

FNP 37

Interviewee: John Haile

Interviewer: William McKeen

Date: July 21, 1999

M: It is July 21, 1999, and we are in the office of John Haile at the *Orlando Sentinel*. Would you spell your complete name?

H: I am actually a Junior because I was named for my father. So, I am Lloyd Johnson (which is a family name) Haile, Junior. As a child, I happened to have a nurse who focused on the John in Johnson and called me Johnny. That stuck with me until I was almost through Vanderbilt University. I had gone to work with the *Nashville Tennessean*, and I submitted my first story with the byline Johnny Haile on it. The editor said, no, no, no; we are not going to do this. He said, how about John? So since then, I have been John.

M: What was your mother's name?

H: My mother's name was Pearl Gillila. That is Irish.

M: Where were you born?

H: I was born in Cleveland, Tennessee, which is in the southeastern part of Tennessee in the foothills of the Smokie Mountains. It is a beautiful area. When I was growing up, people would comment on being in the hills of Tennessee and [I would think] no, no, no, this is sort of a flat-lands; the hills are really up in the mountains there. Now, I go back, and they were right. I was in hills up in east Tennessee. It is beautiful country.

M: What is your birthday?

H: March 20, 1945.

M: What did your parents do for a living?

H: My dad was a clothing-salesman. Well, for most of his life, he was in sales. There were periods when he came in and worked at the main plant there in Cleveland, which was called **P_____ Clothes**, a manufacturer in men's clothing. During the Korean War, they periodically would ask him to come in and head up a department and focus on getting something working, but he enjoyed the sales. He was somebody who really wanted to be with people talking, so he just liked being out travelling [rather] than doing things on the clothes.

M: So he spent a lot of time on the road?

H: He definitely did. It was an interesting situation because we think of people who travel and are gone a lot as being separated from their families but, in some ways, [my situation] was the reverse of that. My dad spent a lot of time with his family because he would be home for periods and then gone for periods. But I was in school, and I played a lot of sports. I was a basketball player, football, and all this kind of stuff. My dad was always there, very actively.

M: Did he give you the love of fishing?

H: Well, he was out fishing all the time.

M: Does he still live in the area?

H: He does. He is eighty-nine years old and still lives here. My mom died about ten years ago. She came from an interesting background _____. We think today of all the progress that women _____. Her mother was a home-builder, and she ran her own business and built homes all over the area. Her father did some construction but was mostly a farmer.

M: How many brothers and sisters [do you have]?

H: I have one sister. **Mary** lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

M: Do you miss that area?

H: I miss the change of seasons, the greenery that goes with _____ the Tennessee area was very nice. Some day, I may end up back up there. I think that is the one thing that _____. I love being in Florida. I cannot imagine being in a much better situation than what has been going on in Orlando, particularly related to the newspapers, to journalism. But you do end up going back a lot of times to see the leaves change and the spring flowers and all of those things.

M: Did you go through public schools in Cleveland?

H: I did a fairly traditional route, a fairly typical Southern education program, segregated schools, for example. In the schools, there was very much a focus on the fundamentals which was, in many ways, very good. I mean, to this day, I can take on anybody on grammar and _____. I wonder if there are four of us who could produce a _____, like a language newsletter-style grammar _____ for the paper I have been doing. On no particular schedule, we try to do that letter every two months. We have these great debates with grammar, and I will put myself up against any style book because it was just sort of drilled into me. It was interesting, though, because when I graduated from high school, I went to Vanderbilt and I was going to be an English major. It became apparent that I had

not approached some of these subjects the way that all these other kids had to, the ones coming out of private-schools, because they were better versed in the interpretive parts of English literature and in looking at something and trying to understand the different meanings, where I had not had that kind of breadth of exposure. There was a difference there but in the fundamentals, I had wonderful teachers who cared about the students, supported the students, and helped us get involved in other things as well. So, it was just a love of the language that has stayed with me.

M: What did you see yourself doing when you were in high school? What career did you envision?

H: I thought I would be a journalist. I have always had an interest with the art, if you will, in that even as a young child, I used to have my own little printing-press, one of these little things you could crank by hand. You could put the little letters in. They had the little rubber-letters, and you would line them up. I did newspapers for my neighborhood and stuff. I used to go out and sell them for a penny and whatever ____ bits and pieces, stuff like the _____. It was kind of neat. Then, in high school, I was sports editor. I actually doing a lot of the business side in things as well. Interestingly, I came back to that in some later parts of my career. One of the interesting things that happened to me was that when I was a junior in high school, the local radio station was trying to introduce FM radio to the area. That shows how old I am. So they wanted to go with more of a contemporary format, and they looked for a couple of students to be DJs, so a senior and myself were selected for these jobs as disc jockeys. So I got involved with radio when I was in high school. I was covering sports for the high-school newspaper. I started covering sports for the local newspaper. I did that in the summer, doing little ____ things. So I got involved at a fairly early age. In fact, in the summer after I graduated from high school, in 1963, I was doing some radio, but I also had a job as a plasterer. It was great experience. Everybody ought to have these jobs. For those jobs, you had to be there at seven or seven-thirty in the morning, at the latest. Before I would get to work, I also would do all the Little League baseball games for the newspaper. I had this thing where the coaches would drop off the score-books from the previous night. I used to try to go to one game myself, but then the coaches would drop off the score-books from the other games. I would reconstruct those games based on the score-books. So, I would write those stories for the paper, and they would pay me by the inch. I forget how much it was. I think it was \$0.10/inch. So, I would do all that before I went to work at seven o'clock. I look back on that and think, how in the world did I do that? Then, there came this critical juncture in my career. That year, one of our teams went to what was called the Dixie Youth World Series. It wasn't Little League, it was actually a segregated league _____. I had a choice of staying with this plastering company and going to another job that we had down in Georgia or staying with the radio/newspaper combo and covering baseball. Obviously, the

newspaper/radio combo was it, put that way.

M: As a disc jockey, you played, presumably, pop music of the time?

H: Yes, I can tell you all there is to know about hit songs from the early 1960s.

M: Phil Spector, the Beach Boys . . .

H: All of that stuff. Nat King Cole. Again, it was not really hard stuff. It was just your fundamental rock 'n roll stuff and some easy listening themes that had come in from that era.

M: I am getting off the subject, but this is something I am particularly interested in. I think radio has played a subversive role in history in that you grew up in a segregated community, but radio waves do not follow segregation. You say you played Nat King Cole. Did you play very many other black artists?

H: Oh yes. I mean, whatever was _____ early rock. _____ that makes rock. So, it was pretty good.

M: _____ the LAC in _____, the radio station?

H: Yes. LAC was probably the far end of that. They were more progressive than most of the stations, because you would listen to . . . what is the Chicago rock station?

M: WBBN?

H: _____. There is one up there. But, they were a little bit more moderate. LAC was always _____. They played some of the blues. They were much willing _____ to adapt. Their advertisements were always fascinating because they recognized that they had a good mix of audience. _____.

M: Going back to journalism, was it the technology of the little printing-press, or was it the need to write [and share] something [that first inspired you]?

H: I think it was just the fun of being in-the-know, of having a sense of what goes on around you. I tell my reporters that I am a fairly shy person. If you put me in a room, it is real easy to go over and stand in the corner. But one of the fun things about journalism is that it lets you play a role. It is like being on the stage. You see some of the same things, teaching does the same thing, and it gives you a forum to be someone else, and you adopt this personality that fits the role. So, you can go out and ask questions that you otherwise would not ask and deal with people you might not otherwise associate with. You are going to meetings you

would not normally go to. I really enjoyed that. It let me be somebody else in some ways. It is very much like acting, like being on a stage and play[ing a] role. Then, I go home at night and I am a very quiet person. You ask people around here what I am like, and you will hear, a really hard-driving, focused, determined guy. You know, I am insistent, and I am all these things. I am outspoken. But I am not quite that in the rest of my life.

M: How would you describe your childhood in general? Were you comfortable? Was there ever a struggle?

H: It was sort of idyllic. We grew up in a community without problems. Some of the things we did go through: we went through the polio scares in the 1950s. I had friends who had polio. That was a big thing. I mean, I still remember those March of Dimes drives that we had when the fire trucks would pull up and down the streets with sirens on, collecting money to fight polio and stuff like that. That was one big thing that was a real issue.

M: ____ were there other intrusions?

H: I had a good friend die from leukemia _____. Those kinds of things happened. So, there were these touches of . . . I mean, it was not all idyllic. I mentioned the segregation situation. It was one of those things that, in many ways, we weren't much aware of. The social awareness was just ____ five or ten years later. So, we were kind of immune to some of these issues. When you get into the 1960s, you have the Vietnam War and all the racial issues, and there were big changes. But during that time, the summers were fun; the schools were fun, too.

M: Vanderbilt was pretty darn expensive. Were you on a full scholarship? Were your parents able to afford it without help?

H: I had some loans, and my parents paid for it. I had a full scholarship to the University of Tennessee, which I chose not to accept, instead choosing Vanderbilt.

M: A full academic scholarship?

H: Yes. ____, and I chose not to. Then, you look back on that and think that the tuition at the time was, I think, \$1,100 at Vanderbilt, and I thought it was a lot of money. Ten years later, I had paid off my loans. I was thinking, my gosh, that was not anything. Why did I not extend those loans for thirty years or something? Stuff like that. When times change, perspectives change but at the time, it seemed like a lot of money, and I know my parents were committed to doing that. I mean, they had the idea that it was a good school and that it was worth it. I think it was a good school.

M: When you went off to college, did you think fairly certainly that you were going to be a journalist?

H: I had thought I would. I remember even in high school, I signed up for physics in my senior year, and I had a big discussion with my physics teacher about, I do not know why I am doing this [because] I am going on to be a journalist. He ended up talking me into because I had this great chemistry project that he said I could carry over, and it would be half my work. I would kind of cruise through my senior year if I would do this, so I took his class. As it turned out, we were both right. Of course, I did become a journalist but, also, my chemistry project won the regional science fair.

M: What was the project?

H: It was an experiment in which I developed a gas-**chromatic graph**, which analyzes the ingredients in mixtures by the chemical electrical resistance to heat. You take up a solution, vaporize that, and run it through an **inner** field in which you have electrical charge. It passes this electrical field, and the resistance varies. You can read that resistance by doing that, identifying various things, articles in the mixture.

M: Does it put on a show?

H: No, all you see are the electrical things, but the fun thing to me was that I got to develop it. I had pieces made for it. I had engineered pieces of plastic, I got a company in East Tennessee to do that _____, and different little bits and pieces I put together. Also, there were some interesting things that happens in a process of that type. The system depended on having compressed air, which forces these things through this long tube. What you do is, you heat up a little box which had asbestos on the inside. Now I regret that. Anyway, there was this asbestos-lined box to which we ran this long tube. Inside the tube was this _____ and if these gases are passing through the electric charge. One day, I forget what I had done but for some reason, that tube kind of stopped up. I used helium to run [through the tube]. The helium that I had came from this huge tank. I just kept pumping and finally, the tube explodes, and the whole box exploded. So, I have all this stuff all over my kitchen, and it is a mixture of asbestos, charcoal, and diamataceous earth and all this stuff. In my kitchen, in my house. So they were fun things. They were dangerous things.

M: Were you offered a science scholarship?

H: No, I did not get a science scholarship. As a matter of fact, when I did the placement test at Vanderbilt, they sent me off to [take] "rocks for jocks" in college. They said I was not cut out to be a doctor or anything like that.

M: Was that a relief?

H: I do not know. I really did not think much about it at the time because I really was not interested in going in that direction. English was my major.

M: If you knew you wanted to be a journalist, I am just curious [to know], how come you went to a university that had no journalism program.

H: I hate to say this. I felt then, and I still believe today, that journalism really requires people with a good knowledge of a lot of different subjects and that the best preparation is a good liberal-arts training with a sprinkling of the specialty that journalism requires. I do have a graduate degree in journalism, but I think the undergraduate work that focused on history, Russian studies, political science, constitutional-law, and all that stuff is really important. When I look back on my career, my general-education courses were some of the most valuable courses that I took, things that I might have missed if I had a straight journalism work. Again, admittedly, I went off and got a master's degree in communications, but I did it with an understanding, because, by then, I had already started working for the *Nashville Tennessean* and I said, if I am going to do this, I will make a deal: I will come and do your masters program, but do not make me take any of those journalism courses. So we struck a deal. I got a graduate degree from Boston University with the understanding that I would not have to take any journalism courses. I took the research courses that go with the graduate program, which were really good. I have used them a lot in my career. I took the **legal part of that**. I took the history of journalism which, I think, is good _____ understanding. But, I did not take any how-to-write-a-story courses or editing those things. I never had one of those courses.

M: Of course, during your time, you have seen journalism schools, particularly in the mid-1970s, become a big deal. I always joke with the students that they are all there _____ because they do not do math _____. You have dealt as an executive, with _____ of journalism graduates over the years. I do not know what percentage of your newsroom would be people with journalism degrees. I mean, you have not changed your mind about that?

H: Obviously, most of the people we hire have journalism degrees.

M: It is almost a union card.

H: Yes. But I will tell you that if I can find just a bright student who is either thinking about going off to law school or med school or something else and I can entice them to journalism, I have worked really hard at that. I think our business thrives on bright people. The **grand** idea is business, and reporting is an essential element of that. Our business is not really about just gathering information. It is

understanding where the stories are, even when they may not be readily apparent. I think sometimes that by being so focused on the hunting and gathering process, we miss out on the _____. People who have sharp minds and who are naturally inquisitive, for the most part, can learn what our business is all about in a fairly good time. I love journalism programs that have incorporated a lot of other aspects. If I looked back on my college career and I had to pull courses out, I would wonder about what I would pull out. Would it be my two years of Russian? I would love to _____ two years of Russian at the time, but it also gave you a great interest in Russian history and politics. I shifted my major from English to political science midway through college. That was fairly _____ stuff. Also, for the politics at the time, it was international _____. I could _____ probably a couple of Chaucer course credits. I think those are all within the perspective. I think all that stuff was valuable. I think the idea of having a broad liberal-arts background and being pushed in that direction but then having the opportunity to come back and focus on what part is important to you. I took constitutional-law, and I was not a great constitutional-law student. I will tell you that. But I loved that course, so much so that some years later when my younger son was at Vanderbilt, I recommended that course to him. He took it with the same professor, and he was equally enthralled, so much so that he ended up going to law school. But the principles in that constitutional-law course were so much of what we talk about in journalism today. I mean, there is the First Amendment issue, which [encompasses many] other issues which we continue to battle [over]: fair trial, free press. These fundamentals are right there in that kind of course, and we do not all understand that. It is really just a great grounding for journalism. Now, when I took a journalism-law course, it was a lot of the same stuff, and I think it reinforced that. But even like things such as statistics. I took statistics in college. It is another course that, at the time, I thought I could probably do without but, later, when I got into to doing research, graduate school stuff, it was easy then because I had that kind of background and had done all that stuff. I could do all those calculations. When I came back to do **polling**, as a reporter for the *Nashville Tennessean*, I was able to take _____ tests and say how good numbers were, which was actually very good application.

M: One of the things we are focusing on in this interview is technological changes, certainly because you are at a newspaper that is very innovative. I do not know that there are too many papers, if any others, that are doing the things you are doing. So, I wanted to sort of see the technological change in journalism through your eyes since you started at that paper in Cleveland. What was the name of the paper?

H: The *Cleveland Daily Bat*.

M: What was the newsroom like when you went there?

H: Actually, it had just gone **offsets [offset printing]**, so it was barely advanced for the time.

M: That was pretty heavy.

H: That was good. There were no linotypes around, and they had a _____. That was considered the Cadillac then. A nice little press, which made it easy for me. This was a paper, too, where we did everything. I mean, I was also the staff photographer as well as the _____ reporter.

M: How many people on the staff?

H: Maybe, six or eight, and, again, everybody did everything. You edit stuff, you write stuff, and you cover whatever happens. You write features. You cover politics. I enjoyed the learning experience. I took pictures, _____ photos. I came back, processed them, developed them, printed them, and cut them on the page.

M: Not able _____ to get that experience today.

H: Oh, I know, and I think it is unfortunate because you do not appreciate the process from beginning to end. So, _____. I think I actually have an **exacto-light** on my desk. If you open the top drawer, there is an **exacto-light** there. I can put down a micro _____ to measure and _____ and calculate the things for the pictures and all this kind of stuff. Those are just some neat things that you learn.

M: What else can you say about the newsroom? Were there any women in there?

H: There were, actually. Yes, we had women in the newsroom. I think, probably, that was more true of the smaller newsrooms like that, because it was said that they were fairly inexpensive employees, but they were doing mostly society and feature kinds of things. Obviously, they were part of the diversity of that newsroom. The community had a diverse population.

M: Was there smoking there?

H: Oh yes, always that, smoking in the newsroom. I don't understand that either because today, I just hate to be around smoke, but there was plenty of smoke in the newsrooms of the *Nashville Tennessean*. I smoked a couple of packs of cigarettes a night probably, and so did most everybody else. People smoked pipes. Actually, we had one cigar-smoker.

M: Working on manual-typewriters? Copy-paper?

H: When I went to the *Tennessean*, we were on manual-typewriters, and we would

put, sort of, a sheath of old newsprint that had been cut to size. Or else, on a couple of occasions, we had a roll of that down below the desk wrapped around a little coat-hanger or something. It would run up through the back of your desk and then up through your typewriter so that as you wrote stories, you would just sort of tear them off. There was an endless stream of paper. You just ripped them off. In fact, the most innocent thing about that was when I went to work for the *Tennessean*, I had gotten married when I was a junior at Vanderbilt. I decided I had better get some kind of job. There was a need here, and I better figure out how to manage this. So I went down to the *Nashville Tennessean*. Actually, I thought I was going to go into television. At the time, I was also the manager of university radio station at Vanderbilt. A couple of my colleagues had gone to work in television for the NBC affiliate W____. A very good TV station. There was guy named **Scott Osborne** and another guy named **Mark Corbett**. They were colleagues of mine. Both [went on to] nice careers. At the time, it was funny. Of course, there were a lot of stars who, during those days and some of them for different reasons. A little bit later, we had Pat Sajak [game-show host] of *Wheel of Fortune* fame. **Dan Milner** was there. Who else was there? John Tesh [TV personality] was there for a while and had, in fact, also worked for the television market at the time. Oprah [Winfrey, talk-show host] was there. In fact, I remember Oprah when she started. It was kind of funny. She had such an accent at the time, a Southern accent. So she was working hard at making sure she did not have a Southern accent. It was very visible. Oprah really grew up fast. You know, she was scrambling around like the rest of us, trying to find stories. Carol Burnett [comedian] worked in Chicago for the news. A good group of folks on the television side.

M: I remember when she did _____. That was a wonderful _____.

H: Oh yes. I think _____ car or something.

M: _____.

H: It was very a competitive newspaper because you had two news groups. Anyway, I had gone to the *Tennessean*, and one of the things they asked me was, what are your clips? I just happened to have a book that had everything I wrote and photographs. It opened up with some photographs I had taken, and then it had some stories. It just so happened that the Vanderbilt correspondent was leaving as I walked in the door. He was quitting because he was about to flunk out of school. So, the senior editor said, yes, we are looking for somebody, and he hired me on the spot. It was like, here, I walked into what at the time was one of the hottest newsrooms in the country, probably, and I got hired on the spot with almost no experience.

M: How long had you worked at the Cleveland paper?

H: I had just worked there for three summers. I worked there a little bit in my junior and senior year, I think, for about three or four summers.

M: So when you went off to Vanderbilt, there was a break in your career as a journalist. Did you have any other jobs?

H: Only the plastering job. I was a plasterer, and I was pretty darn good as a plasterer.

M: So, you were a full-time student?

H: I was a full-time student.

M: And you met your wife there?

H: No. She was from my hometown. We grew up together and then had dated in high school. She had gone off to school in Birmingham, and we kept dating. Then we ran off and got married.

M: Was that in the days before Interstate 65 was completed?

H: Oh yes.

M: So it was a long drive?

H: A tough ride, back and forth.

M: What is her name?

H: **Gwen Jones** and _____. Her father is an esteemed surgeon in our home town and is still there. So, we were just dating, and we ran off and got married. So we found ourselves having to deal with the real world.

M: You ran off, really, and got married?

H: Yes.

M: It was not a big family wedding?

H: There was no big family wedding, which is probably the only way I could have ever gotten married. I do not think I could have gone through a big family wedding and all that kind of stuff.

M: I have sympathy for your bride's parents.

H: Everybody is okay, in the end. I think everybody has gotten even more comfortable with it over the years, so it was just probably one _____. We have been married since 1965? I will have to figure that out _____.

M: Now we are in the *Nashville Tennessean*.

H: Yes, back in the *Tennessean*. I started to tell the story about when I had come in. One of the questions that had asked me was, what can you do? Can you do all of this stuff? Typing? I said, yes, I can type. Well, I could not type worth diddly. So I had this forced-march to learn to type in about two weeks because what would happen was, I would sit there, and I had a desk on the first row. The way the newsroom was set up was, there was the main editor's desk in the front of the newsroom. Then, there was this city desk, and then there were these two areas of reporters' desks, which went back about six rows deep. I was on the first row right in front of the city editor. Well, the main editor would come over as I was writing my story and just tear off the sheet of paper wherever it was and start reading it. I was so embarrassed with all of the typos that I had, so I would just rush through as fast as I could to get the paper out of the typewriter and start editing it before anybody could get over there and see how bad I was. But I learned to type really fast. It was of those instances of overselling a little bit, but you can make up for it.

M: So, you joined the *Tennessean* in 1965?

H: It was January 1, 1966, or January 2, somewhere in there.

M: Was **John Sigenthaler** there as the editor, then?

H: John was there as the editor.

M: So he had been sort of on a sabbatical with the Kennedy and Johnson administrations?

H: John had been with Robert Kennedy at the Attorney General's office and then had come back as editor of the *Tennessean*, I believe, in 1963. So, he had been there for about two or three years when I got to the *Tennessean*. Of course, John accumulated just an incredible group of reporters. I do not know if any other paper of that size...I mean, this was not a large newsroom; you maybe had fifteen reporters or so. Not a whole lot of reporters. I look back on the group that I was there with. I cannot remember how many editors we had come out of that one group. **Jim Squires** was an editor here in Orlando and of the *Chicago Tribune*. **David Hall**, most recently, was an editor in Cleveland and for some

other papers as well. **Frank Sullivan**, who is now back as editor of Nashville _____. **Sandra Kyes**, who has been editor of the *Miami Herald*, is now the managing editor of _____. **Rob Elder** was the editorial page editor in San Jose. **Bill Kovich** was the bureau chief of the *New York Times* for a long time and is editor of _____ now, a career with _____. Al Gore [later vice-president under President Bill Clinton] was there. I have left out some. **David Halberstam** [journalist/author]. _____.

M: **Fred Graham?**

H: No, Fred had left. Fred was a _____. It was just an incredible group of people who came through there. I do not know what it was. The news was great to work with. It was very much a reporters' newspaper _____ editing. For the reporter, it was great. And then, some regret. As a matter of fact, I wish it had been a bit more. Oh, another one was **Craig** _____. Craig was the chairman of the *Tennessean* **board**. I will keep thinking of folks.

M: It was a fun newspaper to read, too.

H: Yes, it was fun. It was such a young group of people. At one point, I think the average age was nineteen. We were all just kids doing this stuff. Somehow, it worked.

M: What kind of guidance did you get from Sigenthaler? Was he just sort of find-your-way editor?

H: There was a mix of that. John was good in terms of giving you, sort of, spiritual guidance, helping you understand what the story is. That may be the most important thing to deal with in our business, just recognizing matters and why you want to write about them. So John was really good with that. John was not that much hands-on with some beat stories. He set the tone for the news room so that we were a certain kind of newspaper. We were a kick-ass paper that was really involved in political issues and digging the news out into breaking-stories. We were going to make things right. For the young journalists who heads out to do good, this was a great place to be.

M: Today, if journalists would take an extended break as he did, to work for the government, when they came back, they might be regarded as damaged goods. Was there anything ever said about [that]?

H: No, it was not really an issue. It probably had to do with the times. It is kind of funny because I hear people talking about how newspapers today have lost the separation from politics, that we are too involved. Gosh, these people do not

remember what it was like. When I was at *Tennessean*, there were a couple of things to keep in mind. One is, it was a Democratic newspaper. That paper was going to support Democratic candidates up and down. We were almost part of the campaigns in some cases. In political-issues, we were involved every which way we could turn. We had a political-columnist who wrote every day for the front page. It was a political-organ in many ways. You had a competing newspaper [the conservative *Nashville Banner*] who was on the other side. I have said that people who read both newspapers got great news coverage because you really saw both papers going after it from the extremes, at each other's throat every day.

M: Were the papers neighbors, then?

H: Yes, it was part of a joint-print operation, and you just walked across the hall. There is a great story about Bill Kovich in that the papers, again, were aligned politically, and we were always aligned with the liberal Democratic candidates. The *Nashville Banner* was aligned with the conservative Democratic candidates and then, later, with the Republicans. In those early days, there were no Republicans whatsoever. In the early 1970s, you didn't have Republicans in that part of the world. So, they would latch with the conservative Democrats. The *Tennessean* was always at odds with the political regime of Buford Ellington and Frank Clement [governors of Tennessee]. I forget whether it was Clement or Ellington, [one] was the head one, we referred to as the leapfrog of government: one would serve for governor for two years, and then the next one would serve for governor for two years, and they would just go back and forth [referring to the fact that Tennessee's constitution, at the time, limited governors to one term but allowed them to run as many times as they wished as long as they sat out one term]. Anyway, I forget who it was, but the political writer for the *Nashville Banner* was writing about the new candidate for the governor. He was doing one a day ____ and another one tomorrow. Bill Kovich was sitting there, just getting his tail whipped day after day because nobody was going to tell him anything. He put up with this so much that, finally, one night after a few drinks, Bill takes a crowbar and goes across the hall and plows into the desk of the competing reporter and gets the list and writes the story, and we ran the rest of them. So, Bill comes in the next day, and all the *Banner* people are really pissed about this. Sigenthaler sort of feigns being really upset at him which caused ____ to fire him but, in the end, does not. Saved a great career. Sigenthaler was a practical joker himself. He had done a lot of this kind of stuff in his career. So, as a competitive jokester, he could see that in that kind of situation. We were very much competitors but, again, with John, he set a certain kind of tone. The newsroom was a lot of fun, yes, but there was also this serious commitment to a kind of political journalism. We were out there making a difference. That was interesting to me because before I went to work for the *Tennessean*, I had been involved a little bit in Barry Goldwater's campaign in 1964. Actually, I began to have some

doubts about that because the Young Americans for Freedom [young conservative activist group] kind of scared me, and kind of backed me up: what is really going on? But, when I came to work for the *Tennessean*, I got involved with a couple of racial issues. There was, at the time, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [civil rights group] had a fairly active presence at the Fisk University there. So those things began to have a real impact on me. When I had been in Vanderbilt, obviously, we were fairly isolated. We would go down the street in the days, and we would find that **Western Avenue** was blocked by the sit-ins at Morrison's, and such things were downtown at Woolworth's, but you did not really appreciate what was going on. When we got into covering some unrest kind of issues, it really began to change the way I felt about all of that stuff. So I went through a political change at that same time. I sort of developed a different view of the world. Actually, when I started looking for jobs, I mentioned I had looked first in and talked first to television stations. I thought that might be where I would go. I actually tried to get a job with the *Nashville Banner* before I went to the *Nashville Tennessean*. Fortunately for me, they did not have a job.

M: Do you feel that what this town needs is another good newspaper? Of course, they would probably stomp their competition and run them out of business. But, do you wish you had competition here? Do you think that would be better? You cannot really consider the local television stations competition.

H: Well, but they are competition. It is a mixed-blessing, I would think. In one way, it lets us do things that other papers, in a competitive environment, could never afford to do. The kinds of resources that I have are fairly remarkable. When I came from Nashville to Orlando, it really surprised me what we had to draw off of, even such things as a marketing research _____. I mentioned earlier when I was at the *Tennessean*, I conducted our own public-opinion polls. I would get clerks and reporters, and we would get a bank to do our polling on elections. Based on what I knew about polling, we did some fairly decent polling state-wide or in our region. But I come down here, and we have this huge research group that can do that kind of stuff. I love it. It is great. Part of that is that the *Tennessean*, because it was a family-owned operation at the time—later, it was bought by _____—and it was in that competitive environment, it did not have the resources, the financial resources that come into play in Orlando. Those resources let us do for this community a lot of really good things. So, you trade off, maybe, the urgency sometimes, that you do have to artificially create for the ability to do more, to get to hire better people perhaps or to investigate stuff. The other thing that happens is that, I think when we were in that competitive office, even though times have changed, there was less attention to being detached from the story. I mean, we were a part of a lot of the stories we wrote.

M: _____?

H: In the political arena, whether it was somebody running for mayor or governor or the U. S. Senate. We became very much aligned with one candidate or the other. Our coverage **was not controlled by this**. We did not have to be a certain _____. We did not _____. We were not inclined to do the major investigative piece for the candidate we were supporting. That was the other paper's job. We did the major investigative piece on the other guy. That is why if the readers got both of them, they got pretty good coverage. I think what you see today is that papers are not going to do that. We are much cleaner in our coverage, even though readers will say, oh no, you are much more biased. That is just not the case. Newspapers are better than they have ever been on the credibility issue. Part of this is because we have said, hey, we are in markets where you are not going to get another voice, so we have to really work hard at making sure that our voice is as fair and unbiased as we can make it.

M: Going from a real strong political position to the middle-of-the-road, are newspapers today better or just blander? Another thing might be, do you think that the *Tennessean* would have been as good as it was without competition, without the *Nashville Banner*, or did the *Nashville Banner* really influence it? (I guess I should not ask two at once.)

H: I do not know the answer to that. I mean, I think it helped us, as reporters, because of the challenge every day. Every day, and we talked a lot about this, you wrote a story. You had the break on the story, and you wanted to do such a good job on that story that there was no other fresh angle for the competing paper. You felt bad when there was an angle you missed, and they would take that and develop it so it looked like a fresh story when it was not really a fresh story. So it made you a better reporter, I think, because you really worked your tail off to make sure you covered all of the bases. Whether the journalism was better and all that, it was just a different kind of journalism. I think it probably has affected readership because there is not as much passion in the papers. If you are, perhaps, overly sensitive to that, you may sometimes find that _____. There is a little lesson about just getting out there, **way out in front paving the way** because _____. In my opinion, that is just tough. I want my editorial page kicking butt every day and if we miss a day, we miss an opportunity. Just in being involved and leading and making things happen and having an absolutely very **political view, it takes a lot of papers** _____. They hold back, and they are not as concerned about needing to have that really strong voice because they think, nobody is going to _____. I think that has hurt them for sure.

M: You said you left the *Tennessean* around the late 1970s?

H: I came to Orlando in 1979.

M: Describe your moving up the ranks in Nashville.

H: I started as the Vanderbilt reporter, and then I went off to graduate school for most of the year. I mentioned earlier, I had the luxury of not having to a lot of the fundamental course work. I cover[ed] politics. I did my thesis on the political organizations of 1968 in the New Hampshire presidential primary.

M: That would have been an interesting thesis.

H: Oh absolutely, the subject matter anyway; I do not know how interesting the thesis was. That was obviously where Lyndon Johnson was against Gene McCarthy. Johnson technically beat McCarthy in the votes, but McCarthy won in the hearts. It became an upset, in fact, that McCarthy had done so well. As I recall, we actually got a popular vote of whether Johnson _____. That was also when Richard Nixon was making his comeback. So, I spent a lot of time with the New Hampshire politics, and that was great fun, I think probably in part because in both the Republican side and the Democratic side, a lot of new faces were emerging, and I made contacts and friends there. I have been active ever since in those two parties. I did some campaigning in the McCarthy and Johnson campaigns when I was going there.

M: So you were writing your thesis not long after that?

H: What I did was, I actually wrote stories for the *Tennessean* on the primaries as they were developing. Then, my thesis was on how the organizations were put together and how what happened, happened, how it came to pass, how McCarthy rallied with a bunch of students, basically, in sort of a grass-roots approach. _____ when he came in under Johnson, he was generally popular. McCarthy was a _____.

M: So, you were at Boston U, and . . .

H: Yes, and I actually wrote it--it was designed as a piece that was for this reporter magazine, which probably **flunked** not long after. But, it had some great writers; it was just a great piece for the insider in politics. It was just an unusual opportunity, I spent most of the spring of 1968 preparing for that.

M: Did Seymour Hirsch work for Gene McCarthy?

H: I do not remember Hirsch. One of the interesting things that I tell people today is that it was before so many reporters raced along behind everybody to **get the best result**. The primary night of 1968, I had dinner at the Wayfarer Inn _____. I am sitting there at the booth with Gene McCarthy and **Teddy White** [Theodore White, political author and journalist], talking politics and not many people around. The TV networks were setting up for speeches and stuff, but there was

not a hoard. I think, gosh, it was a pretty historic moment, with two really important figures. The historical documentation of the political campaign with Teddy White and Gene McCarthy obviously ____.

M: When did the big change come about, because even in 1972, there were campaigns that were not too grassroots and there were not that many people.

H: Not quite as many. It just kept building, you know. ____ is a great book. There was a great line there, great for journalists, and I think it was in that book. The guy's name is ____.

M: ____?

H: ____ **if you cannot cover the** ____, a 1992 comeback. The idea was you have to be able to go out and do the tough basics before you start thinking about all this other stuff.

M: So, when you went off to get your master's degree at B.U., you were still writing for the *Tennessean*?

H: Yes, I was at the *Tennessean*. I had been pretty much full-time during my junior and senior years at Vanderbilt along with being manager of the university radio station. Also, for those two years, I was married and had a child. It was an interesting time, to say the least.

M: Did your family move with you to Boston?

H: Yes, we all moved to Boston, and the *Tennessean* gave me, I believe it was, twenty-five dollars a week to supplement my graduate education, which I thought was wonderful. The B.U. folks paid my fare. I had to send some kind of flier that came from the radio station to apply for fellowships and scholarships. I filled out the forms and sent them in, and I took the GRE [Graduate Record Exam]. Sometime later, I got this thing back that said, you have a fellowship scholarship to pay all your bills, so you need to come up here. So I thought, why not? I had no idea what I was doing. So, I did.

M: When you came back to the *Tennessean*, what did the master's degree mean?

H: Well, I know what I did not need. At the time, I had a _____. I had thought about going back to my home-town in Tennessee. They offered me the job of being managing editor, right out of college. I forget what the salary was, but I wanted [them] to guarantee my salary would be \$10,000 within ten years. They would not guarantee it. So I said, well, how _____ here? And I went back to Tennessee.

M: In what role?

H: As just a reporter. I covered politics. Actually, I was just general. I came back on general assignment, very _____ into politics. I know I covered part of the **fall** campaign in 1968. So, I was very quickly _____. I ended up covering the Constitutional Convention. Actually, during that time, Jim Squires left the *Tennessean*. He left to go to the *Tribune* _____.

M: _____.

H: Actually, I don't remember when Kovich left. Bill left somewhere through there, about that time. Jim and Bill eventually had been our political writers, and it kind of ended up turning all over to Larry Dobtree and myself.

M: Is Dobtree still there?

H: Larry is still there.

M: So, you had ten years there following your master's degree, and you lived through the Governor Ray Black _____ era. Any stories you want to tell about that?

H: Well, I just could not believe that Black got elected to start with. He was not the sharpest tack on the block. He had the right political leanings at the time. He was a conservative Democrat in a liberal field and got elected. His administration was just bizarre from the beginning. It was clear that there were a lot of things that we were chasing the whole time he was there. We did not have a lot of luck. Most _____ liquor licenses and those sorts of things _____ and never was able to do it. They could not get the **smoking gun** that you needed to write those stories. Also, I missed part of that. In 1975 and 1976, I took a fellowship at Stanford and spent most of the year out there.

M: What were you studying?

H: My premise was that I was studying the relationship between business and government. I spent most of the year in the _____ B. A. program. Then, I took a lot of other courses. I had the option to take any course at the University, so I ended up with a lot of great courses, learned things that are true about the American spirit, really neat stuff. It is great. I would recommend it to anybody.

M: What brought that about? Were you feeling stagnant in your job?

H: I think a lot of us felt like we had to be moving on the fast-track and for me, it was the Stanford fellowship.

M: Because the bar had been raised by all these other people?

H: Well yes. I mentioned Jim Squires. Jim had gone off _____. In fact, that may have been what Jim did with _____ starting politics. _____ and came back for a short while and then left and **got a job with** the *Tribune*. Bill Kovich had done the Stanford program, too. Anyway, I think we felt we ought to be doing these kinds of things. At the time, because our salaries were so bad, we could afford to do things. I think today, it is more difficult for journalists in two-income households and things to go off to do those kinds of things. It was fairly easy for me to pick up and move to Palo Alto for a year, and it was an absolutely enriching experience _____. The tough thing is coming back, because you were in this artificial environment where you think you are much relieved from the day-to-day responsibilities. Things are sort of taken care of for you. It is this sort of ideal world, and you come to believe that, that is the way things should be. Then, you come back home and, suddenly, _____, and you do not like that. I think that is why you see some people go off into these programs and leave their papers. The re-entry is tough. They do more counseling with people now than they did then. But it is terribly disruptive. It is tough on families, too. In the class that was ahead of mine, [something] like half of the people got divorces because you sort of think, this is a great way to live. Then, you go back into the same situation, and you cannot readjust. I think people in academia deal with this, in relation to sabbaticals, which is sort of the same thing. So, Stanford was great. The program was great, and the people were wonderful.

M: When you got back, did you have any other problems, or did it make you more restless?

H: I think it definitely made me restless. Before I went to Stanford, I had acted and moved far too quickly. In a year or two, I went from being an entry-level reporter with very little experience to being the night city editor by the time I was twenty-five years old in this newsroom that was a pretty hot-and-heavy newsroom. You did not have time to edit anything. It was just processing stories. You depended on the reporters to get it right. You would try to do the best you could. You had to rewrite _____ before you threw out stories to get _____ and stuff.

M: You probably were an editor around the time that those _____ versions of **VDTs** _____.

H: Yes, we had _____. I forget how it was done, but you would scan into these typewritten pages. That was the first thing. Then, you had to use a certain kind of editing marks to make a change. Talk about something making editing awful; that was it. That was as far as we got in Nashville. When I came to Orlando, we already had _____ systems, which was nice. So, I did not have to deal with too much of that. Most of the editing I did was by hand, and I had a rewrite person.

But, I did that for a couple of years, and that was tough for me. I mean, I really _____ wanted to be doing, in terms of the hours. I was working the four-to-one shift, and my wife was going to graduate school. We had a child. I would get home at about three or four in the morning, and she was getting up at six. After a while, that takes a toll on you. So, just to get back in the reporting ranks _____, which I did. _____ for about ten years _____ state government. Then, in dealing with the relationship between business and government, all about banking and the insurance industry and _____, and there was investigative stuff I did with the banking industry and insurance industries, bonds, particularly campaign contributions and stuff like that. But, when I came back from Stanford. I definitely was restless _____ go back into more of the same was more than I really could take, and I began talking about leaving. John Sigenthaler and I talked about this, and John kind of came to terms with it. He had dealt with a lot of people moving, and they were in the same situation. There were not many places to go in Tennessee. If you were a reporter, there was the city editor and a main editor, and those jobs were not going to change very much. So, [I said] hey, I can sit here and do the same thing for another ten years, but I do not think I can stand this. I will burn out.

M: Sometime in that era, the **Sutherlands** went off to _____, right, for a few years?

H: Frank left sometime after I did, but he stayed with Gannett. He went to Jackson, Mississippi first, I think. I am not sure. He went to Shreveport and, I want to say, went back to Nashville.

M: Was the Gannett purchase at all a factor in your decision?

H: It was just incidental that it was about the same time. It was just something that happened. I contribute it to a lot of things. I considered going to law school. I considered teaching. I had been teaching some out at the Nashville branch at the University of Tennessee. I really enjoyed that. They had offered me to go teach full-time in Knoxville and get my Ph.D. at the same time. Law school was an option. I was offered a job with the public relations _____ with the Tennessee Valley Authority. I just could not find a job in journalism. Then I had discussions about going to Washington. I mean, I certainly came down, talked about going to the _____, perhaps the *Baltimore Sun* or the *Wall Street Journal* in the Washington offices. The Detroit *Free-Press* offered me a job. I turned down Detroit. It was just a time when my family could not make that move. I really thought it was great for them to turn around and offer me a job, sight unseen, in Miami as the editor of Broward County, at which point Jim Squires, who now is editor in Orlando, said, hey John, why don't you come to Orlando? It was just sort of unwritten that nobody be recruited from Sigenthaler. But if we were leaving, all the rules changed. It was clear I was going to do something. Jim and John and I sort of talked, and Jim said, come on down to Orlando; you should

come in here and see the firm.

M: How long had the *Tribune* company owned the *Sentinel* by that time?

H: The *Tribune* bought the *Sentinel* in the 1960s but did not do much with it for about ten years. Then, they decided in the mid-1970s to really change it, and they brought Jim in as the editor, a really young editor. It started a whole upheaval, setting to finding a new standard for the newspaper. One of the selling points Jim had for me when I came down here was . . . at the time, the *Sentinel* was a little bit bigger than the *Tennessean* but not a whole lot. I told Jim, I think the *Tennessean* is a better newspaper, and he really was not offering much more money. Jim said, yes, that is the attraction of this newspaper. He said, this paper is so bad that it does not matter what we do; it is going to look so good. And he was right. I mean, the paper really was bad. A lot of other people here could tell you that. I mean, it just had not had the right expectation[s], in terms of a lot of aspects of journalism. So, we found ourselves sitting here with a community that was suddenly exploding and a newspaper that was hoping to have *Tribune's* attention. We had to pile our resources back into it, and there was this commitment to see how good we could make it. So we did all kinds of stuff. Jim brought me in down here as sort of an assistant editor without any kind of title. My job was to manage the investigative projects and to oversee the political-reporting. Then, I was also sort of the editorial reporter, mostly editorials in economics and politics, which we never do today. We do not have that cross-over. Then, I took over the business section, and I took over the bureau articles.

M: You were kind of the fix-it man.

H: Yes. I just kind of moved around wherever Jim needed me.

M: Did you actually have a title of associate editor?

H: No. I did not have any title. I just had a little office on the side of the lane. Now, I do not know how many knew who I was. ____ did not know many people in the newsroom. I think finally Jim made me a deputy managing editor or something. Then, I got into the situation where Jim wanted to give me the editorial page editors other experience. I had moved around for a while so Jim said, how about going over to be the editor for editorial page for a few months? So I said, okay, I will do that. So, I went over to do that, be the editorial page editor. It was someplace else to build. But while I was there, Jim left to go be an editor for the *Chicago Tribune*, and I got left as the editor of the editorial pages.

M: Who was brought in as editor?

H: For about a year, we did not have anybody. We had this strange situation where

I ran the editorial opinions pages, and somebody else ran the news operation. Actually, two people ____ a three-headed creature. Then, they brought in **David Bergen** as an editor from Palo Alto.

M: Had you already known David?

H: I had not really known David, no. That was a surprise.

M: He is a very controversial figure.

H: David is a dynamic figure, yes. David and I actually got along very well. I reported to the publisher. I did my own thing with the editorial pages, but Dave worked with me a lot. So, I took some of his ideas, and we changed the papers radically around here. I wanted to have world-class editorial papers. That was my goal, and I went after it. I tried to get from people who could help me out. We really stepped it up during that time. Meanwhile, I think David has done some very good things for the newspaper. He helped the newspaper see what it could be. I was talking about how I came down here and got involved with the political coverage, which was really interesting because, like [with] a story about the Highway Department, our people would call the regional offices to try to get information. I said, well, why do you not call the secretary of transportation? They said, can we do that? That was coming out of the paper where I covered state government, and I would go along and deal with all the Capitol officers on a first-name basis every day. I said, pick up the phone, and call them at home at night; I do not understand this place, people did not see themselves as that kind of newspaper. So, we really had to push _____. It was a difficult transition in how people thought about themselves and the kind of journalism that we could do and that we should expect it of ourselves.

M: Make it more of a big-city picture?

H: Yes, and Jim started that process. I think Dave came in and persisted in giving a big push. Also, he redesigned the paper at the time, which was good.

M: Was this the early 1980s?

H: Yes, the early 1980s. We had new presses, which was good. _____. Most of them came in at the same time. We changed the name from the *Sentinel Star* to the *Orlando Sentinel*. We got a lot of momentum. But as you said, David was a controversial figure. I mean, some people loved David, and some people hated David. I liked a lot of his ideas. Some days you were not quite sure whether you should hide under the desk or what you should do but, definitely, I think he was good for the paper when he was here.

M: How long was he here?

H: About three years, and then Dave left to become an editor in San Francisco at the *Examiner* and, at that time, I became editor of the paper. That was in 1985.

M: Were you the heir apparent, or was there any surprise, do you think? Were you surprised that you were picked for editor?

H: I thought I had a good chance of being editor of the paper. Again, I had worked with the publisher. I think I had his confidence, and I had this background that some of people who were new at the paper were not aware of. I mean, people who were new thought of me as an editorial-page editor, whereas my background really had been in printing as city editor or hard-news investigative reporter or political reporter. I did all kinds of stuff, so I had a pretty good grasp of the rest of the business. We were doing so much stuff. I mean, to think during the first two years I was editor of the paper, we added almost 100 people on the staff. That is how fast the community was growing. We were making so much money. I remember one year, the second year, in the late 1980s, I had something like a \$500,000 budget for a year of time, and we were just looking for places to go and things to do. We could not spend it fast enough. All that came to a screeching halt in the early 1990s as the economy slowed down. But I mean, if an airplane crashed in Kansas, we would go cover that. It did not matter where it happened. If it was an earthquake in Mexico City, we would go. We would do any of that stuff, because there was no question about being able to afford it. It was the question, could we get there quick enough and how we would get it back? Then we went through this period, beginning about 1989, of things really slowing down economically and we had to come to terms with that. That was a very difficult period, those years. Here, you have been going full force, 100 miles an hour, for six or seven years, and suddenly you are telling me that we have to pull back a little bit, we have to focus, we cannot do all these things. I cannot have two full-time foreign correspondents; I cannot have a columnist in Washington and bureau people in Atlanta and everywhere else we could dream up. We were about to put somebody in Los Angeles to cover entertainment industries. That is where we were. We said, how can we not be able to do those things? What it did though was, in some ways, it was turning into being a good thing. We came back and we said, okay, what are we all about? We are essentially a local newspaper. We are regional in terms of the Southeast, in terms of our influence, the impact that we have and the papers we compete with and in the stores that we go after. But more than anything else, we cover the central Florida area, which we define as a five- or six-county area, and we have to be absolutely the best there, because that is what matters most to our readers. Now, as we develop stories and they leap to any place else in the world, we will go with that story. But we are going to focus on that. That is going to be the core of our news coverage, and we are going to be absolutely the best we can be.

So, I began doing more with local news, refocusing on _____, really shoring that up because one thing that had happened when David Bergen was here was, David had pretty much taken anybody who was in the bureau and moved them into doing a critic's position or a column, a national columnist, and all those kinds of things that people began doing. I did not have anybody left. I had very few people left at the bureau, so I had to go back and restock that bureau and rebuild that local news coverage because they had to decide what we were really all about as a newspaper. And I think, as I said, in some ways it was difficult. I think you had an emotional or psychological lag in the staff, to see us hit those breaks and refocus back to that, but it was a coming to terms of where we could really make a difference. And that was where we could make a difference, and I think that is where we stayed. We stayed focused on what that area is, recognizing at the same time that we were still Southeastern. We were determined to be one of the two or three leading papers in the whole Southeast, and I think we are there. We compete there every day, and we are stacking up pretty darn well in that category. Allan Neuharth in his most recent list of the top ten newspapers, [for example].

M: Speaking of Neuharth, a redesign which I guess occurred in the early 1980s...

H: I think it may have been 1982 or 1983.

M: ...was very sturdy because really, there have only been minor modifications. What do you think about what [*USA TODAY*] did for other newspapers and how it affected as an executive?

H: Yes, it had some interesting effects. One is, in the industry, it had such negative connotation that it made it difficult to boost important changes that we really needed to make, as the society changed. You have to recognize that pretty much during the time that I was coming from Nashville to Orlando, we were also really beginning to pick up a lot of change in the workforce. Women were full force in the workforce, which affected readership habits. It began to really affect time available for newspaper-readership. It was a huge change that we were slow to react to. *USA TODAY*, in some ways, was the first to recognize that you have to approach your audience, certain audiences, in different ways. So when we would talk about pay, we had to be responsive to readers and recognize that they have less time. How are we going to deal with that? How do we approach that? The thing you got back from the staff was, oh, you are just going to be like *USA TODAY*. It got in to almost everything you did. It became this obstacle that you had to climb over to get anything done, and a lot of things needed to get done, particularly if it involved color or switch-stories.

M: No _____?

H: Oh, you are going to be like *USA TODAY*, when honestly, *USA TODAY* was not all that bad. I think *USA TODAY* was the first to recognize that there was a particular market, I mean, a great market. Al Neuharth identified, way ahead of his time, that there was a business-travelers' market that can support a national newspaper, year to year. And he got there. He has put something on the market that is a pretty good product for the audience that he is trying to serve. Is it a great local newspaper? No, it is a great national newspaper. Is it good with sports, providing a good top-of-the-day kind of assessment of what is going on? Absolutely. Is it visually attractive? For the most part, yes. And Al will tell you too, I think, that a lot of these ideas came out of Florida newspapers. This was where color was going on. Al did not invent color. It was this competitive situation that already existed in Florida newspapers, always kind of pushing the edge out there.

M: I always thought Florida newspapers were so good in general.

H: Generally, yes. It is clearly the best newspaper state in the country. It is terribly competitive. If there is any state that comes close, I guess California could make a claim that it has some pretty good newspapers, but I do not think they stack up against what you have in Florida, across the board. I have said, take the worst newspaper in Florida and put it up against newspapers in most states, and it will stack up pretty well. So, it is a great competitive state which, I think, makes us better. But back to the *USA TODAY* thing, it has been a mixed-bag, but I think it has been unfairly condemned in the industry by people who have failed to see the kind of changes that are going on around us. As a result, we lost a lot of ground. I do not know what the answer should have been. We should have been there. We cannot be today. We are struggling with this, even today. But, we do know that people have less time to read. We do know that there is this incredible disconnect between people and government, in particular. A lot of the institutional things that [newspapers] cover on a daily basis, we have to figure out how to connect [to people]. In fact, to go back something you and I talked about at the very beginning, one of the things that concerns me about people who are in journalism today is that, while we have a much more professional staff, and I think technically we are much better today than any time we have ever been, we are not as connected to our communities and in doing that, we have lost. Newspapers really have to be plugged in to what is going on in this country and if it is not plugged in, you cannot produce the stories no matter how good you are. We have kind of given up some things on that end in order to have this professional expertise, which is often itinerant, moving from market to market, whereas before—about the time I got into this business at least—people, and journalists obviously, tended to be more involved with the community. We were not as separate in terms of our demographics, in our income and education, and certainly in terms of our diversity. _____. We have a readership task force that has been working for several years to deal with these readership issues. The

thing we started to present [to] our staff was, the first things you have to understand is that our readers are not like us. We are different. On the average, we are better-educated. On the average, our incomes are higher. Our interests definitely are different. Our backgrounds, probably, are considerably different. So it is not an easy thing for us to connect and to really appreciate what it is that our readers are most interested in. I have this example that I use with a lot of reporters to begin the hiring process. Forgive me, but I think a lot in terms of concepts, and I visualize things in my head when I try to talk to help people understand. I say, reporting to me has three main options. One is, if you use the example of going to a basketball game, there is a level of reporting where you go to the game and you sit in the stands, and you write about what happened at the game. You get the score, and you know what happened, who did what. You can write a little bit about ____ perhaps. That is one level. That comprises the bulk of the community reporting we do in a newspaper. Another level of reporting is when you go down and sit courtside. You are sitting right there on the floor. You are on the first row. The players are running by you, and you see the energy, and the sweat bounces off of you. You hear the noise, and you hear the trash-talk back and forth, and you hear the coach yelling out on the floor. When you write from that perspective, you write a much more energetic story. You really sense much more of what is going on in the game. That is a much better story. We would like to see more of that kind of reporting. But, there is also the story which would be written by the player in the game. If you can get in the game, be on the floor, be part of that team, you understand more the emotional give-and-take and the physical feeling that goes with that. To me, that is the ultimate reporting, and you would like to see more of that in the newspaper. That is what we have lost. We do not have that sense of, it is my community, it is my neighborhood, and it is my school, and I have a stake in this and understand what is going on. When you feel that passion, it shows up in your ____ and you reflect that in your stories. We are too much up in the stands, and I think the reader senses that. Maybe, we do not quite understand it as much as they do, this disconnect ____.

M: But, under your editorship, you have won a Pulitzer for editorials.

H: We have won a Pulitzer for editorial writer and for investigative reporting. Yes. They were both great pieces of work. We have been finalists several other times. What we seeing is what I had hoped would happen when I came here in 1979 and working through the 1980s, and that is that we have a certain consistency in what we do, and we do a lot of really good stuff.

[End of Interview.]