'd be able to tell me how to get it. They suggested I go to the library, so I did, and at that time you could withdraw books from the public library, and I took it home, planning to read it over the next week or two, you know, and, Lord, I couldn't put it down. I read every word; it was fascinating. And, after that, I was hooked.

RR: Yes.

MR: And . . .

RR: So that's while you were still at the University?

MR: No, that was . . . this was after my child was, oh, three years old.

RR: Oh, but the reference to the Tebbetts' House, you had remembered . . .

MR: Yes, yes.

RR: I see.

MR: But that was the kicker. . . .

RR: You were back in Little Rock then. Yes, okay.

MR: Yes. And we . . . when my husband was killed, my parents bought a house over on 20th and Battery Streets; it's gone now. And that was when the neighborhood was not . . . the neighborhood went way down, and they, you know, we had to get out of that neighborhood.

RR: Yes.

MR: But it was an older home that had been converted to a duplex, and they lived downstairs and we lived upstairs. And it worked out perfectly for us. I had three bedrooms and a huge dining room, about the size of this living room, and a living room that was thirty-two feet long, how about that? We had great parties up there. And a screened-in front porch about the same size. And they had a similar apartment downstairs, and I knew someday that I was going to have to go to work, but I was going to get that kid raised a little while first. And so, when the . . . I'd been doing some freelance writing and, of course, I really got into the local history real quick, and when the mid-century thing came, both newspapers published big special editions, and I went there, clipping on them like crazy, you know. I figured one big scrapbook would be all I need for [laughs]. Boy, you ought to see my library downstairs now, you wouldn't believe it. And Dad said, "Well, you know, you'd be surprised how quickly you can get to be an authority on something like that." And I said, "Well, I don't imagine that will happen to me, but I am interested in it." And it turned out, you know, it was something you

could get your teeth in, and things that you couldn't do, you didn't . . . when you are just one person and you are living in a couple society, you know, you need things you can do by yourself. And the nice thing about local history is you can do it either way, with people or without them. And so, it worked pretty good for me. Then they started the Pulaski County Historical Society, and I had been doing some freelance writing for, if you'll pardon the expression, the *Democrat*.

[Laughter]

MR: And it was mostly because I didn't think I was good enough yet for the *Gazette.* And I wrote an article in the Pulaski County thing that Mr. Haskell was interested in. And I don't remember now for sure what it was, but I think it might've been the article on Nathan Warren, a free Negro.

RR: Nathan, what?

MR: Nathan Warren.

RR: Oh, Nathan Warren.

MR: He lived . . . that may have been what it was. He lived in Little Rock before the Civil War, of course. Then they were all free after that. But . . . I think I may be getting . . . you know, it's been a long time since I have thought about this, Roy. I think I'm getting ahead of my story because, I believe, the first thing I wrote for the *Gazette* was after I went to work for the History Commission. I think I know it was.

RR: Do you remember what year it was?

MR: Oh, yes! That was 1954, and it was in the summer, I guess. Summer of '54 or

late spring, one or the other. But I turned that job down the first time it was offered. Ted Worley called, and I'd been doing research in the History Commission, and he'd seen what I'd written in the Pulaski County thing, which wasn't all that great, and the stuff I'd done for the *Democrat* wasn't all that great either [laughs], but, I guess, he'd watched me do research and was . . . anyhow, he told me he didn't want . . . if I didn't take the job, he wasn't going to hire anybody. But he had . . . they had moved into the Old Statehouse, and he really needed time to get things organized and like that, and they had only two other employees, and one was a secretary who was a nice typist and all that, but limited in what she could do. She wasn't stupid or anything like that, but she, you know, she knew her job, but she wasn't supposed to be a research assistant. And the other one was an elderly woman, actually, an old woman.

[Laughter]

MR: She . . . who was there as a patronage kind of thing. She was the librarian, they called her. Her main job was to talk your ears off while you were trying to do research. And . . . to show people around the museum and to tell the kids to keep their hands off of things and that sort of thing. But she couldn't even type. . . . She did help with the mail because the people, most people in the mail, wanted to know their grandfather's Civil War record, and all she had to do was look it up in a card file and write it down and take it to Lois, the secretary, and let her type the letter, which meant that Lois did double duty, really, you know. [laughs] But she would be old . . . she was a good old lady and she tried and all that, but she just

drove you nuts! And what he needed was someone that could handle the serious historians and help them, like in the summertime, we had the influx of the usual people working on their graduate degrees, and he needed somebody that knew the source material well enough to know what we had that we could give them. The indexing system down there was practically nonexistent except what the WPA had done, and you just had to have enough curiosity to go look at it and see what was there, you know. And I said, "Well, I appreciated it and all that, but the truth is I've got this little boy and I don't want to be away from him that much." He was in school. He was in the . . . at that time, I think he was in the third or fourth grade.

RR: What's his name?

MR: Edwin Lee Ross, Jr.! What else!

RR: Okay.

MR: And I said . . . I just . . . I didn't see much point. I knew I could hire somebody to look after him, but I was just worried about . . . Their hours were eight to four. I was worried about the first hour in the morning and the last hour in the afternoon because we lived like three and a half blocks from the grammar school he went to. And I didn't see much point in hiring someone else to get my pleasure out of life.

RR: I guess Ted Worley prevailed on you. . . .

MR: Well, Ted could understand that because they'd never had but two children, and both of them had died of . . . well, they may not have made it; they may have died before being born, but I know they didn't grow up. And he was a sucker for little

kids, and he understood that thoroughly and he said, "Well, we'll arrange your hours to suit you." And so they put me on part-time thing, you know, and so I'd work from nine to three. That way I'd get him off to school in the morning --- 'cause he didn't have to be there until 8:30 --- and I'd be there when he got home in the afternoon.

RR: This is '54?

MR: Yes. In the summer --- late spring or early summer, '54. But when school started, I mean, when school was out, this must have been, by golly, I believe it was in the fall of '54 because he was in school at the time. And when school was out, you had had all this time, you know, and I thought, well, okay, I can handle that. Mother would be there; she could get him off, and I would just start going in and, you know, taking regular hours, which I did. And that was what led to my leaving the History Commission, which is a long story, but I will tell you I became very dissatisfied there because they --- this was strictly Put Put Atkinson's doing, too --- he felt like he was my guardian angel, but he didn't think that I needed to have much salary because I was a) a woman and b) I had other income. And that b) thing was the main factor. Being a woman didn't have a whole lot to do with it. But he felt that way about anybody that had other income. He didn't know what it was [laughs], he just knew. And I didn't think that had anything to do with it. And he let me go out and get . . . do some of the politicking to get their salary increases, not knowing . . . that I didn't have one in there. I thought they'd put in for increases across the board. There were just four of us, for crying out loud, and

we weren't making a fortune. I think Ted's salary was like $12,000 a year! [laughs] . . . but I was very dissatisfied and a lot of people knew it, including Ted. And Ted was real sheepish about it; he felt terrible about it, but Paul Van Dalsen is someone that got it for us. And when Paul found it out, that's how everybody knew it, because Paul was mad.

RR: He found out that you were not included, you mean?

MR: Yes. And he thought they were giving it across the board. When he found out that it wasn't true, he found it out because I ran in to him in the garage --- see, he was staying at the Marion at that time and that's --- their garage was where we parked if we worked in the Old Statehouse. And when he found out about it, he blew his stack. . . . He didn't like being fooled.

RR: Oh, yes.

MR: You didn't mess with Paul Van Dalsen!

RR: I remember that!

MR: And the way I had talked to him about it, my brother-in-law was at the Game and Fish Commission at the time, and they --- every legislature, they always had a party for the legislators at their house, and she always invited me. And I knew Paul was going to be there, and I knew he was on the Legislative Council. And I volunteered to talk to him about it. . . . Ted should've told me then, "Well, you know, you're not included in it." Well, the reason I wasn't included in it, Mr. Atkinson said, was that I had had a raise since the rest of them did. And I said, "I haven't had any raise." Except when they hired me they didn't pay me the full

amount that was allotted for that salary because I was not working full time. I was working two hours less than the others. Well, when I started working full time, I didn't ask for any more money, but after a month or so, Ted said, "Well, if you are going to work the same hours we do, you ought to get the pay that's . . . authorized for it." And so, that's what he did. Well, I don't consider that a raise!

RR: So, Put Put said that was a raise, huh?

MR: Yes!

[Laughter]

MR: And, so that made me mad!

RR: So you left the History Commission then.

MR: Well, I did, but Mr. Heiskell was at that time Chairman of the Library Board. And he was considering sending his --- in fact, had promised the library that his collection would go to the public library and they had decided --- this gets to be important in a lot of ways because they came up too many times later. But they had decided --- the family --- had decided that they needed to get the collection physically out of his home. And the library was still in the old building, and the new building wasn't going to be ready for, what, a couple of years, I don't remember how long. And so they had decided to move it to the *Gazette* building, and this was about the time, I think --- now Hugh would have to be the final authority on that because I am not sure exactly when and why the foundation was started --- but it was my understanding was that its main purpose was to accommodate his library.

RR: You mean the *Gazette* Foundation?

MR: Yes.

RR: Yes.

MR: Actually, they had another reason. It handled all of the *Gazette*'s charitable contributions, anything like that that was tax deductible so that [it simplified?] their taxes, you know.

RR: Yes.

MR: You can imagine what kind of tax problem there is when you are approached for every kind of donation under the sun. . . . But this library, that was largely the reason for that, but he had to get it not just out of his name, but out of his physical possession. And, of course, getting him out of the driver's seat was something else again! [Laughs] Even after you can't drive the car, you won't give up the steering wheel, and, of course, that was the situation at the *Gazette*, too, in a lot of ways. . . . So they wanted to move it there and he left town --- this was in, must have been in May, or late in the spring --- and over his shoulder on his way out the door, practically, he told Ashmore to have me hired by the time he got back. And he was going to be gone a couple of months.

RR: Is this '55 we're talking about now?

MR: Uh-uh. This is '54.

RR: '54. Still '54.

MR: No. This is . . . no. When I went to the *Gazette*, it was '57.

RR: Oh, '57? Okay.

MR: Yes, this was the spring of '57.

RR: Okay.

MR: And so, Harry thought, you know, that it ought to be easy. He thought . . . [laughs] he was such a spellbinder that, you know, he could . . . what was it Spider Rowland used to say, that you could give somebody a . . . oh, he was talking about Franklin Roosevelt, said give him a microphone, and he could convince the angle worms that it's to their advantage to triple the chicken population! And Harry was a lot that way, too. And he really could . . . he was very convincing. So, he called and asked me to come in and talk to him. And I didn't know what about. And, you know, I'd been doing a little writing for them, and, actually, I was going to . . . the first thing I wrote for them I didn't specifically write it for them. It was one of my assignments after I went to work for the History Commission. They were dedicating a tombstone to Sandy Faulkner, the Arkansas Traveler. And they wanted a biographical article about him to publish on the day they were dedicating it.

RR: How does he spell Faulkner?

MR: F-A-U-L-K-N-E-R.

RR: Just like . . .

MR: Yes. And it's Sandford, S-A-N-D-F-O-R-D. I always wondered whether that "D" was in there, and I finally got some stuff from his granddaughter, and it really was. And . . . So, I wrote the article, not knowing where they wanted to publish it. But I'd been publishing in the *Democrat*, and they said, no, they wanted it in the

Gazette. . . . Mr. Heiskell would not show, I don't believe he would have spirited anybody away from a competitor. He wouldn't hire people off the *Democrat* unless they'd applied for the job. Or that was my understanding. I don't know whether he stuck to it or not, but I think he pretty much did. Actually, he did not rule out free lance writers. If they applied and he wanted them, he'd hire them. Of course, he didn't hire many people himself, you know. But anyhow, when I went to talk to Harry about it, he was telling me all the good things about it, but when we got down to salary, he was offering me very little bit more than I was making at the History Commission. It wasn't enough to make a difference, you know. And I went back home and thought about it. I knew when I left, told him when I left I wasn't interested, and I told him why, you know. I said, "This is not that much difference in salary." He had sent Margaret Burkhead down to feel me out, to see if I was at all interested.

RR: Burkhead.

MR: Yes, she was the head of the . . .

RR: How do you spell Burkhead? B-U-R-K

MR: I'm pretty sure it's a "U." She was head of the public library here, and I knew I didn't want to work for her. But the idea was that I would come there and work until they got ready to give the collection to the library. And I said, "Boy, I don't want to go to the library." I was supposed to go with it. I said, "I don't want to go to the library. I don't want that job." [Laughs]

RR: The job was to take care of the collection then.

MR: Yes. Yes. It would also involve writing historical articles from time to time, but this part was not clearly defined at that time.

RR: To go through it . . .

MR: Yes. That's one reason it never was cataloged. Because she didn't think --- if you didn't have a degree in Library Science, she didn't think you were competent to catalog it. And I didn't like the Dewey Decimal System, anyhow, and that was what she was hell bound on using. . . . But I knew I didn't want to work for her because she wasn't easy. [Laughs] And, periodically, I found out, she really went off her nut because Mr. Heiskell told me that himself. And they protected, the general public never knew that because they protected her. And . . .

RR: So, Harry had sent her down there to feel you out then.

MR: I think, actually, Mr. Heiskell [attended?] that.

RR: Oh, Mr. Heiskell did that.

MR: Yes. And then he told Harry when he found out I was ticked off at the History Commission and in a mood to quit --- and I didn't know, I had told myself when I took that job, "Look, I do this because it's fun. If it gets to where it isn't fun, I'll quit, and I'll get a decent job selling ribbon in the dime store or something." You know, because if history isn't fun, I don't want to do it anymore. And I still feel that way, you know. But, unfortunately, I still think it's fun! So, anyhow, when I went back and thought it over, he told me to take a week and think about it, then let him know. But he thought I'd cave in. But I really, I wasn't being coy; I wasn't trying to be hard to get; I didn't want the job. So at the end of the week, I

thought, "Well, I'm not going to get up there and tell him that. I'm not going to argue with him." So I just wrote him a letter. And told him I appreciated his confidence in me and I hoped he would convey that and my thanks to Mr. Heiskell, but I was just not interested in the job for several reasons. In the first place, you don't offer me enough money. Second place, I'm accustomed to all these holidays on state jobs, and I like it, and that gives me more time with my little kid, more time to do things, you know, and you don't have but five a year, and that's not as much as I want. And, he didn't know there were lots of things I just --- and I . . . privately, I had heard Mr. Heiskell was a demon to work for, . . . but I didn't want to say that.

RR: Yes. [Laughs]

MR: So I didn't put that in the letter. It was a filthy lie anyhow; he really was not . . . like that at all. Not to me! . . . Mary thought he was. Mary Powell. But she . . .

RR: Did she? I never knew that.

MR: Mary thought everybody was.

RR: Well . . . [laughs]

MR: She thought he was the one that drove her crazy.

RR: I can still --- I remember how Mary used to shake her head when she'd come out of the office sometimes. . . .

MR: She . . . didn't see anything good about that old man. He couldn't do enough nice things for her, for her . . . to make her like him. And he knocked himself out, too.

RR: What was it with her . . .

MR: I don't know.

RR: . . . that got under her skin?

MR: Well, you know, a lot of it, she was just . . . I found out why she was hard for me to get along with because she told me herself!

RR: Oh?

MR: And it was because she had been promised by Harry before he knew what the plan was, you know, all he knew was they were going to bring the library to the *Gazette* building. He thought all it needed was a babysitter, and he should've known better than that because, you know, Mr. Heiskell, you remember how he was about JNH's.

RR: Yes.

MR: And he . . . should have figured that he would get somebody that could handle some of those JNH's. . . . But what he thought was that Mary could handle it. and Mary was always looking for something to justify a big raise for herself. She didn't know why she wasn't making as much money as Harry was.

RR: [Laughs] Yes.

MR: And . . . or, well, I don't think she expected that much, but, you know, she thought that as secretary to the senior editor she ought to be making a fortune. And she was doing fairly well, I think, as secretarial jobs went. But Harry also had this thing --- I think Harry thought, Harry looked at all women employees as secretaries, and if you could type, that's what you were, a secretary, [laughs] and that's all you were worth, you know? And he figured he could get me cheap

because he knew what I was making at the History Commission; that was public record.

RR: Yes.

MR: And I --- turned out that the History Commission salaries weren't as bad as I thought because Agnes Loewer, who was running the old Statehouse, was making the same thing I was! And that was terrible! So, anyhow . . .

RR: You wrote to him.

MR: Yes, and he, Harry . . . I think it really surprised him when he got that letter. He didn't expect that at all. And so, immediately, he was trying to find out who knew me at the *Gazette*. He knew Gene Fretz did because he was handling my copy when I wrote for the magazine. He sent Gene down to talk to me. And he knew Ernie Deane knew me, for the same reason, because Ernie . . . was doing the Arkansas Traveler column, and, oh, he may have been on the editorial page at that time, anyhow, Ernie was coming to the History Commission once in a while, and I'd known Ernie before; we'd met through Uncle Walt. And he knew --- somehow, Jim Williamson got into it. Jim was at that time a friend of my sister's. His son married my niece, much to the family's regret as it turned out. The marriage lasted, what, eighteen years, and then he got his brain caught in his zipper and they got a divorce. And . . .

RR: Not Jim.

MR: No. The son. . . . But it was . . . a marriage that should never have been in the first place. I remember telling her when she said she was going to marry Mike, "Well,

honey, Mike is all right. I wouldn't have any objection if he were a protestant orphan." [Laughs] But he was the Catholic son of Jim Williamson, and that made a lot of difference because at that time I was working at the *Gazette*, and I knew what all, well, I knew the staff just didn't like him. And I'm afraid I was a whole lot of the same mind because he was unnecessarily rude a lot of times.

RR: Jim, we're talking about?

MR: Jim. But Jim called me at the History Commission to try to talk me into this job. We had one phone line at the History Commission, just one. And . . . after forty-five minutes, I realized, in the first place, I shouldn't be talking [about] another job from my office phone. In the second place, I shouldn't tie up the only phone in the building for forty-five minutes. And I told him I just had to go, but that I still wasn't interested. So, they sent Ernie down. . . . They sent Ernie to take me to lunch, and Ernie said, "Why, hell, yes, it's a free lunch!"

[Laughter]

MR: And he took me to lunch, and he said, "I'm supposed to try to talk you into coming to work for the *Gazette*, but I ain't going to do it!" He said, "That's not any of my business, and I can't tell what to tell you to do. I don't know whether it's good for you or bad for you. And that's something you're going to have to decide for yourself." And so I told him about what I've told you, you know, . . . the reasons I didn't want to go. And so, he said, "Well, maybe you wouldn't mind coming back up there and talking to Harry again about it and . . . just tell him what you told me." I said, "I told him! In a letter." And so, he said, "Well, come on

back and talk to him anyhow. It won't take much of your time." And so I said, "Well, okay." And so, . . . but Harry had called me. I wasn't going to call him and ask for an appointment to tell him no, for crying out loud! And so, he did and I made an appointment. And I went up there, and he . . . I got talked into it. But he promised me things that the rest, the people who should've known about it never were told. I could make my own hours; I could work anytime I want; I could work at home anytime I needed to. I didn't necessarily have to have the regular office hours. . . . You know, I couldn't run a library that was open to the public unless I did. And he came up on the money, but it was two and a half years before I got my first raise down there, and I had to really go to bat for it, too! I liked to never got it, and when I got it, it was not real generous. And it was a long time before I got . . . enough, what I considered a fair salary. You know, compared to what the men were getting that were doing a lot less than I was. Columnists like, look at Allbright. He had a four-day-a-week job. He came down on Fridays just to pick up his check.

RR: Yes. Old tradition in the newspaper . . .

MR: Yes. But when you're . . .

RR: the men are always paid more than the women.

MR: Well, it's an old tradition everywhere, everywhere. It's not just the news business.

RR: Especially [?] news business.

MR: Well, but you know something, Roy, if I were doing the hiring and I had my

choice between a man and a woman and they were equally qualified, I think I'd take the man. First place, I think he's there more. You know, women seem to have all kinds of excuses. Now, I didn't. I had a good record of very few absentees, you know, and I had to be half dead to take one.

RR: Yes.

MR: But I could name a few that you wouldn't believe that were just gone all the time and got by with it!

RR: Yes. Yes. Anyway, he talks you into it.

MR: Yes, he talked me into it, and I went to work in there, I believe it was August fifth . . .

RR: '57.

MR: Yes. '57. I believe it was August fifth

RR: Boy howdy, good timing, Margaret! [Laughs]

MR: Yes, because on September third it hit the fan!

RR: It sure did.

MR: And before I had even practically taken off my coat, you know [laughs]. And after that, you know, I was in that room . . . where Mr. Heiskell's office later was -- at the north end of the building on the second floor?

RR: Oh, yes, after they remodeled.

MR: After they remodeled, it was Mr. Heiskell's office, and the conference room, that sort of thing.

RR: Wasn't his office, in the beginning, wasn't it on the southwest corner of the

second floor?

MR: Yes. When I went to work there, it was. Originally, it was out in the newsroom.

RR: Oh, right. Yes. And then they remodeled and moved it to the north corner of the building? North . . . northwest or north?

MR: Hugh sold him on that by telling him that he could have the north light over his shoulder. Because Mr. Heiskell was convinced that the north light was the best light. And then they gave him a little window about that wide and real high. And I don't know why they did that, but that's what happened. And the building was always cold. He was always cold in that room. You should've . . . gotten James Warren and Harold Farrow's version of that. Harold Farrow, particularly, because after they had remodeled,

RR: Harold who?

MR: Farrow. He was the . . . he took James Warren's job in general maintenance.

RR: How do you spell Farrow?

MR: F-A-R-R-O-W. You don't need to ask him a question though, he was just the . . . he was the white James Warren.

RR: Okay. I remember James.

MR: Oh, yes.

RR: In fact, one of the questions I want to ask you has to do with James Warren.

MR: Ask me now.

RR: This happned a long time before you or I either one ever got there, but you're good in history.

MR: I know a lot of it because James told me a lot.

RR: Okay. Is it true that Fred Heiskell won James Warren in a poker game?

MR: The story went a crap game, but James said it wasn't.

RR: Crap game. Okay, tell the story.

MR: Well, James was working for Fred Hotze.

RR: Fred who?

MR: Hotze, who owned the building.

RR: H-O- . . .

MR: H-O-T-Z-E.

RR: H-O-T-Z-E. Fred.

MR: Yes. He was the son of the man who had built the building.

RR: Oh, okay. Peter, yes.

MR: And he worked for Mr. Hotze, but Fred Heiskell kept him busy all the time driving him places. He was his driver.

RR: James, you mean.

MR: Yes.

RR: Okay.

MR: And I mean . . . at night mostly, and James knew a lot he wasn't telling. But one of the stories was that he won him in a crap game. So, I asked James if this was true. And he said, "Oh, no, ma'am. It wasn't exactly like that." He said . . . by putting together what James told me and what Hugh told me, because I can't remember whether James knew the whole story or not; he may not have. But the

Heiskells didn't like the idea of hiring anybody away from somebody else, particularly a friend. And, of course, they were only renting the building at the time.

RR: Oh?

MR: They didn't own it until later. And it was built for their occupancy, but it was understood that they were tenants from the beginning. And he . . . approached Mr. Hotze on the subject and offered him a certain sum of money. I don't know what, whatever it was.

RR: Fred did?

MR: Yes. And Mr. Hotze said, "The son of a bitch ain't worth it." [Laughs] And it was "I'll flip you for him" or something. It was not a crap game or a poker game either one, but it was something similar. I don't remember what. [Laughs]

RR: . . . flip a coin, maybe.

MR: It was something like that, yes.

[Laughter]

MR: But that was the way it happened.

RR: Well, that's a . . .

MR: But . . . Mr. Fred was . . . he had the most delightful sense of humor. I never laid eyes on that man. He died on the day before April Fool's --- it's easy to remember --- in 1931. And I never saw him, but after . . . our Mr. Heiskell died, I got all the stuff that he kept at home, his papers and things, and he had brought home from Memphis his father's and his sister's papers. And they had all the letters that Fred

Heiskell had written home when he was in the Philippines . . .

RR: Fred Hotze or ?

MR: Fred Heiskell.

RR: Fred Heiskell.

MR: Had written home when he was . . . he was secretary to Governor Luke Wright in the Philippines, and he had written these . . . he wrote long letters home, and they were wonderful. He was the natural-born writer. He just went with the flow, and he wrote like he talked, and he talked real pretty. And Mr. Ned polished everything he wrote, and . . . he would call Fred at home and read him an editorial he'd written and he'd call him back several times during the night to read the changes he'd made in it, and Miss Georgia told me one time that Mr. Fred said, "Ned polishes all the guts out of an editorial." [Laughs] Which he did.

RR: Georgia . . . this Georgia

MR: That's Mr. Fred's wife.

RR: Okay.

MR: I guess I'm kind of like the people who worked for them when there were two Mr. Heiskells --- boy, that's a staggering thought. [Laughs] In the *Gazette* office, in order to let you know which one they were talking about among themselves, they said Mr. Ned and Mr. Fred. They didn't . . . when they talked to either one of them, they said Mr. Heiskell.

RR: Oh, I'll bet.

MR: Like we did.

RR: I never would've dreamed of calling . . .

MR: Me neither!

RR: Mr. Heiskell anything but . . .

MR: Anything but Mr. Heiskell. Me, too!

RR: I'm a little surprised that Fred commanded the same kind of dignified --- from what I'd heard about him, he was kind of a good-time fellow.

MR: Everybody loved him. Except, now, Nell Cotnam. I heard, someone told me that she used to date Fred Heiskell, and I asked her about that, and she was indignant. She had me know she didn't date people like him.

RR: Nell Cotnam.

MR: Yes, you remember Nellie.

RR: Oh, yes. C-O-T-N-A-M.

MR: Yes.

RR: [Laughs] I remember now.

MR: She said one of her beaus wanted to bring him over and introduce him to her one time --- one of her best beaus, she said. And I imagine Nellie had quite a few because she was right attractive as a young woman. And she told him that that man was not welcome in her home, and if he brought him over, he couldn't come back anymore!

RR: What's she have against him?

MR: His reputation. It was terrible.

RR: Which was . . .

MR: Oh, not good.

RR: Okay. All right. Well, I knew he was bad to drink, . . . that he drank a lot.

MR: Everybody they knew was. You know.

RR: Except Mr. Ned.

MR: Well, now, he just drank wine. White wine. And he finally found out that if you drank enough of it, it'd make you as drunk as anything else! [Laughs]

RR: But Fred . . .

MR: Let me tell you something. Now, this is really interesting, except that you can't -- - there's no point in you using it. Maybe I shouldn't take your time to tell you. But in the Heiskell papers, they have letters from John Netherland, Mr. Heiskell's grandfather. Now, that's a staggering thought, isn't it?

RR: Oh, boy. Mr. Heiskell was born way back in the early part of the nineteenth century.

MR: Yes. He was born . . . uh, Mr. Heiskell was born in 1872.

RR: Yes.

MR: And his grandfather, his father was born in 1832. His father was an old man when he was born.

RR: So, his grandfather must've been born about the time of the Louisiana Purchase!

MR: [Laughs] Give or take a year or two. But . . . the family was big temperance.

RR: Temperance, yes. Presbyterians, weren't they?

MR: Yes. Yes. And not Associate Reformed Presbyterians like Hugh's family. Staid and stolid, but, of course, those others were pretty fundamentalist, too, but . . .

His grandmother Netherland sent him a little pledge when he was about five or six years old, just . . . he knew how to write and that was about it.

RR: Ned?

MR: Ned. And promising that he would never smoke and never drink. Never touch either one. She wanted him to make two copies of it and sign them. And give one to his mother and send one to her. The damned kid took the pledge when he was [laughs] five or six years old! And I have to wonder if she sent the same thing to Mr. Fred. You see, Fred Heiskell was three years younger than Ned.

RR: Yes.

MR: And . . . surely, he didn't take the pledge, but if he did, he forgot it.

RR: Yes.

MR: But Mr. Heiskell, our Mr. Heiskell, never smoked a cigarette a single time in his whole life. And I doubt that he ever touched anything stronger than the white wine. . . . Of course, his parents, you know, were big temperance workers. And that's the reason for years the *Gazette* didn't carry any kind of liquor ads. I think Hugh changed the policy.

RR: I'd never thought about that.

MR: Well, it was . . . I think any of the old timers in the advertising department can verify that, and I think if I were you, I'd get it verified, but I'm sure it's right. Hugh would be able to verify it.

RR: Yes. Yes. I'll . . . that's a good idea. You know, just fast forward for just a minute. Your own career --- you retired from the *Gazette* what year?

MR: When I was sixty-two. . . I quit going to work right after my birthday in 1962, but my retirement officially was from January 1, 1965, uh, '85.

RR: '85. '82 and '85.

MR: Yes.

RR: Yes. So you officially retired in '85. By that time, Mr. Heiskell had been dead for thirteen years . . .

MR: He died in '72, '73.

RR: Yes. But you went on working with the Heiskell papers?

MR: No, . . . when I retired, I left it all.

RR: No, I mean, until you retired.

MR: Oh, yes.

RR: Your career was spent working . . .

MR: After that, let's see, I'd already done the book and . . .

RR: Was that the main idea behind your employment, to do the history of the *Gazette*?

MR: No. That came up later.

RR: Oh, really?

MR: Yes.

RR: I'd just assumed that was, maybe, the main reason. . . .

MR: What I was told when I was hired was that I would probably do most of their historical writing and editing. Not necessarily all of it, but most of it. But my main chore would be with the library itself.

RR: Meaning processing the papers . . .

MR: No, because . . .

RR: . . . cataloging or . . .?

MR: . . . actually, the library didn't want me to do any of that because they wanted that done by their own staff. And then he said I was free to do freelance writing for anybody I wanted to that was not a direct competitor. Of course, that meant anybody but the *Democrat*, I imagine. . . . But, see, Harry hadn't been told what to offer me and what not to.

RR: Yes.

MR: He was just, I guess, maybe they just thought anything he said was okay, you know.

RR: But your job at the library is in connection with the Heiskell Collection.

MR: Oh, but see, Mr. Heiskell had other ideas. That was the reason that Mary was not given . . . she could've taken charge of just the books if that was all there was.

RR: Yes.

MR: And Harry had thought that it was all right to offer her that, you see. . . . I didn't know that that had been done. She was told to, the day I came to work, to give me a key to the restroom, to show me around the building, to see what I needed in the way of supplies, you know, and that sort of thing. And she didn't even enter my office for two or three days.

[End of Side One, Tape One]

MR: . . . see, he took Mr. Heiskell around at night. You got it going?

RR: Yes, it's going now.

MR: I'll tell you later.

RR: Okay. The . . . you were talking about the work you were hired to do in connection to the Heiskell . . . what, his papers, his books?

MR: No, I don't think they had a clear idea exactly what they wanted me to do; they told me they would think up a title for me before income tax time so I could say what my occupation was [laughs]. They never did. And . . . it turned out Mr. Heiskell knew pretty damned well what he wanted me to do, but he just hadn't bothered to tell anybody. And I didn't realize that until I got his papers after he died and the things that he had had in file cabinets at home. Mrs. Heiskell couldn't wait to get them out of her way because they had been cluttering up her pretty house for a long time. And among them was a letter dated 1936, right after that 1936 special edition, you know, that was in . . .

RR: Oh, yes.

MR: . . . magazine format? And I may be mistaken about who wrote the letter, but I believe it was Opie Reed and I had a copy --- it had a copy of Mr. Heiskell's answer to it, a carbon copy. And the letter had been complimenting him on the special edition. He wrote back and said he did all the work on it. He didn't do any of the writing, of course. What he meant was he made the assignments or at least figured out who did what and made some of the assignments. And he said, "I have in mind a column to be written from my collection to be called 'The Chronicles of Arkansas.'" This was in 1936. Do you know how old I was in 1936?! I was in the ninth grade; I'm a year ahead of myself if that! And it just

took him that long to get around to it, you know.

RR: And it finally got started in 1957, then.

MR: And he had in mind exactly what he wanted. And when they found out I was going to the . . . *Gazette*, Putt-Putt Atkinson thought, boy, that gives him an in at the *Gazette* that he'd been looking for. And he thought he could get publicity for all his little historical things and all that, and he came pushing his weight around, and he found out I . . . wasn't in any position to help him. And I was mad at him anyhow; he should've realized that, but he didn't.

RR: When did you actually start the "Chronicles of Arkansas" series?

MR: I'd been there about a year, and it ran nine years and nine months, something like that.

RR: I have a vivid memory of the Civil War.

MR: Yes, me, too! I ain't going to study war no more!

[Laughter]

RR: Talk a little bit about that, the Civil War years and how that was done, how you did that and what it looked like in print.

MR: You know, I've got a little thing in there that I wish I'd been the one that thunk it up, but I wasn't . . . because I didn't realize until I saw it that I'd been doing that all my life. It says, "Problems by the yard are hard; by the inch they're a cinch." And that's how I learned to read, that's how I learned to tap dance, how I learned to play a piccolo, by realizing that it's not really hard to do one note at a time, you know. If you can do one note, you can do fifty. And I just decided, okay. I had a

two-year running jump on it while I was doing the regular "Chronicles," which was mostly just reprints from primary source material with a little introduction, and that sort of thing. And that ran two years before the Civil War series started.

RR: Yes. So the "Chronicles" started with 1859, 50 . . .

MR: No, the "Chronicles" started 1958.

RR: No, I mean the, what you were chronicling.

MR: No, . . . in the beginning there was no restriction as to period or subject or anything.

RR: Okay, I'd forgotten that.

MR: . . . It was just . . . started as four times a week. Three daily pieces on the editorial page, so he could, you know, be Lord God Almighty of it. And then half a page in the Sunday magazine.

RR: And then you were getting ready for the Civil War series a couple of years before.

MR: Kind of on the side, yes.

RR: Okay. Tell about that series.

MR: Well, but you see, we really didn't know what we were going to do about the Civil War, but you could see everybody else was getting ready. And it was scary to me because I knew the old man by that time well enough to know that he was going to drop it in my lap all of a sudden and expect the whole war overnight, you know. He was bad about that kind of thing. So I just bearded the lion in his den one day and said, "What are we going to do about the Civil War Centennial?" And he didn't have a clear idea of what he wanted. And I said, "Well . . ." --- finally, I

got to --- the more I thought about it was --- I was better equipped to do it day by day than anything else because reading the newspaper files, you know, was going to be slow going, and it seemed to me like that was going to be a better way to organize it, for me. And he agreed. He liked the idea. He started it off with the awfulest steamboat gothic type on the logo. God, it was terrible! But that was for the first series. It just looked awful! And it . . . took me a little while to get into the swing of writing that because it, I had a hard time organizing my notes so we could do things on the right day, you know, and then you had a bunch of stuff --- every so often you had to have one that was just a catch-all, and that wasn't working for me at all. And when they moved it to seven days a week, all of a sudden it got easier. I know it sounds terrible, but it isn't.

RR: No, it makes sense.

MR: Yes, it does, to another writer, but it doesn't [?]. And it really wasn't all that bad to do, Roy.

RR: Now, you . . . Refresh my memory. Was it done in the present tense? I don't mean the present tense . . .

MR: No, it was not.

RR: . . . as if you were writing . . .

MR: No. It was not done as a contemporary thing.

RR: Okay.

MR: And one thing a lot of times --- but, of course, there were times that I did some quotes, a lot of quotes from contemporary stuff, but it was never done in present

tense.

RR: But . . . pick a day that might stand out in your memory from something that you wrote about on a particular battle or something and describe how you handled it.

MR: Okay. Well, let's say the Battle of Pea Ridge. You have all this build up to the battle and you do the build up as you go. And then you arrange for the closest Sunday to the battle to have the battle itself because you're going to need the full half-page spread.

RR: Oh, right. Yes.

MR: And then you have the clean up afterwards during the week. And sometimes you've got a . . . well, like Pea Ridge was a two- or three-day deal, you know, and so, you're going to need a little extra time. I think that took more than one Sunday. I well remember, but while I was right in the middle of it, of Pea Ridge, here comes Mr. J.N. in to me, with . . . wanting me to write him a memo for a speech he was going to make in New Hampshire, I believe it was. I believe that was the Pea Ridge thing. And he wanted it on --- typical JNH assignment --- he wanted it on Arkansas men who were from New Hampshire. You know, his daughter [Ebi?], had a farm in New Hampshire and . . .

RR: His daughter who?

MR: Elizabeth. The family called her Ebi, except for Mr. Heiskell. He always called her Elizabeth. In fact, he . . .

RR: E-B-I?

MR: E-B-I, yes. I think that was what the Heiskell children called, younger children

called her when they couldn't say Elizabeth. But all the grandchildren called her Ebi, but Mr. Heiskell always called her Elizabeth Cook. And . . . now look, "I'm right in the middle of the Battle of Pea Ridge. Even Jesus Christ didn't have to walk on the water and feed the multitudes in the same day." And you know what he said?! "Bet he could have, though."

RR: [Laughs] What do you say to that?! [Laughs]

MR: Well, what you say to that is, "I'll see you later in the day. You'll have your damned memo." And the memo, you knew, was the same as the speech. You don't just write a memo, you write the damned thing. And he came at me once --- a lot of times he knew that I had more than I could do. I think he just wanted to see if I could. And, you know, he expected me to walk on the water, and there were times when I did! Just because he expected me to. But it meant burning a lot of midnight oil. . . . But he put out a JNH one time. He wanted a history of the Arkansas River, and that was as much as he was willing to say about it, and I had a pretty general idea of what he meant, but only by kind of guessing and putting together things he had said earlier. But he didn't ask me to do it. He put the assignment out to Shelton. He told Shelton to put a reporter on it. And Shelton put Charlie Allbright on it. And I knew Charlie couldn't do it. Charlie writes funny.

RR: [Laughs] That's right.

MR: He's a good writer, but . . . when he comes back to me, he thought --- Mr. Heiskell thought he was saving me a lot of time when he put an assignment out to

somebody else like that, but they always had to come to me to get the information. It did save me some time.

RR: I've done it myself.

MR: What?

RR: I remember . . .

MR: Well, you were supposed to; that's what I was there for.

RR: I got a JNH once --- and I've been trying to remember this guy's name --- Mr. Heiskell had something about a man from North Carolina who had opposed secession. I can't remember his name. And he told Shelton that he wanted a full, you know, a long story on this guy. And I spent days . . . who would that have that been?

MR: I'm trying to think. I don't know. There were people in most states that . . .

RR: Well known public figure of the time. This would've been in the late 1850s and early, right up until the outbreak of hostilities, and he had opposed secession. And I can't remember what became of him. I just remember working days and days on that and . . .

MR: To do something on a North Carolina man from here is not easy!

RR: I know it, and I still don't remember why, what it was that piqued his interest about this North Carolinian, but . . .

MR: . . . I did a — I went through some of my handwritten notes to myself to kind of refresh my memory on some things before you came, and there was a thing I'd written about the JNH. And one of the things I'd said was all you had to do was

get a JNH and the rest of the staff would give you all kinds of sympathy but no help at all!

[Laughter]

RR: That's right.

MR: Do you remember that Harry used to talk about an editorial on the saber-toothed tiger in Arkansas that he said he found in the composing room in type that Sam Dickinson had done? And he had the whole staff turned against Sam Dickinson. He said . . . Sam was keeping nothing editorials, you know, on hand for slow days when he didn't want to write. Anybody --- I saw that editorial later.

RR: Oh, really?

MR: Yes, it was in some of Mr. Heiskell's stuff. He had the proof sheet on it.

RR: Did it ever run?

MR: Never. But later years, Mr. Heiskell still wanted it done, and he approached me on the subject, but I knew what happened to Sam over it, and I wasn't fixing to! Anybody that read that editorial that ever worked for the *Gazette*, on the news side anyhow, would recognize it immediately as a JNH.

RR: Yes. The subject, yes.

MR: It's not what any other person would think up to write an editorial about.

RR: Trees. Remember how he had a thing about trees?

MR: Yes! Turtles. He put out a JNH on turtles in Arkansas, and I don't know what led to that. And . . .

RR: I drew one of his tree assignments, . . . something about somebody wanting to cut

a tree down somewhere, and that's all it took.

MR: Yes. It probably had something to do with the one in old Washington that was considered one of the oldest trees of its kind in the nation, something like that?

RR: This was here in Little Rock. There were trees here that . . .

MR: Could it be a gingko tree?

RR: Well, it might, well, God, gingkos, yes. We had a story about gingkos one time.

MR: Yes, I had a little bit to do with that, too.

RR: Oh, you did?

MR: Well, that was before my time, I think, but when, I think it was Bryan McGinnis was working for the *Gazette,* and he went out with a strike in '49.

RR: Bryan McGinnis.

MR: Uh-huh. And he was real proud of himself because he'd found a gingko tree that he thought was the only one in Little Rock. And I don't remember where his was, but he was telling me about it, and I said, "Mac, that's not the only one. There's one . . ." and I don't remember which one he had, but there was one on Mrs. Terry's lawn. That may have been the one he knew about. There was one on the corner of , I think, 18th and Broadway; there was one in the old post office yard, which is now gone --- the old federal building, you know? They had --- there were several. It wasn't real common in Little Rock, but there were several. And he said, "You know, you've got more useless information in you I ever saw." [Laughs] And right after that I was in Fayetteville one day and Gene Farmer was there visiting Uncle Walt. You remember him? He was foreign news editor for

Life magazine.

RR: Gene Farmer? Oh, yes.

MR: And I was telling him what Bryan said and he didn't laugh. He said, "There is no such thing as useless information." And I said, "Well, I felt obliged to point out to him, that I kept him from making a fool of himself in print!"

RR: Well, somebody must've printed a story about the gingkos because when I moved into a house on Southwood Road, there were two young gingko trees that had been planted between my yard and the street.

MR: You know, they are a nuisance.

RR: Oh, they smell like . . .

MR: Well, they've got that fruit on them that . . .

RR: Yes. Anyhow, Mr. Heiskell loved trees. I didn't know about turtles. But he had all kinds of odd . . .

MR: I don't know what prompted the turtle thing, but he gave the assignment to Carrick one summer when he was working for the *Gazette*.

RR: Carrick Patterson?

MR: Yes, but Carrick managed to go back to school without writing it. [Laughs] I think Tiger [Mathilda Tuohey] fell into it, but she never did write it either. And this thing on the Arkansas River, Allbright took my notes --- that had some good stuff in it --- . . . it wasn't all my notes on the river, but it was a few, you know, and I never did get them back, but he wrote the article. And I took one look at it, and I said, "That ain't going to get it." It wasn't any good. He didn't, it was just fluff.

You know, Allbright has this way about him, he'll take a one paragraph and make it, like, twenty inches. And it's good reading.

RR: Oh, yes, he can really draw it out.

MR: Yes, except that you wish he'd get to the point. But it's funny. But that wasn't what Mr. Heiskell was after. What he . . . he liked to read Charlie, though. And when he put Charlie on the editorial page, he told me later Mr. Allbright was not a success on this page. But it was because he wanted him there because he liked his writing style, and when he got him there, he wanted to change it.

RR: Yes. Do you remember Charlie's last column before he went upstairs to be an editorial writer?

MR: Is that the one on . . . No.

RR: I never will forget it. He was explaining to the readers why he was not going to write the column anymore. He was going to write editorials. He said he knew a woman --- I suspect it was his wife --- who had this habit in driving a car. When she'd get into the car, no matter where it was parked, before she started off, she would put it in reverse and back up a few inches or a few feet and then go forward. And he thought maybe that's what he was getting ready to do. [Laughs]

MR: I don't remember that, but . . .

RR: Become an editorial writer.

MR: I'm surprised I don't remember it. I read his column regularly, and I don't anymore. He's gotten to where he . . .strings it out too much.

RR: Well. What other kinds of outside interests did Mr. J.N. have? You know, we've

talked about trees and the library and . . .

MR: The trouble is that he was interested in everything. And he . . . you just couldn't name anything he wasn't interested in. That's how some of those JNH's came along --- something would happen and he'd --- like one day I was coming up the steps instead of taking the elevator, and the next to last step looked brand new --- those marble steps, you know, and the rest of them were all kind of dipped.

RR: Oh, yes.

MR: And I said, "Did they replace that step?" He was standing in the hall, just getting off the elevator when I got there. I said, "Did they replace that next-to-last step there?" And he said, "Well, I don't know, why?" And I said, "Well, it looks brand new and the rest of them don't." And he said, "Well, I don't know. I'll ask." He was curious. So, he did ask. He told me later, "No, they didn't replace it; they just turned it over." And I said, "Well, that's funny. I was just wondering how come --- they were all put down at the same time --- how come one, if it didn't get broken . . ." And . . . the next think I knew he gave Charlie a JNH. I bet Charlie hated me for that, but I never told . . . I never admitted it to Charlie. He wanted him to write a piece on things that don't wear out downtown --- like fire escapes because they're there all the time, but they're not used unless they have a fire. And, you know, it is kind of interesting,

[Laughter]

MR: . . . but . . . And Charlie made a kind of a stab at it, but it wasn't worth reading, and he knew it.

RR: Is this why the old man was a good newspaperman? I mean, curious about everything?

MR: I don't know. They talk about the Heiskells being born newspapermen. When they were in college, I asked him if, I said, "They didn't teach journalism in those days, did they?" And he said, "No." He just had a liberal arts education. . . . He had English, French, Latin, Greek, you know, and physics, . . . just liberal arts, you know, nothing in particular.

RR: Yes.

MR: Most people, male and female, if they went to college, they were educated to be ornaments to society. They weren't necessarily educated for their professions.

RR: Yes. I read in John Thompson's manuscript, which you've also read, that he, as a kid, put out a neighborhood newspaper, and I think . . . .

MR: Yes. It's in . . . his papers.

RR: Oh, it is, is it? Yes. But I find it interesting that . . .

MR: You might want to go out and run through those, too. Linda Pine has charge of them.

RR: Oh, yes. It's interesting that here's the owner, well, we say, <u>the</u> owner, of a newspaper, who actually worked as a reporter for several years before he became a newspaper . . .

MR: [Laughs] Yes, but it was not the same kind of reporting you did, Roy.

RR: How do you mean?

MR: Well, okay. He was city editor of the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*. Do you

know what a city editor was in those days?

RR: Well, I just read it in John Thompson's book, but . . .

MR; He wrote the little local column.

RR: Yes.

MR: It was similar, it was more like Nell Cotnam's column than anything else. [Laughs]

RR: Okay. All right.

MR: But he also, if he was covering the downtown area, he picked up an occasional ad for the paper, that sort of thing.

RR: Did the same thing at the Knoxville *Tribune*, didn't he?

MR: Yes. Yes. That was his first job.

RR: Now, when he went to work for the Associated Press, what about those years?

MR: Well, he was in the Louisville Bureau, but --- now the piece about the *Maine* was apocryphal; it didn't happen.

RR: Okay.

MR: When the *Maine* sank, I checked it out and I talked to him about it. I even did a tape with him on it, and that was a mistake. . . .

RR: Tell that apocryphal story.

MR: Well, it's told best by James Street in James Street's "South." He'd heard it --- James Street, of course, had worked for the *Gazette* --- he'd heard it all over the country, he said. Heard it in several other newspaper offices. And the story went that Mr. Heiskell was working for the Bureau in Louisville, Kentucky, which was

the relay --- wire service stuff to the south. And the report of the sinking of the *Maine* came in, and he waited for confirmation, and it didn't come, so he killed the story. He relayed it, but he killed it, put out a kill order. And so, the *Gazette* was the only one that didn't honor the kill order. Dickison Brugman was the editor at the time.

RR: Dickinson, who?

MR: Dickison. D-I-C-K-I-S-O-N, I guess, I'm not sure. You better check the spelling of his name.

RR: And what was his last name?

MR: Brugman. B-R-U-G-M-A-N.

RR: Okay.

MR: He did . . . the "Other Days" column in later years.

RR: Okay.

MR: But he was then, I guess, the editor of the *Gazette*.

RR: And the story was that he had refused to honor the kill order and run the story.

MR: Yes. Yes.

RR: Okay.

MR: And so, he said the *Gazette* was the only newspaper that had the story the first day. This was not so. I checked it out in the *Gazette* files. The whole thing was just . . . In the first place, it was impossible because the old man was working in Memphis at the time. He was still with the *Commercial Appeal*. He very well remembered Mr. Moony, his boss, coming in the newsroom and telling them that

the *Maine* had been sunk.

RR: So, he had nothing to do with that story one way or another.

MR: Nothing one way or another, not even with the *Commercial Appeal.*

RR: How do you suppose that story got started?

MR: I tried to ask him. I had a theory, but the kicker on the story was that they told people that the story was told later to young reporters, and the moral of the story was "Be as cautious as old man Heiskell, but as daring as Dickie Brugman." And it sounded to me like something Fred Heiskell would've done. But I asked him if he thought that was possible, and, oh, no, his brother would never have done something like that. And I . . .

RR: You mean, started the story?

MR: Yes. Yes. And he said, "No, that never would have happened." I . . . his brother had that kind of sense of humor. But his brother, if there was a born newspaperman in the family, it was Fred Heiskell.

RR: That's what I've heard, that he had a feel for the news.

MR: If you read those letters he wrote home from the Philippines, you will --- I fell in love with him --- but he . . . was the best writer. I think he had the best feel for a story.

RR: How was Mr. J.N. as a writer?

MR: [Laughs] Who knows! As Mr. Fred said, he polished all the guts out of everything.

RR: Yes. Well, I --- it's interesting to me to read excerpts from his editorials that John

Thompson has . . .

MR: Sometimes he was perfect.

RR: Early editorials.

MR: Have you ever read --- his masterpiece editorial was --- you know, he had this thing about short editorials. He just simply could not abide long ones, and he said people didn't care that much about what you thought. And he was right. And Jerry Neil drove him up the wall with those long sentences, and Jim Powell did, too! And he drove, Jerry, drove him up the wall with words that were too . . . long, too, you know, too arcane, and he just . . .

RR: What was his masterpiece editorial?

MR: Oh, the . . . his analysis as Jeff Davis was going into the Senate, I believe, was when he . . . anyhow, he gave the Devil his due. And all this that you read about him being one of the main foes of Jeff Davis, go back and read the file and tell me what you think.

RR: Main foil?

MR: Foe. A main enemy.

RR: Oh, foe.

MR: Main newspaper enemy.

RR: You don't think he was an enemy?

MR: Well, I don't think he was anywhere near as mean with it . . .

RR: But he could be biting in his editorials. Maybe not about Jeff Davis, but later on, subjects that got his attention, he . . .

MR: Well, you know, this is one of the reasons I am glad that I'm not writing that volume on the *Gazette* history because I don't think I could be objective about it. I'd hate to hurt his feelings even now. But the main person --- it was the *Democrat* that had these big headlines, "Crowd Yells 'Coward' as Davis Leaves the Stand." It wasn't the *Gazette*. In fact, the *Gazette* was rather kind to him until he started picking on the *Gazette*. I asked Mr. Heiskell, see, he came here --- they bought the paper in 1902, and he was here immediately after they bought it. And he was here six months before his brother got here. And I asked him if he'd ever been to Arkansas, to Little Rock before, you know, and he said no. He'd come with his father, you know, when they were looking at buying it. But I asked him if he --- how he got filled in on the local political scene and all that, and he just dug in, he said. I said, "Well, how about Brugman, did he help you?" "No, I did it on my own." And I said, "Well, you know, you were right in the middle of this Jeff Davis thing at that time. . . . How'd you figure out all of that?" He said, well, he worked long and hard, but he just wouldn't give me any real answer, you know.

RR: Yes. Yes.

MR: I guess he really never had thought about it.

RR: Maybe not. Maybe not.

MR: . . . but I did ask him if Davis ever came to the office and threatened him, you know, [laughs] as he was reported to have done. He said, "No." Of course, he was, the *Gazette* office was at that time right across from the Statehouse, right across Markham Street, and he said he had come in the office once or twice, you

know, occasionally, but he never was belligerent. And I asked him why Davis appointed him, I mean, why he was appointed, you know, to the Senate? To fill out the unexpired term, you know? And he said . . . that he had written an editorial that gave him credit for what he had done, and he appreciated it. He told him he appreciated it. And it was just for twenty-three days, anyhow.

RR: Yes.

MR: It was no big deal.

RR: Yes. We were talking about Mr. Heiskell and what kind of a man he was. I have the impression from somewhere that he was trained up from childhood to be a gentleman.

MR: Oh, yes.

RR: What was that . . . How'd that work out in practice?

MR: He got a lot of it on him. [Laughs] [phone rings] And it's like . . . Ed'll answer the phone. It was like, I think Mr. Fred was like the old lady. He was . . . a gentleman like the *Gazette* was an old lady: old she was; a lady she was on --- just occasionally, you know?

RR: Yes.

MR: But Mr. Heiskell was always a gentleman.

RR: Always a gentleman.

MR: Yes, he was.

RR: What'd that mean in everyday . . .

MR: Except that he was two people in one. You know, they used to ask him how he

got so old, and he thought up several pretty clever answers. Mary Powell had the perfect answer: he was serving out the unexpired terms of all the people he had driven to an early grave!

RR: [Laughs]

MR: But to me, he was two personalities in one body, so he got a double shot at it.

RR: What does that mean, . . .What were the two personalities?

MR: One was the fine old Southern gentleman that the world saw. This was the same one his family saw. It was the same one the country club crowd saw. It was the same one most of the *Gazette* saw. But there was another little side to him. . . . He was Mr. Fred's *duenna*. He would go out and round him up when he knew he was misbehaving and all that, but I think he secretly envied Mr. Fred a little. He knew he could not be like that. It just wasn't in his makeup.

RR: How sad.

MR: Mmm. But, I mean, he was inhibited enough he knew this was not for him. But he wasn't above grabbing a pretty girl and squeezing her up and kissing her and stuff like that. And, I worked for that man from 1957 until he died in 1972 --- he died just exactly six weeks after his birthday, you know, and he spent most of that time trying to plant one on me. And, that guy never did make it!

[Laughter]

MR: I remember complaining about it one time --- Mary complained about it constantly, Mary Powell. Millie actually seemed to like it.

RR: Millie?

MR: Millie Woods.

RR: Oh, Millie Woods.

MR: Yes. And little Robin came to a Christmas party one time fresh from his office with her lipstick smeared all over her, and she didn't know --- she was young, she didn't know how to handle it. I remember telling him one time he'd taken me to lunch --- he always took me to lunch on my birthday, and he'd round up other people around to take with us and he said he did that to keep down a mutiny. But he'd taken me to lunch one time, and we came back, he starts all this. And I said, "Mr. Heiskell, I don't know how to --- I don't know how I'm supposed to deal with you. If you were anybody else in this office, I'd just knock your block off and that'd be the end of it, but you're my boss, and I just don't know how to handle it." And he said, "Oh, I think you're doing pretty well!"

[Laughter]

RR: Let me ask one more question and then we'll quit for the day. I've been --- you mentioned tap dancing while ago, and I've been told, in fact, that you . . . have been a good tap dancer. Do you still tap dance?

MR: No. The house has got carpet all over it, and there's not any place to do it. I pretty much generally gave it up after I married.

RR: Oh, that far back?

MR: Yes, because, you know, I was away with the army for a while. I used to dance in a lot of shows, floor shows and things. I used to teach dancing. In fact, I taught the basic tap dance class at Arkansas Tech when I was a freshman.

RR: Is that right?

HR: I entered, enrolled in it because I thought it was an easy A, you know. Turned out, the teacher didn't know anything about it, and so, she just turned over class to me. Of course, she had to be nominally the teacher for it to count. And when I transferred, I had one hour too much of P.E., so . . . it didn't transfer. Too bad --- it would've helped my grade point.

RR: Well, look this may be a good place to stop today. Let's . . .

[End of Side Two, Tape One]

[Beginning of Side One, Tape Two]

RR: . . . First, this is Margaret Ross and Roy Reed, on February 8th, and we are continuing . . .

MR: It's Hugh's birthday.

RR: Is it? Hugh Patterson's birthday?

MR: Yes.

RR: Well. We're continuing the interview that we started yesterday, and Margaret, I think you said you need to clarify something.

MR: Yes. We were talking about the appointment --- Mr. Heiskell's appointment to the United States Senate to finish out the unexpired term of Jeff Davis, and I asked him why he was appointed. And . . . the way I worded it, I thought he understood what I meant; I meant why did the governor make any appointment at all? Because there were only twenty-three days left in the term, and they'd have to have a special election then, and he knew it. So, you know, why do anything?

And he thought a minute, and . . . I said, "Well, after all, you weren't . . . you were far from Jeff Davis's best friend, that was for sure. And do you think the governor was taking a little jab or something? Why would he make any appointment?" And he said, "Well, I did write an editorial that recognized the good things he had done." And that was that long one, I guess. But he may have been talking about the governor because . . .

RR: Governor Donaghey, right?

MR: Yes. Because he had done the same with Governor Donaghey, and, of course, you know, Donaghey had been at odds with his father-in-law over the State Capital contract, but that was not mentioned at all. So I just wanted to make it clear I wasn't talking about Jeff Davis [Laughs] . . . you know, influencing his appointment . . .

RR: Right. Right.

MR: I just didn't mention the governor's name in connection with him, and I was afraid it wouldn't . . .

RR: Right. Okay. Because Davis was dead at that point. That's the reason the appointment . . .

MR: Well, yes, real dead!

RR: Yes. Let me shift way forward, if I can, . . .

MR: Oh, good.

RR: . . . to the last years of the *Arkansas Gazette*. Before it really approached bad times for the *Gazette*, there was a period when the *Democrat* was in some

difficulty. Back when August Engels --- oh, after he died and his nephews inherited the paper . . . was there a period when Hugh considered buying the *Democrat* from Engels's nephews?

MR: I think Hugh would be the one to ask about that, but I know he was approached on the subject. And . . .

RR: By the nephews?

MR: Yes. And I wasn't privy to the thing, you know. I just knew that they approached him.

RR: By the way, those nephews are . . .

MR: Stanley Berry and Marcus George.

RR: Right.

MR: And . . . you know, he said they were always real decent opponents. They were nice people and they fought clean. I think he did look into it to see, you know, if it would even be possible. Because it could've been a thing that wouldn't have been allowed to do.

RR: Antitrust.

MR: A monopoly thing, yes, antitrust thing. He even, I think, if I'm not mistaken, I don't know that he made a special trip to Washington for that purpose, but I think he did consult with people in Washington the next time he went. But he would be the one to tell you about that.

RR: I'll be sure to ask him about that. Shifting forward a little bit, as we know, the Hussman family ended up buying the *Democrat*, young Walter Hussman --- and

then after Hussman had owned the paper for some time and difficulties continued at the *Democrat*, it is my understanding that Hussman approached Hugh about a joint operating agreement. Can you fill me on any at all about what happened?

MR: I guess . . . I have things in my own notes about that --- I'd have to refresh my memory to get the details right. Really, you'd be better off to ask Hugh if he is well enough --- you know, he's been ill, if he can talk to you about it. Because he would remember, I'm sure, greater details than I would, and, of course, he knew more . . . he did it. But my recollection of it is, originally, it was Hugh's idea.

RR: Oh, really?

MR: I could be wrong about that, but that's the way I remember it. It would've involved one of those third-party deals, you know, where they form a new corporation to handle the . . . that. It would just be for printing purposes, you know?

RR: Yes.

MR: But the *Gazette* would have the . . . would be the dominant member of it, and I think that was what scotched that deal. And then, at a later date, when he might have been more agreeable, you know, they'd already bought a press. Of course, we had a new press. It hadn't been in very long.

RR: I've also been told that at some point Hugh might have tried to buy the *Democrat* out right from Walter, do you know anything about that?

MR: I know that Walter offered it to him, and that he considered it, but . . . his decision was not to do it.

RR: Any idea why he might've turned it down?

MR: Yes, but I think you'd be better off to ask him, don't you?

RR: Yes.

MR: Because he knows and I'm guessing.

RR: Yes. Your guesses could help me know how to approach the question with him.

MR: Oh, he's not touchy about it. All you have to do is ask him.

RR: Well, [laughs].

MR: As I told you yesterday, he is probably the easiest man in Arkansas to interview because he knows what you want to know and why you want to know it and he knows how much he is willing to tell you!

RR: Yes.

MR: And he just takes the ball and runs with it.

RR: Fast forwarding again, after the antitrust lawsuit that the *Gazette* filed against the *Democrat* and lost, and after Hugh began to look around seriously for somebody to buy the *Gazette*, the grapevine talk, you know, the gossip, had half a dozen different companies interested in the paper. Did you hear much of that talk at the time about who might be interested?

MR: Well, now, you have to remember by that time I think I had retired.

RR: Yes.

MR: And when he . . . he didn't tell me all that stuff. You know, that was pretty private business, and while Hugh was a good friend of mine and he sort of inherited me from the old man because after the old man died, Hugh was my boss.

RR: Did . . . specifically, did he ever mention to you that the Stephens Company might be . . . having talks . . .

MR: No. No, not ever.

RR: Okay.

MR: You know, Witt Stephens owned an interest in the *Gazette* for about a year. Exactly a year.

RR: I'm glad you reminded me of that.

MR: Exactly a year.

RR: About what period was that?

MR: Oh, that's easy. Let me see now. You remember the story that made the rounds and I asked you if it was true, and you said it was --- that they wanted to insure Hugh's life for something like $100,000? And while Witt Stephens was a stockholder, he voted against it because he said . . . he didn't believe in insuring anybody for more than he was worth.

RR: [Laughs] Yes, I remember that story.

MR: Well, that's what it was.

RR: You confirm that?

MR: Yes. Yes. He died laughing, but he said, yes, that's what he said.

RR: I do remember --- in fact, I've heard Witt Stephens tell about owning some stock in the *Gazette*.

MR: But, see, Stephens --- that is where Hugh really proved what he was capable of doing. And he saved the *Gazette* that time; we'd have been working for Witt

Stephens, otherwise. Stephens didn't want anything he couldn't be the major owner of.

RR: Sure.

MR: He had to own at least 51% for it to be worth it to him, and all he had was the Fred Heiskell stock.

RR: That was a pretty good percentage, wasn't it?

MR: Yes, but it wasn't that good.

RR: What was it, 25% or . . . ?

MR: Mmm, . . . it's not that cut and dried, really.

RR: Okay. But he owned the Fred Heiskell stock.

MR: Yes.

RR: Then Hugh managed to get it back somehow.

MR: The way he did it --- he, with the help of the lawyer then, I think, was Gaston Williamson. . . . I'm not sure about that; I'd have to look at my notes; I've got all this in my notes! But this is . . . why I don't like oral history. I don't trust my memory, and if I did, I'd make all kinds of errors. And this may be one, but anyhow, with the help of his lawyer, they drew up some stuff, you know, and, of course, the sisters, Mr. Heiskell's sisters, still owned their share. And he went --- he and Gaston, I guess, whoever the lawyer was --- went to Memphis to talk to the two sisters. And then the one that lived in Rogersville --- or [Knoxville?], wherever, . . . Elizabeth, the other sister --- Carroll McGaughey's grandmother --- they got --- in other words, he fixed it so they had their voting rights, Mr. Heiskell,

and their spot was tied up so that it was not ever going to be for sale, anytime soon, if ever. And there was an intervivos trust.

RR: What kind?

MR: Intervivos. That's with the two in Memphis, and I don't know how the other one was set up because she had --- the two in Memphis were maiden ladies, and they were leaving all of theirs eventually to the . . . nieces. It wasn't just . . . Mr. Heiskell's children, but they had other nieces, too. And then the same thing with Elizabeth Smith's stock.

RR: Elizabeth Smith?

MR: Elizabeth Heiskell Smith. I think her name was Smith. Anyhow, that was another sister, the one that was Carroll McGaughey's grandmother. And Mr. Heiskell had their voting privileges, and the stock was not going to ever be for sale. He saw that, well, the first meeting he came to . . .

RR: Witt?

MR: You need to get Hugh to tell you this because he . . . does it so much better than I can! The first stockholders' meeting that he came to, Hugh was taking notes as the Secretary . . . for the thing. And asked him to read the list as a formality of the stockholders, and he read it all off, and when he came to Elizabeth Smith, he . . . told her circumstances and then the other two and told their circumstances. And Witt could see he was beat! He never was going to be able to get that. So he kept it a year, for the capital gains tax thing, and then he offered it for sale --- to them, of course. And they bought it --- the corporation bought it --- is my

understanding.

RR: That's a good story.

MR: . . . The way he tells it, it really is!

RR: I'll get him to tell me.

MR: Yes.

RR: But as far as you . . .

MR: But get him to tell you about, also, about the meeting later of gas company stockholders where Hugh was invited as a guest and Stephens introduced him as the only man who ever beat him in a business deal.

RR: [Laughs] That'd be a matter of some pride, I'd think.

MR: You would think, yes.

RR: But in this later --- after Hugh decided to sell the paper --- as far as you know, he didn't talk to the Stephenses. Are the Waltons . . . was there any talk of the Waltons being . . .

MR: Not to my knowledge.

RR: Or, now, I understand the New York Times company expressed some interest.

MR: Oh, really? Well, I'm sure they had a crack at it, but I don't . . . but that's . . . I say I'm sure --- I don't mean I really am sure. . . . I would suppose that they did because . . . I'm sure he must have had an agent helping him --- broker, newspaperman . . .

RR: What can you say about Knight-Ridder's interest?

MR: I have no knowledge of that at all.

RR: Did Hugh ever say anything to you about it looks like Knight-Ridder is going to buy the paper?

MR: No!

RR: Roy Ochert, you know, who was at work on a book about the closing of the *Gazette*, you remember talking to Roy?

MR: No. I may have done it.

RR: From Batesville.

MR: I may have done it because, you know, you forget --- there's some of these people that . . .

RR: Well, what I'm getting at is this --- Roy was working on this book and he had to lay it aside because he got a job up at the Russellville paper. I talked to Roy the other day and his memory of his talk with you is that at some point while the *Gazette* was being offered up for sale and there was a lot of back and forth negotiation with one company and another --- that Hugh dropped by your office and said, "Well, Margaret, it looks like we're going to sell the paper to Knight-Ridder."

MR: He said I told him that? Well, I don't believe it!

RR: You don't remember anything like that?

MR: In the first place, I don't think that he was making any effort to sell the *Gazette* as long as I was working there. . . . In the second place, . . .

RR: Well, this would've been after you had left, obviously, because you had been gone for five or six years when this all had taken place.

MR: Yes. Yes.

RR: But, apparently, still talking to Hugh from time to time.

MR: Mmm. Not very often.

RR: And as . . . Roy Ochert understood it, it was in one of these conversations with Hugh, in ‘90, ‘91, along in there . . .

MR: He must have me confused with somebody else.

RR: Well, maybe so. I’ll check back with him.

MR: Because I don’t have any recollection of that at all. I do remember that he showed up at my door one day.

RR: Hugh?

MR: Hugh. And I hadn’t seen him in a long time or heard anything from him, but I could tell by the way he looked that something was up, you know. And I said, “Okay, who did you sell it to?” And that was when he really thought he had sold it to somebody else.

RR: Do you remember who?

MR: Oh, I’d have to think about it. Off the top of my head, it didn’t pan out. But he thought . . .

RR: Not Knight-Ridder, then?

MR: Oh, no. Oh, no.

RR: Well, they talked to a bunch of . . .

MR: Oh, Ingersoll, Ingersoll.

RR: Ingersoll.

MR: Yes.

RR: Oh, okay.

MR: I had to . . . I always . . . It's a good thing to check with me --- when I don't remember --- to check with me a few minutes later. Sometimes it'll happen. But, you see, that one fell through pretty quick. But the rumors, but that was the first one that I knew of that the rumor got around in the office, and I think the reason that it did was that Ingersoll came here.

RR: I think I remember that. Yes.

MR: And, of course, he wanted to see the plant, and you can't blame him. Hell, he was going to buy the thing; he wanted to see what he was buying. But he just backed out very unceremoniously. And without, really, without even saying so, I think. But . . . Hugh's got to tell you about that because I really am not knowledgeable on it.

RR: Right. There have been indications that members of the family --- Patterson, and, I guess, the Heiskells . . ., were not all in exact agreement throughout these negotiations to sell the paper. Have you heard anything?

MR: In my opinion, if the boys had been in agreement on anything . . . like . . . "Is it raining out there?" If they could agree on something that simple, then they would still own the *Gazette!*

RR: Yes. Mmm.

MR: But what are you going to do? When Hugh came on board in this family, which was, of course, before Carrick was even born, all the men in the Heiskell family

had died. The big plan was to assign Carrick Heiskell to take over the paper, and he was killed in the war. And the other son, of course, died the same year, but he was never really a member of the family, you know, because . . .

RR: He was the retarded son?

MR: He . . . they called it a birth injury. That's the reason Louise was born at Mayo. But he lived to be in his twenties and was in an institution in Massachusetts --- I think Massachusetts because that's the reason they had the summer place at Salter's Point. But he had never figured in the future of the *Gazette*.

RR: Was his problem physical as well as mental, or do you know?

MR: I think . . . it was --- Nell Cotnam said it was something similar to mongoloidism.

RR: Yes. Okay. . . . Anyway, after young Carrick was killed in the war . . .

MR: That just dashed Mr. Heiskell's hopes. Mary Grace told me that the day that telegram came, he went in his office, she said --- now, this does not make sense --- she said he went in the office and closed the door. And when he came out, he was a different person. That he used to throw tantrums, she said. I don't believe that. I can't see as how . . .

RR: Was Mary Grace the switchboard operator?

MR: Oh, yes. She made it up as she went, I think. But the reason that it didn't make sense is that, I believe, at that time his office was still a thing in the newsroom. It didn't have a door, you know?

RR: Yes. . . . a pretty frightening image in any event.

MR: Well, but at least --- I think . . . his son's death did change him a lot. And it sure

changed all his hopes for the future. Now, Ebi would have loved to have taken over. She wasn't qualified, of course.

RR: Was or was not, I . . . ?

MR: Wasn't, for heaven's sake. She was making marriage her career --- three of them.

RR: She thought she was qualified, right? I mean, she had done some newspaper work.

MR: She had worked at the *Gazette* briefly as . . . probably society editor, or something --- I don't know what she was, but anyhow, she was brought up to be an ornament to society, you know? And she . . . some people might have thought she could have handled it, but . . . Mr. Heiskell, even if she could have handled it, he wouldn't have let her have it because she was female, and that disqualified her right there! He wasn't going to say that, but I feel pretty sure that's the way he felt. I can't say for definitely that he did, but if I knew him at all, I think I knew that much about him.

RR: When Orville Henry left the paper . . .

MR: [Laughs] Yes. . . .

RR: Were you still there? No, that was . . .

MR: No, but I . . . I don't think I was there . . .

RR: That was after Gannett, wasn't it?

MR: Well, Gannett --- boy, that was the stupidest thing they did.

RR: You mean letting Orville leave?

MR: It was --- the way the story got to me and, of course, this is through the grapevine;

Orville can tell you better than I can, but it started over some kind of flap about his mugshot.

RR: That went with his column?

MR: Yes. And he didn't want it in the first place, but he had one made with his hat on. . . . Let's see, who was the editor at that, that came in as editor?

RR: Walker Lundy.

MR: Was it Lundy?

RR: Yes, he had become editor. He was the first Gannett editor.

MR: Well, he was the one then that said he'd have to have another picture made without the hat. And Orville was not accustomed --- Orville was autonomous at the *Gazette*. He ran sports, and nobody interfered with him. I asked him one time if it was true what Mr. Heiskell told him that . . . he said, "I read the sports section about once a year. Your problem is, you don't know when that is going to be." And I asked him if that really happened, and Orville just laughed and said, "Yes, it did!" That's what he said. But he meant it. He didn't know anything about sports, and he knew he didn't. And the rest of them that were in authority --- that could've exerted authority over him --- didn't care that much about it. And they were tickled to death to let Orville run his own show!

RR: So, what a thing to . . . a picture with or without a hat was what governed . . .

MR: I think that is what triggered it, but it was probably just the last straw.

RR: Yes.

MR: And . . . all I was getting was, you know, [the ?] from the staff. And a lot of it

was coming to me about tenth hand, you know.

RR: Did you ever hear that the *Gazette* lost a bunch of circulation after he quit?

MR: No, but I bet they did. Gannett seemed to specialize in doing things that cost [us?] circulation.

RR: [Laughs] Yes, it's an odd way to run a business . . . !

MR: And they specialized in things that spent money unnecessarily --- big blow-out parties and things like that, you know?

RR: Retreats where they got in touch with their inner man and that sort of thing.

MR: Yes! Yes. A lot of stuff that was just ridiculous. And, you know, while some of the staff members might enjoy all that, they lose respect for the guy that throws it around that way and doesn't increase their salaries.

RR: Right. Do you know anything about . . . when Bill Dillard pulled his ads out in a huff?

MR: Yes.

RR: Do you know any of that background?

MR: Which time are you talking about?

RR: Well, I didn't know it happened more than once!

MR: The time that it got to be a big, big problem was after --- you mean the Gannett thing?

RR: Right. I take it it had happened before that?

MR: Oh, he was always threatening.

RR: Oh, was he?

MR: Yes. He lived next door to Hugh, you know?

RR: No, I didn't know that.

MR: Yes, he bought that house on Edge Hill Road and lived next door to him. In fact, I guess he still lives there, but I don't know. But . . .

RR: What kind of threats? . . . I didn't --- I'd never heard this before.

MR: Oooh. Well, I think he made them to Hugh, so get Hugh to tell you.

RR: Okay.

MR: But it was, you know, when they --- usually, it was things over --- if they'd have to go up on their advertising rates. And he'd want to know why. And I know there was one time when Hugh said he had to give the staff some salary raises and the present income just didn't justify it. And he said, "Don't give them any raises; that's what I'd do!" And Hugh said, well, he wanted his people to be able to make a decent living. And, you know, they weren't clerks in a department store.

RR: Sure.

MR: And you just can't compare apples and oranges, you know?

RR: Yes. But when he finally did pull out the ad after Gannett bought it, I understand that had a bad . . .

MR: I think even Hugh thought that was, more or less, justified. They were making deals. The Gannett people were making deals with advertisers and hustling, as I understand it --- now, this is from something that Hussman said himself. He didn't say it to me, but he said it publicly. He said that he got proof of it and he took the evidence to Dillard that they were selling new, some new advertisers at a

cheaper rate than he was paying, and he was their major . . . their main advertiser, individual advertiser. And . . . when they saw that direct evidence, you couldn't argue about it. I don't know what it was.

RR: What about the story about some problem Dillard was having with taxes, and the *Gazette* had a page-one story about it, and he thought it was overplayed?

MR: I'm not aware of that because it was after my time, but I am sure . . . things like that did happen. Similar things did happen.

RR: Probably more important was this deal behind his back with these other . . .

MR: That was the main thing, I think, but then anytime there was an unfavorable news story, I imagine that he would raise hell, but he didn't get to first base as long as Hugh was running the place with that. Hugh wouldn't cave in on that.

RR: Did you ever meet Moe Hickey, the last president of the *Gazette* company under Gannett?

MR: I might've, but I don't remember him. You know, a lot of those Gannett faces came and went so fast and I . . . wasn't down there anymore. I went to some retirement parties and things like that, but . . .

RR: Yes. After it all settled down and Hussman ended up with the paper, you remember John Robert Starr ran it for a while and then he hired Griffin Smith, but I was curious to know whether you and Griffin might be any kin to each other.

MR: We're not. His father and mother are good friends of mine through the *Gridiron*. His father was Lord God Almighty of the *Gridiron*, and I wrote the lyrics for it for thirty years, and Griffin wrote . . . some of the best lyrics . . . I mean, he wrote

some of the ones; I took them home to listen to them and thought, "Gee, I wish I'd written that!"

RR: Old Griffin, we called him. He's Griffin Smith, Jr., isn't he?

MR: Yes, but he's not anymore. The father was Supreme Court Chief Justice, you know?

RR: The present Griffin's grandfather?

MR: The older Griffin --- yes, the . . . young Griffin, but we referred to him as --- I didn't know the grandfather at all, but we referred to them as Griffin and Young Griffin. And I think that's the way they referred to him when talking about him. He's a sharp young man; he's as smart as he can be. Educated for a lawyer and practiced.

RR: Good writer.

MR: Yes, good writer.

RR: Excellent writer, [his] travel stories for *National Geographic* were wonderful.

MR: He walked out on the law business because he wanted to be a writer. He didn't want to be a lawyer. Then he came back and practiced with his father for a while, but . . . , you know, there's something about it that you can't get away from.

RR: Yes.

MR: I don't really know him very well. He's a nice fellow. He's called me once or twice when he needed some information, you know, but I don't really know him necessarily.

RR: Okay. Well, . . . we were talking yesterday about Mr. Heiskell and what kind of

man . . . I knew with some limited experience that he could be witty and funny; I heard a few, but you were around him an awful lot. . . .

MR: He was born witty.

RR: Was he . . . a funny guy?

MR: His wit was based more on puns than anything else, but it was nearly all very funny. . . . I told you about the world's highest dam, didn't I?

RR: No.

MR: Well, he threw away some really good one-liners, you know? He was in the news library one day, reading an out-of-state newspaper, and the telephone rang. Betty Jo answered it; she puts the phone down and said, "Oh, good Lord, some lady wants to know what's the world's highest dam!" And she reached for the almanac, and under his breath, without looking up, he said, "Goddamn."

RR: [Laughs]

MR: And nobody heard it but Jerry Jones! Even Betty Jo didn't hear it! But . . . he was just. . .

RR: That's a wonderful line!

MR: And . . . you remember Ernest Dodd, that was composing room foreman?

RR: Yes.

MR: Of course, a lot of the people in the composing room complained about him. In fact, there was a rumor that he was required . . . he had married some relative of the Allsopps and when they bought the Alsops stock they were required to keep Dodd on --- which wasn't true at all. None of it . . . there wasn't a bit of truth to

that, not a part of it. But he was all powerful in the composing room, and Mr. Heiskell privately referred to him as Dodd Almighty.

RR: [Laughs]

MR: You know, I mean, he was just . . . a lot of his wit was puns. But a lot of it wasn't! [Laughs] He just had a natural talent for it. It wasn't the . . . it was a sophisticated wit usually. And it wasn't the kind of wit that his brother Fred had, which was --- you would have just loved him. I mean, if you ever get a chance to come down and read his letters in Mr. Heiskell's papers --- because those papers include what . . . were in the hands of his parents and his sisters, and his father had things that had belonged to his grandfather, so, you know, there's quite a lot in there. And that [?] you get the letters that Mr. Heiskell himself wrote, you see.

RR: Oh, my. Yes. I take it the old man's sense of humor was clean.

MR: Usually. He took pride in the fact that it never contained any dirty words --- and, of course, he missed some good jokes that way! But he didn't do that, and it was never . . . very rarely profane in any way. That Dodd Almighty thing was very unusual. But it was not --- the jokes he told were funny, you know? He may have cleaned them up a little bit, but you got the message.

RR: I remember riding up in an elevator with him from the . . . Little Rock Club, up at the top of one of the bank buildings --- years after I'd left the paper, I was back doing a story about him, and we got on the elevator, and you know how the doors will sometimes close too soon . . .

MR: Yes.

RR: . . . and it banged up against the old man's shoulder, and after we got in, the first thing he said was --- in that kind of stentorian voice he could affect when he wanted to --- he said, "I've always had a great fear of being guillotined longitudinally!"

[Laughter]

MR: You know, he could run up and down those --- he and E.T. Gaylord had a kind of a running rivalry going as to who could appear to be the best preserved because they were --- Gaylord was a little bit older, I think, than the old man. And when they'd go to these newspaper meetings, they were always the two oldest there, you know. And Gaylord would come in, just bounding up the steps and things like that. Of course, Mr. Heiskell didn't do that. He didn't do that as a young man, I don't think.

RR: Not his style.

MR: Not his style, that's right. Dignity was his.

RR: One of his editorial campaigns, or at least one editorial, jumped on Arkansas Power and Light Company --- it might have been naming C. Hamilton Moses explicitly for building ugly power line poles in Little Rock. Of course, it fits in with the old man's beautification interests and that kind of thing . . .

MR: Yes, but I don't remember anything about it.

RR: What I am wondering, though, is whether the paper --- well, if Mr. Heiskell ever took on the AP&L over policy matters, you know, serious . . . you know, here's the great behind- the-scenes political power in Arkansas for all those years --- do

you know whether he ever took on AP&L over that?

MR: Not that I know of. That must have been before my time, really. I don't know. And he didn't have too many ongoing editorial campaigns. He may come back to a subject two or three times, but to hit it hard everyday, the first one I remember that he had was, you know, right after he came here was when North Little Rock pulled out of Little Rock, you know it used to be the Eighth Ward of Little Rock?

RR: Oh, yes.

MR: And he --- that poor guy, he didn't understand North Little Rock people at all. I grew up over there, and this happened long before I was born, but I was born knowing you don't talk to North Little Rock people about "Don't do this because it's not good for Little Rock." Because they didn't care whether it was good for Little Rock or not.

RR: [Laughs] Kind of hoped it wasn't!

MR: That's the reason they wanted out because Little Rock was getting things they weren't getting. Of course, they weren't understanding it all either. Little Rock was also doing it on improvement districts, where you had to pay taxes to pay for paving the streets!

RR: Yes.

MR: But when the Faucett brothers took over, you know, I'll always believe that Mr. Heiskell was probably responsible for the town's unpopular nickname, Dogtown.

RR: Oh?

MR: Because in those editorials, he . . . didn't say this is only going to be a place where

they dump dogs; he didn't put it in those words, but that was the tone, that it wouldn't be good for North Little Rock to pull out, you know. North Little Rock was booming at that time because the railroad was booming.

RR: He lost that fight, didn't he?

MR: Sure did! Well, that just goes to show you when you got . . . people like the Faucett brothers, like you have . . .

RR: I'm sorry, what?

MR: They knew how to play dirty.

RR: The Faucett brothers over in North Little Rock.

MR: What they did was illegal.

RR: Faucett. How do you spell Faucett?

MR: F-A-U-C-E-T-T. The Faucett Papers, incidentally, are at the public library now.

RR: Mmm. On this matter of editorial policy, I think I've mentioned that I've just finished reading John Thompson's manuscript . . .

MR: Yes.

RR: . . . and one of the things that he and Bill Rutherford go into at considerable length is the editorial positions that the old man took on a whole range of issues down, right across the seventy years he had the paper. And, on the one hand, there's a whole litany of what we would refer to as very progressive ideas. He . . . always was trying to reform city government back in the old days.

MR: He was --- he beat the drum for city manager form of government for a long time.

RR: I thought it was city commission form.

MR: Well, he always told me it was city manager, but I . . . didn't bother to go back and read his editorials because I was going to do that later, you know, when the . . .

RR: Back in the teens, when he first started . . .

MR: Well, but, see, he had . . . they hired the city planner named John Nolen, and he had --- actually, he paid his salary for a while, the old man did.

RR: N-O-L-A-N-D?

MR: N-O-L-E-N, I think it was. Or it could've been N-O-L-A-N, I don't remember, but there's a whole bunch of stuff on the connection with John Nolen in the Heiskell papers.

RR: So, city planning was one of his things, and it seemed like it was always an uphill fight.

MR: Yes.

RR: Still is, of course.

MR: What they had --- the idea they had at that time, I thought was pretty good because --- where you have city hall, it was new then, brand new --- . . . he wanted to clear out the next two blocks southward, and this would make a complex. Later, you had the Robinson Auditorium there, I believe that was later. It could've been about that time, I am not sure. But anyhow, . . . and then you have the courthouse and then you have --- this was going to be a promenade with a city park and stuff like that. And the library was the third street in.

RR: Could've been very nice.

MR: Yes, it could've been a thing that would still, probably, save downtown.

RR: Yes. Along with these progressive editorials, Thompson and Rutherford point out a whole series of editorial positions that we, today, would consider . . .

MR: I know what you're going to . . .

RR: . . . even reactionary

MR: Yes.

RR: on race problems, for example,

MR: The racial thing was . . .

RR: . . . the labor radicals and immigration. . . .

MR: The racial thing is the part that just takes your breath away. Because when you go reading along in 1903, 04, 05 in there, and there were a whole bunch of lynchings --- there were even times when blacks lynched whites.

RR: I never knew that.

MR: Really. There weren't a lot of them, but there were some. And it didn't bother him a bit. He was . . . it was very anti-Negro.

RR: And that, I guess you'd have to say, in the context, that was a pretty overwhelming opinion among white Southerners.

MR: It was the only opinion. In the South, you just didn't hear anything else. But, you know, a whole lot of that was inherited opinion, and you don't pay that much attention to . . . well, you do because it's stronger usually if it's inherited, but the one you really respect is when they come to that conclusion themselves . . . because you . . . respect everybody's right to make up his own mind. And if he

makes it up differently from what you do, well, that's all right, too, it's his privilege. But evidently, this was something that --- he grew up in Memphis.

RR: He had some fairly approving editorial remarks about the Ku Klux Klan. . . . I should say he did come out against the Klan later on, but . . .

MR: Of course, can you always be sure he wrote them?

RR: I don't know. I wanted to ask you about that. Do you know whether he ever had another editorial writer on staff in those early years?

MR: Not that I know of. I do --- seems to me like I vaguely remember asking him, and he said no. But he was gone a lot of times.

RR: But he also made it a point to say that he was responsible for what was on that page.

MR: But he always also would tell you that he okayed all of Ashmore's editorials before they [went out for typing?]. You know . . . better than that!

RR: I want to get into more of that in a minute, too. On this race question, can you trace when he began to change, or did he actually change, or did he just kind of give up and quit talking about it?

MR: I'll tell you something that I probably shouldn't say. In my opinion, he got that Pulitzer Prize for losing his daily battle with Hugh and Harry. He agreed to [flip end?], to take the position of law and order. This is the law, obey it. He thought Harry went way beyond it. The general public thought Harry went way beyond it. But, Roy, go back and read those editorials again. When you read them at the time, maybe it did sound like he went way beyond them. I don't remember. I

don't remember how I felt --- about his editorials, I remember how I felt about the issue. But when you go back and read them, they seem so mild, you can't imagine anyone being upset.

RR: I know it. I've done that.

MR: But it --- sometimes they would upset him. Now, Harry always said he'd hold it up a week for a --- to decide whether to use a comma or a semi-colon, and he did. He was bad about that, but . . .

RR: You think maybe he just lost the battle with Harry and Hugh?

MR: He would agree to all --- they could make him agree to it because [it sounded?] so reasonable, how could you argue?

RR: Well, let me put it this way, I've heard it suggested that Harry, who was a really consummate con artist, Harry managed to get around the old man on the race issue by saying, "Look, these are the rabble out on the street, and we don't want to be ident --- you know, we don't want to be on the same side as them," talking about the segregationist mobs, and that kind of things.

MR: That's possible, but, you know, Hugh would be the only one that could answer that definitively for you. Because I know there were a lot of times when Harry would make his own argument, and the old man would still say no. And he'd call in Hugh, and Hugh knew how to make the old man think it was his idea. And . . . they agreed on a lot of things.

RR: Yes.

MR: And, I'm not talking necessarily about the race issue, but on a lot of things that

happened around there, Hugh knew how to present them: "Well, Mr. Heiskell, we've done what you wanted us to on so-and-so and so-and-so," and the old man didn't even remember doing it because he didn't. You know, that kind of thing. But Harry was supposed to have his editorials on the old man's desk before the guy left in the afternoon. Of course, he left early, and a lot of times, Harry would disappear to the Press Club across the street and not show up until the old man left and wouldn't have the editorial completely finished. He'd have it mostly done, but he wouldn't have it finished.

RR: He must've had one of those editorials still to be done so as to miss the old man's scrutiny on the day he was at the Little Rock Club with some out-of-town newsmen --- '57 --- and they had had two or three martinis at lunch. The rest of them left. On the way out, Harry stopped and said to the bartender, "You better make me another one --- make me another martini. And you better make it a double one because I have to go back and write an editorial." He had --- might have been one of those days he was trying to miss the old man, you reckon?

MR: He could've been facetious.

RR: [Laughs] A lot of what Harry said was facetious.

[Laughter]

MR: Right!

RR: What about the --- shifting gears some --- the old man's approach to the news and what went in his paper in regard . . . to taste? What can you tell me about that?

MR: Little things, mostly, like instructions to the person doing "Other Days" that they

were not to have anything in there that allowed people to figure out how old a living woman is. Because he was tired of being chewed out about it. You know, if they had, say, a local, well known lady, if they had her marriage date or something like that in there and people could figure how old she was, he didn't like that. Little crap, you know.

RR: Yes.

MR: And you know the famous story about when he came in one day and stopped to . . . see what was on the wire, and he pulls this off and takes it over to whoever was in the slot and said, "Be sure this gets in the paper. It's about a fifty-five year old woman who had a baby. That will amaze half our readers and scare hell out of the other half."

[Laughter]

MR: And he had an eye on what people would be interested in. That was the main thing. So far as hard news was concerned, Mr. Fred was the genius there, not Mr. Ned.

RR: Yes. I heard a story, maybe, I read it in John's manuscript, about a matter of taste that came up during the 1948 gubernatorial campaign when Sid McMath was running for governor, right about the time or after, his wife, Sid's wife, had shot to death his father. Do you remember that incident?

MR: Oh, yes.

RR: A terrible tragedy.

MR: A big deal.

RR: And one of . . . his enemies would harass him at his rallies . . . by setting up a loudspeaker, playing "Pistol Packing Mama," the old song. And the reporter, it might've been Sam Harris or somebody else, naturally enough wanted to put it in his story, . . .

MR: Sam was city editor.

RR: . . . but Mr. Heiskell vetoed it and said, "No, that's in bad taste and I don't want that printed. . . . Did you ever hear that?

MR: No, but I believe it. It's the kind of thing he would've done. Yes. And, well, . . . I've heard people say this, but I don't believe it --- that when Fred Heiskell got into this deal with the prostitute that was killed, you know, [there was] lots of talk around about it and all that, and that --- one person said, and I believe it was Nell Cotnam who should've known better --- that Mr. Heiskell said, "It's news. We have to print it." The other side of the story that I heard from other people --- and this was one I didn't dare ask Mr. Heiskell about, sorry about that --- I just couldn't, but the other side of the story was that he went to great lengths to keep it out of the papers, both Little Rock papers. And that he had the help of a prominent advertiser to keep it out of the *Democrat*. . . . but that he forgot the wire service, which I don't believe because he used to work for the wire service, why the hell would he forget them, you know?! But, anyhow, it did get in one of the Memphis newspapers.

RR: But not here?

MR: Not here. And this is the story, I don't know that it's true. I tried to check it out

once when I was in Washington and had access to a *Commercial Appeal* file, but I couldn't find it. . . . It could have been in the *Scimitar,* though. But he said, the story went that several people here took the Memphis newspaper, and they clipped it and sent it to his mother. He did this to save his mother's pride. He didn't want her . . . I don't know whether she knew about it or not; I guess she did, but anyhow, to save her pain. And one of the stories that --- all of these people that will tell you --- a lot of this is just latrine rumors and I don't believe there's any truth to a lot of it --- but said that Mrs. Fred Hanger called him, and she was mad because . . .

RR: Hanger? H-A-N-G-E-R?

MR: Yes. She was a carpetbagger lady who had married a local man, . . . married --- you know the Hanger House? --- married that one. And she had a little soiree once a week or so and Fred Heiskell was always one of the men that was invited. Nobody came but men. [Laughs] She called it tea. But she was a social leader of sorts and they said that she called him, complained because the *Gazette* had published a story about a raid on some kind of gambling place or something of the sort, . . . where they published the names of the people and that one of her relatives was listed and she said, "How could you publish that when you wouldn't publish the story about this other?" . . . and he said, he was reported to have said to her, "Well, you know, it was in the Memphis paper, and several people sent clippings to my mother anyhow." She happened to have the Memphis paper and knew it was in there, and she clipped it and sent another copy to his mother. But I

don't believe it because I did talk to her son about it.

RR: I've heard the story about Fred and the prostitute that was killed, but refresh my memory on what happened.

MR: Oh, . . . the only believable story that I heard about it came from a man whose father pointed out the building to him where it happened. And then a woman, here, who . . . was pretty well known and she was pretty reliable, . . . said her father was a policeman at the time, working that beat. He just happened to come by there as the lady comes tumbling down the stairs. He had gone to the house to tell the lady he wouldn't be seeing her anymore, that he was getting married. And she argued with him about it, and she, evidently, she was pretty much in love with him. And everybody was, it seems!

RR: Yes.

MR: And so, they got to the head of the stairs --- this was one of those open staircases that opened down on Markham Street, you know? Real wide --- AOUW building had one like it.

RR: Yes.

MR: And . . . this was the 100 block, I think, on East Markham, and she comes tumbling down the stairs and broke her neck and killed her. But she lost her balance at the head of the stairs. She was trying to force him to stay, you know, and he just forcibly took her arms from around his neck, and when he did, she lost her balance and fell down the steps. It was an accident. Some people will tell you he shot her with a gun, which is ridiculous! But there was never anything that

came of it, you know.

[End of Side 1, Tape 2]

MR: . . . who would tell them?

RR: Well . . .

MR: And this was about the time, now, that the story went that Mr. Heiskell was once the owner of the *Democrat*, but . . . he said he wasn't.

RR: Yes, I wanted to ask you about that some more. We just touched on that yesterday, of course. That about . . .

MR: That is a story that irritated the hell out of me at one time [laughs], because when he was made a --- what was it that [?] guy called him --- a national landmark --- not the building, him! Anyhow, they did a plaque at the Third Street entrance, you know, at the *Gazette* and the day they had the little ceremony where they dedicated the thing, the ceremony took about, what, ten or fifteen minutes, something like that, but the speaker who had come here from somewhere else, I think, included that, that at one time he had owned both newspapers and that he didn't think it was healthy for the newspapers to be, healthy for the community for both newspapers to be owned by the same person. And that he didn't keep it for that reason. And he didn't say anything about it. He was there, of course, but he didn't challenge it. He let it pass, went on upstairs. I went on up with him, I followed him into his office, and I said, "I want to know exactly when did you own the *Democrat*?" And he said, "Never a day in my life." And I said, "Well, did the *Gazette* own the *Democrat*?" "Never," he said. And I said, "Well then,

where are they getting this?" He said, "I don't know." And I said, "Well, why don't you challenge it?" Well, it didn't seem like an appropriate time to, you know. He wasn't fixing to challenge it. But then later, when August Engel died, the reporter that wrote his obit for the *Gazette* was someone I didn't know; I guess he was new. . . .You know, there were a lot of people that came and went in the newsroom that I didn't know because our hours didn't jibe usually. But they sent the story up for me to read somehow, I don't remember why, and . . . he had that in it --- that at one time the *Gazette* had owned both papers, or that Mr. Heiskell had, anyhow, made the statement one way or another, I don't remember how. And I took it out. And when the story ran, it wasn't in there, and the reporter was unhappy about it, naturally, and he came up to my office at the [?] . . . told him why they took it out --- because I said it wasn't right. And the reporter came upstairs and asked me about it, and I said, "Well, that's what Mr. Heiskell told me." And he said, "Well, I found that in Mr. Allsop's *History of the Arkansas Press*." I said, "You did?" And he said, "Yes." Well, I had a copy of the book., and I, of course, had read it [?] that part at least. I guess it just didn't make an impression on me until then. I'd forgotten I'd read it. So I went and got it. It did say it. It even gave a date for the sale of the paper. And so, I went down and asked the old man, "What about this? You told me you never owned the . . . *Democrat* a day in your life." "That's right, I didn't." And I said, "You also told me that the *Gazette* never owned it a day in its life. Is that not true?" And he said, "The *Gazette* didn't own it." I said, "Then what is this all about? Mr.

Allsopp said that the *Gazette* owned it. He said, "Well, we didn't." I said, "Does that mean that the same people that owned the *Gazette* owned the *Democrat*?" I thought maybe that was an out. He said, "Well, I guess you could say something like that." He just simply would not talk about it. So I took that date and looked it up in the files, in the *Gazette* files, and it had a story about this long. I'd say two and a half to three inches long, counting a little bitty head. And it just reported that the *Democrat* had been sold. And it said to whom, but it didn't say from whom. It was when they sold it back., in other words.

RR: When Allsopp and Heiskell, you mean, sold it back . . .

MR: Whoever. I don't know who owned it. I do remember at a later date, when --- and I . . . told Shelton, I . . . gave myself up. I said, "Shelton, I'm sorry I have to tell you this," but I told him exactly what had happened, both conversations, and I told him, I said, "Now, I did look it up in the files, and, evidently, it probably is true because they were sheepish about it when they sold it back. They didn't say anything about who was selling it. And Shelton's one-word scatological reply was typical Shelton!

[Laughter]

MR: And I felt the same way. I was so mad at that man, I could've wrung his neck!

RR: About what year was this clipping in the *Gazette*?

MR: 1912.

RR: About ten years after Mr. Heiskell had moved to Little Rock.

MR: It was the same general period when Fred Heiskell got married. He was married

in April of 1912, and this probably happened just shortly before that.

RR: When they sold it back to the *Democrat* people who . . .

MR: We don't really know how he kept that prostitution story out of the *Democrat*, now, do we? But, at any rate, this is when they sold it back. Yes.

RR: So, presumably, the Heiskells had bought the paper sometime between 1902 and 1912?

MR: I tell you, in his papers, when I finally got them after he died, there was the instrument that proved it. But I don't remember off the top of my head whether it . . . seems to me like it was a deed, but I don't want to say that for sure. It was probably a deed of trust, you know, I don't know whether it was on file or not.

RR: The deed being --- which transfer are we talking about now, when the Heiskells bought the paper?

MR: Two. Well, when whoever it was bought it.

RR: From Allsopp?

MR: Some of the owners of the *Gazette*, not necessarily all.

RR: Yes. It was a mixed ownership back in the beginning, wasn't it?

MR: Oh, yes.

RR: Two Heiskells --- two or three Heiskells --- and Allsopp, and anybody else?

MR: Yes. There were --- well, when they bought it, it had been owned for years by a corporation . . . that had a lot of local owners. . . . W.B. Worthen had been buying them up over years. I did a thing for Hugh when he sold it, and I've got a copy of it downstairs. Let's see, I hesitate to try to give you a chain of title like that; it's

too complicated to do it from memory. But there were about three outstanding shares for a while, and . . . I don't know how they finally resolved those.

RR: After 1902?

MR: Yes.

RR: Okay.

MR: But they finally did call them in. And they themselves agreed --- Mr. Allsopp was one of the originals that purchased it with them, but it was by their consent. They offered it to him because they thought they needed somebody already local.

RR: He was their business manager.

MR: Oh, yes, for years and years. He was the bean counter. He was really stingy.

RR: Yes. So, why do you think the old man was so coy about this?

MR: I think there was something he didn't want known. And if he didn't want it known, it wasn't going to be known, and that's all there is to it.

RR: Could you speculate on why he wouldn't have wanted it known?

MR: Not on tape, I won't!

RR: Okay.

MR: But it's a guess. He . . . said it had something to do with --- Elmer Clark had been ill. Elmer Clark was the previous owner.

RR: Okay.

MR: And he . . .

RR: Owner of . . . ?

MR: The *Democrat*.

RR: The *Democrat*.

MR: He had some kind of extended illness, he said, but he didn't --- that was as far as he was willing to go. He wouldn't say that that was why they bought it. He wouldn't say anything.

RR: What year was the incident with the . . .

MR: That's what makes me think it might've been a mortgage more than a . . .

RR: Oh. The incident with Fred and the prostitute, what year was that?

MR: That'd be 1912, I think.

RR: About that same time?

MR: Yes, because that's when he married, and it was supposed to be just before he married.

RR: Yes. Obviously, you think there's some connection then between . . .

MR: No, I think that was coincidental really . . . because . . . the reason that I put the two together in my mind was that they did happen about the same time, you know, and I had to wonder why they had to use the advertiser to keep it out of the *Democrat*. But it was because the *Democrat*'s people probably didn't know they owned it.

RR: Didn't know they owned . . . ?

MR: Didn't know that they had the mortgage or whatever it was that they had. They didn't know that . . .

RR: . . . the *Gazette* people, or whoever, owned the mortgage.

MR: It was probably a big secret.

RR: This is all very curious, isn't it?

MR: It is. But, now, I . . . do remember finding some kind of an instrument in his papers, and, by that time, I was so harried --- they were coming at me in all directions, you know. You have no idea what a chore it was to go through all his papers, and they brought a great big garbage bin up to my office and just left it for me to throw the junk that was sent up from the basement of his stuff. And a lot of it was just old newspapers, you know, and that kind of stuff.

RR: What about the newspapers? I remember his desk was one of the seven wonders of the . . . Can you describe what his desk looked like?

MR: At this period. Now, I can't imagine what it looked like when it was in the middle of the newsroom. I can't even imagine that. I was in that newsroom a few times in that period as a high school kid, because I was editor of the high school paper, and we'd go over there and borrow cuts. And so, I was there a few times, but I didn't know him and he didn't know me, and I didn't know who that was sitting over there, you know. I guess he was in the newsroom, but I just didn't notice it. There was a sort of a little --- it had sort of walls, but it was screened or something like that --- open. Sam Dickinson said he would sit there and read the editorials --- they had to turn their editorials in to him, you know --- [he'd] sit there and read the editorials out loud and everybody in the newsroom could hear it, and it made him feel like a fool, you know, because it was somebody else reading his stuff out loud.

RR: Was that the office that Nelson had later on? In the late 50s?

MR: No, I think . . .

RR: It was kind of open and glass and . . .

MR: No. They'd remodeled before Nelson came . . .

RR: Okay.

MR: . . . into power.

RR: Okay. But after you went to work there, tell what his desk looked like.

MR: Stacked pretty high. His desk looked good compared to the table behind his desk where the papers were stacked and they just went up the wall.

RR: Several feet high.

MR: Oh, yes. But it was that way in the newsroom, too, according to a lot of people. Charles J. Finger put in print a story that he went there one time to talk to Mr. Heiskell about something or other and there was a big stack of papers there and he put a mark on the top one. And then he went back a couple of years later and found that that paper was still there.

RR: [Laughs]

MR: But after Mary came to work for him, a lot of times when he'd go on trips, she'd clean out his office and get rid of a lot of that stuff. But she got to where she . . . just swam upstream so much. There was so much conflict between them, it's a wonder she kept that job as long as she did. But he finally had to fire her. And he said to me, "You know, she treats me like she was the employer and I was the employee." And I said, "You should be treated so good!" you know?!

[Laughter]

RR: You sound like you spoke right up yourself!

MR: Well, really, I think that was why he liked me because, you know, everybody else was . . . and I just wasn't brought up that way, you know, to be a doormat.

RR: He apparently didn't care for a lot of pictures in his newspaper.

MR: Now, at what period are you talking about then? Because for a long time he didn't have a photographer. The reporters --- Larry's supposed to have been the first one.

RR: Oh, you mean, he was just to take pictures, you mean? The reporters did that.

MR: Reporters took their own pictures.

RR: I have the impression of a man who came very slowly to the idea that a newspaper page ought to be anything but words.

MR: He was a word man, all right. But he had a daily, on-going battle, he told me, with the Allsopp faction --- he and his brother --- to try to modernize the paper. It took them, I've forgotten how many years he said, to get the ads off the front page below the fold and then, finally, to get them off altogether. And he said they would suggest something like that and Mr. Allsopp would say, "Well, I'm against it now," implying rather that you can ask me later. They'd bring it up a year later and he'd "Well, I'm against it now." It was always that. He was against anything that cost money. When they wanted to buy comics, he was against it now. When they wanted to go to color comics, "I'm against it now," you know, he was against everything. And they were going to these newspaper meetings nationally; they knew what was going on nationally, and they wanted the *Gazette*, you know, to be

in step with the times. They didn't want to be followers. They wanted to be leaders. Mr. Allsopp didn't, and, I guess, really, it came to a head after Fred Heiskell died --- of course, he died in 1931, you know, and lots of big changes after that because that's in the middle of the Depression. And when Hugh came, boy, the place looked like a --- Hugh said . . . when Harry came, he was just dismayed at the way he found the building, you know, condition. Nell Cotnam told me that . . . they'd open a desk drawer and there'd be a mouse in it and some of them became kind of pets. They even gave names to some of them! And the place was a mess. Hugh was the one that said, you know, enough of this, but he had to really fight to be in position to say that. And, of course, the old man was the only way he had to fight. He had to --- he . . . told me he nearly drove the old man crazy when he was trying just to get enough authority to get things done, you know.

RR: Have you heard the story about Mr. Heiskell at some point hired a new business manager, I don't know who, and the new business manager took it on himself to start cost-cutting practices of one kind or another, and one of his cost-cutting measures was to cut back on the newsroom supplies, pencils, and things like that. Somebody complained to the old man and the old man called the new business manager in and said, "Young man, you should understand that your job is to make enough profit for me to publish the kind of newspaper that I want to publish." Essentially, you know, " That's enough." Have you ever heard that story?

MR: No. I can't even imagine who that might have been.

RR: I don't know.

MR: I don't . . . I can't imagine that he hired any kind of business manager because when Hugh came, Will Allsopp was the business manager, the son of Fred Allsopp. Fred Allsopp had been business manager of that paper since he was a child practically, and when he finally retired or died or whatever he did, Will Allsopp took over just immediately. In fact, he'd been working with his father all along --- you know, since he was grown --- he never had any other job, I don't think. . . . I can't imagine that the old man hired anybody in the business office, really. He did get Hugh his job down there after the war because he didn't want him going off to somewhere else.

RR: How would you . . . sum up the overall influence of J.N. Heiskell?

MR: [Laughs] It depends on who . . . influence with whom. You mean, the community as a whole?

RR: Okay, take it one thing at a time. The community . . . the state . . .

MR: . . . the state

RR: . . . newspapering.

MR: . . . political and that sort of thing? The *Gazette* was always more powerful than prosperous. It was the chief molder of public opinion, I think, in Arkansas because it had greater literacy, a greater level of literacy. He never bought into this old theory that the average newspaper reader has the mentality of a ten year old. He never --- he said, "Well, if that's the way it is, we need to elevate it." . . . Like when they started "The Chronicles," half the staff was wildly opposed to it.

They didn't think local history had anyplace in the newspaper. They had been kind of brainwashed by a few members of the staff like Mary, you know, that sort of thing. He did not care whether they liked it or not. Of course, I'd been there a year before we did "The Chronicles"; . . . they'd had plenty of time . . . to get in their licks. And he . . . said he was going to do this nice thing for the people of Arkansas whether they wanted it done or not.

RR: He didn't call in a focus group to ask whether it was a good idea?

MR: He didn't call in me to ask!

RR: [Laughs]

MR: He didn't ask anybody. He may have talked it over with his wife. Nell Cotnam swore up and down she ran the *Gazette* from the breakfast table which, of course, wasn't true. I'm sure what she said made an impression on him because, you know, she knew what all the ladies at the country club thought. It sort of reminds you of that story about the lady that said she didn't see how Harry Truman ever was elected president [because] nobody at the country club voted for him. But, you know, he really did --- those were his peers, his social peers at least. Not his mental peers. His mental peers were more likely to be in that newsroom, and if you noticed when Harry Ashmore came, he spent more time in the newsroom than he did in his ivory tower office.

RR: That's right.

MR: And he wanted to know what the people were thinking, and he didn't care what the people at the country club were thinking.

RR: I've seen him actually sit down to write his editorials in the newsroom, rather than go back to his office.

MR: Yes. Yes. I think he got the feel of it better in the newsroom, don't you?

RR: Yes. And he liked the company.

MR: I'm going to tell you something, Harry was good company himself.

RR: He was.

MR: Harry was probably the smartest person either of us will ever know. He had a brain so sharp it was about to cut his ears off. But he was also what you said --- the consumate con man.

RR: Maybe a good editor needs to be a good con man sometimes.

MR: But the fact is he was not conning you for things that would do him any personal good.

RR: Oh, absolutely not.

MR: It was just for the things he thought was right. And I think he didn't steer you wrong very much, you know?

RR: Did you ever hear the story about Harry's wife, Barbara, and the neighbor lady out on Southwood Road? During the . . .

MR: I knew one of her neighbors. Who was it? Go ahead.

RR: I never heard the name put to it. One day the neighbor lady was out in her yard and noticed that Barbara had a ladder up, cleaning out the gutters on her house, on Barbara's house. And the neighbor lady, I gather with some indignation, said, "Mrs. Ashmore, let me ask you a question. What does Mr. Ashmore do?" And

Barbara said, "He thinks."

[Laughter]

MR: Well, that's just about right. But, you know, I remember the story when Carrick asked Hugh what he did at the *Gazette*. And he said, "Every morning I go down there and turn Jim Williamson on and then every afternoon I turn him off before I go home."

[Laughter]

RR: I never heard that!

MR: Well, Hugh told me that himself so I guess it's true.

RR: I'll probably want to slice this out of this tape, but I can't resist telling this story that you might not have heard because of your delicate female ears at the time.

MR: Oh, you'll be surprised how indelicate those female ears can be!

RR: You've heard about the day that Hugh and Jim Williamson were riding up the elevator with the new bowling reporter? A young guy still in school, and the sports department had hired him to cover bowling news.

MR: Mm. I didn't know that.

RR: And the three of them got on the elevator, and, you know, how there's always a moment of silence, and this young man couldn't stand it, and he turned around to these two guys in their suits and ties and said, "You guys getting any?"

[Laughter]

RR: I don't know who told that story afterward; I'm sure it was not the young reporter himself.

MR: It could possibly have been either one, Harry or Hugh. You know, it wouldn't surprise you if they did.

RR: It was Jim Williamson actually.

MR: Oh, Jim. Well, of course, it would have to be Hugh, then.

RR: Yes. Jim would not have told that, would he?

MR: And I don't believe Hugh would've made it up though, do you?

RR: No. But Jim was not --- my memory of Jim was a fairly straitlaced fellow. Is that . . .

MR: Yes. I really think he was. Jim toward the end there --- he was a very insecure man, believe it or not. He was boorish as he could be, and the whole news side hated his guts. . . . And he knew to keep his hands off the news side.

RR: As business manager.

MR: Yes. And, fortunately for me, he also knew to keep his hands off of me. Don't tell me what to do. Because he knew I belonged to J.N. Heiskell, and that's all there was to it, and that was the same as belonging to the Lord God Almighty. You know, you don't mess with the boss.

RR: Yes.

MR: And, similarly, the managing editor usually left me alone, too, for the same reason.

RR: That'd be A.R. Nelson.

MR: Who was chicken. He . . . I would have taken orders from Nelson if I'd had to, of course, but, fortunately, I didn't have to, and he was --- the only time he ever had

any connection with me was when Mr. Heiskell would leave town. He would tell Nelson that he wouldn't be there to read my column before it went to the back shop, for him to check it out. But not to make any changes in it! I don't think he even read it, to tell you the truth.

RR: Now, Hugh --- what's your overall feeling about Hugh Patterson?

MR: Largely, a whole lot misunderstood in a lot ways. I mean, too many people look at him as a professional son-in-law, and he was not that. And, yet, he wasn't really appreciated by the family as much as he should have been, I think, because he had this drinking problem, and that colored everybody's opinion of him and rightfully so. And I'm sure it colored his performance. But he did do some pretty darn good things at the *Gazette,* and he really was the one that was responsible for turning loose of the purse strings enough to modernize this place. And then, of course, he was tradition bound in a lot of ways, too. When it came time to move to modular makeup and things like that, he drug his heels. So, he wasn't perfect, but he did a pretty good job all things considered, and he put together a staff in that business office that was very competent. When he called this place in --- where was it that Jim and Leon were from? Terre Haute, wasn't it?

RR: I don't know.

MR: Anyhow, the two newspapers there merged, and theirs was not the dominant newspaper.

RR: That would be Leon Reed we're talking about.

MR: Yes. And he phoned out there to talk to Leon, and Jim answered the phone, and

Jim got the job. And he didn't want to hire two people off the same paper. So, Leon went on to Louisiana for a year. I think I've forgotten where in Louisiana --- Shreveport, maybe, somewhere in Louisiana for a year. And then at the end of the year, he hired him.

RR: As circulation manager.

MR: Yes, but not as business manager. Of course, Jim was hired as business manager, not general manager, for several years. But he would do things like he hired Tom Kemp to work under Jim without even telling Jim. And, you know, that wasn't good. He did a lot of things like that that were mistakes. He shouldn't have done them.

RR: But I get the impression overall of a strong publisher.

MR: Yes. Yes. We hadn't had a publisher, see, in all those years. It had been a long time since they'd had a publisher.

RR: Mr. Heiskell --- that was part of his title, wasn't it? Or was he editor . . .

MR: It was his title. It became . . .

RR: . . .editor and publisher, or . . .

MR: No. Nobody had the title of publisher until Hugh.

RR: Oh, he was, Mr. Heiskell was just editor then? There was no publisher.

MR: Yes. Senior Editor.

RR: There was a business manager who took care of all that other stuff.

MR: . . . In the days when there were two Mr. Heiskells --- perish the thought --- they weren't all that concerned with titles. And Mr. Allsopp handled the business

office, Fred handled the newsroom, and Mr. Ned handled the editorial office. Each one interfering in the other's job anytime he felt like it. Because they were all stockholders, too, that made a difference. And that makes the difference in the final outcome of the *Gazette* was who were the stockholders. People just overlook that entirely. . . . they have to realize that the family had come down to all women until Hugh got in it. And then his two sons were the only boys that lived here. Carroll McGaughey had come here for a while with dreams of rising to power because . . .

RR: He was a nephew of the old man.

MR: He was Mr. Heiskell's great nephew, yes. But he didn't . . .

RR: So there were all women there at . . .

MR: And they weren't working at the *Gazette*. They weren't working anywhere. They were ornaments to society, remember?

RR: Speaking of the women of the family, how do you spell Wilhelmina?

MR: W-I-L-H-E-L-M-I-N-A. And he always called her that, too. Wilhelmina.

RR: Tell me about . . .

MR: Everybody else called her Billie.

RR: Billie.

MR: Her friends called her Billie.

RR: Tell me about . . .

MR: I respectfully called her Mrs. Heiskell. [Laughs]

RR: Tell me about Mrs. Heiskell some.

MR: Oh, boy. Well, I didn't know her too well, but she was . . . pretty snobbish. And she'd been brought up to think that, as soon as your kids hit puberty, you sent them to a finishing school or a prep school and got rid of them. You didn't have to take them to take them through those difficult years, you know?

RR: Is that the way she was raised?

MR: Oh, yes, yes.

RR: She was a lot younger than he, right?

MR: I think eighteen years, something like that. He used to say --- he was thirty-nine when he married her. [Geez, it?] was more than that then. Younger. I don't know. I'll have to do some little simple math.

RR: Eighteen, twenty years, I've heard. . . .

MR: Yes. But he thought when he married her that she was twenty years old. Turned out, she was nineteen, was going to be twenty on her birthday, but her birthday hadn't come yet. So he would always finish that with "So, you see, I married a teenager." And look how old he was, twice her age.

RR: Yes, yes.

MR: And her --- one of her bridesmaids, two of them were still living when they had their golden wedding anniversary, and one of them was Nell Cotnam and the other one was Ruby Jarrell Dupuy.

Rr: Ruby who?

MR: Ruby J-A-R-R-E-L-L was her maiden name, and Dupuy was her married name - D-U-P-U-Y, I believe she called it. I have an idea originally it was P-U-I-S, but . .

. in the ladies' room at the country club at their golden wedding anniversary celebration, she is said to have recalled that when . . . Mrs. Heiskell told her friends that they were going to get married, that her mother said, Mrs. Dupuy's mother, said, "Well, she'll be a beautiful widow, a beautiful young widow." Which . . . was predictable. That's what you would've said, too, you know?

RR: Sure. Who actually died first? Did she?

MR: No, he did.

RR: Oh, okay, but not by a whole lot.

MR: She outlived him a little bit. She drank pretty heavily and smoked pretty heavily. She did all things he didn't do.

RR: Yes.

MR: And they'd go to these newspaper meetings, and she'd spend her time in the bar, you know!

RR: She sounds like kind of a rounder.

MR: She wasn't really. She was . . . pretty lady like; she had a lot of dignity, too. And she was fairly knowledgeable about a lot of things. You know, she had a . . . the usual fine arts education, you know, general, liberal education which is what he had. He had English, French, Latin, Greek, and Physics, stuff like that, you know, but nothing that would help him make a living. Not a damned thing.

RR: And, of course, she didn't have to worry about making a living.

MR: No. Not at all. Her father was George R. Mann.

RR: George R.?

MR: Yes. Rock. R for rock. No, that's not right. That was his wife's maiden name.

RR: The architect?

MR: Yes. Who designed the *Gazette* building, you know, for Fred Hotze, mmm, Peter Hotze. Peter Hotze was the original owner.

RR: Right.

MR: They didn't buy the building until 1936.

RR: I didn't know until I read John Thompson's biography --- John and Bill's --- that the old man played golf. Did you know that?

MR: [Laughs] He played at it. Ask Hugh about that because --- I don't think he ever was good at it. He bought some golf clubs one time. When they went to Boca Raton . . . to the SNPA [Southern Newspaper Publishers Association] meetings and things like that, about all there was to do was play golf or tennis, one. That was all the women could find to do, and that was all there was on the side for anyone to do, I think. It was pretty much a resort hotel, but it catered to golf and tennis. He may have done it then, but he never was good at it, and I don't think he did a whole lot of it. Now, Ralph got to be really good.

MR: The grandson?

MR: The grandson, yes. . . . And I think Hugh fooled around with it a little, but, of course, Hugh wasn't going to stick with any of that kind of thing long enough to do anything with it. But the old man --- he . . . got into photography one time, bought a pretty fancy camera, wound up giving it to Carrick, you know, because he couldn't figure out mechanical things any better than I can, which is not at all.

RR: Computers would probably have not . . .

MR: Oh, forget it.

RR: . . . pleased him.

MR: Well, he never even learned to type.

RR: Really?

MR: He couldn't type, didn't you know that?

RR: No. Did he touch, I mean, did he . . .

MR: He didn't do anything.

RR: . . . hunt and peck. He didn't do anything?

MR: No.

RR: He didn't operate a typewriter?

MR: No.

RR: He wrote his editorials by longhand?

MR: Yes. Or dictated them. Originally, he wrote them longhand, and, I guess, they sent them to the back shop that way, I don't know. But, you know the old story about the young reporter that was sent in --- some people say it was Joe Wirges --- was sent in his office to --- didn't have a typewriter. A lot of the *Gazette* people at that time, were two or three people using one typewriter, and one desk because, you know, their hours were staggered a lot of times and . . .

RR: I . . . shared a desk with Charlie Allbright when I went to work there and a phone, but we did have separate typewriters!

MR: Sam Dickinson had to bring his own desk, and he bought a secondhand card table.

That's what he told me. This was before Hugh came, of course. But Joe --- one story says Joe Wirges and others say it was a brand new reporter --- of course, Joe grew up in that office. But some say the cub reporter was sent in there as a gag to ask the old man if he had one under that stack of newspapers, you know.

RR: A typewriter?

MR: Typewriter, yes. So he went in and asked for it, and the old man said, "No, I don't have a typewriter. Why would I have a typewriter in here? I don't even type." And . . . whoever the reporter was, he persisted and, finally, he said, "Well, you can look if you want to, but there's not one there. And he looked and the kicker was --- according to James Street's "South," he's the one that really elaborated on the story, said that he found not one typewriter, but two and the corpse of a young reporter.

RR: [Laughs]

MR: And you know the story about Mrs. Heiskell when she came in his office one day, she very rarely came to the office. She and Louise both came down there about once a year to the stockholders' meeting, and that was it usually. But one day she came to his office for some reason, they say, and saw the mess it was in and said, "Ned Heiskell, this room is a disgrace. It's bound to be unhealthful." And he said, "Yes, I guess that's the reason I died so young."

RR: [Laughs] What kind of a driver was he?

MR: [Laughs] Well, Mrs. Heiskell always said he was Little Rock's number one traffic hazard. Believe me, she was number two.

RR: Okay. [Laughs[

MR: But he told me one time he drove all the way downtown one day with his reading glasses on, didn't even know it. He had macular degeneration, you know, . . . actually, he was legally blind, practically. But I . . . rode with him once only, and it was when we had the Denver system of traffic lights, you know? And he took Mary and Millie and me to the luncheon at the Trinity Episcopal Church one time. It was their bazaar, church bazaar at Christmas time, you know? Pre-Christmas thing? And the reason he took us was that Louise had done the decorations, and he wanted us to see them --- Louise, you know, she did gorgeous things --- and he would --- I specifically remember the corner of Fifth and Louisiana. Oh, God, it was horrid! We were going up Louisiana and he stopped --- had to stop, of course, because you had the Denver lights, and they were just going crazy. But, for some reason, they were turned off that day --- or they were not functioning right, anyhow, he stopped and looked up the street for a long time and he looked down the street for a long time, and when it was clear that way, he dashed across without looking back over here. And the whole situation had changed over here.

RR: To the left?

MR: Yes.

RR: [Laughs]

MR: When we finally got up to Trinity Church, he parked between two Cadillacs and that just made you want to cover your eyes, just don't watch, you know? And I told God that day, "If you'll just get me back to the office in one hunk, I won't ask

you to do this again."

RR: What kind of car did he drive?

MR: He had an old, I think it was a Plymouth, something of that sort.

RR: Were you around --- I'm sure you were --- when he quit driving? Gave up his . . .

MR: Oh, yes!

RR: What was that about?

MR: Let me tell you about that old Plymouth first. He had what he called his air conditioning, which was a cardboard box that he covered the windshield with . . . in the summertime.

RR: [Laughs] To keep the sun out.

MR: And then, Hugh, I think --- and this is a tacky thing for me to say, but I think, really, Hugh was the one that was promoting this because he wanted a Mercedes, . . . and he bought one in Germany and brought it home, and I think Hugh had one probably before they did. I'm not sure about that because I remember Mr. Heiskell, uh, Mary looking out the window one time, and saw a Mercedes and she said, "I want a car like that." I looked outside and said, "Yes, it is nice." And he said, "What is it?" I said, "It's a Mercedes Benz." And he said, "Well, I can't afford one of those, but my son-in-law can." So then, what they did was they ordered Mrs. Heiskell one, and when they went to Germany the next time, they got it and brought it home. You could do this as a tax advantage; you could bring it in as a used car, see. . . . But hers was so hard to steer. It was . . . earlier than the . . . ones they had later. And then the next year, when they went, he decided

he believed he'd have one, too. So, he did finally get a Mercedes, but he drove that old Plymouth, I think it was Plymouth or Pontiac, one; I've forgotten which.

RR: Well, when did he give up his drivers' license?

MR: He didn't . . . I don't think he actually gave up his license, but it reached the point [laughs] where it really was not safe for him to be driving anymore. It hadn't been for a long time, but who was going to tell him? But Hugh just decided something had to be done. So he assigned Bob Collier to go get him in the morning whenever he wanted him to and then take him home in the afternoon whenever he wanted to go, and anytime between those two times that he needed to go somewhere, be available. And he just had his own driver, you know.

RR: Did he resist stop driving, did he resist not . . . ?

MR: No, he didn't, I don't think. Hugh talked him into it and made him think that he'd thunk it up himself. You know, Hugh could make him, he could make him believe that it was his idea originally.

RR: Did you hear him say, or did you --- I heard that the old man announced one day that he was not driving anymore because there had come to be so many damned fools on the streets of Little Rock that he didn't want to be out there driving amongst them. It was dangerous.

MR: I have an idea that Hugh told him he thought that.

RR: [Laughs] Okay.

MR: I don't know that for sure, but it's logical.

RR: Margaret, I think I better go.

[End of Tape Two]

[End of Interview]