

FNP 36

Interviewee: Allen H. Neuharth

Interviewer: Ralph L. Lowenstein

Date: July 23, 1999

L: This is Friday, July 23, 1999. I am at 333 South Atlantic Avenue in Cocoa Beach, Florida, interviewing Allen H. Neuharth for the Florida Newspaper Oral History Project. Good morning, Al. Can we start off by your giving me your complete name?

N: Allen H. Neuharth.

L: I should introduce this by saying that it would take us three or four days to interview you completely, so this oral interview will largely deal with your Florida connections. But I do want to get your background in South Dakota. Would you tell us, Al, where were you born and raised?

N: I was born in Eureka, South Dakota, on March 22, 1924.

L: Your father died when you were very young?

N: I was less than two years old.

L: How did your father die?

N: He was injured in a farm accident, developed a leg and bone problem, and lived for a while after the accident. But they could not save him.

L: Your mother worked very hard to support the family, did she not?

N: Yes.

L: At what age did the family move, then, to Alpena?

N: It was the summer between my fourth and fifth grade in school. I started fifth grade in Alpena. I went through four grades in Eureka.

L: The beginnings of journalism for you started in high school, did it not?

N: We had a weekly paper at Alpena High School. The paper was *The Echo*. It was not really a paper by itself, but it was part of a page, half a page, in space donated by the local weekly paper. I began writing for that and became the editor of that paper in my junior year in high school.

L: Did you have any association with the newspaper itself?

N: Yes, I worked there part-time sweeping up, cleaning up. I even got to play with the lineotype machine a little bit, but I never became a skilled lineotype operator.

L: Did you go into the military right out of high school?

N: I went to Northern State Teachers' College in Aberdeen, South Dakota, for one quarter. I was eighteen. After the first quarter, a bunch of us in that freshman class enlisted and went into the Army.

L: What year was that?

N: I went in January of 1943. I enlisted in the fall, December of 1942, and went in January of 1943.

L: You ended up with a unit that served in Europe?

N: In both Europe and the Pacific. After training, I was with the 86th Infantry Division. We were in Europe, and then we were one of the first two divisions that were shipped back to go to the Pacific. We landed in the Pacific after the atomic bomb was dropped, so we were spared any service there.

L: I was especially interested in your encounter with General Patton [George Patton, Commander, U.S. Army Third Corps]. Would you mind telling us about that?

N: He was a hero of mine. He was a great guy. He was a go-go guy. Our 86th Division was part of his Third Army for a period of some weeks, and I was a sergeant in a reconnaissance platoon. On one day, a corporal of mine and I were marching a bunch of captured German soldiers through an encampment. We were resting at a crossroads, resting ourselves and them. Patton, whose jeep had stars displayed on it, was everywhere, close to, sometimes at, the front lines. This was, of course, when we were coming back from the front line. He stopped and wanted to know who was in charge. I was the sergeant in charge. He wanted to know what the hell we were doing there. So I told him we were taking a break and he said, get the hell back on your feet, and [get] those Krauts moving. [He said] that I would be in the same encampment they were headed for if I was not careful, or something to that effect. But I enjoyed the encounter. I enjoyed the chance of having him talk to me.

L: Was he, in any way, an inspiration? Did anything about this man affect you in your later life?

N: Oh sure. A lot of people have affected my later life, but he was a person I looked up to because he was the senior commander of the unit I was in. He believed in moving and getting things done. He was not a guy to make excuses

or to fool around, and I thought his results-oriented approach to life was pretty good.

L: You went to the Pacific also, later, did you not?

N: Yes, we were over there, I guess about five months. It was easy to get over and tough to get back when you were trying to get out of there, but I saw no combat because the bomb was dropped while we were enroute. V-J Day came while we were in Luzon [Philippines]. We did not see combat.

L: As soon as you came back, you went right away to the University of South Dakota?

N: No, I waited through the summer. I got out of the Army in May 1946; it might have been late April. I got married in June and spent the summer waiting for the fall term to start. My new bride and I worked as carnies and traveled to one- and two-night carnivals and fairs around the states of South Dakota and Minnesota. I went into the University in the fall term of 1946.

L: Would you mind giving her first and maiden name?

N: My bride's name was Loretta Helgeland.

L: She was from where?

N: Woonsocket, South Dakota, twelve miles from my home around Alpena.

L: Had you known her before the war?

N: Oh yes. She was a gorgeous cheerleader for the Woonsocket Red Men, and we met at basketball games and dated for a good many months before I went into the service.

L: When you went to the University of South Dakota, did you major in journalism immediately?

N: Yes. I had a dual major in journalism and government.

L: That school is now named for you, is it not?

N: Well, no. There is a Neuharth Center for Journalism. They have no school of journalism there. They only have a mass com [communications] department and some journalism classes. They had a department of journalism when I was there. They no longer have a department of journalism. So, the school paper

was an extracurricular activity. We established a center for journalism that primarily helps out the school paper and the students who are interested in journalism. We have a full-time director and assistant there. We work with the mass com department.

L: How did you first go to work for the university newspaper?

N: I was interested in broadcast or print, and I went to work for KUSD, the university radio station, in sports. I broadcast the sports games. I was broadcasting the homecoming game my freshman year, and my older brother Walter was sitting in the stands and had the radio on, listening to me, and had it turned up real loud. Some people in front of him turned around and said, would you turn that damn thing off? He said, don't you want to hear the game while you are watching it? One of them said, not with that damn idiot broadcasting it. So, my brother reluctantly told me about that. I listened to some of my tapes, and I realized I was pretty bad. I quit broadcasting and went into print. I became sports writer, sports editor, and then editor of the *Bolante*, the school paper.

L: Were you the sports editor the whole time, or did you become the editor?

N: I was the sports editor, then managing editor, and then editor. I was editor for the last semester of my junior year and first semester of my senior year.

L: Would you say that you were bitten with the journalism bug from that point on?

N: Yes, I liked it. I liked journalism. I was out of the Army. I had been in four years. I had been in pre-law before the war. I did not want to waste or spend seven years getting a law degree. I really majored in it because journalism, to me, looked like the easiest way to get through college, through that university, and get a degree. I loved the extracurricular work in journalism. I liked the fact that the editor of the paper was sort of a bigshot on campus.

L: Looking back at it, in sort of perspective, as objectively as you can, would you say that your interest in journalism starting in those days was because you realized you had a talent for it and you could do well with that talent or because it was a profession in which you could accomplish other things?

N: I did not really know what I had much talent for when I went into college. I think that is probably true of most kids, even though I was a little older. I was twenty-two after I started. I think I felt primarily that it was fun [and] it was interesting. I got to do a lot of things. I got to go to sports events for free. Later on, I could be a sports writer and get paid for it. As the editor, I really did have, maybe, more influence on campus than someone my age or with my not-very-mature judgement should have had. I liked all that. I also felt that I

could do some good. We did some campaigns on behalf of students that got me called into the university president's office three or four times, but I still felt it was important. I liked the fact that you could have a voice and sort of have a window on the world even though the world was not very big at that time; my world was not, but I liked that.

L: At that time, did you think about spending the rest of your life in South Dakota, or did you have wider horizons, even then?

N: I thought I ought to try to get a professional start in journalism in South Dakota. I had been off in both Europe and the Pacific and a number of states in this country in the Army. I think it was doubtful that I would have expected to spend my whole life in South Dakota, but I thought I would get rich and famous there before I moved on. That did not happen; instead, I went broke and ran away from home.

L: I am going to get to that in a minute. If I can digress for just a moment, you have only one sibling, Walter?

N: Yes, he is seven years older than I am.

L: In a lot of the stuff I have read, I do not see much mention of him. Is he still alive?

N: Oh sure. Walter is a great friend of mine. In fact, he will be eighty-two this October. He lives in California at Long Beach. He has been retired. He retired at age sixty-two. He was in school administration work out there. We see each other often. They usually spend at least two weeks every winter here with us in Florida. I have seen them out there, and they have traveled with me on some of my gimmicks, like **Newscapade** and **Buscapade**. He was an older brother and because I did not have a father, he was sort of a mini-version of a father for me.

L: Out of college, you went immediately to work for AP [Associated Press]. How did you get the job?

N: I went to work for the Associated Press. Like most kids in college then, I was not too concerned about where I would go to work. I was concerned about getting my college degree. I started interviewing for some jobs in the spring of my senior year. I had an offer to go back to two newspapers where I had interned in the summer, one in Mitchell, South Dakota, and one in Rapid City. I had in mind starting this venture called So Dak Sports. The business manager of the *Bolante* and I decided we were going to do that to get rich and famous.

L: His name was?

N: His name was Bill Porter, a now retired lawyer in Rapid City, South Dakota. I thought a job with a wire service would get me more exposure around the state than would one paper. There were eleven dailies in the state, and there was no statewide paper. So, I tried hard to get a job with the Associated Press or United Press International. UPI had a one-man bureau covering Sioux Falls and Pierre, the capital--they were not hiring. AP had three people in the bureau, and the bureau chief had entered a request for a fourth person to be based in Sioux Falls but to help cover the legislature as well. Fortunately, that request from the Minneapolis bureau came through the week before I graduated from college, so he offered me the job, at \$50 a week to start. I took it. That is where I started.

L: Then, two years later, you and Bill Porter started this So Dak Sports?

N: So Dak Sports, yes, as in South Dakota Sports. We waited until he got out of law school. He was two years behind me because he got a law degree. We spent much of that two years planning and plotting to start this venture which turned out not to work. I worked for the AP for the two years while we were getting ready to launch So Dak Sports.

L: And you borrowed money from . . . ?

N: We did not borrow. We sold stock. We formed a corporation and sold stock. Most of it was in blocks of 100 shares. Our biggest investor invested \$700. Most of them were doing it as a donation. They were sports fans or former jocks who thought a statewide sports paper would be good for South Dakota. Nobody invested a lot of money and did not expect to make any, but that is how we raised about \$50,000 to get the thing off the ground.

L: How long did you run that paper?

N: Two years. We went broke after two years. We were going broke regularly. We never made any profit. We got pretty good circulation and no advertising, or very little. So, we had to fold it after two years.

L: By that time, it was what year, when you went broke?

N: It was the fall of 1953.

L: You were twenty-nine years old?

N: Right. I ran away from home, went all the way to Miami, Florida, and got a job as a reporter on the *Miami Herald*.

L: How did you happen to choose the *Miami Herald*?

N: Well, [for] one thing, I was ashamed. I had offers for jobs around there and in Minnesota, but I was so ashamed at having gone broke that I wanted to get as far away from home as I could. I wanted to work on a big paper, and the *Miami Herald* was one of the leading papers in the southeast, along with Atlanta. [It was] certainly the leading paper in Florida then. I happened to have a cousin of mine who lived in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, who knew the bureau chief for the *Herald* in Lauderdale. So, I contacted him to see if he might open the door for me, and he did enough so that I got a telephone interview with the, then, managing editor of the *Miami Herald*. His name was George Beebe. I sent him a bunch of stuff, propaganda and factual stuff, and he looked it over. He had a lot of applications then from snowbirds, or Yankees, who wanted to work down there. He called me and offered me a job at \$90 a week as a general assignment reporter. I did not know Miami, so I suggested that maybe he ought to interview me first, and he said that was not necessary and they were not paying for trips like that. So, I asked him if I could come down at my own expense, which I did. I rode the train two nights and a day. I went down and looked around and got the interview with him and other people and then I decided I was lucky to have the offer, so I grabbed it. I went back to South Dakota, took my car, rented a trailer, loaded up everything we owned, and came to Miami.

L: You had one child or two, by then?

N: I had one child, Dan, who was fifteen months, and my wife was pregnant with our second child, Jan, who was born in Florida.

L: When you went to work for the *Miami Herald*, how long were you a general assignment reporter?

N: I started on December 31, 1953, and I was a reporter for two or three years. Sometimes I substituted on beats. I was on the police beat a while, the court beat a while but, basically, general assignment. I was offered a chance to go to the *Herald's* Washington bureau for a period of three months, which they did with some of their reporters. I grabbed that. I was up there for three months and loved it. I had an opportunity to move out of reporting into editing, and I became the assistant city editor and then the executive city editor of the *Herald*.

L: During that time, you had opportunities to come up to this part of Florida to see what was going on around Cape Canaveral and so on.

N: Right.

L: Was that while you were still assistant managing editor?

N: Yes. After I left the city desk, I became assistant managing editor, and part of my job was to supervise the state coverage of the *Herald*. The *Herald* was very much a statewide paper at that time. George Beebe was the managing editor. George Beebe hired me, but **Lee Hills** was the executive editor. They were the two who I really owe my training. In supervising state coverage, it was pretty clear that the *Herald* needed to be covering what was then Cape Canaveral, as the space program developed. I came up here on several visits, and we opened a one-person bureau here with a reporter named **John Morton**, mainly to cover the space program. That resulted in my making a number of trips back and forth and really falling in love with the space coast area, the Cocoa Beach area. I became kind of a space nut because I got to know all the early astronauts.

L: Is this the same John Morton who is now the newspaper analyst?

N: No. Same spelling, same name.

L: With your background with So Dak Sports, when you made those trips up here, did the idea begin to gel a little bit that this place--I think it only had weekly or semi-weekly papers at that time--[might be able to support a state paper?]

N: Yes, there were three weeklies here, one in Titusville, one in Cocoa, and one in Melbourne. The daily papers that came in here were the *Miami Herald*, the *Tampa Tribune*, Jacksonville, Daytona, but primarily the *Orlando Sentinel*, which was, by far, the leading circulation here. As the area grew, it grew by leaps and bounds then. It went from a little fishing village to a space village with people pouring in. It seemed to me that it could support a daily paper of its own. Others had that idea. The *Melbourne Times* went from a weekly to a five-day-a-week daily not too long after that. Anyway, that is how this area, Cape Kennedy/Cocoa Beach/space coast area got my attention.

L: Did you try in those days to get anyone interested in starting a paper?

N: Yes, I did. I mentioned to **Jim Knight**, who was then the general manager of the *Herald*, that I thought the *Herald* ought to do something exciting up here. He asked me, what, and I said, like start a new daily newspaper. Understandably, he kind of laughed and said, well, we are doing pretty well where we are, which was quite understandable because the *Herald* was the dominant paper in Florida, doing extremely well with circulation, financially, and otherwise, and it had a pretty good presence in central Florida.

L: But, I assume that you kept that in mind later on, right?

N: Well sure. You know, having started So Dak Sports and having gone broke with it, I hoped that sometime in my career, I would have an opportunity to start another little paper somewhere that might work, rather than just having a failure on my record. I thought then, and even more so a few years later, that the space coast area was an ideal place for a new venture like that.

L: Then, from Miami, you went to Detroit. How did you make that move?

N: I was asked by Lee Hills, who was the executive editor of both the *Miami Herald* and the *Detroit Free Press* to take the job of being his assistant in Detroit. The Detroit newspaper situation had taken a dramatic turn. The *Free Press* had been number one in a three-newspaper town, and Hearst [William R. Hearst, publisher] sold its newspaper, the *Detroit Times*, to the *Detroit News*. So, those two afternoon newspapers combined and, all of a sudden, the **Knight's Free Press**, which had been number one in a three-paper town, was number two in a two-paper town. So Lee Hills, who is a very, very brilliant and dynamic guy, said he had to figure out how to get it back to number one. He wanted to bring some new talent in. Jack Knight, who spent a good time in Detroit, had the title of publisher there. Lee Hills was executive editor, but he [Knight] really ran it as the publisher. They decided to expand and try to take over Detroit again, so Lee asked me whether I would be interested in doing that. I told him of course I would [and that] I would take any assignment that he had in mind for me.

L: What year was that?

N: That was in November of 1960.

L: So, you were still in your thirties?

N: Yes, I was thirty-six then.

L: Just for information for this tape, Jack Knight is John S. Knight, who is Jim's older brother.

N: While Jim is general manager [and] ran the *Miami Herald*, Jack Knight lived half the year in Akron, Ohio, where the Knight organization [now Knight-Ridder, News Inc.] started with the *Beacon Journal*. Then four or five months of the year [he lived] in Miami and moved around to Detroit and Chicago and other places where they had newspapers.

L: How long did you and your family live in Detroit?

N: I lived there a little over two years. The family lived there two years. I came in November. The family came in January.

L: Your title there was?

N: I was assistant executive editor, which was assistant to Lee Hills. Because he was, in effect, publisher, I was fortunate because he had me do a lot of things outside of the newsroom as well as in the newsroom.

L: He was executive editor and publisher?

N: No. Jack Knight still had the title of publisher, but Lee Hills was de facto publisher. He ran the whole thing.

L: Then, you got a call from Gannett [New Jersey newspaper group], right?

N: Yes, I did. I was asked by them whether I would be interested in joining their organization. I told them I was happy where I was, but I interviewed with a couple of their top editorial people and, then, Paul Miller (who was the president, the chief executive, and chairman of the Gannett) offered me an opportunity to come in and run their two Rochester, New York, newspapers. I was very happy at the Knight organization. I had been with them almost ten years, learned a great deal, had the greatest respect for Jack Knight and Lee Hills, particularly, but others as well. But I also felt that someone in the family, probably, would ultimately inherit running those papers. At Gannett, there was

no family member in the business. It was run by an outside professional, Paul Miller, and it was pretty clear that that would be the pattern. So as I waited, even though the Knight organization was much bigger and professionally a much better organization at that time, I decided to make the move at age thirty-eight and see if I could not carve out a new career with another company.

L: What would your title be when you changed over?

N: I went in as a general executive for a couple of months, with the understanding that I would be the general manager of the two Rochester newspapers, to begin with.

L: Gannett was not the large group that it is today?

N: No. It was a regional group. It had, I think, sixteen newspapers that were all in the northeast. Most of them were in New York state; one was in Connecticut, one was in Danville, Illinois, [and] one was in New Jersey, but it was primarily a northeastern regional group.

L: Then, while you were working for Gannett, this idea of the paper in Cape Canaveral/Cocoa/Melbourne, did this then come back to the surface?

- N: Sure. It did not take me long; in fact, during the interviewing process, I had told Paul Miller that I had a strong interest in and knowledge of the state of Florida and that Gannett ought to be in business in Florida. He told me, well, I have tried several times to buy a paper down there, but somebody always beats me to it or offers more money. I said, well, maybe you ought to start one. So, I told him about my experiences here, in the Cocoa Beach area, and his interests peaked pretty quickly even though, then, people were not starting new newspapers because the newspaper industry was not doing all that well.
- L: Let us talk about that just for a second. What is interesting about this is, I think since World War II, no new daily had ever been successfully started in the whole country, right?
- N: Yes, I think with the exception of *NewsDay* on Long Island in New York.
- L: So, there was a lot of resistance to trying to start a paper from scratch?
- N: There was a lot of skepticism on the part of the people in the industry, and there was a good bit of resistance within Gannett. But, Paul Miller was the boss and if the boss wants to do something, he can overcome resistance.
- L: So, how did you go about starting a paper here? You actually acquired another paper first, right?
- N: Yes. By that time, the *Melbourne Times* was a five-day weekly, the *Cocoa Tribune* had become a five-day daily, a small circulation, and *Titusville Star Advocate*, likewise. They were all trying to keep up with the huge growth in the space coast area. I suggested to Paul Miller that we ought to try to buy one or two or all three of those papers and use them as a base for a new newspaper. We made an effort, first, to buy the *Cocoa Tribune*. You probably do not want all these details, but Paul Miller sent others down to deal with Marie "B'dear" Holderman. She was well along in her years. I think she was, then, late seventies or eightyish. She had all kinds of offers from other people to buy her paper, and she turned them all down. She turned our people down, showed them the way to the door; it was not for sale. Having been rebuffed there, I said to Paul, we just have to go ahead with our plans to start a new paper, but why don't you let me have a shot at Mrs. Holderman, because I had known her from my days at the *Herald* coming up to the Cocoa area. I came down to visit her and told her that I wanted her to know what Gannett's plans were: that we were going to start a new daily newspaper in this area, serving the Brevard County area, and that we thought that it would be pretty tough competition, that we were prepared to spend quite a lot of money, [and that] we did not want her to get hurt. We loved her, admired her, and respected her. We were willing to make a

generous offer to buy the *Cocoa Tribune*, to keep publishing it as an afternoon newspaper, which it was, and we were going to start a new morning daily for the whole area. She was only lukewarm at first; then, her associate who had been with her for many years, John Pound, and I had dinner that evening at Bernard Surf, which is a favorite restaurant hangout for everybody, and we talked about it some more. I went to see her the next morning and she said, I just do not want to sell. But, she said, progress around here is getting to me; I am just sick and tired of all this progress. So I said, well, why don't you let us put together an offer? She said, not yet. I went back and told Paul [that] I thought that there was a possibility of acquiring that paper. He said, why don't we bring her up here? Bring her, her associate, and some of her family. So, I called her and said, we would like to fly our Gannett plane down and bring you and John Pound, and she had two grown daughters living with her, up here to spend a weekend; you can see what kind of company we are and get to know the people, and we are prepared to make you a good offer. So, she accepted that, and we flew the four of them up in the Gannett plane to Rochester. It was on the Kentucky Derby day. They came in early in the morning. We had a good conversation, and they got right to the point. [There was] a little confusion on John Pound's part about whether she was there to talk about selling or not, but she said she was there prepared to sell if the offer was right. She had John Pound tell us that they thought the paper was worth \$1,900,000. I looked at Paul. Paul looked at me. We both shook our heads, and Paul said, well, that seems like a fair price; why don't we shake hands on it? It happened that quickly. We did shake hands on it. Of course, the lawyers fooled around for a while to get the job done. That is how that came about. Once we had that base, we owned the *Cocoa Tribune*, we used that as a kind of a background in many ways, [as] kind of a veil to hide our plans to start a new daily.

L: Now, the *Titusville Star Advocate* and the *Melbourne Times*, they were not purchased by Gannett, although the Melbourne paper was purchased later, was it not?

N: Yes. The *Melbourne Times* was, then, part of the Perry [John H. Perry, Jr.] chain. We made an effort to buy that and were unsuccessful, but we then followed-up. After we announced the *Cocoa Tribune* purchase, I went to see the **Hudson** family, Bob Hudson and his father, and told them what we were going to do and why we had bought the *Cocoa Tribune* and that we thought there was a chance that they would get hurt some by having a big new daily newspaper in the area. [I told them that] we were prepared to make them an offer for their paper to keep it going as an afternoon paper. Like we saw often the case, they had hoped to keep it in the family but they also saw the problems, so we ended up with them agreeing to sell us the *Titusville Star Advocate*. My recollection is, that price was \$1,000,000.

- L: This was about the same time?
- N: It was a few months after we bought the *Tribune*.
- L: I see. So, you did not acquire the *Melbourne Times*?
- N: Not at that time. No, it stayed in the Perry chain until it suffered. What happened to it was what we had said might happen to the *Cocoa Tribune* and the *Star Advocate*. They were hurt in their daily circulation by the new newspaper, by *TODAY*. The Perry people decided sometime later to convert it back to three times a week, I think, and then to a weekly. Then we bought it from them.
- L: Was their agreement between Gannett and these two families, the Holderman family and the Hudson families, that they would continue to have some involvement with the papers?
- N: Sure. We did not have any contracts, but we told Mrs. Holderman that she could continue to run the *Cocoa Tribune* as long as she wanted to, and we told Bob Hudson that he could run the *Titusville Star Advocate* as long as he wanted to. Mrs. Holderman did that until she became ill and died.
- L: I am getting a little bit ahead of myself, but how is that possible if you started a new paper? Do you mean she was still publisher when you started *TODAY*?
- N: The *Cocoa Tribune* continued to be a small afternoon daily serving the Cocoa and Rockledge area, primarily.
- L: So that continued for quite a few years?
- N: Oh yes.
- L: Do you remember how long that was?
- N: No. We would have to check the dates on that. It continued until after her death. Then, all three papers, Melbourne owned by the Perrys and Cocoa and Titusville owned by us, suffered in circulation because *TODAY*, as it was then called, it is now called *FLORIDA TODAY*, began to take over most of the readership.
- L: That became a morning paper?
- N: *TODAY* was a morning paper. The other three were afternoon papers.
- L: You did not really start that paper until you had done a lot of research?

N: Oh yes.

L: Subterfuge is not the right word, but you sort of shielded the fact that you were going to start a new paper from your competition, right?

N: Yes. As I said, we were talking about expanding the *Cocoa Tribune* and adding a Sunday edition. We had to explain why we were bringing in new presses and new equipment, so you could call that a subterfuge.

L: But I mean, you were concerned with the competition would do what?

N: We were concerned, particularly, that Orlando might come in. Martin Andersen, a very, very aggressive, successful publisher, we thought, might come in and start his own Brevard County paper. He already had a section for Brevard County in the *Orlando Sentinel*. He had at that time, I think, 29,000 in circulation in Brevard County, the biggest chunk of circulation they had outside of Orange County. So, we were concerned that he and his successor, Bill Conomos [William Conomos, editor and publisher, 1966-1976], might beat us to the draw. That is why we worked under the pretense of starting a Sunday edition for the *Cocoa Tribune*, even though Mrs. Holderman knew that was not what we were going to do.

L: Tell me a little bit about the research that you did here that was a little bit unusual, maybe, before you really got that paper under way.

N: We had used **Lou Harris & Associates**. Lou Harris was a famous pollster back in the 1960s who first made his reputation in political polling and then in newspaper polling. He did some very, very extensive and expensive research in this area to see how people felt about the papers they were reading, the big papers from out of the area, like Miami and Orlando and Jacksonville and Daytona and Tampa, and the local papers and what they [were] interested in, in a paper. The headlines were that these were people from all over the country, some from all over the world but mostly from all over the country, heavily from the upper Midwest, Northeast, Central part of the country. Most of them were well-educated. They were, what was then considered, high-tech people, and their interests went well beyond the city boundaries of Cocoa or Titusville or Melbourne or wherever they happened to be living. They were more globally oriented. Globally may be too strong a word but certainly oriented beyond their backyards. A lot of them had an interest in areas back home. Most of them had a love-hate relationship with sports teams elsewhere in the country. They wanted a, what they would often call, a more sophisticated daily newspaper that would emphasize heavily space coverage, since that is what most of them were doing for a living, but also emphasize coverage beyond the space coast,

coverage in Florida, the U. S. generally, and around the world. It was that research that convinced us that if we could put together a paper that was interesting in design and had content that would appeal to those people, then it might work.

L: You did a lot of running in of the paper before you actually published it, opening it to the public?

N: Oh sure. We spent many months putting the staff together, and we did a lot of dry runs. In fact, for a period of thirty days, we published it, actually published a paper every day. During, not all but most, of that thirty-day period, we printed them, and we hauled them to distribution points around the county to test out our circulation, the whole thing, and then dumped them.

L: *TODAY* got a reputation, almost immediately, for innovative design. I can remember that as a professor at the University of Missouri. Immediately, you began hearing about *TODAY* as, probably, the most advanced newspaper in design in the country.

N: Yes. It was designed to appeal to people who were in a hurry. Everybody at the Cape was in a hurry. They worked hard. They played hard. We had young people design it, and there were no sacred cows: the newspaper had not done anything before that you could not do differently. So, they designed a breezy-looking paper, breezy in content and appearance, based on what the research said the people in this area wanted. It looked a little different, and it was a little different in content from the traditional newspapers of those days.

L: Was it an immediate success, financially and circulationwise?

N: It was an immediate circulation success. These numbers can be verified--this was a long time ago, over thirty years ago--but I believe our circulation projections were for about 20,000 paid at the end of a year, and we had about 32,000 at the end of three months.

L: The first paper was published when?

N: March 21, 1966. So, circulation far exceeded our expectations right away. The advertising came somewhat more slowly but not bad[ly]. But because we had low advertising rates, we lost money as the circulation grew. We did not want to increase the rates too quickly [otherwise] advertisers would think we were trying to gouge them, so we lost money for almost two years. We had projected that we would be profitable after three to five years. It turned out that we were profitable a little after two years, and the newspaper has done very well for thirty years since.

L: Whose idea was that for the title?

N: The title was the work by the fellow by the name of Maurice Hickey. We called him Moe. He was the general manager who we brought down for the newspaper. He had been with us in Elmira, New York. We had been kicking around all kinds of titles, all of the old standard ones: *Star*, *Tribune*, *News*, *World*, everything. I did not like any of them. I wanted something different. He came to me one morning and said, I got it. We ought to call it *TODAY*. I thought he stole it from the NBC Today Show, but he claimed that he woke up in the middle of the night and thought of it. I think what happened was, he was a carouser; he usually closed all the bars in town. I think he did not wake up in the middle of the night; it probably hit him when one of the bars closed at two or three in the morning. But anyway, I thought it was a great idea.

L: Was it his idea to do it in all caps, also?

N: No. We had design people work on that. He just thought it ought to be *TODAY*. Then, I had design people work on that. We took the little sphere with the *O* and put satellites around it and stuff.

L: You were, at that point, the vice president of Gannett?

N: Yes.

L: Yet, you were running this newspaper.

N: Yes.

L: So, were you able to maintain the other duties, or did you just take a sabbatical from that job to stay down here and see that this paper got off the ground.

N: No, I wore both hats. I was general manager of the Rochester papers and a VP of the company. I was down here much of the time for at least six months, but I went back and forth. I kept a place here, but I commuted. To make the Rochester thing work, I brought in a genius as the executive editor, a fellow by the name of John Quinn. He really made it comfortable for me to be away from there and down here most of the time.

L: So, were you the publisher of *TODAY* here? Were you listed as the publisher?

N: No, I did not have that title. I had the title of president. I took the title of president because we established a corporation called Gannett Florida, which would include *TODAY*, Cocoa, Titusville. So, I was president of Gannett Florida,

but I did not have the title of either editor or publisher.

L: Was there a publisher?

N: Moe Hickey was the general manager and then was named publisher later.

L: And John Quinn was the editor?

N: No. The first executive editor was James Head. The first managing editor was Ron Martin. Ron Martin now runs the Atlanta papers.

L: Yes, I know.

N: Jim Head lives in Tampa. He went on and became editor of *Parade Magazine*. They were the two top editorial positions.

L: So, what was John Quinn doing?

N: John Quinn was running the Rochester papers for me. He was the executive editor up there.

L: You were starting a new paper, and there were papers in the vicinity that had large circulations. They just did not sit back and take it, especially Orlando. What kind of competition did they give you in those early days?

N: Well, the *Orlando Sentinel*, Martin Andersen and Bill Conomos were very, very aggressive. They considered this their territory, so they put in a lot of cut-rate circulation programs. They increased their coverage for their Brevard [County] section. They had a very good local Brevard section. They were tough competitors. The other newspapers—Miami, Tampa, Daytona, Jacksonville—really did not react very aggressively, but they all assumed that we would fail sooner rather than later. *Miami Herald* had the second biggest circulation here. I think they had 9,000 or 10,000 daily, and Orlando had 29,000. So, Orlando had a big chunk of its business to protect. We had a lot of fun with that. They were the big guys, and we were the little guys. So, we picked on them. I manufactured a few feuds with Martin Andersen. I liked him personally and respected him a great deal, but I had to pick on him. I called him the highway man from Andersenville and said all he wanted to do was make all his money in Brevard County and run with it back to Orlando, that kind of thing.

L: You were a good general, and a good general always thinks about what the other general would do. Suppose you had been Martin Andersen. You are Al Neuharth, and you are Martin Andersen thinking like Al Neuharth. What would you have done in those days to really grind this new paper under?

- N: [Laughs.] I would have prayed a lot. I am not sure I would have done anything all that different from what Martin Andersen or Bill Conomos did. I might have done it with a little more power, a little more money. They basically took a very good existing, established product and tried to improve it and sell it at more attractive rates. I do not know that they could have done, or that I would have done, much more than that. I think it was just a question of whether that established paper had enough of a hold on readers in Brevard County or whether, as our research showed, they were ready for something new and innovative and they were not interested in the tradition of this area or of any newspapers in this area, because they were all outsiders.
- L: So, there was just room for a new newspaper in what amounted to a new population.
- N: I think so. I think anyone, the Orlando ownership, could have come in here and started a new newspaper. I think the *Miami Herald* ownership could have. I think anybody could have and probably run others out of town the way we did.
- L: They just did not. Later on, as president of Gannett, an executive—I am not sure exactly; I know your history and when you became, really, the president and CEO of Gannett—Gannett then, under your leadership, acquired other Florida papers as well: Pensacola, Fort Myers. Were you involved with those acquisitions?
- N: Yes, I was involved, but the chairman of Gannett at that time was Paul Miller, who really started the Gannett acquisition program. I was lucky to inherit that from him, and I was able to enhance it some. But, in the case of Pensacola, Paul Miller worked to acquire that from John Perry. In the case of Fort Myers, he worked to acquire that from **Baron Collier** and the Baron Collier family, and my only participation in that was a failure. Paul Miller was negotiating. Well, we all were. I mean, I was involved, but he was the chief negotiator. He was negotiating to buy both Fort Myers and Naples and had an agreement with Baron Collier that he would sell both of those papers to Gannett. Then—I do not remember what year this was—the year that they had agreed on a deal, on the first or second of July, Paul Miller got a call from Baron Collier saying that the rest of his family simply would not let him sell Naples because it was in Collier County, Collier County was the family name, and he would still sell the *Fort Myers News Press* to Gannett but he would not sell the *Naples Daily News*. So, Paul said, I have a young fellow who knows Florida better than I do; I want to send him down there to talk to you. At that point, I had not met Baron Collier. So, Paul put me on the Gannett plane and said, go down to Fort Myers and talk to **Chet Perry** and people there, and then go over to Palm Beach where Baron Collier lived. I went over to see Baron on the fourth of July of that year. We had a nice lunch at his oceanfront place. I told him all the reasons why it was

better for Naples and Collier County and the *Naples Daily News* for us to own both and that I thought there was a little more room in the price that Paul had offered, etcetera, but I was unsuccessful. It did not work. So, we ended up buying the *Fort Myers News Press* without getting the *Naples Daily News*, and the rest of that is history.

L: Were there any other newspapers in the state that you were influential in acquiring? I know you owned some weeklies as well.

N: Yes. We had some discussions about West Palm Beach with Perry, and we were unsuccessful at that. We had some discussions in Jacksonville.

L: Tell me about Jacksonville. Were you still president of Gannett when that paper was sold to the **Morris** family?

N: I was chairman and president of Gannett, and I was very disappointed that we were not able to acquire that. We had made strong overtures there and, we thought, pretty strong offers, but Billy Morris went beyond what we were prepared to do. The biggest disappointment to me was the Gainesville paper.

We were among a number of people who were hoping to acquire the Gainesville paper and the Tallahassee paper, and the *New York Times* was involved.

L: Because there is a whole string of them in Florida owned by the family, right?

N: Right.

L: What was the name of that family?

N: It was not the same family. The Gainesville paper was owned by (you will have to look this up), I think the son's name was Billy. We had a lot of conversations with them, and we thought we had the inside track. It ended up the *New York Times* was successful, and we were not. In Tallahassee, the same thing: we thought we had the inside track, and the Knight organization was successful, and we were not. So, while Gannett was very fortunate in acquiring Pensacola and Fort Myers and, then, Cocoa and starting *TODAY* over here, we were hopeful. Lakeland is included in that group too. Of course, in the beginning, before my involvement, Paul Miller had been very actively wooing Martin Andersen, to buy Orlando. It was partly because of his big disappointment when the *Tribune* people bought the *Orlando Sentinel*, *Star-Sentinel* that he was willing to make the investment in starting a new paper here.

L: So, you win a few, and you lose a few, as those things go.

N: Sure.

L: Largely because of you, I believe, the Gannett Foundation, as it was then called—it is now called the Freedom Farm--has a great relationship with the University of Florida College of Journalism.

N: Sure.

L: Do you recall that relationship, your involvement with that relationship?

N: Yes, very well. Once we were in business in Florida, we felt that we should be active in supporting, financially, certain institutions and certain endeavors. **Jim Jesse**—who you are going to be talking with, I understand—is the one who was instrumental in convincing us that we should make a major contribution to the University of Florida because they were in hopes of building a new journalism building back in those days before your time. They had terrible quarters. They were producing good journalists. We were hiring quite a few of them. So, we had conversations. Again, Jim Jesse deserves the credit for most of this. We had conversations with the president of the University, Stephen C. O'Connell [president, University of Florida, 1967-1973], and the dean of the school. He was convinced and convinced us that if he had a lead grant, of something like \$1,000,000, he would be able to use that as leverage in Tallahassee to get some real money from the state. So, that is what we ended up doing, giving \$1,000,000 to the University of Florida, which I think helped get that project under way.

L: I think that is one of the few times that the Gannett Foundation ever gave that kind of money for a building program.

N: It was the first time we had given \$1,000,000. We had given \$500,000 out at Oklahoma State where Paul Miller went to school, but it was our first \$1,000,000 grant. Back in those days, \$1,000,000 was quite a bit of money.

L: A lot of money, and I recall [that] you must have had a very good involvement with the University because when they offered me the job as dean, I remember, after President [Robert] Marston [president, University of Florida, 1974-1984] called me, the first call I got was a call from you asking me to take the job. I was very, very flattered that the president of Gannett would be calling me to ask me to do that.

N: Sure. I told the president I would lobby if they picked somebody that was a genius. When they went after you with your credentials, we clearly felt—and you later proved us right—that would be the biggest single thing that could happen to boost the program at the University of Florida. I would not have done that if they

had been courting somebody who I did not think had the credentials to do the job that you ended up doing.

L: Bob Marston was very influential in getting that money put into a permanent endowment, rather than the building fund.

N: Right.

L: I would never let the University of Florida sell that stock. It was in Gannett stock. Thanks to you, by the time I left the deanship, that Gannett stock was worth over \$4,000,000.

N: That is a modest pay.

L: I do not know if you ever knew that.

N: That endowment was worth more than \$4,000,000 in Gannett stock, which did a fantastic job for the college even more than the building did.

N: Sure. We had a good run. You were smart to hold onto it.

L: Right. Well, I had great faith in you, Al.

N: Thank you.

L: In fact, to sort of bring this to a close because I wanted to touch upon the Florida connections, what you did from that point on [is] you started the paper *TODAY*. Then, having been successful in doing that, you also had the idea of starting not a specialized newspaper but a general circulation, national newspaper, which was a first also. Was *TODAY* the seeds of *USA TODAY*?

N: Sure. If *TODAY* in Florida had gone belly-up, there would be no *USA TODAY*. Remember, I had one failure in So Dak Sports and one success in *TODAY*, here in Florida. That was the thing that led me to believe that this might be attempted on a national scale. Because we had a very young staff at *TODAY* in Florida, there were a lot of those people still around who had played a role in Florida and the starting of a successful new newspaper that I was able to tap. They were either still at Gannett, or we were able to bring them back to Gannett. So, the germ of the idea for *USA TODAY* was born because of the success of *TODAY* in Florida. The way that it developed was partly because of the people who had cut their eye-teeth on *TODAY* in Florida, who had a good many years more experience and who were willing to do it again on a national scale. I am talking about people like Ron Martin, who was the managing editor at *TODAY* in Florida; he became the first managing editor of *USA TODAY*. I am talking about Moe

Hickey, who was the first publisher of *TODAY* in Florida, who became general manager of *USA TODAY* during its planning stages. He was no longer with us when we began publication, but he was influential in the planning of it. John Quinn, who in his Rochester Gannett corporate role had been very influential in the design of *TODAY* in Florida, became the chief architect of the news content of *USA TODAY*. So, a lot of that Florida background and experience—and there were many others in advertising, circulation, and news—who had been through the experience in starting the paper in Florida who helped us make it work with *USA TODAY*.

L: But, you sent the original task force to think about this newspaper and its possibilities right down here to Cocoa for, what, a year?

N: No, about six months. Yes, we put them up for six or seven months in a little cottage in Cocoa Beach, kind of locked them up, and had them do their thinking and the developing of their plan there. They traveled all around the country and the world and came back here. Of course, I was living here. I wanted to be where I could keep a close eye on them. While I was a resident here, I was still commuting a lot from up north. We put in charge of that group **Vince Vazano**, who had been a publisher of *FLORIDA TODAY*. He was the head of that task force of those five young people that planned *USA TODAY*. One of them [who] had a strong Florida background, **Frank Vega**—who is now in Detroit running that operation, but he had worked in Tampa and elsewhere in Florida—was our circulation planner in the task force. They did it all here. I wanted them to do it here for three reasons: one, I wanted to be where I could check on them every weekend or get with them every weekend; two, I wanted them to be where *FLORIDA TODAY* reminded them of the success of a new newspaper and where they could see how it was done and go back and retrace some of that; three, I wanted them in the shadows of the launch pads at the Kennedy Space Center, where I think there is more vision per square mile than anywhere on earth. It was true then, and it is still true today. I think that environment, that combination of things, is what helped those three young kids—I say young; their average age was thirty—come up with a blueprint for starting *USA TODAY*.

L: Vince Vazano makes his home here, does he not?

N: Sure. He lives down the street.

L: Al, I can remember—because I was the dean in those days—when you started *USA TODAY*, that you put a lot of your own reputation on the line, because everybody said you were crazy. I know every editor and publisher in Florida said that you were going to go broke doing it. They laughed at it. They ridiculed it, really. They laughed at the shape of the box. They laughed at the attempt to start a nationwide newspaper. Did you realize at the time that you

were facing the So Dak Sports again?

N: Of course. I knew all about the laughter and the ridicule, and I was laughing at the laughter. I was having more fun than they. I had the advantage.

L: You were not worried? You were not concerned?

N: No, I was not worried at all. I knew that it was a high-risk venture, but I was never worried about it because I knew that we were privy to much more information than our critics. I knew we had done it in Florida on a small scale. It was my feeling then, and is now, that whether it is a newspaper or anything else, if you want to go into a smaller venture than what you have been doing, you divide; if you want a bigger venture, you multiply. That is somewhat of an oversimplification, but at *USA TODAY*, we multiplied many times over the things that had worked at *TODAY* in Florida. So, our people knew what they were doing.

L: What do you mean by divide, on the smaller scale?

N: Well, divide: if you have a big operation and you want to downscale it or you want to bust it up into regional operations, then you divide. You do not destroy the formula. You use the same formula, but you divide. You do everything smaller. If you want to take a successful model, like *TODAY* in Florida and make it a national enterprise, then you multiply many times over. You figure out what the multiplier is. But, the basics are pretty much the same. The implementation changes some, but the basics are pretty much the same.

L: I think there was no other newspaper person in the United States who could really make *USA TODAY* a success but Al Neuharth. Because it took more than an idea, I think, and it took more than vision. It took someone who was a risk-taker and who had power and who was willing to bull this through, because did you not face a lot of opposition from the Gannett board on this?

N: First of all, you are overly generous, you are very kind, and you are wrong. There are other people who could have done this. I happened to be in the right place at the right time. There was opposition within the Gannett company to the idea, initially, but all board members, all of them ultimately came around. When we voted on the decision to do it, it was unanimous. During the days when we were bleeding about \$10,000,000 a month, nobody ever wavered because they knew what the mileposts were along the way [and] that if we get X circulation by X time, we were on target. They knew that advertising would come slowly. They knew that it was going to cost us a lot of money. It cost a little more than we thought it would.

- L: \$50,000,000 is the amount usually banded about, is that conservative?
- N: That is very conservative. No. I think it is no secret that the after-tax investment at *USA TODAY*, until it became profitable, was about \$400,000,000 which is \$800,000,000 before tax. We were using fifty-cent dollars, remember, because of the government. You know, it was money we earned elsewhere. So, that was a lot of money.
- L: And the bleeding kept up for how many years?
- N: It was five years before we had profitability and a little longer than that before we had a full year of profitability. We had several months of profitability in the fifth year. But now, it is making more money than the law allows. When you look at that \$400,000,000 to \$450,000,000 price tag, it is not much more than we paid for some individual newspapers, like Des Moines and Louisville. So if you looked at it in terms of the investment in a major newspaper, it was a bargain. But, if you looked at it as something that might possibly end up being worth zero, then it was kind of risky.
- L: Were there any suggestions from the board during those five years that you throw in the towel and junk the whole thing? Did that happen?
- N: Never. No, there was never any hesitation or nervousness on the board, either expressed to me privately or expressed at board meetings because, again, they were privy to the information. See, we knew when we hit the magic number of 1,000,000 in circulation, which happened in seven months, we knew that was the end of the ball game, that then it was just a matter of time until those geniuses on Madison Avenue, the advertising geniuses who claim that they are the most creative people in the world but who are really the most conservative on earth and who do not want to invest their clients' money in a new publication or a new idea because they are afraid if it goes belly-up that they will be blamed for it. We knew that the 1,000,000 would get to them and that it would just be a matter of time. If we had not gotten that kind of circulation, if we had lingered for a year or two at 400,000, 500,000, 600,000, 700,000 circulation, then we could have had a problem. But, once that circulation break-through came clear and it kept growing and growing, then everyone was convinced that we had a winner, internally.
- L: Going back, what date did *USA TODAY* publish the first [issue]?
- N: September 15, 1982.
- L: How many years of preparation went into that, would you say?

N: Between three and four. Well, more than that. Probably five or six years of thinking went into it, but we organized formally—we set aside some research money, \$1,000,000—three years in advance. We put the task force together about two and a half years in advance. So, I would say three years of full-time planning on the part of a lot of people and another two or three years of thinking and talking about it.

L: Was *USA TODAY* your idea? I mean, you do not have to be modest. I mean, really, this is going to be your story 100 years from now.

N: Let us say that it was generally agreed that if *USA TODAY* failed, I had to take all the blame.

L: Good. Like the Normandy Invasion. Is that right?

N: Right, and that if it succeeded, there would be quite a few architects who would take some of the credit and many who deserved some of the credit.

L: Victory has a thousand fathers, right?

N: It was my neck that was out there, I guess.

L: When did you really conceive the idea that, really, there was room for a national newspaper?

N: In the mid-1970s, Gannett had grown to where we were in thirty-six states. We had newspapers in thirty-six states, and I traveled to all those places all of the time. I went to every place once a year. Then, I became chairman of what was then the American Newspaper Publishers' Association, 1977-1978, and I went to all fifty states in that role. We had our own Gannett plane. I would load it up. I read every newspaper everywhere, studied them. I talked to editors about how they thought they were doing. I talked to readers. My conclusion was that most of the newspapers in the country, including Gannett newspapers, were pretty good but not as good as their editors thought they were and that, in most cases, newspaper readers had a hunger for something more or something different than what they were getting and that more and more of them were turning to the tube more, to television more, particularly the younger ones. At that time, we had quite a few newspaper deaths and no births; there were very few births. I was convinced that we had to do something rather dramatic with our newspapers. Because we had so many Gannett newspapers, over eighty dailies at that time, that was a great concern to me. That was how Gannett made its money. So, as a result of that feeling that we had to change the way newspapers looked and what was in them, I said, I wonder if we could not only change what we have but if we could start something totally new and totally different. Then, we began

talking with people internally, like the John Quinns and other creative people, **John Curly**. That is how it developed. That is why it developed.

L: Looking back, it has been fifty years since you first entered the newspaper business, maybe a few years more. Tell me, how do you believe the audience has changed, not just the newspaper but the news audience? Also, how have newspapers changed? Thirdly, how do newspapers need to change to compete?

N: The third one is harder to answer, but I will try. Certainly, the audience has changed dramatically in fifty years, in terms of its interests. When I grew up in South Dakota and graduated from the University of South Dakota in 1950, there was not much global interest. By global, I mean national or international. People were interested primarily in their community, their city, their state, or their region. Sure, they would be interested in the president of the United States and a few so-called national sports teams, but not strong interest. That changed, I think, for two reasons. One, it changed because so many millions of us traveled around the country and around the world in World War II. We came back to our home base, and we had a somewhat broader vision or clearer vision of the world. Secondly, it changed because of television. When it became possible for everyone everywhere to get, on the tube, quick information and entertainment, they became more reluctant to fight their way through dull gray newspapers. When Lou Harris did the research for us on *USA TODAY*, I remember he sat down with us in the news room, or in a meeting room, to talk about the survey results. He had a copy of the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* and he said, I am absolutely convinced, based on this research, that the television generation will not continue to fight its way through dull gray newspapers. He leafed through the *Times*, and he leafed through the *Wall Street Journal*. Well, he was right, because it was the television generation. So, those interests had changed dramatically from 1950 to 1975 or 1980. That is why we sometimes get more credit than we deserve for creating all these things at *USA TODAY* that were different. We did not create very much; we stole. We stole most of it from the tube or from magazines, and we adapted it to a daily form of print. Do you look at it? There were some directs. Do you like the weather map? We stole it right off the TV screen and put it on a piece of paper. And the color and the graphics. So, they were not new, but they were done to adapt to how the public had changed in its interests.

L: Then, how have newspapers changed?

N: Newspapers have changed. I think it is fair to say that the appearance and content of newspapers have changed dramatically since 1980, for better or worse, depending on your point of view. But, it has changed. We have a smart-aleck guy who I admire very much on the *USA TODAY* staff named

**Taylor Buckley**, who said, when we were labeled McPaper everybody called us McPaper, the fast food of journalism; *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post* coined that, and I laughed; I thought it was a nice label--

L: In fact, there is a book about the beginning of the paper, and it is called *McPaper*.

N: Right, and Taylor Buckley said, well, they call us McPaper, but more and more, they are stealing all of our McNuggets, as they were. Now, you can go to any city in the country, and the color, the graphics, [and] the brightness is there. There are no longer any dull gray newspapers, with the exception of the *Wall Street Journal*. Even the *New York Times*, the other day, ran a three-column eight-inch deep picture of David Cone [MLB pitcher: New York Yankees, 1995-present; Kansas City Royals, 1981-1995] on page one being carried off the Yankee Field after he threw his perfect game. They would not have thought of putting an inch of sports on page one twenty years ago. So, newspapers have changed.

L: A lot of that change has been due to, first, *TODAY* that existed here, I would suggest, and then *USA TODAY*, of course, had a tremendous affect.

N: Yes. I think *TODAY* in Florida had some impact, as well, but *USA TODAY* had more. As to your third question, which is not as easy, I think newspapers in the future, first of all, will have to continue to recognize that they are dealing with a generation who grew up on television and who is now wed to the Web, or many members of this generation are wed to the Web. I think they will have to make sure that they, in print, can supplement what people get on the tube or on the Web, in interesting and more complete ways and in an easier-to-get fashion. Everybody on television came in and said, that is the end of newspapers. Well, it did not happen. Now, a lot of people are saying, well, the Internet is the end of newspaper. I think that will not happen for these reasons. If newspapers recognize that newspaper journalists are the best gatherers of news and information in any profession, the best gatherers—they are trained gatherers of news—nobody else can match that. Television cannot match it. Radio cannot match it. Certainly, the Internet cannot match it. Also, recognize that most of the news that we have gathered traditionally, that our newspaper people have gathered, never sees the light of day. More of it is discarded than printed. You know that.

L: Of course.

N: So, it seems to me [that] now, we have to be even more diligent in seeing to it that the best gatherers of news, newspaper journalists, have more avenues in which to disseminate that news—on the tube, on the air and radio, on cable, on the Web—so that people can get their news, their good professionally-gathered

news, when they want it, where they want it, and how they want it.

L: So, you do not see the division between the media, well, the division, yes, but that they are all part of a conglomerate, the Internet, the television, and radio.

N: Oh yes. I think absolutely. I think the successful ones, the successful owners and operator, in the news and information business will be what you call, properly, the conglomerates. They will have professional gathering of news, and they will disseminate it in more ways. Now, do I think newspapers will be one of those ways? Absolutely.

L: Because there is something that is serendipitous about a newspaper that no other medium has.

N: You are correct. I think there are two things. Well, there are more than two, but the two key things are that they are the most affordable way to get the most news and information and advertising, because cable costs more money and you have to make an investment to be on the Internet, and they are the most portable. I have said this and people think I say it facetiously, but I mean this: you cannot take the computer to the bathroom with you. Newspapers are so portable that our research shows that newspapers are read everywhere: living room, bathroom, bedroom, bar room, office. So, it is not a chore to take the newspaper with you and read it. For me, the Web is not a bore, but it is a chore. You have to sit someplace. You know? I do not think that the mass appeal of newspapers will vanish. I think it will still be the biggest single, most affordable way for news and information in the broadest sense, including advertising, to be distributed, but that those who gather that will have to take advantage of other ways to disseminate it as well.

[End of the interview.]