Gazette Project

Interview with

Julie Baldridge Speed

March 1, 2000

Interviewer: Jerol Garrison

Jerol Garrison: This is Jerol Garrison and I am interviewing Julie Speed at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock Law School, where she works. Julie, this interview is part of an oral history project being conducted by the Arkansas Center for Oral and Visual History at the University of Arkansas Library in Fayetteville. The center will transcribe the interview and you will have an opportunity to review the transcript and make changes before the document goes into the archives of the library, where it will be available to persons interested in Arkansas history. The aim of these interviews is to shed light on what kind of a newspaper the *Arkansas Gazette* was. Before we go any further, Julie, I would like for you to tell me your name and indicate yes or no that you are willing for the Center of Oral and Visual History to conduct this interview for the archives and to keep the interview on file for persons interested in Arkansas history to examine.

Julie Baldridge Speed: My name is Julie Baldridge Speed, and I am willing to have the interview be conducted and the results kept in the

archives.

JG: Great. Then we have a form here and if you're willing to sign this form then we would have it all on paper.

JS: Yes.

JG: Is that all right?

JS: Yes.

JG: So, you will be willing to sign the form?

JS: Yes.

JG: Julie, I wondered if you could describe the work you did for the *Arkansas Gazette* and when that was.

JS: I went to work at the *Arkansas Gazette* in December of 1970. I had been there, starting in the summer, six times before I was hired. I really wanted to work at the *Gazette,* and I worked there all of 1970, all of 1971, all of 1972, all of 1973, and left in early 1974. I cannot tell you exactly when, but sometime in late 1973 or early 1974 is when I left the *Gazette*.

JG: So, you were there --- does that add up to four years?

JS: About three years.

JG: And you say that you worked there six times during the summer?

JS: No, I went there to try to get an interview six times.

JG: To a job interview.

JS: Yes, a job interview. I was thinking of taking a battering ram if they did not let me in. I could not get past the, into the news room to get with someone and

actually get a real interview, so I kept going in and I would get a little closer each time and I was finally successful. Actually, the story of how I was able to get the interview is kind of interesting. About my second or third visit, I was able to get in to see Mr. Nelson, A. R. Nelson, who was the managing editor, and I visited with him. I just finished graduate school at Fayetteville that August, and I visited with him about getting an interview, being considered, and he said there were no positions available and he was --- many people who know him better than I did, because he was not long after I came to work there — He was sort of a phantom figure. Even when he was there, he was sort of in the background, at least for me, because I had not been around when he was more involved with the direct newsroom activity. But he finally said something he may have regretted later. I just kept popping up. Once a week or every two weeks, I would pop up and hover in his office. He said, "If we have an opening, I will give you an interview." And the very next Sunday there was a wedding announcement for Margaret Mobley in what was then called the Women's Section. It had big pictures of the brides on the front cover at that time, black and white [photos], of course, and Margaret Mobley married. Her mother had been my college French teacher, so I was interested in Margaret Mobley. So I read through the wedding announcement, and she had married George --- you're going to have to help me with this. I never knew him, George someone.

JG: Clark?

JS: No, he was at the *Washington Post.* He had left the *Gazette* to go to the

Washington Post, and I went in the following Monday with the newspaper under my arm and said, "Mr. Nelson, I noticed that Margaret Mobley who is on your copy desk has married someone from the *Washington Post*. And my guess is that either she has moved to Washington or he has moved to Little Rock. And I am betting that she has moved to Washington. You told me that if there was an opening, you would let me interview." And so I had him, and he let me go see Bob Douglas. Bob, of course, at the time was the news editor, and Bob sent me home with a stack of books about how to edit. I mean, I had never had a journalism course. I was strictly an English literature major, and so I did not have any idea what I was doing, but I knew how to write and to speak. I knew what a perfect sentence was. And he sent me home with these books. Margaret had been a copy editor, so that was the position that was available. And I went back the next day, and he handed me piles of wads of paper that came off the, I learned later, off the machines back in the wire room and said, "Fix this. Write headlines for this." It was trash copy; it wasn't the copy that was actually going to be used in the newspaper that day. It was articles that had come over the Reuters. . . . I am trying to remember what we got . . . Reuters Associated Press, UPI, maybe one or two others. He just parked me over in the corner or someplace and told me to come back in the afternoon. It was awhile later, maybe two or three weeks later, that I may have gone down for one more interview with Bob Douglas before I was called and offered the position. Bob is the one who offered me the position, not Mr. Nelson.

JG: And he had reviewed the material that you had edited?

JS: Oh, absolutely. I had edited, and . . . the night before I read through those books and paid close attention to what their message was because I really didn't understand and really did not fully understand for some time because the *Gazette* was a complicated place.

JG: Especially for someone who was not fully familiar with this type of work.

JS: I was lucky because I grew up in a family where it was considered appropriate for everyone to understand the government, to know who the Supreme Court justices were, to know who the cabinet members were, to be acquainted with history and presidential politics and who the state officers were, and what the different state agencies were, so I had a background at least of something of the system and that was very helpful.

JG: Where did you grow up?

JS: Heber Springs in Cleburne County.

JG: And your father, what was his name?

JS: My dad was William Baldridge. He was in the Navy for 30 years. Both my parents' families went back for a number of generations in Cleburne County. Daddy was in the Navy for 30 years, and we finished the last three years in Washington, just before he retired. I was still a child, so I lived up there, and mother was not working at the time, so we went to all the different sites frequently. It was very important at the *Gazette,* maybe more than anyplace else, because they expected such --- they had such a high standard. I was not allowed

to edit my first page-one article until I had been there a whole year. And when I left the *Gazette* and went over to the *Democrat* to write a column, I noticed that I was still the junior, one of the most junior copy editors. Had I left the *Gazette* and gone to the *Democrat* [as a copy editor], I would have been senior copy editor as far as the length of years.

JG: Oh, at the *Democrat*?

JS: At the *Democrat*. The length of years I had been copy editor. There was such a difference at that time in copy editing standards. At the *Gazette* I had to be there a year before they trusted me with a page-one story. That was how meticulous they were about the perfection of the news.

JG: Let me just go back for the record and get the name of your mother.

JS: Olive Baldridge.

JG: And you went to the University of Arkansas and majored in English?

JS: I went to Arkansas Tech and majored in English and then the University of Arkansas for my graduate work.

JG: And you have a graduate degree?

JS: No, I --- this is funny --- this is also such a *Gazette* thing. What happened was that summer that I was going to take the master's exam, I had one more summer term; that was the summer of 1970. There were thirteen people who took the master's exam at the end of the first summer term. I wasn't one of them. I was going to take it at the end of the second summer term. And only five of them passed it. I knew all of them knew more than I did. They all did, I was certain of

it, and so I was terrified. And because I had been an English literature major and had gone straight through and spent the last five years of my life in that field, I was afraid that, emotionally, I would just fall apart if I flunked the master's exam. And so I thought, "Well, I'll leave and I'll give it a little while and then I'll go back and risk it." What I learned later, a number of years later, is that it was such a political system up there that, at that time at least, I was really one of the favorites of the faculty. I may not have known as much as some of those people that failed the master's exam, but I most likely would have passed it had I taken it. Once I got to the *Gazette,* it was like a constant poker party. I mean, I was in, thrown in a newsroom with cigar-smoking, loud-talking, roughneck, brilliant people, but, nonetheless, it was a very all-male kind of place. And they teased me a lot, and one of the things that they teased me about was because I would fret aloud about needing to get back up there and needing to schedule my master's exam. One time they ganged up on me and made me stand in the center of the copy desk and renounce the notion that I needed to ever finish the master's exam because it was so irrelevant to anything. That could have changed the course of my life if I had gone back, taken the test, passed it and gotten a master's degree. Who knows? I might have left and done something different, but, instead, because I did not officially have the master's --- I had like a 3.9 something in my graduate grade point — but I never did go back.

JG: Julie, do you remember the people who were working on the copy desk the first year you were there?

JS: Yes, it was Paul Johnson and Gary Drury. Bill Rutherford, who was the assistant news editor. It was Ray Kornegay. David Petty would come on from time to time. Those are the people that I remember. Of course, Bob Douglas was the news editor at the time, at the time I came aboard, so he was in the center for the early part of the evening. And then someone else --- Paul, Drury, Bill Rutherford, usually, or someone else would come to the center of the desk at a particular time of the evening when Douglas left — which usually ranged between 9:00 and 9:30 on a night that there was not a lot of news. And some nights Bob would still be there when I got off at 11:00 — but when he called to offer me the job was the first time I realized that I would be working nights. I did not realize until I took the job that I was going to be there at night. And so it was quite a surprise. I just assumed that the whole world worked from 8:00 to 5:00, so I did not realize that.

JG: Could you describe a typical night on the Gazette copy desk?

JS: Well, yes, it was very hectic. There were several things that were considered matters of honor, which was an interesting mystique that regulated that news room. We uniformly, with very few exceptions in the newsroom, we wanted to be the best. Pat Carithers was just magnificent as the wire editor. He had great news judgment. Between Carithers and Bob Douglas we had --- by the time I walked in at 2:00 — there was a pretty good idea what the lead story was going to be. In fact, I complain now about the newspapers that I read because I can never tell what is the most important thing. Sometimes you have to read and find it over at the bottom of the obituary page. You know, the lead article. They do not seem to

lead with the same kind of news judgment. But the news would be set and the articles would come to us. Of course, everything at that time was hot type; [it] was typewriters, manual typewriters, was mechanical in the way it was done. There weren't computers in the newsroom. And so it was very much a human activity. It was the best job I ever had because at the end of every day when I walked out, it was done. No point in worrying about tomorrow because you couldn't start until you walked in. I never left my desk with a list of eight hundred things I needed to do for the rest of the week because we never knew when there was going to be an assassination or a plane crash or a building burning down or an indictment or a conviction or whatever was the lead story. But from the time you walked in --- there were slow news days and there were very hectic news days, and what I saw was the need to turn out as close to a perfect reflection, mirror important events of the day that were written in a style that people could understand or were presented in a manner that people would be interested enough to keep themselves informed. And that reflected not only what had happened that day, but what related information, from the near and distant past that related to these events, that folded that in, so that you didn't just have a snapshot; you had a historical perspective of why this is important. It was also really important --- and they stressed this — that if what went into a story conflicted with what we had reported before in any way, that differentiation was stated within that story so that we didn't just have people, so there was not a gap. It was a historical record and, therefore, each day's newspaper was linked to the one before and the one before

that. It was like a chain of events, and we were made to feel . . . maybe, I was more impressionable because I was so young and I bought into it so comprehensively because it was like a monastic order almost in some ways. There was a code of conduct up there of what was honorable and what you had to do to do the right thing as far as getting the news out was concerned. I can recall everyone taking it very seriously because we were told it was the newspaper of record and that it was essential that we were recording history. The responsibility was a grave responsibility, and nobody laughed. They were dead serious, and I was so impressed with the people I worked with. I did not know how to be properly impressed. I look back on it, and I am just knocked out. But, at the time, I was smart enough to realize that I was in a very special place.

JG: You were the only woman working on the rim?

JS: Well, I was, Margaret was the first and I was the second.

JG: Margaret?

JS: Mobley was the first female copy editor. Then she left and I took her place. I guess I took the distaff place on the rim.

JG: Is that M-O-B-L-E-Y?

JS: Yes. And then, Ginger Shiras was at the state desk along with Matilda Tuohey. And my recollection is that, when I first got there, I could be wrong about this, but I think Ginger, Matilda, and I were the only three women in the newsroom. Now, after that came Leslie Mitchell and some other reporters, female reporters. Of course, then there were other women who came to work at the copy desk after I

did. At the time I was there, I was the juniormost of the three women in the newsroom. And it was quite interesting to be able to watch it.

JG: Now, you would be given a piece of copy, whether something from a reporter or off the wire and then . . . ?

JS: The copy desk was like a big doughnut with one end cut off. And the news editor sat in the center and then we sat around the edge. And there was a tall metal basket that sat right in front of the news editor with a lower basket. I mean, there was a top one, and the unedited pieces went one at a time as they were received by the news editor or whoever dropped them in. I guess the city editor would sometimes bring them over and hand them to the news editor, who would quickly review them, assign a value to them. The news editor was the one usually who decided what size headline, which would give us some clue as to how important the story was and how long it should be. And they would drop that into the basket. It was a point of honor that, if you were unoccupied, you would fight the other members of the copy editing team to grab the article that was dropped in the basket. It was considered disgraceful behavior to hesitate if something was dropped in the basket. Certainly, if you were the only unoccupied person, you [would] obviously grab it, but if there were three unoccupied copy editors at the moment and one piece of copy dropped in, we would sort of wrestle each other for it. [Laughs] [We would] grab for it, slap each other out of the way, and we would get the copy and we had to edit it. And most people considered that --- not people in the newsroom, but --- after I left there, I had a lot of people say, "So you were

like a proofreader." Of course, that's not the case at all. It certainly is the case that was one of the things we had to do, but we would rip articles, as I am sure you can remember, in pieces and tape them in different order so that paragraphs --- of course, now, you would do it easily on a computer, but paragraphs had to come out. And if the most important paragraph was seven paragraphs down, you would move it back up to the top, rewrite the lead. You would make sure that the middle initials of the officials or the people in the story were correct, you would make sure that their titles were exactly correct. In other words, you didn't want to list a president of a bank as a CEO or a chairman of the board. So you had to have an enormous amount of trivia or minutia in your head.

JG: Seems like I remember that the *Gazette* tried to use middle initials of . . .

JS: We always used middle initials, and we had to know what they were. [Laughs] We had to know it. And it's amazing how often wire copy would be wrong. We'd change that. And then, of course, we had the challenge of writing the headline, and it would have to fill up --- it wasn't like they justified them like they do now --- we had to fill up a space, and the headline had to be long enough not to look odd because the ends were --- there were gaps at the ends of each line, but it had to be short enough that it would fit, actually fit, in the space. And it had to break. If there were two or three lines, it had to break in certain places. It could not break between a preposition and its object. You couldn't break in the middle of a verb clause. There were all sorts of things that you couldn't do, so it was very restrictive and really quite an art. Some people wrote great headlines, and I wrote

clear, concise headlines, never as creative as some of the other people on the desk. Mine were not flashy.

JG: Now your tools there were a typewriter and a copy pencil?

JS: We had a typewriter, we had a pencil, we had a jar of paste, we had some blank newsprint, we had a little carbon copy white form that we --- there was a stack of new ones, and we would take one off the top, and we would type the headline on that carbon copy form. . . . And I want to say there were, there was a white copy and a yellow copy, and then we would paste the article onto the form. Then, after the news editor had reviewed our work, he would fold it up, stuff it in an envelope and put it on that conveyor belt and send it back to the back. And if the headline didn't fit or if something went wrong back in the back, it would come sailing back to us, and we would have to --- my recollection is that, somehow, I do not know how they knew who edited different things, the news editor may have coded them, but they would come back to us and say, "Fix this. Do this."

JG: Like if the headline was one letter too long.

JS: Too long, or if something didn't work.

JG: This headline sheet that you pasted above the story indicated the headline and the type face?

JS: Yes, we would type that in, but that was actually written in pencil at the top for us by the news editor, and then we would type that in as we typed the headline, so that the back shop --- . . . I could be wrong about that, but my recollection is that we would type on there what the size would be. There were 24 R's and 2-24's,

and I do not know that I ever saw a headline much bigger than a 40 pt., but I wasn't there when Nixon resigned, so . . . [laughs].

JG: So a 2-20 R would be two columns wide and an R would be Roman . . .

JS: Roman and the 24 would be the 24-point type.

JG: Size of the type.

JS: Yes, and sometimes we'd write subheads which ran directly under the headline and some certain size headlines, which we could tell from the codes, required a subhead. We had to know that and know which size it was. Really, it was like playing a game. It was all very manual, and that is where I learned to write on the typewriter, starting with headlines. But then we would get to the point where, if we wrote a lead, we would have to type it and it had to be typed accurately. We did not have computers where we could fix things, so you had to learn to think through your fingers. You know how to do that, but a lot of people don't. It has really seemed invaluable to me since computers have gotten to be so commonly utilized, because I write very quickly. [The] first draft very quickly. [Laughs] We did not have a lot of time sometimes.

JG: Well now, you named these people that were working on the copy desk when you first went to work there and . . .

JS: I hope I have not left anyone out. Those are the people that I remember.

JG: Do you have any particularly strong memory of any of these people that you would like to comment on, something about their work habits or . . . ?

JS: I think I have already commented on their work habits, and everybody was really a

hard worker. Everybody was really --- you almost felt like you would work for the *Gazette* for free. It was such a calling. But Paul Johnson was my — of course, Bob Douglas --- let me first say that Bob Douglas was the person who hired me and who I would give the most credit to for giving me a chance and for teaching me a great deal about the overall importance of what I did. He had a way of communicating without words what was expected of you, and he would make you strive to do your very best. But as far as the person that sat next to me and really guided me along and had confidence in me, Paul Johnson was there every day, making sure that I kept my chin up and kept moving, because it was very tough at first. It was like being in an alien environment. I knew that I was very good at school, but this was a completely different kind of challenge.

JG: Had you had any journalism at all?

JS: None. Zero.

JG: But you took English.

JS: No, strictly English. I was in one of those families where we always --- my parents always subscribed to the *Arkansas Gazette,* so I had grown up in a family that read the paper every day. That may sound like a weak reference but it isn't. You know, I mean, there are enormous numbers of people who do not read newspapers. So when you grow up in a family where it is considered standard behavior to read the newspaper, it — in fact, I used to fuss at Bob Douglas after he became a university professor and tell him that he should coerce the students, his journalism students, into, by some point system for quick quizzes, into reading

at least the first three pages of the *Gazette* every day because I knew something that I do not think a lot of people know who are in the newspaper business, and that is people don't read newspapers.

JG: Well, it is different nowadays with a lot of people getting their news, or what they regard as their news, off the television.

JS: Well, and over the Internet, but the thing is, even in the heyday of the *Gazette*, there were just a lot of people who didn't get information at all, so you really, if you have students in journalism who think they want to be journalists but who grew up in households where it wasn't considered standard to read the newspaper every day, you will have people who don't appreciate the --- I can remember going on vacations and feeling compelled to, I still do, to find a newspaper somewhere, because I just start having withdrawal symptoms. I mean, I just cannot go off and not know what is going on. So, there is that need to know.

JG: Do you remember any particular major stories that came across the copy desk when you were working there? Is there a major story that comes to mind?

JS: No, I really don't. I worked there in the early seventies, and I remember the overall --- of course, . . . as a news person at the time, we were all pretty sensitive with the beating we were taking by Spiro Agnew and President Nixon. It was demoralizing, especially in that setting, as hard as we were all working to do the right thing. It was upsetting to have the President and the Vice-President behaving as if the press was sort of a scummy subculture. And I remember that, but I don't remember ever feeling --- there was never a time, and it has been

called up in my memory as late as the last two or three years [with] what has gone on in Washington, there was never a time I do not think when anybody at the newspaper, until the events started coming out about Watergate and the burglary and the cover-up and the use of hush money and those kinds of things, I don't ever remember anybody in the newsroom wanting Nixon to be impeached just because we did not like him. [Laughs] He was, after all, duly elected. [Laughs] I mean, we had to start feeling like he had committed multiple felonies [laughs] and high crimes as opposed to regular crimes. When I say multiple felonies, I mean felonies against the state as opposed to felonies against individuals. I think I draw the line between them. That was all very much going on. Nixon was elected in — I want to say he was elected first in 1968 and again in 1972 — and so there was this growing split between the press and the presidency. And Agnew and his rhetoric would sort of be the --- that was the headline of it. There was a lot going on under the surface. They obviously had a distaste for the press, but it was, I believe, an active campaign to discredit the press. And I think they were somewhat successful. It sure is hard though now to watch what is going on with the way we get our information and the kinds of information that we get and the way it is scrambled up. If you were a purist or became a purist during the old days of the *Gazette,* it was real hard not to miss being able to get it straight. Just have it come to you in the morning and there it is, and it's all laid out and you can read it and you don't have to worry about inaccuracies very often or any sort of agenda.

JG: Did you ever see Mr. Heiskell, J. N. Heiskell?

JS: Yes, he was still coming in part of the day. I want to say pretty much every day, and he turned one hundred when I was there. I don't know exactly what year he turned one hundred, but I do know that I went to his one hundredth birthday party, and I know that I remember that he was still coming in. Since I was only there for three years, he was ninety-eight or ninety-nine and still coming in.

JG: Did he ever come over and talk to the news desk?

JS: No, he came over and talked to the news editors, but he never talked to me directly. I was awestruck, of course, and understood that I had not earned my stripes enough to dare to approach him. I believe I may have seen him in the hall once or twice and spoken to him just respectfully, but I didn't ever speak with him directly.

JG: So your dealings were always with Bob Douglas or whoever was sitting in the slot?

JS: Yes, after Bob became managing editor, Bill Rutherford became news editor. I am sure that someone else can date those. It seems to me that Bob Douglas was in my sights, as far as being hands-on, almost the whole time I was there, but my recollection is he became managing editor maybe sooner than that. He was still such a newsman that he could not get out of the newsroom. He was in there pretty much pitching all the time, making sure that he had an idea. Mr. Nelson had been such a shadow. Then to have Bob Douglas as managing editor, it was a very different style.

JG: You saw Bob Douglas?

JS: Yes, he was in there although, as I recall, he would leave a little earlier once he was reassured, but . . .

JG: Now what time did you get off?

JS: I got off at eleven. I was one of the early people. I worked from two to eleven. I think one person came in before I did, but I believe that shift floated. Maybe it was Gary Drury, I cannot remember. When I first came, I was expected to make coffee every day in this huge pot, because I had to carry it all the way down and around the hall to the women's restroom, which was, of course, way off from the newsroom. And I don't drink coffee, never have. I dutifully made coffee for about a year for that whole . . .

JG: For the copy desk?

JS: No, it was a big pot. It was a big newsroom coffee pot, forty plus cups that used to sit sort of behind Bill Shelton in that big coffee pot.

JG: I do not even remember that coffee pot over there.

JS: You would come in late from having worked at the courthouse all day and . . .

JG: I got my coffee out of the coffee machine.

JS: There was a big pot, and I would make it. I finally just said, "I am not going to do this anymore," and there was all this grumbling about me being uppity, and I said, "No, no, I just do not drink it. If I drank it, I would make it."

JG: But you did it for a year.

JS: I did it for a year before I finally got my courage up. . . . Of course, the other point

that I made was that the men's bathroom was two steps away. It was really quite a job to carry several gallons of water back up that hall without spilling it. [Laughs] So, I won the coffee battle. But, it was very different, it was a good humored group. I never felt resented to be in that room as a woman. I never felt that. The times were just changing, they were different then. I probably got more --- I will tell you what I can say --- I think I got all the respect that they felt for me, and I heard every reservation that they had. In another setting, I might have been treated more courteously and undermined in other ways. At the *Gazette,* I never felt that my career was in jeopardy or that my path toward a higher salary or toward a better job was jeopardized by my gender. Any reservations that anyone had about women were pretty much personal as opposed to occupational. And they would say it right out loud. That is as bad as it ever got, so I never had to be worried about being passed over or disrespected behind my back.

JG: Well, you said that sometime around 1973 or 1974, you left and went over to the *Arkansas Democrat*.

JS: I want to say it was 1974; that sounds right. I went over --- It may have been --- Nixon resigned in 1975, is that correct? And I had been at the *Democrat* for several months, maybe six or seven months, when he resigned. I wish I had my dates more specific, but I don't remember. I remember exactly the date that I went to work for Bill Clinton, but that was easy because I know when he was elected and so I can peg that. But, I cannot . . .

JG: So you had been at the *Democrat* a few months when Nixon resigned?

JS: Yes.

JG: So, what did you do at the *Democrat*?

JS: I had a column, a consumer column. Consumer protection had gotten to be kind of hot. The Ralph Nader era was upon us, and they hired me to take over a little "Answer Our Readers' Questions Column," and I had turned it into --- I started to turn it into a consumer column. After a few months, they put it on page one. And I was on page one at the *Democrat,* which would never happen again, but the *Democrat* was a much smaller, less well financed, less ambitious, at the time, newspaper than the *Gazette*, so it was a fairly simple thing to be popped out on page one. I was just at the right place at the right time.

JG: Was it a year or two that this column ran or how long did it run?

JS: Well, they hired someone to replace me when I left, and it ran another year or so after I left. Then they moved it inside, and then it eventually disappeared.

JG: How long did you write it?

JS: Well, I wrote it from late 1974 or early 1975, whenever I left the *Gazette,* until December of 1976, which was when I went to work for Bill Clinton, who was then Attorney General.

JG: What did you do for Bill Clinton?

JS: I was his director of consumer affairs. That was the title, but I very quickly became a — well, I stayed the director of consumer affairs the whole time I was at the Attorney General's office, but I very quickly became press secretary, because he was so sought after by the press that he had need for someone to

always be dealing with writing press releases and setting up news conferences. At this end, it is easy to spot why, but at that end, it was amazing. He was just pretty much mobbed. There was press in and out of there all the time, and the Attorney General's office, which had, I suppose, under Joe Purcell and to maybe a lesser extent Ray Thornton and then slightly a lesser extent Jim Guy Tucker, had become more and more kind of a hot seat, partly because of utility regulations. It was the consumer movement that was going on, and the Attorney General became more and more active in intervening in rate cases and other utility issues. And those utility issues were so important to consumers in Arkansas because they affected everybody's lives, how much they paid for their electric bill or their gas bill, so with those interventions, primarily with AP&L and later, to some degree, Arkla and Southwestern Bell. There was just a lot more press.

JG: How long did you work with the Attorney General's office?

JS: Two years, and then Clinton became governor, and then I was with him for the first year.

JG: Oh, you followed him into the governor's office?

JS: I was his press secretary, his first press secretary.

JG: For two years?

JS: No, Maggie was born in January of 1980, and I left at the end of my first year in the Governor's office. I was with him for a full three years. That is all.

JG: Maggie is your . . .?

JS: My daughter; she's twenty.

JG: M-A-G-G-I-E.

JS: Yes.

JG: Where did you go . . . you went home?

JS: I went home. [Laughs]

JG: To take care of baby?

JS: That is right.

JG: When did you . . .?

JS: When did I re-emerge? I ended up in Fayetteville. I spent three and a half years at the Hilton up there as their director of sales, which is the person who oversees the sales and the management of conventions and groups that come into the hotel and where they meet and how they meet and what they eat and what they need. But it was a natural sort of thing because most of the planners of these big meetings are lobbyists, and most of the lobbyists were people I had gotten to know in my years in Little Rock. So, it was a quick, easy thing for me to come back down here and say, "Why don't you bring your group to Fayetteville?", and the Hilton was a new high rise hotel in Fayetteville. Fayetteville is a very pretty area, so that was fairly successful. It wasn't what I did; I just did it because there was not a lot to do in Fayetteville for me. I mean, what was I going to do up there? And then the University hired me in 1986 to run the Old Main campaign.

JG: To raise money to . . .

JS: To raise money to . . .

JG: To raise money to refurbish Old Main?

JS: To raise money to save Old Main, to renovate Old Main. It was condemned and boarded up, so we embarked on a campaign to raise the money. I was fortunate to work with the people up there on that. That is how I met Ray Thornton. I had actually met him before, but that is how I got to know him. He was president of the University at the time, so that is how I managed to — when I came back to Little Rock from Fayetteville, that is, I had gotten to work with him on a number of different occasions because he was one of the people that we took out to make our major asks. When we wanted to ask somebody for $25,000 or $100,000 for Old Main, we would take Ray Thornton. [Laughs] So, I got to work with him and then came to work with him as director of communications for the University system before he ran for Congress. And then I ran his Congressional office and then came to the Law School; so that is my whole history.

JG: So you worked in his Congressional race and ran his Congressional office?

JS: I ran his Congressional office for six years.

JG: Oh, ok. When he was the U. S. representative for Little Rock. . . .

JS: From the Second District, yes.

JG: Ok, then after Ray left office, then you . . .

JS: Came to work in the Law School.

JG: Ok, and you are . . .?

JS: I am the director of external relations, which is fund raising or development, as the euphemism. It is non-academic publications, alumni relations, public events, press, and other duties at this time. [Laughs]

JG: Sounds like about a twenty-four hour day.

JS: Actually it is a great. Academics compared to the *Gazette* is a much slower pace. One of the great things about working at the *Gazette*, to turn the topic back to the subject that we're supposed to be talking about, I'm sorry I've veered away . . .

JG: That's fine. I'm glad to get the big picture.

JS: The *Gazette* taught me to think quickly, write quickly and to write responsibly because you didn't get a chance to take it back, and I say write, even though the reporters were doing the writing, we were ultimately responsible for making sure that they said what they meant. When the copy desk finished editing the reporter's copy, it went to the printers in the backshop. They would occasionally decide to edit on their own, but also because they had to type in all of our words a second time to form the hot type to be the slugs that made up the newspaper pages that were used in the printing process. It wasn't like it is now where the writer sits down at a computer and types it in, and then an editor just tweaks it on another computer screen and then it zips into the paper. If you count the editors', the copy editors' work is the second typing. It had to go through a third typing in the backshop, so we would actually read the whole paper cover to cover at 10:00 or 10:30 at night when it flew out of there, the news pages only. Now, we weren't responsible for sports; we weren't responsible for the women's pages, but we were responsible for the business section; we were responsible for the stocks.

JG: Now, were you reading the actual first edition of the paper or were you looking at page proofs?

JS: Page proofs. We never saw --- I very seldom walked out with a paper under my arm. Sometimes I was able to, but it was more often than not that there was something that would happen, and it would happen late, and we would be remaking --- at least once a week they would rebuild a page. Sometimes the most exciting days we would only have to rebuild the front page.

JG: And what you mean by that is that the presses had started rolling on the first edition.

JS: Well, or at least it was laid out and the page was done. And we would have to break it down. It wasn't like you could just take something out and plug something back in because, whatever you took out, you had to find a place for it someplace else. One thing I have left out that we did that was kind of fun --- although I was terrible at it --- was that they would hand us pictures and tell us what size they had to be as far as the space that was available, and we would have to crop them so that they would fit. We had these little wheels that taught us how to do that, and I used to make Bill Rutherford so mad because I have absolutely no eye for [it]. I am not a visual person. And I would crop things down and, of course, they were the only picture we had. If they came over the wire, we did not have several of them. Generally speaking, even if they were our own photographers, they had turned them in and they had gone. We actually cropped it with a slicing blade.

JG: So, you did not use a copy pencil on the pictures?

JS: No, we sliced it into pieces. If I had cropped the good stuff and made it too small,

even if it fit the space, I had taken the proper proportions out. I think they finally just took photos away from me totally because I just had no eye for it. But that was one of the things that the copy editors did. Bigger newspapers, I suppose, maybe all newspapers now, I do not know, but bigger newspapers have photo editors who take care of those kind of things now that know what they are doing and have a more artistic eye for that, but it wasn't me.

JG: Well is there anything else that you would like to mention about your work at the *Gazette?*

JS: One of the things that told me a lot about the *Gazette* that always has seemed to be an anecdote that tells a story, a true story about the *Gazette* [was] when I was at the *Gazette*, for some good long time --- two or two and a half years --- the *New York Times* started to put a heavy push on trying to hire women in the newsroom. And they were doing a kind of a nationwide combing to try to pull women in and to increase their numbers. I was told later, although I do not know if it was true, but it had something to do with the fear that they would be brought before the government in some kind of affirmative action capacity and would be in trouble and then would just need to start hiring quickly and might get a lesser quality of worker. So they checked with people, and Roy Reed checked with Bob Douglas, who recommended me, and I was able to go up to the *New York Times* and spend a week in the newsroom at night, just everything that I was used to by then, working on the national desk. It was one of the three copy desks at that time at the *New York Times*. They had the national desk, they had the obituary desk, and

they had the world desk. I am trying to remember the exact title, but at any rate, it was the city desk. At any rate, the national desk covered the whole world. So that was a long time ago. I happened to come on the Monday after Archibald Cox was fired, so I was there the Monday after the Saturday night massacre, which was an amazing time to be at the *New York Times*. It was an amazing time to be at the *Gazette,* too. But I happened to be up there and got to watch all that history in the *New York Times* newsroom. Bob Douglas had given me the name of some of his friends in New York who had left the *Gazette* and had gone to work in various capacities up there. And I called up Pat Crow who was at the *New Yorker,* and he had met me for lunch. And he was asking me about whether I would be interested in working in New York and what sort of chances I thought that I had, like, to get hired at the *New York Times.* And I told him that I was excited and scared and all the things that you feel at that stage, and he said, "Well, so are you any good?" and I said, "Well, Bob Douglas thinks I'm good," and he said, "Well, if you are good at the *Arkansas Gazette*, you will be great at the *New York Times*." They ultimately offered me a job and I declined.

JG: You mean the *New York Times* offered you a job?

JS: The *New York Times* offered me a job. But what I realized up there was that I had always thought that there were smarter people someplace else, in Washington and New York and Chicago, and in Los Angeles, but what I found was that the smartest people at the *New York Times* were no smarter than the smartest people at the *Arkansas Gazette.* And it was a wonderful thing for me. Part of that

reflects on the *Gazette* and part of it was just the truth that there are not nooks of smarter people other places. [Laughs] We are all pretty much spread out over a scale, and there are some smart ones and some less smart ones, but it was Pat Crow's remark about being good at the *Arkansas Gazette* and being great at the *New York Times* that was really a high compliment coming from one who had worked at the *Gazette* and had moved on to New York and was an editor at the *New Yorker* and would say that.

JG: How does Pat Crow spell his name?

JS: You know, I want to say it is just like it sounds, C-R-O-W, which would surprise me. It ought to be K-R-O-H, or something like that, but I believe it is C-R-O-W. Bob Douglas would know for sure, if you want to get into contact with him.

JG: And Pat Carithers is with one R or two R's?

JS: I want to say it is two, but, gosh, I have slept since then, you know. I do not really remember. Unfortunately, with the use of a computer, spelling becomes less and less important; that is the reason I want my children to learn to write with a pencil and paper.

JG: Well, you mentioned Maggie, who is age twenty now. Do you have other children?

JS: Albert is eleven and in the fifth grade, and he will be finishing high school at about the time that I go to the nursing home. [Laughs]

JG: Well, this has been a great interview. Is there anything else you would like to observe before we conclude the interview?

JS: Yes, there is one other thing: I have had a marvelous working life. And I believe that I was extraordinarily fortunate, very lucky, to have been in the right place at the right time and to have been blessed with the opportunity to work at the *Arkansas Gazette* at the time that I did with the magnificent reporting and editing staff and to have learned what I learned because everything I have done since then, every single job I have held, was made possible by that. It was worth more than a PhD; it was worth more than anything could have been, partly because I had it on my resume, but partly because I had to work so smart to fit in up there that everything else has seemed easy. [Laughs] They gave me the tools and the information and the --- I mean, I knew every important major figure in Arkansas, what their middle initial was. [Laughs] And I mean, how can you lose? You know those things like you know your family's name, so you walk out and, of course, it is utilitarian to know that kind of information. It is very valuable. I always tell my children that if you can write a perfect sentence, you are in the top one percent and that is not really true, but what I learned at the *Gazette* made me so employable and gave me so many chances to do all these fascinating things that I have gotten to do. I do not think I would trade it for anything. And I was just so lucky, not just because I was at the *Gazette*, but because I was at the *Gazette* at that time with the Ernie Dumases and the Jerol Garrisons and the Doug Smiths, the Paul Johnsons, and the Bob Douglases and others who were so magnificent in their abilities. I was really lucky, really fortunate. If my path had gone in a different direction, I would have missed an awful lot.

JG: Thank you very much Julie, we appreciate it.

End of Interview