

FNP 40

Interviewee: Garth Reeves, Sr.

Interviewer: Julian Pleasants

Date: August 19, 1999

P: This is Julian Pleasants, and it is August 19, 1999, and I am in Miami with Mr. Garth Reeves, Sr. When and where were you born, Mr. Reeves?

R: In Nassau, Bahamas, on February 12, 1919.

P: When did your parents come to Miami?

R: May 11, of the same year.

P: Why did they come to Miami?

R: My father was on his way to New York to buy printing equipment to start his own business. He had a small printing business on the side in Nassau that he operated out of his home. He worked for the Nassau **Guardian** newspaper. He had a brother, Fred, who lived in New York and he was going up there to buy equipment and come back and open his own business. He never got to New York because he stopped here in Miami, and he met some friends whom he had known before from the Bahamas. One was **Reverend S. A. Sampson**. Another one was **M. C. Boley**. They said, this is the place you should drop your anchor; this place has a lot of potential. Now, I do not know how they could see potential in Miami back in 1919. Really, I do not think there were 30,000 people in Miami at that time and [there were] strict segregation laws and things like that. I guess those old people had vision. They said, we think that something is going to happen here. Instead of going to New York, he stayed in Miami and opened a business. He never went to work for anybody else in this country. He bought printing equipment, and his two friends went in with him. I think they formed a company, the Magic Printing Company. Like all new business, it did not flourish right away. It took a little time. I think his friends sort of got a little disheartened, maybe. Anyhow, they expressed [that] they possibly wanted to get out [of the printing business]. So, I think my father bought them out for a grand total of \$375, which was a lot of money in those days, and he kept the business going for himself.

P: *The Sun* was the first paper?

R: Yes. **That was, I think, in 1920, and it only lasted eight months because World War I was going on**, and there were people shortages and other problems. After eight months, it folded. He kept his commercial job printing going, which he was doing quite well [at]. He worked for many of the businesses in downtown Miami on Flagler Street. He was a master printer. He was very

good at his craft, and he did well with his job printing. [On] September 1, 1923, he started *The Miami Times*. It was a struggle, but he was proud of his reputation of [publishing] a paper every single week. Every single week, he got out this newspaper, in spite of hurricanes, mechanical failures, [or] labor problems. Whatever it was, he got out his newspaper once a week, and he was very proud of that. We will have completed seventy-six years, on September 1 [1999], and we have never missed an issue in those seventy-six years. I feel very proud of that, too, having taken over for my dad, but it has been a struggle. I remember we had paper shortages during World War II. In fact, *The Miami News* was the dominant paper then, instead of *The Herald*, and we used to buy paper from them, the end of their rolls that they would usually throw away. They would cut it up in flat sheets and sell it to us, and it kept our paper going. I never forgot that. But, it was always a struggle to get newsprint [and] to keep going.

P: It must have been difficult during the hurricane, in 1926. It is amazing you could get a paper out under those conditions.

R: Right. I remember my dad paid men—I think he paid them fifty cents an hour—to turn the press by hand, in order to get that newspaper out. He was going to get a paper out every week, in spite of whatever. I remember the electricity in our part of town stayed off more than a week. That was the only way we could get the paper out, by turning the wheel by hand, and I remember seeing those men do that.

P: When did you start working for the paper?

R: As a newsboy and as a printer's devil. I have never had another job in my life other than the four years I spent in the Army, serving Uncle Sam. But, I started off as a printer's devil around the print shop, sorting pie. I do not know if you remember that term. Sorting pie is the type, when individual characters get mixed up and you put them all in a pie box. My job was to sort them [and] clean up the place. Then I got a paper route—I guess I must have been ten when I started. In those days, my sisters even had a paper route. They [the girls] sold papers on the streets of Miami. We were a very tight-knit family, and we helped our dad do whatever needed to be done. Those girls got out there on Saturday and carried those papers just like the newsboys did. I took over when my sisters finished high school and went to college. That was a good experience because I remember my dad used to print the paper one page at a time. First, he would fold the page in half and print that. Then, he would print the other side. Then, he would have to reverse that page, and then he would print the other two pages. The press we were working on was no more than a twelve by eighteen press. Boy, it was a real project getting out newspapers in the old days, but that is what you had to do.

P: How many pages did you have, then?

R: Eight pages.

P: What was your readership, in numbers?

R: We printed about 500 or 600 papers a week when we started.

P: Is this where you got your love of journalism?

R: No, I was not really [in] love [with] journalism. I loved job printing-- I imagine because that is where we made the most money. I was not obsessed with journalism because my dad never made a lot of money out of that newspaper, but his commercial job printing subsidized the newspaper in those lean years. I would always wonder why he spent so much time on that newspaper instead of on his job printing where we were making a good deal of money. I remember him saying to me one day, this newspaper will be more important than the job printing. I could not see that in those days, but he was right. There came a day in the 1960s, maybe the 1950s, after the war, [when] we continued to have the job printing and the newspaper, but the newspaper began to catch fire. Job printing began to get in the way of the newspaper because the newspaper began to grow. Then, having coming out of the Army and having been treated like I was made me take a different look at the newspaper [and] the power of the press. I knew that segregation was terrible. I suffered in the Army because I had to accept that. They sent me away from here saying, you are going out to make the world free for democracy, and we have to defeat men like Hitler and Mussolini. They were waving that flag at me, but they treated me like a damn dog, because I am black. It was a terrible thing to accept. You are laying your life on the line, you are overseas, and you see them treating the German prisoners better than they treat you. It just does something to you. It takes your manhood away. I never could deal with that. That bothered me. It bothers me today. I have a twenty-five foot flagpole in my yard, on the water where I live, and I have never hoisted the American flag on that pole. I just cannot do it for some reason. I just cannot fly that flag. I have flown Mandela's [Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, first democratically elected State President of South Africa, 1994-1999] flag, South Africa. I have flown the Bahamian flag. But I will never forget the way my country waved that flag at me and then treated me, under the false pretenses that I was really there to help save this world for democracy. The [segregation] that [I] live[d] under and the way [I was] treated, I could never justify that.

P: Did you volunteer, or were you drafted?

R: No, I was drafted. In fact, I went in the first black contingent to leave Miami. Everything was segregated, they did not even ship you out or draft you together.

P: What unit was this?

R: I went overseas to Europe with the 383rd Engineer Battalion. Then, I later came back from Europe and went to Officers' Candidate School for anti-aircraft artillery. I will tell you a story about one of my Army experiences. I was assigned to coast artillery, which were big guns, ninety-millimeter guns. I was fascinated by the ninety-millimeter guns, and I put in for officers' school. I was accepted, and they cut my orders and sent me to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. I came back to the States. The boat landed, and I got a train, went down to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. A black sergeant picked me up at the station. He looked at me strangely and he said, are you Sergeant Garth Reeves? I said, yes, I am. He said, well, I am supposed to take you to the Fort, to officers' training school, right? He said, are you sure they did not make a mistake? I said, here are my orders. So, we are riding back to the post. This was a black guy, and he said, Sergeant, I have been on this post for twenty-two years, and I have never seen a black guy come into this school, into the coast artillery school. I said, well, you see one now. I said, they did not make a mistake. He said, well, I'll be damned. And, I went to the post. I got there at night around eight o'clock. He took me into this captain who was on duty, and the captain looked at me strangely. He told the sergeant, put him in the room down there. The sergeant took me down there, so I slept that night. I got up the next morning, and they had cut orders for me, moving out of that camp down to Fort **Campwell? Burg? McCall?** _____, the anti-aircraft school in North Carolina, near Wilmington. They cut orders and moved me right out of there. They just overran the orders from the headquarters in Europe.

P: So where did you go after that?

R: To Wilmington.

P: Then did you go back to Europe?

R: Back to the Pacific. Yes, I finished [the war] there.

P: Where were you in the Pacific?

R: I was in Hawaii. We went back at the time when we were getting ready to invade Japan, because the war in Europe ended while we were still at sea on the boat going over [to Hawaii]. Boy, we were all happy about that. We wanted the ship to turn around. They said, no, we still have another enemy over there; Japan is still there. So, they were building up the forces in the Pacific to invade Japan. God, I saw the intelligence reports, that we were really expecting 2,000,000 casualties in the invasion of Japan. None of us felt very good about that. What a loss to pay. We figured we could win the war but, God it was going to be very costly. But, sure enough, they dropped the big one on Hiroshima, and the

Japanese changed their minds. I was very happy about that. The war ended, and we were still training in Hawaii.

P: Did you have white officers in those segregated units?

R: Yes. The first unit I went into, [had] all white officers. They had one colored [man]. He was the chaplain, the minister. The NCOs were all black. Only the officers were white.

P: In a military situation, you were discriminated against constantly by these white officers?

R: No, not the officers themselves. I believe they realized that they were taking men into combat. You arm them and you know you [have] to treat them like men, or you are not safe. I think they were smart enough to realize that. It was not the discrimination. It was just the policy and the practices of the Army.

P: The very fact that you were segregated.

R: Yes. **General Benjamin Davis** came over to inspect the troops once, and my colonel was **Frank Blue**. They wanted to look good in the inspection. So the General came into my tent and asked me, how is it going, Sergeant? I said, not too badly. I said, it could be a little better. He said, what do you mean? I said, well, if we had cots to sleep on like the guys across the street, which was the 555th Parachute Battalion, an elite white-only group So, he turned to my colonel and said, why are your men not sleeping on cots? The colonel said, I did not know they were available, General. He said, well, damn it, they are. He was the only black general we had. He said, well, if the guys over there have them So, there we were. Hell, the white boys were sleeping on cots, damn it. Why can you not look out for your men as well as the white generals or colonels are looking out for their guys? We were sleeping on the ground.

P: Did you get your cots?

R: You are damn right we got cots after that, because the General had spoken.

P: Were you all aware about the Tuskegee airmen?

R: No. That kind of started right after we went in, but we did not hear a lot about them while we were overseas.

P: You went to Booker T. Washington High School, which obviously was a segregated school. Give me some idea of what kind of school it was and what kind of education you got.

R: Booker T. Washington was a great building. I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had seen when I went to that school. [It was] 1931, I think, when I went to Booker Washington, in the seventh grade. It was a comparatively new school because **had just won it in 1928**. It had these beautiful signs, lavatories/laboratories and **things**. In the classroom, the Bunsen burners were broken in the science labs, and I noticed that our science teacher, when he did an experiment, he did it, and we just watched. I wondered why we did not do our own experiments. He said, well, this equipment is broken, and they have not repaired it. I remember, the whole year, they never did repair it. Another thing was the books: we got the secondhand books from the white schools, hand-me-downs and things like that. We never got new books. Even the athletic equipment. The black schools did not have any athletic budget to buy jerseys and football togs. So, Miami High and Miami Edison used to give us their old togs from the last year, and we used it in practice. We would have to buy jerseys to have for the games. That was the way things were.

I remember when I was going away to [my military] service, I confided to my mother: I said, my heart is not in this; I am going against my will. She said, well, I want you to be a survivor; I want you to come back home, you do not have to win this war by yourself. She said, you try to make it back home because I say things have to get better one day, but it is not going to happen overnight. I thought about that a lot of times because I had some situations in the service that were very disgusting. I remember once, when I [was] heading to the Pacific coast to go overseas, I got on a train in New Orleans. We had to go all the way across the country, up to Fort Washington, which was a port of embarkation for the Pacific. I had my ticket. I had to pull my ticket, and I got on the train at night. The conductor came by. I got my ticket, and I said, when are we eating; I am hungry. He said, just sit down over there; I will be back. An hour later, he had not come back. When he came back about an hour and a half later, I said, I would like to get something to eat. I said, I am hungry, and I am ready to go to bed now; I wish you would show me where my bunk is. He said, I am busy right now; you sit down over there, and I will be right back. Three hours went by, and the guy never came. I never ate. So, I confronted him. I said, look, you have my ticket there. I said, I have meal coupons to eat; I am tired, and I want to go to bed. He said, you sit down; you sit down right in that coach right there. I said, no, no, no. I said, something has got to be wrong here. They had military police riding on the train, so I went to the military police and I said, I want you to come with me and talk to this conductor. So, he came with me. I went up and I said, I am ready to go to bed, and I have not had anything to eat, and all that. So, the conductor looked at him, and the military police[man] told me, you do what that white told you to do, or I will have to lock you up on this train. That is the military police. That is the Army's policeman who is looking out for my rights. So I rode across the country sitting up in a coach, and I had to buy my food because I could not go into the dining car. Something like that, is kind of hard to get out of

your crew. Little experiences like that. You forgive your country for things like that. It took Truman [Harry S. Truman, 33rd U. S. President, 1945-1953] to, what, 1947 before he really desegregated the services.

P: I believe Booker T. was in Overtown? What was Overtown like in the 1930s? I understand it was sort of a Harlem of the South.

R: It was great. Neighborhoods were really neighborhoods. Any mother in that neighborhood could discipline anybody's child. It is quite different today. If Mrs. Johnson next door saw me getting out of line, she would straighten me out, even to the point of punishing me, spank[ing] me. Then, when my parents came home, she would tell them what happened. Well, then I would get another whipping. But everything was so different during that time. Booker T. was a closely-knit school. We had a lot of pride in that school. [There was] no graffiti on the walls or anything like that. Nobody was tearing up anything. Back in those days, I guess, the segregation did not bother me that much because I had not seen anything of the outside world, and I seemed to have had everything in my neighborhood that I thought I needed or wanted. I really never did get downtown much, then. I might get downtown, maybe, once a week or something like that, if I had to go down to the store to get something. Growing up and after I grew up, when I went to college, I would come back home, and Miami was alive. We had more black businesses then than we have now. As to nightspots, we had clubs that we really enjoyed where we would have our dances. Nobody really wanted to go out of our neighborhood to anything. We had our own movie houses. Growing up, the one thing [we didn't have] was swimming pools. That is why so many black kids would drown. I learned to swim in a rock pit, not too far from here on the campus of a school. There is a school on that site now.

P: You also had some pretty good jazz.

R: Oh yes.

P: A lot of top-level performers?

R: Right, and some of my best evenings were spent in the **Sir John Hotel**. After these black acts would play on the beach, they would come back over to where they had to live. They could not live over there in the hotels, although they played the hotels. They would have jam sessions in the club. That was a great time to be in Miami [with] all the great acts and stars.

P: What is your view of the impact of Interstate 95 which went through Overtown?

R: It really destroyed the black community because up until that time, we were all right there together, and we had our own real community. But when I-95 came

through, it came right through the heart of the city, right down 6th Avenue. Our house went, too, because we were right next to 6th Avenue, on 5th Place. Miami was never the same. The people started moving out. The thing is, there was no place to go, because when you moved out, the nearest place was Liberty City. In Liberty City, there was a big housing project there. Then, what we called Old Liberty City was west of the housing project, and there were really no nice homes over there or anything. When you mov[ed] out of one place, you look to kind of upgrade. So, where we are now was all white [back then]. From 62nd Street on back, it was all white. From 12th Avenue back east, it was all white. The real estate agents got into it, too. They saw a good way to make some money. They started selling homes to blacks in these fringe areas. Well, the whites started to move once one black moved into the block. It was like everybody had to go then; they had to leave. That is how Liberty City opened up. Then, a lot of people were stubborn about leaving, and we had some terrible incidents about integrating some of these neighborhoods. They had a bombing. It was something like 1951 when they bombed, set off a dynamite blast, [in] an apartment complex that previously had been white. It had turned black, and they called it Carver Village, named after George Washington Carver. Blacks just started moving in, and the whites did not like it. They set off a dynamite charge in one of the vacant apartments. It did not kill anybody, but it really upset the black community. I was living just a few blocks away on Northwest 13th Avenue, at **60? Terrace** at the time. I remember my daughter was a baby, and I heard this blast. [I thought], my God, what is going on? I guess I reacted just like everybody. I got my gun and put it in my pocket, and I [went] out to see what in the hell was going on. I met most of my neighbors, everybody [saying], what the hell is going on, Garth? I [did] not know. [There was no] severe confrontation that night. The police came, and nobody was hurt or anything, but the hostility was in the air. It was like they were bringing a war to our community, and the black people were very upset. But, we managed to get over that.

P: When you finished at Florida A&M, did you always intend to come back to Miami?

R: Yes, because my dad had this business. I guess [it was like] the old British custom: the male child usually inherits. I had four sisters. They were all school teachers. I came back, and I went to work with my dad.

P: You started as a reporter. What was your beat? What did you cover?

R: Everything. In a black newspaper, you had to be versatile. You had to write an obituary today and a wedding story tomorrow. That is why I think a black journalist had an advantage over a white journalist because when a white journalist went to a newspaper, they gave him a certain spot, a niche, and that was all he did. We had to do everything.

P: Did you have any journalism courses at A&M?

R: When I went to A&M, the only school of journalism was at the University of Florida. I told my English teacher, and he said, do not worry about that. He said, just take all the English courses you can, and you will end up being a good journalist. So, I took all the English courses, literature and all that. It is really enough. I worked on the school newspaper. I got the bug for the newspaper, the journalism bug, when I came back from the war. I told my mother when I came back, I [was] not going to stay because during my four years in the service, I had been to a lot of different countries, and I had been to a lot of states. I said, I am not going to leave the country. I started naming some place that I had been that I liked much better than Miami, like Seattle, Washington, Washington, D. C., New York City, New Orleans, and Cleveland and all these nice places. I guess all of them had their inherent prejudices and segregation. Some of them, even the northern ones, had segregated **paths**, but they were not as obvious as they were here in my time. So, I told my mother, I am going to try someplace else. She said, well, your dad is kind of depending on you; you are the only boy, and he was hoping you would take over the business. I said, really, I would like to help him but if I stayed around here, mama, I will get in trouble. I said, I think I have made a sacrifice for my country, and they do not respect me for that. She said, you do not solve problems by running away from them. It kind of caught my attention there, my mom talking down to me. I said, well, this problem is a little too big for me, and I do not think I can solve it. She said, you have not tried; anyhow, you think about it. When men have done their best, angels can do no more--my mother always told me that. She said, but make sure you have done your best before you give up. I did not sleep well that night, thinking about leaving home and what my mother was saying to me. I was wondering why she was telling me [that] I was a coward for running away, or that I was not using good judgement in not staying around trying to change things here. So, I thought about it and I said, I will tell you what, I will give you a year [to] see if we can do something. Then the newspaper became my primary objective. You have got to have a propaganda arm in order to get anything done. I had not been active in the NAACP, but I became an active member. I got the newspaper in the fight, publishing the protests and the segregation, writing articles about the evils of segregation and things like that. We had a very good president of the NAACP, Reverend Theodore Gibson. I do not know if you know that name, but he was a prominent leader. He was a fiery leader of the NAACP. I remember Father Gibson used to stop by the office sometimes and say, Garth, what problem will we attack next?

I remember one day, I told him, you know, we really ought to go after the golf courses. I said, you know, I like to play golf, but they only let us play on Monday. He said, well, hell, let us do something about it. Sure enough, we organized a group called the Cosmopolitan Golf Association, which was a group of black

golfers. We formed this little club, and we started collecting dues and planning our fight with the municipal golf course. We had two good NAACP lawyers there. We did not have any money to pay them, but these guys were committed. If we got the \$380--I think that is what it cost in those days--to file a suit, they would file it for us. So, we got together, and we decided to file the suit. We did this back in the 1940s, but the suit lasted seven years, I think. It went all the way to the Supreme Court, and it became a landmark case because it was the first time a suit had gone that far to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruled that you cannot take tax money, build a golf course, and restrict any of the residents. Simple as that. So, it was just customary that the city commission told us that we could only play on Monday. Monday was the day they maintained the courses. They were watering the lawns and cutting the grass, and you are out there trying to putt. Monday was a terrible day because that is the first day of the week. I had to go in and organize my office. So, we filed a suit, *Rice v. the City of Miami*. Joseph Rice was one of the golfers from Coconut Grove, and he was a member of the Cosmopolitan Golf Club. He was one of the regulars. Now, the regular guys played every Monday. They would not miss [it] these golfers loved the club. They could only play Monday, but they were there. They took off of work to play golf on Monday. We filed that suit, and we got thrown out of every court until we got to the Supreme Court.

P: Let me ask you about another issue that occurred in Florida during this time. Jackie Robinson [MLB player, 1947-1956] was integrating baseball and had a couple of incidents, one in Daytona Beach, for example.

R: Right.

P: Were you involved in that or aware of that at all?

R: Not in Daytona, no, but I remember when the Dodgers used to come here for training. They never lived with the team. They would always live at the Sir John Hotel. That is where I always saw them, over there.

P: Now, these were the firsts? This was Jackie Robinson and, later, Roy Campanella [MLB player, 1948-1957] and Don Newcombe [MLB player, 1949-1960].

R: Right. All of them used to come, and they used to bring their families. We had a good time. They all lived at the Sir John Hotel. It might have been the Lord Calvert at the time. It opened as the Lord Calvert. But, the guy who opened the hotel--[this was] why it got its name--was a liquor distributor. That was a popular brand back there, Lord Calvert, so that is what he named the hotel. Roy Campanella had a big family, I remember. They always brought the kids down, and they would stay during spring training.

P: Was everybody aware of the tremendous significance of breaking the color line in America's pastime?

R: Oh definitely, because boy, everybody loved baseball. We had our black league, the thing was to really get it opened up. We knew it would happen one day. Believe it or not, I was one of those lucky guys. I happened to [be] going to school in Brooklyn when the season opened. I was going to a linotype school [for] linotype mechanisms. My course ended on that Friday. I had a sister living in New York, and I stayed with my sister. I told my dad I was going to take a vacation after the course ended. When the season opened in Brooklyn that Monday, or Tuesday, the Dodgers and the Giants in Brooklyn, I was in the stands when Jackie Robinson took the field for the first time. I saw it: major league baseball integrated. To me, that was a great day.

P: Was the audience integrated?

R: Oh yes. Because it was Brooklyn.

P: Were there many African-Americans at the game?

R: Oh yes, there were a lot of them. They only played one game in Brooklyn and the next day, they went to the Polo Grounds. They opened with the Giants. I saw Jackie hit his first home run, because I remember when he hit it, he hit the facade between the decks, between the first deck and the second deck in center field. It bounced back in the playing field. I remember sitting in the stands, and one of my friends from Miami was living up there, James Wallace. He was booing every time Jackie came up. He was booing him, you bum! Now, this guy is a Giants fan, and he is a black guy. I said, this guy has got to be crazy. Here is the first black guy who has ever played, but baseball was baseball. He did not give a damn about him being the first black man. He was playing against his Giants, and he was a Giants fan. I laughed about that afterwards.

P: Do you think people today recognize what an extraordinary hero Jackie Robinson was and what he had to go through, what courage it took?

R: I do not think many people realize it. That was a tremendous thing that he did. Pee Wee Reese [MLB player, 1940-1958] died this week, and I remember how Pee Wee was the only guy on the team who stood up for Jackie. I'll never forget that, when they were booing Jackie.

P: At the *Miami Times* you started as a columnist. Then you went to managing editor, then editor and publisher. How did that take place, and what different responsibilities did you have in each job?

R: They were actually overlapping because I always did whatever had to be done in the newspaper and, at the same time, [kept] the commercial job printing going, because that [was] where the real money was. When I became active with the NAACP and we started the civil rights struggle, I had to keep that part of it going. That was my job to write the articles. My dad always wrote the editorials. He never wanted anybody else to write his editorials. If I had a strong position on something, I usually took it to the front page, in a front-page editorial, and he maintained his column. We did that a few times. My dad and I had pretty much the same philosophy except once, politically.

I liked John Dewey when he ran against Truman. I was excited about the job Dewey had done in New York. I was trying to convince my dad to switch from the Democrats to go with Dewey and boy, I could not do that. I guess my dad was one of those yellow-dog Democrats. He was a stone Democrat all the way. I said, gee, we ought to consider [the fact that] the Republicans were the only ones who would let us register to vote. I said, the Democrats would not, you know. I tried, but I never could convince him. He said, I will tell you what; one day, this newspaper will be yours, and you will be the publisher; then you pick anybody you want to support. For now, that is my job, and I am staying with the Democrats. Boy, I thought Dewey would win. But remember, we could only vote in those days in the national elections. In the local elections, we [could not vote]. Then, the Republicans opened up their primary because they had no power at all anyhow, it was such small numbers, and they opened it up to blacks. So, the first time I registered, I was registered Republican. [Which was] the only way you could vote. I changed over to the Democratic party later.

P: Were you organized at all, in terms of persuading the community as to how to vote? Would you write an editorial and urge them to vote in later years?

R: Yes, we would do that. We always made our endorsements, and we have such a following, a believability in our newspaper. Black people believed in the *Miami Times*. We built that up over the years, I imagine, by fighting their fights and not sacrificing integrity in any way.

P: For example, would you have urged them to vote for John F. Kennedy [35th U. S. President, 1961-1963]?

R: Oh definitely, we supported Kennedy all the way. He was the only president for whom I left Miami to [see] his inauguration. I was really enthralled with that man. I thought, this is a new type of politician here; this country has got to change with a bright, young man like this who, I thought, had his head screwed on correctly.

P: But Lyndon Johnson [36th U. S. President, 1963-1969], who was a Southerner, did more for civil rights than Kennedy.

R: That is right. Isn't that something? Reading those historical events, you think about these things [and] you wonder about them sometimes.

P: Now, in some of the activities in the community, there were some fairly serious riots in the 1960s, and there was one, even later, in Liberty City.

R: In 1988, yes, after the McDuffy riots.

P: What was your position, editorially, on those riots in the black community?

R: Editorially, we did not call them riots. We called them protests. Sure, everybody else called them riots but, editorially, we were saying that the people were not just rioting to be rioting. They were protesting wrongs that were piled upon them year after year and that it looked like nothing was being done about it. Do you see that picture of Janet Reno [U. S. attorney general, 1993-present; state's attorney of Dade Co., FL, 1978-1993] and myself? That is when we had made up because during that time, we were having some serious problems with police brutality. We were protesting editorially and every way we could, in mass meetings and everything. But we could not get the city officials to really react to this thing, to really do anything about it. So our editorial strategy was, let us attack the top law enforcement person in the state, the state's attorney. Someone said, you are crazy; how are you going to attack Janet? Janet is our friend. She is the only decent person down there. Why are you going to jump on [her]? Yes, but we have to get attention to this problem of police brutality. If we jump on Janet . . . They said, hey, maybe we better take a look at this thing. And it worked. We wrote a piece in our paper saying, Janet Reno is to black people what Hitler was to Jews. That was awful. Janet asked me, now, how could you write that about me? I said, we had to get your attention.

The *Herald* picked it up and said what the black newspaper said: Janet is a racist. It got their attention. People started talking about it, saying police brutality in this town is bad. Then, the grand jury got on it and everything. Later on, I had to apologize to Janet. I said, Janet, you have to do what you have to do sometimes. I said, that is what we had to do; we had to use you to get the attention. So, once the state attorney's office was attacked, they had to respond, well, what could we do? There were a lot of things that could have been done that were not followed up on, that were done after that time. Things really changed after that. The police were getting away with too much. We had a chief named **Walter Headly**. Walter Headly stayed chief for about twenty-one or twenty-two years in Miami. Headly was known to have a dossier on every official in the city, all the top businessmen and everything. Nobody bothered Walter Headly. So the *Miami Times* came out one week with a front-page saying, Headly should be fired; he is a disgrace to this city, and we do not need a man like that running this police department because brutality is rampant [and] he is

not doing anything [about it]. Oh, we raved about it, and the *Herald* picked it up the next day and said, the black newspaper is calling for the dismissal of the chief. They had never done it--Headly must have had a dossier on the editors there too, but we were clean. He had not done anything to us. Everybody said, aren't you scared writing about him? Hell no. You have to bring these things to the attention of the public if we feel that we are right, if they are mistreating us and they are not doing a damn thing about it. Let us bring it to a head. Sure enough, Headly was fired a couple of years later. We started the movement. People saw through Headly, that Headly was not the best man for this job, and they got another police chief.

P: After that, they began hiring more African-American policemen?

R: Right. Well, we had African-American police even with Headly there. Yes, Headly was there when we brought on the first ones. The police went through a lot, too, to maintain their jobs. You know, they were not policemen fully; they were patrolmen. They could not arrest whites. They were restricted to black areas. Still, it got our foot in the door. That is why in my civic activities around Dade County, I wanted a seat at the table. If you did not have a seat at the table, how could you be heard? I wanted to get on the board. I did not want to get on the advisory board. I wanted to get on the policy-making board. That is where you can speak up and be heard.

P: In civil rights, how did you view Martin Luther King's gradual, more pacifistic approach as opposed to, say, Malcolm X and the Black Panthers--where did you stand in that ideological split?

R: I was with King to a certain extent. My mother always said, you do not pick a fight you cannot win. You cannot win if the other guy has a gun, and you have a slingshot. We did not have any guns. We did not have anything to fight with. I was afraid it was going to be a real serious bloodbath if we did not go with King. If we went with Malcolm, it was going to be really, really rough. Things might have changed faster, but it would have been bloodier. King was making a lot of sense, and history proved him right. I think the real reason King was murdered is because King was beginning to get the poor white people of the South to see that, really, it is not just what [was being done] to black people; [someone with] white skin [was] not much better off with low wages. He spoke to a white group, and he convinced them that he did not have anything against them. It was against the system. They began to rally behind King, and this was a dangerous move for white America if you have a black man here who is convincing white people that they should follow him against the system.

P: It is one thing to give the vote, another thing to give economic equality.

R: Yes, the two kind of go hand-in-hand.

P: How was your paper received by the white community? Obviously, the *Miami Herald* read what you wrote. Did any other civic leaders?

R: They always viewed us as a responsible black press. Responsible--I liked that. My dad was far more conservative than I was, and he always used to quote an English philosopher, I think his name was James McKinley, who said, never have a group of men resolved a situation more meaningfully than when they sat around a table and talked about it. He thought that if you talked about a problem in a meaningful manner and truthfully, being honest with yourselves, you can do it. You know, that worked [with] integrat[ing] the beaches in Dade County. I will tell you the story on the beaches in Dade County.

We arranged a meeting with the county commissioners at Crandon Park. They agreed to meet with us, the NAACP delegation. The meeting took place at 10:00 at Crandon Park. They had a conference room above the refreshment stand out there. They did not know what to expect. They did not know if we were planning a demonstration, because demonstrations were going on at the time. They did not know exactly what to expect, but they showed up at the meeting. I guess they had planned their strategy, as to what they would do in the meeting. We had planned ours. We had met out at Father Gibson's home that morning at 8:00 to plan our strategy of how we would approach this meeting about integrating the beaches. Our strategy was, we would bring all our past tax receipts from the county, and we would appeal to their sense of fair play. We said, gentlemen, we are here today for a redress of a grievance that we have, that you have about twenty-eight public beaches here in Dade County, and blacks are restricted to only one, Virginia Beach. We feel that is wrong. All of us are residents of Dade County. We are all taxpayers, and none of us have criminal records. We brought along our tax receipts so you could see that we were freeholders. During those days, you could not vote on certain issues if you were not a freeholder. So, we [were] all freeholders, and we [had] paid our taxes. Now, we notice on this tax pie chart that eleven percent of our taxes goes toward the maintenance of parks, playgrounds, [and] beaches, so we think that you are doing wrong when you restrict us to one beach and you are taking our tax money and maintaining the total of twenty-eight beaches. They listened to us, and nobody said a word.

They had all the commissioners there. They had the county manager, who was **Hump Campbell**. They had the county attorney, who was **Darry Davis**. They had all the commissioners. They just sat there and listened, and we laid out our plan. We took our attorneys with us, **G. Graves** and **John D. Johnson**. We said, we have had our attorneys research the laws of the state and the county, and there is no law on the books that says, black people cannot enjoy the public

facilities. So, we would like an answer from you. They would not give us an answer. They said not a word. [There was] nothing to say. So we said, we are coming back at 2:00 today to use this beach and if you want to put us in jail or beat us up like some of your police officers have been doing, that is all right. We feel that we need some sort of answer and some sort of resolution to this problem and we left.

Though we might have had a dozen or fourteen people with us that morning, when we got ready to go back, we had about half that many. But we went back at 2:00. There were a lot of policemen out there. There were a lot of county police. They were all along the beach. They did not know what to expect. We did not know what to expect, either. Somebody told us, do not go into the bathhouse. We could hear a lot of noise in the bathhouse. They said a bunch of white hoodlums were in there, waiting to beat us up when we [went] in to change into our swim trunks, and the police were going to conveniently not answer the call. So, we did not go there. What we did [was] we slipped on our trunks under our clothes, and we walked down to the beach. The police didn't stop us, and we just walked down to the beach. **Oscar Range** and **Mrs. Athalee Range** and myself kicked off our sandals, took off our slacks, and went into the water. Nobody said a word. No police officers came up. Some reporters were out there because they did not know what was going to happen. We stayed in the water, maybe, a half hour or so, and we came out of there. From that day, and I think it was November 7, 1957, the beaches of the county became integrated. I liked that because it was like my father was saying, responsible men would sit down and reason together at the round table, honestly. That happened and after that, there were no incidents. Blacks slowly began going to different beaches, any one they wanted.

P: What was the *Miami Herald's* position on all this civil rights activity?

R: [The] *Herald* was not editorially positioned, as it is today. You see, it was not popular to take the position of blacks during the civil rights struggle. I guess they were looking towards their population. Ninety percent of their readership, I guess, was white. They skirted a lot of issues, and they tapdanced around a lot of them.

P: It would hurt their advertising if they took a strong editorial position?

R: Right, and I think they were cognizant of that. I imagine we were, too. That is how we got our, I guess, opposition and our strength in the community because the people knew the *Times* would always come out fighting.

P: Didn't the *Times* get bombed one time?

- R: Yes, and believe it or not, by a black group. They had an organization called BAMB, the Black African Militant Movement, I think it was. These guys were always attacking us for not being militant enough. They thought we should urge the people to riot. A lot of it did not make a lot of sense to us. Editorially, we were not going to do that. We would get these letters to the editor saying we were not militant enough and [that] people should rise up and all that. But one night, we had closed up. The office was not open and by, probably, midnight, it happened. They threw a bomb, more like a Molotov cocktail, in our front door. It smashed the glass, but we had these metal bars...or we might have gotten them right after that. But it smashed the glass, and it burned just the front. It burned out before it could do serious damage to the building. Then, we were right in the heart of a thickly populated area. I imagine people saw it as soon as it burned, but it burned out. We never had any other problem after that.
- P: Did you ever get any phone calls or threats or letters from the Klan or other groups like that?
- R: Yes, we would get those, but we would just throw them away. We would not even print them.
- P: One thing, I suppose, that you had to do is, when an incident would take place, the white press would give one interpretation, so you had to sort of reinterpret or clarify some of the facts. Was that part of your function?
- R: We called it writing it from a black perspective, because the white perspective was quite different from the black perspective. I have been convinced in my general experiences that objectivity is a myth, because a writer can take that story and turn it anyway he wants to. So, if the white reporter views a demonstration in the community as a riot, the *Miami Times* might view that as a protest. The white headline might say, Blacks Riot Against Shells in Liberty City. *Miami Times*: Blacks Protests Against Shells in Liberty City. You can be as objective as you want to be, I guess.
- P: Another thing that you did, and I presume this is part of your function both as a newspaper editor and a human being, is that you have been active in not only the black community but in Miami-Dade, in general. Did you feel that was a specific responsibility that you had as editor of the paper?
- R: Definitely, because there were so many powerful white organizations that really ran the town, like United Way. They did not have any blacks on the board. And the Boy Scouts, I wanted to get in there because I was going to have my say. You know, you are not going to like what I am saying, but at least I will have my say, and I am going to say it in such a way [that] I am not angrily accusing you of racism as such. When I sat on the board of Miami Dade Community College,

which I did for nineteen years, a group would come to us, say in South Dade, and say, they would like to use our facilities for a summer camp. They would have to come before the board for approval. I would be sitting there and I would say, all right, it is no problem with me, but let us investigate and make sure that the summer camp is open to all of the people of Dade County. One time, they came back and said, no, this is a white-only thing. So, they did not get it. I changed [the] legal staff of the community college. A guy who is a federal judge today was the head of it, **Reiscamp**. He is a federal judge today, but he headed up the legal team. They would come in and I would say, Mr. Reiscamp, how many minority lawyers do you have on your staff? He would say, well, we really do not have any; it is not that we have not been looking for them, but none of them have applied to our firm and all that. So I said to him, you know, this community college represents all segments of the community and, possibly, you should not wait on them to come to you; you might seek them out because we would like a legal staff to represent us who represents all segments of the community. I did that for three years at a time. The second time he came, I did the same thing. I think he had one Hispanic the next time. The third time he came, I shoved it to him. I said, no, I am protesting right now, and I am asking all my trustees to vote with me against this law firm representing our college because for six years, I have been asking him to include minorities on the firm. He has not done it, and I think it is time that we make a move. Mr. President [and] Mr. Chairman, I think that we should look for another law firm to handle business with. [We] moved him right out like that.

You see, if you have a seat . . . and you do it in such a way [that] when you are in this dominant white group and you are the only black sitting at the table, whatever you say is not going to mean very much to them because they know they have the votes, but you kind of prick their conscience. You see? You know, it might not be a bad idea if we included a black on that committee or something like that. That is what I did. I wanted to get on all the policy-making committees. I did not want to serve on the advisory committees. Sometimes, you have to start there. You have to start on the advisory committee, but I want[ed] to be a policy-maker because that is when you get something done, get things looked at.

P: Now, you were the first black, I believe, on the board of the United Way?

R: Yes.

P: The same for the Boy Scouts?

R: Right.

P: So, there are several of these community agencies where you were the very first?

R: Right. They did not feel uncomfortable with me, I do not think, because I had paid my dues in the community. I felt I had done a good job, and I was working for the same thing [they] were working for, for a good community, a good wholesome community. So, nobody really objected. But then, I would always be their conscience, and I was listening to what was said. You would be surprised to know the racism that could go on in a meeting if only all whites are in the room. So, I am listening carefully to what is said, and I am making my little notes. I read my agenda very carefully because there were certain things in the agenda that, if you do not read them carefully, that they slipped by you. But, I have had a good relationship with most of them. It was a sacrifice because, I remember, a lot of times, it [took] two hours for these luncheon meetings, but I would leave my job. I wanted to be there to see what was going on.

P: Now, would you do editorials about, say for example, the law firm that was dismissed?

R: No. Believe it or not, I did not even write it up because I did not want people to think I was using that as a forum for a newspaper. A lot of things happened that I did not report on. It was not my job to make news for my newspaper. It was to get something done, to help this community become more rounded.

P: Let me go and look at the status of the newspaper in the 1950s. How many readers did you have then, and how many do you have today?

R: In the 1950s, our circulation was possibly about 7,000 to 10,000. Today, we are 22,000.

P: What is your major source of advertising?

R: Corporate. We get a great deal of corporate advertising. We have Sears, K-Mart, General Motors, Coca-Cola, [and] Pepsi. A great deal of corporate advertising, and it moves around. I remember, five to ten years ago, we were heavy on automobile advertising. Right now, we do not get a lot of automobile advertising. We get some of it. We usually get a lot of grocery advertising. Well, we get Publix now. Winn-Dixie used to be with us. They used to be one of our biggest advertisers. It goes around, and it comes around [in] different ways. Now, the health organizations today are big because everybody has health services. Everybody has some Medicare or Medicaid.

P: That was another struggle you had, to integrate Jackson Memorial.

R: That is right. My mother had diabetes, and she was losing a leg. I went out to the hospital to see her. There was no air conditioning in this west wing where they put all the blacks. It had an electric fan that was doing a poor job. I had to

do a sit-in outside the administrator's office. They kept me out there all day. They **had already seen** me, but word got around. I made some phone calls to some politicians and things like that. The next day, they moved my mother to a ward in the wooded building. A couple of black nurses came up to me and told me, that is the first a black person has ever been in that building. She said, I have been working here twenty-two years. I said, well, things change after a while. If nobody could test it, you see, nothing would get done. Everybody seemingly would go along with the status quo. My newspaper never protested it early anyhow, but it hit me right at home that my mother was about to lose her leg and, Jesus, look at the conditions. Segregation is such a terrible thing, and it is senseless. I look at the old separate but equal laws. Separate but equal would have worked if it was . . .

P: Really equal.

R: If it was really equal, right.

P: And it was not.

R: Just like after slavery, boy, it would have been a great country if everybody had gotten his forty acres and a mule. But, it never happened.

P: Let me ask you about another controversial issue. This is not Miami. You might remember Reverend Henry Lyons [former president of the National Baptist convention] . . .

R: Yes.

P: . . . was charged with a lot of illegal activities. Let us just put it that way. Some of the members of the black community defended him in the beginning because they thought this was the white authorities picking on Henry Lyons. What was your reaction at the beginning? Did you see that, because of police brutality and because of discrimination, that this was a normal set of circumstances, or did you think, well, maybe he actually . . .

R: With the Henry Lyons case?

P: Yes.

R: Listen. There is only one way to put it. Henry Lyons was a crook, and I abhor people who would try to smooth that over. If you are a thief, you are a thief. We do not do ourselves any good by protecting a thief. Here is a man [who] head[s] one of the largest black religious organizations in the world. He could have done so much good, had he been an honest man. But, he was a dishonest man, and

he hurt so many people by that. I do not think we should find excuses for dishonest people. No, we have a lot of political appointments now that really hurt the black community, wherein the community development corporations, which are usually run by people who worked in political campaigns of certain public officials and who would get the appointment, are supposed to help develop that community, but most of them sit around, spend the budget, and do nothing. They get refunded year after year. Nobody asks for accountability. I think everybody should be accountable. Everybody should be accountable. Newspapers, too. But, we have not had that accountability. I do not want to make excuses for you, and I do not want to make excuses for politicians who are being tried for bribes and stealing money. Damn it. A lot [of people] said, but the white guys are doing it. Well, it is still not right. I tell a lot of black guys that. I say, and don't you think, with your black face, you can do everything a white politician can do and get away with it. I say, the country is not like that. If we had more accountability and quit making excuses . . . I saw in the paper recently that people are trying to shorten his term. Why? He has done his harm to the black religious community of this country. Why let him out to do more? No. Let him stay there and pay his debt to society. That is the way I look at it.

P: Let me ask some general questions about newspapers that we are asking everybody in this little survey. Today, what do you think are the most important functions of your newspaper?

R: Number one, to keep the people informed, basically, and to educate. Education goes a long way because there are so many services that are offered by government that people who are not well-informed do not even know that they are there, and they are losing. Like health services. There are a lot of free health services that you could get almost everywhere. But, if you do not know about them, you are going to be sitting over here with diabetes, dying from it, and not even know you have it because you have not availed yourself of these health services where you can go down and get examinations and find things like that. There are lot of social services available that people do not know about. There are a lot of people in our community who are really not sophisticated enough to interpret a lot of things to their best advantage. We need to educate them, explain this to them and make it known to them. We need to do it through our churches. I think the black newspapers have to work very closely with the churches because our people believe in their churches. Today, I think they believe in the churches more than anything else, and I think if any salvation is to come to the black man, it is coming through the churches because we have more of them than anything else. Most of them are better organized. We have a lot of them that are not particularly well-organized.

P: When you took over from your father, did you change much?

- R: No. I found that the things my dad told me that I thought were not exactly right or not good for the paper, he had a lot more smarts about him than my young mind thought he had. I see the same thing in my daughter. I tell my daughter some things, and she has some different ideas. Later on, she will come back and say, you know, I think you might be right. I think that happens to everybody. When you are young, you get out of college. I came back home thinking, boy, I was going to really turn this thing around and do things.
- P: Has your audience changed, from 1950 to the present, the people who read the paper?
- R: Not basically. We usually hold onto our readers. I do not know if we have as many young readers today as I would like to have, but we kind of aim ourselves at the middle-aged **voting** community.
- P: How has Miami changed in the years since you have been with the paper?
- R: Believe it or not, I thought that we had a great deal of change going into the 1980s. Things were beginning to shape up. A lot of civil rights suits had been filed, and a lot of things were beginning to take place. But then, I thought that the Mariel boat lift set the black community back twenty years, because once Mariel came in and the Cuban refugees came to this country, we sort of changed our attack against beating the drums for black people to minorities, and that was a mistake. I hate to admit it, but that was a mistake because we included the Hispanic brothers along with the black.
- P: And the Haitians?
- R: And the Haitians. But, basically, the Hispanic refugees never really joined with the black community in any way, and we included them in our suits when we amended our suits to say, minorities. That was meant to show that we are fighting for all minorities, but we did not get that kind of cooperation from the Cuban refugees. They did not really come in with us. In fact, I think that the refugees hurt the black community of Dade County more than it did anybody else. A lot of people would say that the community was dead before the refugees came, and they enlivened it and all that. But I said, no, we had this community going pretty well, and we were working out a lot of problems pretty well. It is a new thing today with the people from the Caribbean because instead of all the black people really sticking together in their fight for equality and human decency, I see some divisions between American blacks, Caribbean blacks, the Haitians over there, the Jamaicans over there. America is a melting pot like that, but I think that black people must understand that they are in a position where they are easily identifiable, and the history of this country has shown that there has been always this kind of innate resentment of blacks. This is where we

come from. We have not overcome it yet. Racism is still rampant in the country. I think there is so much more work to be done.

P: Have you changed your editorial policy, now, back to strictly supporting black causes, as opposed to minority causes?

R: We are slowly doing that. I think it is necessary.

[End of Side A2]

P: . . . _____ in reaction to any kind of editorial position you have held?

R: I cannot really remember any significant repercussions from advertisers for my editorial policy. There probably have been a few but, basically, I have always tried to keep that separate. I did not want the editorial to be dictated by the advertisers. No, no, no. I do not think we would be an effective newspaper that way.

P: You do not have the problems of being owned by a chain or anything like that, so you do not have to deal with those kinds of issues.

R: No, no. We are strictly independent.

P: Do you get many letters to the editor?

R: Yes.

P: How have they changed over the years?

R: Not a great deal. We do not get as many today as we used to get. I do not know if people are getting complacent and feeling that they have it made or that the problems of this country have been resolved. I do not know. We invite letters to the editor because we like to know what people are thinking. I wish we had more to give us a better insight on people.

P: Do your readers like to read those letters?

R: Yes, they do. A lot of people are too lazy to write. They will call us up and give us a good letter to the editor, really, over the telephone. I say to a lot of them, hey listen, that is great; that is the stuff we need to disseminate; why don't you put that on paper for me? You never get it. They promise you, but you never get it. That is terrible because you get some good things over the phone that you wish you could reduce to writing.

P: How has technology changed the newspaper business?

R: Considerably, from the day we set type one character at a time to today. My daughter is installing a new technology system now, and it is on order. It is going to be the most up-to-date thing that we have, but technology changes so fast. We bought our first really technological system in 1988. Computerized, and we have upgraded and upgraded and all that. Now, she is going to quit upgrading and do a new thing altogether. I think it is called Baseview. It is really the latest in newspaper.

P: And that enables you to do your work more efficiently and more cheaply.

R: Oh definitely.

P: What has happened in America, in terms of newspaper reading? The theory is that in a few years, everybody will use the Internet, and people will not have the physical newspaper anymore. Do you see the end of newspapers?

R: I do not think so. I think the newspaper will always be a part of the community. I remember when segregation was supposed to end in the schools and the different public facilities and all that. Everybody was saying that this would be the end of the black press, that there was no need for a black press now with the segregation ending. But, that was not true. In fact, that pointed out that the black press was needed more than ever because segregation ending is a term, but like we all say, there is still a lot of work to be done in the general course of things.

P: How many other African-American newspapers are there in the state?

R: We have about fifteen.

P: Are most of them the same size?

R: We are the largest.

P: Do you have active participation with the Florida Press Association?

R: No, I do not.

P: How about the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors?

R: No, I have never participated with the state organizations.

P: Any particular reasons?

- R: I guess from my old days I should not go back, but I was not wanted back then. I did not think it was worth that much to push myself into the role.
- P: Is it getting harder or easier to publish a black newspaper?
- R: I think it is getting easier because of the correct technology you have out there. Years ago, I could not afford Associated Press, and now it is in my reach. But, I did not want just Associated Press. I wanted the Caribbean. We use the Caribbean Newspaper Association. Then, there is one we get out of London, from Africa. I wanted the paper to be a real black newspaper, real different, not to be a carbon copy of the *Herald*.
- P: Do you use syndicated columnists, like William Raspberry [Pulitzer Prize winning nationally-syndicated columnist for the *Washington Post*]?
- R: Yes. In fact, let me tell you a story about Raspberry. We have been using Raspberry for many years. The *Herald* had the rights to the Raspberry column, but they very seldom used it. When I originally wrote for the rights, they said the *Herald* had that territory. I wrote back and said, well, they are not using it. I said, I read the *Herald* every day, and I might see one Raspberry column every two weeks. So, they started sending me the column, and I started using it. Then, the *Herald* picked it up. They would not miss a Raspberry now. Maybe they did not think he was prominent then, but I always liked him. I thought he was very good.
- P: So, you can still use him, even though they have the rights?
- R: Yes. Well, there are no more rights now, no more territorial rights on columns.
- P: So, it is sold on an individual basis?
- R: Right.
- P: Any other columnists you use?
- R: Yes. **Carl Roland** and Jesse Jackson's [African-American political leader, clergyman, and civil rights activist; U. S. presidential candidate, 1984, 1988] column.
- P: Does that provide a more national view, and that is sort of what you are trying to do, expand the parameters of the paper a little bit to talk about national and international issues?
- R: That is right, but I try to stay as black as I can. I try to pick the news that you do not see, that you will not find, in the *Herald* or the *Sun Sentinel*.

P: Would you use a white columnist?

R: Sure. In fact, I had a white sports editor way back in the 1960s. He was the only white on my firm. I did like the whites. I put him right up at the front desk.

P: So everybody could see him.

R: Everybody could see him. His name was **Harry Spear**. He was my sports editor. Harry would come in, and he and I would laugh over that.

P: Looking back on the time that you have been with the paper, what would you say is your most important contribution to the community?

R: The newspaper, itself?

P: Yes.

R: I believe, bringing the people the news of their community every week in an unbiased sort of way, from a black perspective, and trying to steer them. You are not supposed to steer, I guess, but we try to do that. We try to kind of steer them in the right direction, editorially.

P: Let me add to that. What do you consider your most important personal contribution?

R: To this community, I think my most important contribution other than the newspaper was taking a leadership [role] during the civil rights struggle, in things like the golf law suit and the beaches. Somebody had to do that. Everybody knew it should be done, but everybody was standing around waiting on somebody else to do it. You have to have a warm body. You are not there to resent [because] somebody will get beat up, if you will. Somebody had to step forward. If you are writing about it every day, protesting it and saying, this is wrong and we should do something, well, when they ask for volunteers, your hand should go up, or else you are not for real.

P: I realize your journalistic career is not over. Have you accomplished most of what you wanted to do when you started?

R: Except write a book. I always thought I would write a book, but I never got around to it. I have some interesting experiences I would really like to put down on paper. One day, if God is still good to me, I might still do it. I understand they have a dictating machine, now, that can actually record your voice.

P: Yes. I have thought of that.

- R: I sure would like it. I am going to invest in that and, maybe, I can get my book opened.
- P: Sometimes, that is the best way, to sit down and, sort of, reminisce. In fact, this will be a good start for you. You will have a couple of hours here.
- R: That is right.
- P: So, you can use that as a basis.
- R: Well, good. I will be looking forward to getting a copy.
- P: Have you had any problems with freedom of information? Is there a set of circumstances or a particular incident where you wanted information from the police or the city, and they would not turn that information to you?
- R: No, I have never had that problem. We always had a pretty good relationship.
- P: If you look back on your career, what would be the strangest incident that occurred the whole time you were involved in the newspaper business? (That is sort of a strange question.)
- R: I think we touched on it earlier. Some of the greatest changes that we made, I do not have a headline story in my newspaper because I was always aware of the fact that people would think, this guy is going around trying to make headlines for his newspaper. That is not what we were about. We were about this community first. Now, those things would come. Headlines we made, you might have read them in the *Herald*, but I did not want people to feel that this guy is seeking self-aggrandizement. No, that is not what it is all about. We are for this community.
- P: Did you ever have any trouble with labor unions?
- R: No.
- P: You are not unionized?
- R: Never have [been], and I always tried to stay away from printers who had possible labor problems. I picked up on my dad's reputation of having a paper every week for seventy-six years. I would not want a strike to break that down.
- P: Is there anything else that you would like to say before we conclude the interview?
- R: No. It has been a hell of a ride.

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P: All right. With that, we conclude the interview with Mr. Garth Reeves.

[End of interview.]