

Mary Gay Shipley
First Person Plural Interview Summary
Friday, December 4, 2020

Note: the following citations are not on the original zoom file, but not on the edited record BEGINNING

You've been interviewed a lot about That Bookstore in Blytheville [Tom Williams, "Interview with Mary Gay Shipley" in *Arkansas Review: A Journal of Arkansas Studies* 36 (April 2005): 3-15
Malcolm Gladwell piece in *The New Yorker* [October 4, 1999, 48] about the power of recommendation,
wonderful pieces
want to concentrate on information not so widely available – personal background, not for profit activities

Audio file begins here:

JB Jo Blatti interviewing Mary Gay Shipley for the First Person Plural project December 4, 2020.
This is a remote interview due to the covid-19 pandemic [zoom test conducted Tuesday, December 1, 2020]
Could I ask you to say and spell your name

MGS This is Mary Gay Shipley – a Southern thing – insist on the double name

JB Aware that we are recording and that the record will be archived at the Pryor Center and the UA Center for Arkansas History & Culture?

MGS Yes, shocked wanted to interview

JB You've played an interesting role – native of Blytheville – start with family, parents, relatives

MGS Born in Blytheville. Both siblings born here. Knew mother's mother

JB Who were your parents?

MGS R.A. Nelson and Mary Blanche Gay Nelson. She was secretary to the president at First National Bank, father trying to get a loan for his bottling company, got a wife, too
Married in February 1938, nice cold winter day, New Orleans honeymoon
As soon as they got back, daddy went duck hunting

JB Very Arkansan

MGS I was middle child, only girl
Best times, I hope everybody thinks that
Walked to school, play outside all the time

5 min in

Every direction, children around us, great times

JB Blytheville about an hour Jonesboro, Memphis

MGS Jonesboro about the same size as Blytheville when I was growing up
Memphis media & medical center, major shopping
Blytheville shopping area for immediate area, Memphis mecca

JB Always drive? Trains?

MGS Had an uncle – many times go on train, big city experience. They'd meet us at the station
Also had Greyhound buses

JB Children unaccompanied? Someone in Batesville told me about going to the orthodontist on the train -

MGS We did that oftentimes. Someone would meet us at the other end. Also, people would help one another along – meet you at Monette, say, and take you the rest of the way to Jonesboro. Not everyone had a car.

JB Your family did?
You mentioned your parents meeting over the bottling bank loan – is that what your father did?

MGS Dr. Pepper/Seven Up bottling
We all worked there
My first job picking up nails, gravel alley out behind

10 min in

Second was helping count money at end of the day
Aunt who was professional girl scout, daddy's sister – full of energy
Some jobs I didn't have to do

JB You grew up in segregation times in Arkansas. Did Blytheville have a large African American community?

MGS Yes. Black maid in the house all the time I was growing up – very involved in her family
Older brother very sensitive to issues that came up - ex. pool

JB Answer?

MGS They had their own pool. Don't know how well cared for. Separate, but not equal –
He [brother] went off to be civil rights worker, our crusader

JB What I know of your career –
Involved in maid's family, social interactions?

MGS More being aware, making sure their children had the opportunity to go to college. No social interactions

Interesting coming back to teach in 1968
My father sold soda pop to everybody – black, hard-nosed white folks
Walked a fine line because of business

JB What did you learn at home?

15 min in

MGS Didn't talk a lot about people and issues
More the way we lived our lives, more frustrating
[My brother] was arrested for taking people to a state park on the 4th of July
[My father] worried ... scared & frustrated

JB Remember how you felt?

MGS My role as peacemaker
He [brother] tried Air Force Academy, had glasses, wouldn't accept him
Draft not interested until civil rights, got notice, went to the navy, in basic training got TB
[tuberculosis], spent military time in hospital
[Older brother] started teaching in Vidalia, Louisiana with grad degree after military. It was
dangerous. They always took two cars, followed when driving.
All of that had a profound influence on all of us
He's now retired from a career in the steel industry in Beaumont, Texas– said he knew exactly
what was expected!
And a second one (with his wife) as a Methodist preacher.

JB See anything in the way folks raised you?

20 min in

MGS Both of my parents very interested in helping people – didn't matter who they were, important to
help
Aunt had all the pep and energy – Christmas would explode
Everything you were doing was most important
Adults were demonstrating things
As newlywed, when husband in the army – Barstow [California], 40 miles from Death Valley, at
Ft. Irwin
I was working with African-American woman on Girl Scouts issues, a peer, this is when we will
be able to truly integrate, not enough of that –

JB Religion any part of that?

MGS We were at the Methodist Church whenever the door was open – daddy a trustee, mother taught
Sunday school, we were acolytes, youth group, choir
My father - only reason to have a job – hunting & fishing license, but not on Sunday

25 min in

All went to Methodist schools

Do all the good you can!

MGS I probably would've gone to Hendrix, but didn't want to be his little sister there - not that he would've done that
Friends of my folks knew Florida Southern College, beautiful campus, near Orlando, Frank Llyod Wright buildings
Really wonderful old school math teacher –

JB Knew math was your path

MGS Fabulous math teacher in high school
Knew wanted to teach
Talking about growing up, lot of talented people in my class, musicians, English, math, history, literature
Describes roaming study hall, helping others, when I realized I wanted to teach math

MGS Taught for 10 years

30 min in

JB Experience in 1968

MGS Gosnell, out by the air force base
Cannot remember African American students, not many

JB A version of open enrollment?

MGS Early 1970s, true integration, moved to Blytheville schools early 1970s

JB Socially & educationally successful?

MGS Teachers worked very hard together [to share information with one another]
Not sure how [that effort transferred] to the students
Big effort to make sure teachers were comfortable

JB How?

MGS Teaching in general

35 min in

Cared most about the students
Not much help from the administration
Ex. one year 60 kids in my geometry class, asked repeatedly that it be split
Finally happened when an administrator's son received a failure warning

Every student I ever tutored – all I ever did – make them do the homework
Some good students failed geometry – just move on

MGS I want to back up to an unwritten rule family

Not allowed to just complain

We had to figure out how to change it

40 min in

There have been times when there's something I want to do - not going to happen. I'm not the right person, just too early... Instead of butting my head against the wall, put my energy into something else.

When it came up again – what a good idea – can I help you?

JB Assumption boys & girls be educated in your family?

MGS Aunt went to Galloway [women's college established 1889 by Methodist Episcopal Church South in Searcy, Arkansas (White County), merged with Hendrix College in Conway (Faulkner County), 1933]

All of my father's siblings

My mother's sister to Sophie Newcomb [women's college established 1886 in New Orleans as a coordinate of Tulane, restructured in 2006 following Hurricane Katrina damage]

My mother, business degree, Memphis

Daddy – we will pay for college education and we will give you a car. Beyond that, you're on your own.

Godsend, no debt – unlike students now

Older brother enamored of Volkswagens.

Daddy had to go somewhere else to buy that car.

So he opened a Volkswagen agency

We became a Dr. Pepper/Seven Up drinking, Volkswagen driving family.

JB Husband – when did you marry?

MGS First time I ever saw him (college)

Counseling appointment with math teacher could not bear practice teaching – went on and on

There was Paul [Shipley] walking across campus – the day [November 22, 1963 - President John F.] Kennedy had been shot – November

So physically affected – who was that?

45 min in

His fraternity, my sorority decided we ought to date. Kind of hooked it up, March 1964.

Married summer after we graduated, so 1964-1966

JB Met in 1964, married in 1966

Army, was Blytheville part of the package?

MGS He probably would have had a career in the army had it not been for the Vietnam War

Ft. Irwin was a staging area for Vietnam

He was the first lieutenant who didn't get orders for Vietnam

Options – Vietnam, I said 'give me those resigning papers'

He worked at the bottling plant for a while, the VW agency. Not wonderful, not horrible.

He wasn't interested in taking over the business -

Ended up teaching, we both did.
He finished at 2 p.m., I finished at 4
He was ready to move into dinner, ready to go, became a good cook

JB Parallel careers –
How exactly math teacher develop conviction Blytheville needed a bookstore?

50 min in

Sounds a bit like ‘put up or shut up’ yet became such a literary place, and so devoted to children’s literacy. Way beyond founding a bookstore.

MGS I thought that’s what booksellers were supposed to do

Also, the timing

Reading public wanted to meet the people who write books, who were becoming ‘stars’

Wanted to say hello to the writers

We were a very small store, as most members of the American Booksellers Association are

The association is always looking for members who are a little more representative

Richard Howarth at Square Books [in Oxford, Mississippi] said this author [John Grisham] will come to your store

We started talking in fall, it was March before we worked something out – had just hit the *New York Times* best seller list

I tell him [Grisham] we rode on his coattails – rode as hard, as far as I could

Important for them [publishers] to send authors to rural stores on their usual book tours

54 min in zoom recording shuts off abruptly

Second zoom recording session Saturday, December 5, 2020

JB Second formal interview, continuing a conversation we began yesterday (12.4.2020)

MGS Glad to be in conversation Hope you can cross this off your list.

JB Note: I can hear zoom crosstalk in the background, we’ll hope for the best

JB When we left off in our Friday session, established bookstore, family history, do you & husband have children?

MGS No

JB 1980s, 1990s big cheese regionally, nationally among booksellers, women, community foundations - how balance bookstore, family amid broader commitments?

MGS Fortunately, husband mainstay home fires, cooking, majority of house chores
Really, really good staff at the store, enabled getting away to do these other activities

5 min in

At one time up to five people – not all at same time

Volunteers, up to fourteen to sixteen for John Grisham, whoever it turned out to be, always depended on volunteers

Important to be connected to the rest of the industry -

1986 elected to American Booksellers Association - -poster child small business
Represented stores places ought not to have stores
14 years on that board – various capacities, education department, traveled the world, retail seminars

JB Where did you go?

MGS Singapore, hosted by former student
Also, Warsaw, Bratislava, Hungary, enlarging economies eastern Europe
Contrast – they were so appreciative of the written word, no money
I lived where people had money, didn't necessarily appreciate written word
On teams with people from Harvard, other better-known places, people said they won't know where you are from
I said, very close to the Mississippi River and Elvis Presley's Memphis –
Our translator had studied in south Arkansas –

JB Famous *New Yorker* cartoon [all of U.S. recedes flatly from East Coast, referencing a form of cultural provincialism]

10 min in

MGS [References Malcolm Gladwell interview for *New Yorker* magazine in 1999]
First of all, I thought it would be a phone interview, very hot August day
On his way to Nashville [Tennessee]
Expected half an inch
Couldn't buy the magazine in Blytheville at the time, had to have the article faxed to me
My mother said, 'Mary Gay, hope you don't get a big head.'
Only two subscribers that I knew of – not a problem –
The New Yorker sent a photographer up from Mississippi

JB Wider – print story Women's Foundation of Arkansas credits Pat Lile and Olivia Farrell
Pat Lile's [*First Person Plural*] oral history includes you quite clearly. What's your version?

MGS Olivia Farrell, annual luncheon recognizing one hundred most powerful women in Arkansas
An answer to folks who couldn't find women for boards: here are some
I was chairman of the Arkansas Community Foundation at the time [1998]
The idea was to move beyond an annual event and create a women's organization

Mississippi County community foundation – I'd been trying to figure out

Figured I'd learn. Well, I was being asked to join the state board. Opened my mouth & jumped in
- a whole lot bigger

15 min in

Early on, \$750,000 challenge grant Rockefeller Foundation
Two years – no more said about it
Pat [Lile] was a fabulous hire
We talked for one hour every Thursday morning, figured things out together
The 100 women initiative [that started the Women's Foundation of Arkansas in 1998]

Here's our women's foundation. We made a date with Olivia & discussed an organizational approach to the 100 women

JB Mississippi County - Sam Scruggs, economic, racial social justice issues?

MGS Rockefeller challenge, in redoing this - affiliates/partners program developed
We weren't sustainable.
I came back to people in Mississippi County, asked them to do the work to come in as affiliates.
Sam Scruggs, he was executive director of the Mississippi County Economic Opportunity Commission, worked in poorer parts of the county

20 min in

JB State? Federal?

MGS Organized and set up, all the credit himself. Fabulous
On the Arkansas Community Foundation shortly before he died. Mover behind all that.

JB Was Sybil Hampton director at [Winthrop] Rockefeller [Foundation] then?

MGS She came on somewhere in this process, how I got to know her. Lynnette Watts was at the Women's Foundation then came

JB Other issues of significance at Arkansas Community Foundation?

MGS Reorganizing and stabilizing, setting in place sustainable ways to operate
Growth of all those affiliates

JB Raise funds – much higher rate

MGS Lot more visibility
Move the Rock Street house [headquarters] [from] old house, now beautiful headquarters, really nice place
If you are going to meet with people about large donations -
Grown enormous amount
We built on the foundation laid

JB Delta initiatives –
Rural Heritage ASU [Arkansas State University]

MGS ASU, Ruth Hawkins projects – Johnny Cash home Dyess, Pfeiffer-Hemingway home in Pigott, Lakeport plantation

25 min in

Just a fan – cheerleader of Ruth

JB Bancorp – associated with community development

MGS Southern Bancorp Communitys Partner

Out of Arkadelphia [Clark County]
[Rob] Walton, Winthrop Rockefeller [Foundation] involved
Originally serve the underbanked, not banked, now where banks retreating
Bought bank in Helena, hired people to identify what needed & capacity-building, not sustainable
Wonderful, but not sustainable
It's a bank, a holding company, a non-profit
I came in on the community development, non-profit end
Community development is not sustainable, changed what we are doing
More lending, more wealth building strategies among low income, grassroots
Loans banks might not do, a lot smaller, lots of training, education

30 min in

What is it I can do?
Diversity, equity, inclusion (vendors, board, customers, staff)
How can we be leaders? That has been exciting for me
Not just two token women and a token African American -

JB Who do you work with on loans?

MGS Bank can do this much, we can consider this extra

JB Are your criteria the same as bank's or different than the bank's?

MGS Don't know exactly
Not interested in people who can't pay back
Not interested in sending people to payday lenders
Trying to fill little gaps

JB A banker I know used to mention character, circumstances, as well as financials –

MGS I do think some of that comes into play, also using safeguards
Trying to help people, other institutions –
Darrin Williams [president of the bank] says: we have mission and margin

37 min in

Discussion of flashing light: stop & restart zoom audio recording

Close zoom file

December 5, 2020 interview continues new zoom file

[Interviewer notes zoom issues – we'll continue recording]

JB A couple more questions, coalition of issues 1970s, 1980s –
NOW [National Organization of Women], PeaceLinks
You show up in the collection of Carol Gaddy Graywing, poet, feminist, activist, in her archival
collection
Were you personally acquainted?

MGS No, let me know –

We had a little NOW group here, and I'm sure I joined it
NOW group brief, beginning of book store [late 1970s], gave them dues
Betty Bumpers [activist, wife of Governor and later Senator Dale Bumpers]
Meeting at Episcopal Church, not much above ground activity with places that have military
bases. We're in the process of creating a cold war museum in Blytheville.
Hoping to pay some attention to this [Bumpers/Peace Links] in the Cold War Museum

5 min in

JB Large commitments over a lifetime, flunked retirement?

MGS Love what I do. Means I have time to choose –

JB Cold War initiative in Blytheville

MGS Potential game changer this part of Arkansas. Biggest thing I've been involved in, lot of potential.
I do have a lot of help
National center for the cold war
Air Force SAC [Strategic Air Command, operational Blytheville 1955-1992]
Cold war influenced a whole lot of 50-year history. A great professional team.
Hopefully by January [2021] we'll have a plan to announce

JB How far off I-55 is Blytheville?

MGS Right on it. The base is on the west side of Blytheville

JB Basic concept – an interpretive museum and physical artifacts?

MGS We have a KC 135 [Boeing Stratotanker, military aerial refueling aircraft, developed in 1950s,
still in use]
A B52 [Boeing Stratofortress long-range subsonic, jet powered bomber, also operated by USAF
since the 1950s]
Barry Harrison, [Gosnell/Blytheville Regional] Airport Authority, everything intact
Copper thieves have been there –
NPS [National Park Service] called – needs to be a facility with landmark status, looking for one

10 min in

We worked with Travis Ratermann at Dept of Arkansas Heritage
In 1980s the Air Force put an addition on it [the alert facility] to accommodate women
We think that's even more significant

[Discussion ensues about this element as a sticking point in the National Register nomination and
potential for reconsideration in future.]

MGS We did travel/interpretive feasibility study
Want people to see/experience what airmen experienced on weeklong alert
Will probably build a new visitor center with interpretive space

There used to be sally gate [aka sally port, dual gate, controlled access security system in which only one gate opens at a time]
The Christmas tree is still there – [SAC alert runway configuration that replaced right angle plane placement with a herringbone pattern for faster pullouts and takeoff]
A 15-minute runway formation – loaded with nuclear bombs
The base also tells the story of refueling operations
B-52s in the air all the time

Weapons storage – another opportunity – rented out to Aeroplex [Arkansas Aeroplex, commercial facility managing multiple uses of the former air force base], a negotiation
Capehart housing is now on the National Register
[named after Senator Homer Capehart, R-Indiana, sponsor of the 1955 bill that established base housing for many mid-20th century military families in the post-World War II era]

Now Presbyterian retirement housing, could set up a couple units as visitor spaces

15 min in

JB What about the fuel silos? Huge at places like McConnell, former SAC base in Wichita

MGS Don't know about that
One of the things we got from Ruth Hawkins, show people what will do
All these military bases beige & brown
Converted a building into an exhibition space [demonstration area]
Army airfield [World War II], then SAC base
We have a klaxon that actually works
One room: cold war vision for the center
This AFB involvement
Honoring and remembering – Hanoi bombing 1972, 1 perished, 3 went to Hanoi Hilton

20 min in

Students researched co-pilot who died - African-American captain, his wife taught in middle school.
Now in St. Louis. Had her students write letters to her husband. Saved the letters, never opened.
Hope we can make a connection with her. Very poignant story.

The person who does some interviews for us interviewed one of the crew members who'd been at the Hanoi Hilton. Then went up to Wilson for dinner, happened to meet the pilot for KC 135 who was supposed to refuel that plane [Hanoi capture], explanation of refuel operation.

JB Great computer graphic

MGS Base renamed 1988 for General Eaker [Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, 1896-1987] very instrumental in this whole refueling concept

25 min in

- JB National Register work – surprised
- MGS Might be reconsidered. Base chosen, an active base [not very accessible to ordinary visitors]. We are still eligible for all tax credits
- JB Nominations do get reconsidered
This project quite large - \$20 million
- MGS Original figure – not real sure, placeholder amount
- JB 501-3c?
NPS interested in coming in with you?
- MGS I don't know, kind of like state parks, have all they can deal with -
We will need partners

30 min in

Have [William J.] Fulbright papers
Public political papers at UA Fayetteville
Private personal papers at Blytheville, no one on our team knows how to assess
One of people in our group had dinner with Fulbright descendants in D.C., said yes
We don't have the expertise
Have things we need to capitalize on

- JB Speaking professionally – having an archivist take a look –
- MGS After the first of the year, contact ASU [Arkansas State University] archivist. Papers are there.
- JB Cold war, so many southern Democrats had so much power, second half of the 20th century

35 min in

- MGS Staff issues, we're open Friday and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Fellow came in driving from Texas to New York
Last base was a SAC base just like this one

Unless you live here, know the sunsets, the beauty of flat places
We're going to have to do some landscaping, not Disney though

- JB Did you know as a young person wanted to come back?

[lots of zoom noise here]

- MGS I think I did
Centrally located, never felt stuck. Always had family & a job.
Always thought I'd teach at the high school, which I did.

- JB Husband a hard sell?

MGS Townie from Lakeland, Florida
First visit winter, not a stick of green. Made a life for himself here.
Lots of friends, hunting, fishing, not as obsessive as daddy

Three years in grade school, my mother, aunt, daddy traveled with us, 8 weeks each summer

40 min in

All 48 states

After opening the store, it was like I left at Thanksgiving and came back first week of January
He said, had excellent help, people he could depend on – before phone calls [cell]

Compares Yellowstone 1950s-1970s

I'm really glad I saw it then, compares Old Faithful then and 'improved.' Great experience they gave to us.

JB Skip Rutherford at Clinton School in Little Rock says he's going to bring the world in the program series there
Was the bookstore program a bit that way?

MGS We were – going back to the education.
Three-four stores, we took the same geography [map] and handed it out to publishers. Taught them: fly authors to Memphis for 1-2 airfares, hit 4-5 stores (Memphis, Blytheville, Oxford, New Orleans, Jackson) that really can sell your books.

45 min in

JB What do you read now?

MGS Describes *Becoming Robbie Lee*, a recent book by Myra McLarey, written from the perspective of a 10-year-old girl growing up on the Delta. Her grandmother, an unusual woman who socialized across 20th c. racial lines, comes to her house to die. Interesting that people can write like a 10-year-old.
Gives a second example, a forthcoming novel titled *The Bookseller of Florence* by Ross King coming out in April, set at the time that the printing press was replacing manuscript books in Europe.

50 min in

I want to return to the Book Angels [a subject discussed in the December 4, 2020 interview file].
In this part of the world, poverty not related to book needy, children of all income levels often need books

Ambitiously, we would underwrite maybe 100 books a year with help

In the year of 9.11 [2001], people just shocked, unable to move forward.

What are we going to do about this?

55 min in

I contacted Head Start, every child, sometimes 1000 kids

Head Start people would help us wrap

JB Feedback?

MGS If I made a talk in school, always someone in class would mention – only feedback
They can't all get to the library
Also got an international grant through Rotary, 35 free libraries throughout the county
[Mississippi]
Rotary, blue & yellow, Rotary colors

JB Anything I raised?

MGS You've done a lot of research
Fabulous life
Fallen into some things – turned out to be pretty wonderful

JB Anything you'd like to add?

MGS You've got me covered – and then some

58 min in

FPP oral history content ends here

Recording off at 1:03/1:04 minutes

The last couple of minutes is technical: zoom/paperwork/FPP process

December 18, 2020 zoom recording

This is Jo Blatti recording for First Person Plural with Mary Gay Shipley, one of several interviews conducted remotely due to the pandemic. This is Friday, December 18, 2020. This is a follow up interview. I wanted to ask about a couple of figures in your early life and some reflections.

JB Aunt, 'professional Girl Scout' all over the U. S.?

MGS I believe she started in Little Rock, Memphis, Dallas, New Mexico, maybe Arizona, last place New York City. We did visit her. She was very generous about sharing places, people she knew. I remember when the World's Fair was going on, New York [1964].

I remember one time playing outside – I was chosen to go on train to Dallas with my father to visit. I got to visit with Aunt Sis. She was a big part of our lives. Went on those camping trips –

JB Must have made it easier for your parents to have another adult. What about your mom, a quiet presence, also runs through the interviews?

MGS Very quiet, supportive. Knew how to gently guide you. Not critical, but you knew if she didn't support [a particular action]. Very kind. We had wonderful adult influences in our lives.

JB Mother a homemaker as you were growing up?

5 min in

MGS You describe book, church activities, civic activities-

She had a wonderful group of friends, art studies, now community college [a resource], then would buy programs. Fabulous group of women. Played bridge weekly. When we were in scouts, she helped with that.

JB Ever go back to work?

MGS No

JB You described first & second jobs at the bottling plant. Were there things you didn't have to do because you were a girl?

MGS Probably so. Didn't have to unload the trucks, did have to sort [empty] bottles. Didn't have to carry the 200 lbs. bags of sugar. Before there were weight rooms, daddy put football players to work.

JB At home, chores divided boy/girl?

MGS don't think we thought much about that. All washed dishes. Didn't mow much, but certainly raked and trimmed hedges

JB Just wondered. Every family a little different

JB When you were a grown woman, was it unusual for a woman to become businesswoman in 1970s Blytheville?

MGS Don't think so – some of the stores in town owned by a couple – mom and pop stores, women ran. Not that unusual.

10 min in

JB Got to thinking about that as you described not only the business, but approaching publishers about author tours

MGS If it was unusual, it was that the store was located here [in Blytheville], this rural corner of Arkansas

JB Comparison - that designer dress store in Magnolia –

MGS Exactly

JB When we spoke earlier, I clean forgot to ask about your 2012 run for the Arkansas statehouse, real respectable run

MGS Encouraged to do that by Barry Harrison and some of his friends. Always interested in politics, seemed like an opportunity. An open seat. Interesting for me to be on the inside of an election

JB What do you remember? What were the issues?

MGS Mainly an issue, being able to represent the area in Little Rock. At the time, and now, the district 50% African-American, 50% white. Lot of people on that voter registration moved, some dead. Those numbers are deceiving.

15 min in

Want to be represented by white woman or black man? That's fine.
Always been able to find something else to do. Couldn't do the cold war museum if I'd been successful -

JB Four-way primary, lot of people

MGS The district a little bit of Blytheville, the rest Osceola, Mississippi County. Where this person going to live, then race, gender - who did people want to be represented by?

JB Many of your activities - town/country, rural/Delta centered – origins agriculture, Pine Bluff, southeast. Is there an alternative network to the Little Rock, central Arkansas focus that I see [living in the capital city]?

MGS A part of the state that at one time was once wealthy and powerful, a whole part of the state has lost population and political clout in my lifetime.
People in northwest, not so organized. All shifted.
Important that voices are heard. We don't want to be dragging down the rest of the state with our health problems, education, and poverty. There are smart, creative people out here, or they wouldn't be alive.

JB Question of how do you balance

20 min in

MGS [Cites urban comparison] The same thing happening in the cities, an exodus, leaving central core vacant

JB Given your experience, see any difference in the ways women and men work in civic affairs?

MGS I think they do work in different ways
I find women leave meetings with lists of what needs to be done - what they're responsible for
Men leave with, vague idea, maybe secretary will take care of
My experience in book business different – all kinds of people
People work in different ways -
When women in the room and at the table, more gets accomplished

JB Interesting, in the financial realm, evidence companies with up to 15% women representation on the board associated with better performance –

You have been very generous with your time, anything you want to add?

MGS I do want to tell you yesterday - press release from Senators Cotton and Boozeman: designating our Cold War Museum. At least introduced, our big news for the day.

JB Congratulations. With that, very best for the holidays

MGS 2021 coming, vaccinations

JB Be well and safe. Thank you again.

27 min in / OFF