

FRED P. PETTIJOHN

Fred P. Pettijohn was interviewed on August 18, 1999 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Mr. Pettijohn was born on May 11, 1917 in Baltimore, Maryland. When young Fred was four months old, the Pettijohn family moved to Tallahassee, Florida, where Fred completed all of his public schooling. He worked on the school paper and developed a desire to pursue a career in journalism.

His first newspaper job was the Assistant Sports Editor for the Tallahassee Democrat. And then he worked as a general assignments editor for the Florida State News. He graduated from the University of Florida in 1941 and while a student he wrote for the yearbook and campus newspaper, the Alligator. While waiting to be drafted for service in World War II, Pettijohn moved to Washington, D.C. where he was employed in a variety of jobs, including an ad salesman for the phone company and a reporter for the Washington Times-Herald.

In 1942 he was drafted and served three years in the U.S. Army. He earned three battle Stars in the China-Burma-India campaign as a First Sergeant in airborne artillery. He was twice nominated for a Bronze Star and received his Honorable Discharge in December, 1945. He returned to Tallahassee after the war and after a brief stint as a Training Officer in the Bureau of Veteran's Affairs, he was appointed sports editor of the Tallahassee Democrat . While at the Democrat, he won the Associated Press's

FNP 41 page 2

sportswriting award for two consecutive years. In 1953, he took his talents to the Ft. Lauderdale News, where he was named sports editor.

He quickly moved up the ranks of management and took the position of Managing Editor of the paper in 1954 and became Executive Editor in 1960. When the paper became the Sun Sentinel, he was elected Vice-President and by 1968 was appointed general Manager of the paper. Pettijohn served as First Vice-President and Editorial Director until his retirement in 1982.

Fred Pettijohn was active and prominent in community affairs. A sampling of his commitment included membership on President Dwight Eisenhower's Committee on Higher Education, 1958; he was a member of the Broward County Crime Prevention Committee, served on the Board of Directors of the Greater Ft. Lauderdale Chamber of Commerce and participated as a member of the Board of Trustees of Holy Cross Hospital. He was also on the Board of Directors of the University of Florida Foundation, the Salvation Army and the Ft. Lauderdale Historical Society. In 1970 he was President of the Florida Press Association.

Mr. Pettijohn has garnered many awards during his distinguished career, including a Distinguished service Award from the Florida Press Association; an Honor Award for Professional Service from the University of Florida College of Journalism and Communications and the University of Florida Distinguished Alumni Award. In 1991 he was inducted into the Florida Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1991. The citation for his

FNP 41 page 3

membership was as follows: "He earned a reputation as a tough editor with an unerring instinct for quality, and an expectation of commitment and dedication from his reporters and editors. Yet he was equally well known as a warm, humorous, caring gentlemen truly interested in the well-being of his fellow man. Pettijohn was deeply committed to his community, civic organizations and higher education."

In his interview, Pettijohn talks about his early career as a sports writer; his war experiences and his career in Ft. Lauderdale. He discusses R.H> Gore, the conservative owner of the paper and the sale of the paper to the Chicago Tribune. He explains his chagrin with errors; the successful advertising section; investigative journalism; letters to the editor; use of columnists and cartoonists; technological changes; and the paper's contribution to the community. He includes an assessment of Governors Reubin Askew and Claude Kirk, Jr., along with an amusing story about Kirk. He concludes with an anecdote about John F. and Jacqueline Kennedy.

P: How and when did you decided to go into journalism?

Pj: I had decided when I was in, about, the eighth grade that I wanted to be in newspaper work. We did not have a school paper at the time, but we had an energetic high school student who had a mimeograph machine and put out his own high school newspaper once a week. To show you what kind of a paper it was, he called it *Ye Weekly Snooze*... He was quite proud of that title. Anyway, he had a reporter for each class, and I ended up as the reporter for my class. After a year, I thought, this is really what I want to do. I talked to my father about it and he said, well, I am sure it is

FNP 41 page 4

interesting, but I can tell you now, you will never make any money in the newspaper business. For a number of years, I thought my father was brilliant. He could see far into the future and see you would not make any money out of it.

P: You also worked for the *Florida State News*. What was that?

Pj: It was an opposition daily paper to the *Tallahassee Democrat*. I do not remember how long it lasted, from the mid-1930s, I would say, until shortly before World War II. World War II probably finished the *Florida State News*, a pretty good newspaper. Comparing it to the *Democrat*, they did a pretty good job. Like most underdogs or newcomers, they were good hustlers.

P: Why did you choose to go to the University of Florida instead of somewhere else?

Pj: I remember, we talked to the dean of men and my mother said, this is the first time that Fred will ever have been away from home, and I am concerned about him. The dean looked at my record and said, Mrs. Pettijohn, I think we can tell you that we will have your son home by Thanksgiving. She had a great sense of humor, but that did not strike her as funny. It did me and I thought, well, it does not hurt to laugh in front of the dean of men. He obviously had used the line before with varying amounts of success. I wanted him to know he had someone who was quick on the uptake. It

FNP 41 page 5

turned out, he was not right, but it was close there for a while.

P: Where did you live on campus?

Pj: I lived right by the old, I think it was, College Inn. It was a den of iniquity. Obviously, the good locations had long been gone and had I been a little keener, I would have known there was something wrong with the availability of a room right across the street from the campus. All-night card games. They had a bunch of former athletes who had graduated and either were not able to find work or it had never occurred to them to look for work. So, they played poker mainly at night and fleeced the freshman who were coming in.

P: How did working for the campus newspaper, The Alligator, help you in your journalism career?

Pj: Well, I thought at that time, and I am still pretty much married to the idea, that any time that you had the opportunity to write under some degree of pressure—and obviously pressure for a college publication is not the same as it is for a daily, and the *Alligator* was a weekly at that time—and have somebody go over your copy and either talk to you about it or tell you it was all right or bounce it back at you—I thought there was a great benefit in that and the more I could do of that, the more eager I was to do it.

FNP 41 page 6

P: Talk about your Army experience. You were in the China/Burma/India campaign and you were in an artillery unit?

Pj: Yes. I was in an air transportable or airborne artillery unit. We had been designed specifically for this China/Burma/India theater. We could fly guns, ... could load them on gliders and land them. We were designed and set up to move quickly by air for whatever distance they wanted to move us.... We won and lost Myitkyina three times. Every time that we would take it... we were relieved by the Chinese army each time and each time they relieved us, they lost it, until finally we took it back a third time and held it. We stayed there and provided air support while all portions of the strip were put in working order, and the Japanese bombed it. They had a guy with a low-power engine called Washing Machine Charlie who flew overhead, usually at one of the meals, and tried to drop bombs on meal formations.... They did have bombers coming in. They had some fighters coming over.... we supposedly had radar which would advise us of incoming unpleasant people. From thirty to forty-five seconds ahead of our signals, the Chinese who worked at the field took cover. They had some method of communication that we never did break. They were close, though, at least a half minute and in some cases a full minute ahead, which becomes important to a guy who is looking for a foxhole or looking for a slit trench and he is the last one there. You do not like to give somebody a thirty-second jump on you. You might have been a world-class sprinter, but you do not like those odds at all.

P: How did the war experience impact your life?

FNP 41 page 7

Pj: I felt that I had demonstrated to myself that I could handle people and could lead people. I was used to being in uncomfortable and dangerous situations. I had pretty good control of my emotions.... The Army is a great leveler. If you have trouble with humility, they can do a lot for you. I thought it would have been tragic had I not gone in the service because I felt I had benefitted so much from it that it was almost a totally selfish outlook.... But I enjoyed the feeling of knowing that I could go into almost any situation. I certainly could survive the early part of what tough-going there [was], [which] might be learning what the routine was, and then I would progress from there with whatever I was going to do.

P: And you were with the Tallahassee Democrat for six years. What, specifically, did you do all that time?

Pj: I covered the Class D baseball team. I covered the birth of Florida State University in all sports.... I had a lot of success with the *Democrat*. I had won the state's AP [Associated Press] sportswriting award two years in a row, the first person who had ever won a writing award for consecutive years. (The) *Fort Lauderdale News* had decided to go back into the Sunday field.... So, they were going back in the first Sunday in June, and the editor who was doing the hiring was impressed by people who had won writing contests. He sent his political writer by the *Democrat* office to talk to me. He told me that Jack Gore wanted to talk to me and I said, about what? He said, he was not specific, but [about] a job with the *Fort Lauderdale News*. So, I called Jack and talked to him on the phone and asked him what kind of money they were talking

FNP 41 page 8

about. We discussed it ...(and) we decided to take the offer and drove down here. I got here with about a 102 or 103 [degree] fever, talked to the people at the *News*, took the job, had a month's issue of back papers to look at, and promised them I would come to work the next Friday.

P: Tell me the difference between the Fort Lauderdale paper and the *Tallahassee Democrat* at this time.

Pj: There was not a great deal of difference in circulation. The *Democrat* was up around 18,000 to 20,000. Fort Lauderdale was about 22,000 in the summertime but about 35,000 to 38,000 in the season. It was more sophisticated. It was a privately-owned newspaper.

P: Who owned it?

Pj: R. H. Gore, Sr. He had been a newspaperman himself and was, by far, the most colorful creature I had ever met. It looked like the *Fort Lauderdale News* was a growing paper, and Tallahassee was pretty much limited to the growth of the state government. There were not any other large industries there....

P: Were you competing with the *Miami Herald*?

Pj: Oh yes. In our minds, we were. In the *Herald's* minds, I do not think we were

FNP 41 page 9

much competition. They had a bureau. They had a Broward section in the *Herald*. Just taking alone the people on a beat or on the street working, they probably had as many, if not more, people than we did, in their basic office. Old man Gore was a lot of things that are good. Throwing money around was not one of them. He liked to keep most of the money that came in, which meant that he did not want to pay anybody much. He owned a TV station, he owned a radio station, and he owned the only newspaper in Fort Lauderdale, which gave him a leg up, for sure. I worked for all three.... The *Herald* had the morning field to itself. We had the afternoon field to ourselves.... We moved the Saturday paper which, in the way of income, was never a good one. We moved it from Saturday afternoon to Saturday morning. It gave us a leg up covering Friday's sports. The University of Miami played all of its games on Friday night. Advertising built up very quickly. Before I left, we had the largest Saturday newspaper in the United States, in the number of pages, helped by a real estate section that was gigantic. It still is large, but it was gigantic. It was almost embarrassing. You know, nobody who lived here long read it, but the advertisers loved it and thought it was a great deal.

P: You went, almost immediately, from sports editor to managing editor. How did that happen and why did you decide to do that?

Pj: It happened because the man who was managing editor was a good newspaperman but a sensitive newspaperman, and that is a difficult thing to live with.

FNP 41 page 10

Old man Gore was too roughshod for him to live with comfortably. He had occasional attacks of ulcers, and he finally reached a point where he just could not take it. He was nearing retirement.... Me taking the job was a little more difficult. I was bothered by several things. Was I ready to leave sports? You know, it was 1954. I was thirty-seven years of age, and that seemed fairly young for me to be leaving a field in which I had demonstrated I could do pretty well in, against any competition. Was I ready to come under the direct fire of R. H. Gore, Sr., who was a factor? Did the newsroom job scare me? No, not that much, not that part of it. I was more concerned about Gore, Sr. than I was [about] the people I was working with. I worked well with most of them.... Another factor which was important from the first is I now had a family that was growing along, a five-year-old and a three and-a-half-year-old. I needed more money, [which] I was not going to get [doing] sports in Fort Lauderdale....

So, I had told Mr. Gore, Sr. [that] I was afraid I did not know enough about the city. I had only been here about six months. [I said,] I do not know enough about the city, I do not know much about the people, I do not know much about the politics. I do not know anything about your hand in all of this, but what experience I have had in life tells me that you have a very large hand that is not seen in this, and that is of some concern to me. I said, if you will give me six months, I will study the news end of the paper as much as I can, I will talk to as many people as I can, I will learn as much about the job as I can, and, at the end of six months, I will either take it or I will move on and get out of your way. So, he thought that was fair, and that was what transpired.

P: Explain to me, when you took over as managing editor, exactly what your duties

FNP 41 page 11

were?

Pj: The managing editor of the *Ford Lauderdale News*, if he is really the managing editor, does the hiring and firing of the entire staff. He buys all the features in the newspaper. He oversees the production of every news page, with the exception of the editorial page and the op ed. He is responsible for getting the paper closed up in the pressroom or to the pressroom on time. In my case, the managing editor also wrote a column five days a week. This was Mr. Gore's suggestion, which was more than a suggestion.

P: Six years later, you became executive editor?

Pj: We went into a second newspaper. I became executive editor so I would, in effect, be the person that ran the news pages of both newspapers, the *News* and the *Sentinel*. I continued to buy the features for both newspapers. ... [The *Sentinel*] was now the morning paper, located in Pompano.... When we got set to get the *Sentinel* started, the reason we started it was [because] a family in Indiana wintered in Pompano and noticed there was no daily paper in Pompano, so they decided to come into Pompano with a five-day-a-week afternoon newspaper. Well, the old man [Gore] could not stand the thought of that, so we beat them out on the street by a week or two.

It was called the *Sun Sentinel*, and the Associated Press never would accept

FNP 41 page 12

that. They said it had to be attached to a city. I do not see that *USA TODAY* is attached to a city. Until [the] *Fort Lauderdale News* folded, the AP forever referred to it as *Pompano Beach Sun Sentinel*; to hell with the people who own this newspaper. We did not have it on the masthead....

All of the departments heads and the leading managers of news departments [were] in this meeting and R. H. Gore is running the meeting and he says, does everybody agree that the newspaper should not come into Fort Lauderdale? I said, no. And he said, what? And I said, no. He said, no what? I said, no, I do not agree that the paper should not come into Fort Lauderdale. He punished me; for several weeks, he did not speak to me. ... But now, I had a new assignment with my job. I had to meet with R. H., Sr. at 5:30 every morning [and] discuss with him what our news play looked like for that afternoon. The *Sentinel* was a baby to a lot of us. He never had much interest in the *Sentinel*, to tell you the truth. He got it started [and] it looked okay, [but] the *Fort Lauderdale News* was his child. He wanted to know, and we went through the paper page by page, why the *Herald* had this story that we did not have and if I said, well, we had that story but you missed it, he said, where was it? I said, it was on 3A. He said, it was not properly displayed or I would not have missed it. So, it was a cannot-win situation, and you learned to live with it.

P: What sort of political bent was the newspaper?

Pj: Ultra-conservative. We were much to the right of Barry Goldwater and looking for

FNP 41 page 13

room to move further, but further out in that direction was pretty much a wasteland. We were one of the few papers that declared early and strongly for Barry Goldwater. We were a paper that could not tolerate the mention of Eleanor Roosevelt. R. H. Gore had been governor of Puerto Rico under Franklin D. [Roosevelt] and as such, he wanted English to be the primary language in Puerto Rican schools. Eleanor(Roosevelt)... wanted Spanish. To no one's surprise, Eleanor prevailed, and he wrote a letter to FDR, typed it himself...and told FDR very plainly, if you want Eleanor to be governor of Puerto Rico, I suggest you appoint her; if you are going to support her in what I think is the most important decision that involves the people of Puerto Rico in the United States, then there is no place for me here. The old man, as I have indicated, was not careless with the nickel. There was a gunboat coming in to Puerto Rico, and he arranged to move his family back to the mainland on that gunboat.... It was a freebie, and he took advantage of it.

P: What ultimately happened to the *News* and the *Sentinel*?

Pj: The fate of the afternoon paper in the average city was pretty well spelled out. We thought instead of dying a slow death, why do we not manage our own demise? We have another newspaper, [and] it is not like we are going out of business. Why not stop circulation, division by division, and slowly back out of the afternoon field, heavily recommending the morning. It seemed like a pretty good idea. A lot of people did not understand it. A lot of people did not like it. A lot of people said, no, if you are going to fold up in the afternoon, we are not going to go with you in the morning; we are going to

FNP 41 page 14

go with the *Herald* who we know will be in the morning for the rest of our lives.

P: At some point, the *Chicago Tribune* purchased the newspaper?

Pj: The *Tribune* bought us in 1963.... It was a natural marriage. The *Tribune* was one of the few papers the old man would consider selling to. He sold it for \$18.1 million and in 1963, nobody in the newspaper business believed that the *Tribune* had paid \$18 million for that shitty little paper in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. They did not know that having the *Fort Lauderdale News* press running was a lot like having the United States Mint running. You know, we had a small compact circulation. We had a growing advertising rate. We had a popular newspaper with people. It was well read, which had been demonstrated many times. It was rolling in money.

P: How did that affect what you did, once you were owned by the *Chicago Tribune*?

Pj: The difference between a home-owned, family-owned newspaper and part of a chain, you cannot measure. It is too wide, and it is too deep. It gave me a certain amount of freedom that I had not had, in that I did not have to go to the office at 5:30 any more. I did not have to undergo a daily grilling. I could look to making sizable increases in the overall payroll. I could look to adding people to the staff. ... We thought we would get a ton of suggestions from them. We did not. ... We were new to the newspaper family, too. We were their first acquisition. They did not quite know

FNP 41 page 15

what to do with us. They were happy they had us. Nobody believes this story when I tell it today, but they told us, we are really not interested in the *Sun Sentinel*; if you have some people who would want to take it over, we would sell it to them very reasonably and we think we could give you press time and print the paper for you....

P: In 1968, you became the assistant general manager. What duties did you have in that position?

Pj: Well, I was overseeing all of the departments in the newspaper, editorial less than any of the rest of them. I felt editorial was in good hands. ... There were two senior managers who both had been considered the competitors for the general manager's job. The [position of] assistant was [at] Gore's insistence. He was not ready to make anyone general manager. He wanted to be president and general manager. It turns out he got exactly what he wanted. The agreement between he and I was that when I showed him I could handle a job, I would be the general manager.

P: Eventually, in 1970, you become first vice-president and, in 1977, editorial director. What financial, editorial, or circulation problems did the newspaper have when you took over as managing editor and first vice-president?

Pj: The newspaper itself had no financial problems. As we have already indicated earlier, it was literally a gold-mine, an unadvertised gold-mine. Mr. Gore, by design, gave a limited amount [of information] to editor and publisher. He said, why should

FNP 41 page 16

other people know how good things are here? It will just attract them to the area, and we do not need competition of any kind. With all that money, you had a problem, in that the *Miami Herald* paid handsomely to the South, and we paid unhandsomely to the North, as did the *Palm Beach Post* and *Times* as far as we knew. They were pretty generally in the same salary brackets that we were, but we lagged way behind the *Herald*. We lost a few people to the *Herald*, mainly because most of the people who we hired had applied to the *Herald* first and George Beebe, who was managing editor during my early years and through a great deal of my career, had made a promise mainly to his own mind—I do not think he ever made it to anyone from Fort Lauderdale, but it is possible he did—that he would not raid the Lauderdale ranks. I do not think he ever broke it. It may have been broken after his time. But it was certainly a high-class attitude to take, because there was a time when he could have certainly hired 75 percent of our people away without any trouble, I would think.

P: When you took over as general manager, what specific goals did you have for the newspaper?

Pj: We were trying to improve the press room, which involved new presses mainly. We had to reduce running time. By this time, the weekend paper run was heavy. We were trying to always increase circulation. We always had a tough nut down in the Hollywood-Hallandale area. They had a paper of their own which filled a niche, and they got their national/international news from the *Herald*, so there was no place for us in that position....

FNP 41 page 17

P: How did you go about increasing circulation?

Pj: You try to tell people what a good job you are doing and do all the marketing devices and all of the tools. ... We increased our sampling, which we had done on a limited basis because sampling cost[s] money, takes time, and is slow to produce results.... I wanted to change the attitude of the people at the *News*. I wanted them to respect what they were doing here, [that] they were a winner in Broward County. If we were a loser in Hollywood, we just had to grin and bear it. But we were doing a good job elsewhere. Like anybody else who had been in the newsroom, I wanted to improve the reporting. I wanted to improve the editing. I wanted to improve coverage overall. I wanted to eliminate, as far as possible, the stupid mistakes.

P: What errors most upset you?

Pj: The dumb ones. Dumb geographical errors: they do not know where the airport is located [or] they do not know the difference between the Fort Lauderdale, Hollywood, and Greater Miami Airports. You know? It seems nonsensical to say that, but that will come up in a story.... [When] somebody gets confused in a story, I am irked that they got confused....

P: What would happen, normally, in a case like that? Would you, the next day, rectify the mistake?

Pj: Not unless somebody asked for it. I did not believe in correcting errors that

FNP 41 page 18

nobody was interested enough in to correct me.

P: Would you put the correction on the same page that the story was written on?

Pj: I would not promise that, but I would say we would come as close to that page [with the] recognition as we could.

P: In your view, what are the most important functions of a newspaper like the Fort Lauderdale paper?

Pj: I think, overall, it should represent the needs, the desires, and the dreams of the people whom it serves, the area in which it serves. I think it has to provide some leadership. I do not use the word strong leadership because I do not want to go overboard in extremely strong recommendations for political offices, which is the first thing people usually zero in on when you say leadership.

P: Did you make recommendations for campaigns?

Pj: Yes, we did. Always, from the time I came until the time I left. We sometimes recommended a man we knew had no chance, to prove that we were looking for people of quality, not recommending winners.

P: Should the newspaper reflect the thoughts of the people, or do you try to

FNP 41 page 19

persuade the people as to what their dreams should be?

Pj: That is an old [question], and there is no right answer. My thinking is that it should reflect. I do not want to build their dreams for them. I do not have any idea how many different dreams are out there. If I can settle on one important one...if you want better schools, yes, I will help you with that, and I will take a strong hand in that.

Reduced crime? Everybody wants to reduce crime

P: As you look at the paper from, say, 1953 to 1982, how did the readership change?

Pj: It became more liberal. It was more diversified. The flight of the white person from Dade County was underway, and we were the beneficiaries of a great deal of that, mainly west of the Turnpike, or west of Interstate 95 I should say. They brought with them a liberal touch, and they demonstrated it in almost every election that we ever held. By this time, there was a strong Jewish vote. They demonstrated that in elections....

P: Did the newspaper take any position on the growth of the area, in terms of traffic, overcrowding, overpopulation, pollution?

Pj: [We] recognized these problems, brought them to the table, and discussed them in some detail. If it was something like traffic, you could get your hands into it with some

FNP 41 page 20

hope of success. If it was something like pollution, which very few people understand, I have not found [that] many people give a damn about it or are against it. Again, it is kind of a selective thing. You are not trying to pick winners and losers, but you have to husband your strength. You cannot just scattershot and make people think you are against everything. You have to pick out the things you can attack and approach intelligently. If you cannot do it in that manner, you better stay the hell away from it until you educate yourself enough to be able to go back into it with a basis of leadership and education and an intellectual approach if you have to.

P: Is there less investigative journalism these days?

Pj: I do not know. I cannot answer that. There is much more in Fort Lauderdale. They have had for ten or twelve years a team of a man and a woman who lead almost every investigative situation they have, who do it well, who have been contenders for a Pulitzer several times. I will not say they have been close contenders, but contenders. They have tackled [and] have had some success with state issues. Reform in laws governing pawnbrokers was one of their most recent. We did not have the manpower to do that in my time....

P: When you started, say from 1953 again, until you retired, what was the major media competition for the newspaper? Obviously, in the beginning, television was not a major factor, but toward the end it would have been.

FNP 41 page 21

Pj: It was sounding the deathknell for the *News*. People were not going to come home, read the afternoon paper, and miss the news which was current and had everything from noon on, [while] we were cutting off at 11:00, 11:30, [or] 12:00, depending on which edition you had. You had to just be blind if you ignored that....

P: Over a period of thirty years in the business, did you see any change in the letters to the editor or guest columnists?

Pj: Yes. The professional letter writer was born during that period. I did not know he existed, though I read the letters to the editor every day and read a number of them before they appeared in print. But I was [at] a party one night talking to a man whom I had just been introduced to and I asked him, if he worked, what did he do? And he said, I write for the *Fort Lauderdale News* and I said, that is interesting; what area do you cover? He said, oh, I do not cover an area. He said, I write letters. And I said, and they pay you for that? He said, no, they do not pay me for that. So I said, in actuality, you do not work for the *Fort Lauderdale News* and he said, no, he did not. I said, the reason I am questioning this so hard is [because] I am the executive editor for the *Fort Lauderdale News* and *Sun Sentinel*, and your name was strange to me; I have never seen it on a payroll, and I just had to pursue it. And I started paying more attention. I asked the people who handled it and they said, oh yes, they are people who write six, eight, ten letters in a six-, eight-, ten-month period. If we do not get a letter from them in three or four months, we think, have they died? Have they moved?...

FNP 41 page 22

P: What is the benefit of these letters? Do you think people read them very often?

Pj: [They are a] high readership item on every readership study we ever took.

People want to know, without the newspaper trying to tell them. They want to feel the pulse of the public, and this is one way they can do it.... If she was overwhelmed by letters to the editor on one subject, she was told to come see us [and] we would try to make more space available and do it quickly so those letters could be accommodated, so the letter writer would get the feeling that we are trying to keep up with what the public is asking. We were always accused of only printing letters that favored us or favored our stance. Most of the letters we received were against us and against whatever we proposed....

P: Most newspapers do not use more than three or four syndicated columnists on any given day.

Pj: Yes. Well, three or four is a pretty good number, and it depends on your space situation, too. If you have a completely open open page, three good columnists along with a cartoon or two will pretty much eat up that page. We would run a syndicated columnist in sports. We ran Ann Landers. We ran Dear Abby.... The *Herald* turned down Ann Landers when the guy came through the first time and I said, oh, we want that. We still have her. We still like her. She is still popular. She still draws a lot of mail. The first month that we had her, I asked that her mail be sent to our office. Though she was new, they had not run into this before, I said, I want to see what kind of

FNP 41 page 23

mail she draws, I want to see what kind of readers she has....

P: What about cartoonists?

Pj: He(Channing Lowe) has been given a great deal of freedom. He was the first full-time editorial cartoonist the paper had, so we were late getting into that game. Your syndicated cartoonists are excellent. If you can find one who is anywhere close to your philosophy, the temptation to grab him for \$8 or \$9 a week is overwhelming.

P: Where did most of your advertising money come from?

Pj: We had the biggest classified section in the state. Bigger than the *Herald*? Yes. Producer of results? Positively, or it would not have remained the biggest. I think it is still the biggest in the state. Why? A good, tough question that I never have answered to my satisfaction. We had at that time a strong element, and still have, of elderly people who shop the classified pages. I always thought they were probably responsible for the response you got with a lot of ads. I ran a couple of classified ads during my time, and we were overwhelmed. People would start calling early, and they were still calling late, long after it had been sold.

P: What about your view of advertisers boycotting a particular editorial? How do you react to that?

FNP 41 page 24

Pj: The first thing I do is martial the best people whom I have, from the overall newspaper standpoint and from the advertising standpoint, and ask the head of the local store, or whatever it is, if we can take him to lunch and talk about the situation in which he is violently opposed to something we have done. We would like to have a chance to give him our side of the story directly and, just as important, we would like to get all of the details of his opposition to it. We understand [that we may] offend somebody with a stand that we take. But we would like to be able to live with you and still maintain our standards and still express our feelings in areas that we think are important and if you are included in that, we are going to have these situations. It does not mean that the answer to them is to boycott us, because you do not ever want to get into a contest with a man that buys ink by the barrel. You will lose.

P: What about the issue of linotype to computers? How did technology affect the newspaper?

Pj: You were able to produce a much better newspaper, and you could do it in less time. You did it cleaner, you did it in a healthier environment and, gradually, you got a different class of people.

P: Better educated?

Pj: Yes, better educated, better type of person. The pressmen and some of the old linotype operators were pretty crusty, salty people. They would do things that could be

FNP 41 page 25

embarrassing. I remember the head of our production department was a man named Floyd Piles, and they would slip in a classified ad that read, Floyd Piles eats cow puckies. We had a hard time explaining to Floyd how that got in the paper.

P: Did you work strongly to improve the number of hires, both from minority groups and from women?

Pj: In the later stages of my career from minority groups, yes. From the time I was in authority in the newsroom, always women. I found that if I had fifteen people, eight women and seven men, six of the women were probably superior to six of the men. There was a good man that was better than any of them. There were two women who were not worth a damn, probably, at the end of the line. Of course, there were a couple of men down there with them, too.

P: What was your relationship over the years with the Florida Press Association?

Pj: I was a strong supporter. I sold them on the idea of the newspaper members of the Florida Press sending a person to the campus for a week as a visiting fireman, attending classes, answering questions, [and] meeting with people. I saw the Florida Press as a means of accomplishing a number of things statewide that you could not do on your own.

P: Give me your impression of some of the governors of the state of Florida. Let us

FNP 41 page 26

start with Claude Kirk [Jr., Florida governor, 1967-1971]. You have a good story about Claude, I believe.

Pj: Well, it is a story I have always liked. He was thinking about running for vice president of the United States, and he thought that he would capitalize on his introduction to Don Maxwell, the editor of the *Chicago Tribune* and pay Don a visit to see if he could garner some support from Don. Don knew him; I do not know how favorably, but he knew him and knew of him. Claude showed up in Don's office one day, accompanied by a Florida highway patrolman. Claude, during the course of the conversation said, you know why I have this highway patrolman with me who is packing a six-shooter on his hip? Don says, I have no idea; why did you bring him with you? He said, if you do not agree to back me for vice president, he is going to shoot you. Don, in a very disgusted manner, said, get out of my office and do not ever come back, and take your Florida highway patrolman with you. Claude went into his usual serenade, why, I am just joking. Maxwell said, I am not; I am very serious, and I do not suffer clowns during my working hours. So, Claude left, never to be vice president of the United States, I do not think.

P: Your views of Reubin Askew [Florida governor, 1971-1979]?

Pj: Reubin brought a real feeling of sincerity and honesty to the office. Reubin, at one time, credited us with the biggest push he got in going for governor. We endorsed him when no other paper in south Florida was interested in him. He felt that was a

FNP 41 page 27

turning point for him in that campaign, and he went on to be governor and a good one. He was effective and, I think, honest, sincere, a hard worker [who] led an exemplary life. [He has] never been touched, to my recollection, by the slightest breath of scandal. [He is] a rather colorless man. You wonder how he would do in modern politics where TV exposure plays such a role. I cannot see him attracting very much of a female vote. He had a little charisma, but he sold you on his sincerity and his honesty. God bless him. I was always thankful for him.

P: What do you think during your tenure with the newspaper was the greatest contribution that your newspaper made to the community?

Pj: The greatest contribution we made was, [regarding] the Ferre brothers from Puerto Rico, who wanted to build a cement plant at Port Everglades. Except for the ocean side, it would have been completely surrounded by high-priced homes of happy and contented retirees who certainly did not want to get up and face a gob of cement dust blowing onto their beloved patios every day. Ferre was intent on doing this [and] was not particularly concerned how much it was going to cost him. No one could understand why he was so bent on locating it in Fort Lauderdale,... but he did not understand the demographics of it and did not seem to give a damn. We spent a lot of time and a lot of money sending reporters to locations of cement plants. When we could find one of Ferre's, we went there first. We did a good job on it. We had the city commission, as well as the county commission, fully apprised as to what we were letting ourselves in for, and Ferre never could get in. That was early, a triumph. Our greatest

FNP 41 page 28

loss, and thank goodness we lost: we were bitter opponents of the tunnel on U. S. 1, and I am afraid that it amounted to no more than the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Gore, Sr. were victims of claustrophobia. He would never let you drive him through the tunnel, and woe be unto you if you were at the wheel and went ahead anyway and drove through the tunnel....

P: Why was John S. Knight significant as a publisher?

Pj: Because he was a shining light in the field of news coverage. He was a man who had been in it, done it. He used to tell the story that he loved, that his father told him, that he would never amount to anything in the newspaper business and he immediately started to bust his ass to prove his father wrong. He was somebody who, regardless of what business you were in, I think, if you met him at a meeting or a party or listened to him, you were impressed with him. He had seemingly done a little of almost everything. He was, at heart, a common man....

P: Who were some of the other journalistic giants during this period?

Pj: ... The man who owned the *St. Petersburg Times* [Nelson Poynter] was an outstanding figure.... Certainly Al Neuharth, without any question I think, was a leader in Florida journalism. I think he was a leader in the national field, first in Florida....

P: What do you think about the idea of a national newspaper?

Pj: Well, it is pitched to the traveling man. It is a smart pitch. As long as men travel,

FNP 41 page 29

USA TODAY will be a success. The traveling man cares nothing for local news. The average one does not care about what happened in Belleville, Illinois, last night before he got there, but he does want to know what is happening around the nation. He only travels five days a week. They only publish it five days a week. That is not accidental, [it is] very smart. They picked out a good target, they zeroed in on it, and they never flinched. They had some tough times, I am sure. They had a lot more tough times than anybody has ever admitted....

P: What about the criticism of *USA TODAY*, that it is McNews, that is all brief news summaries, that it does not have thoughtful analysis.

Pj: So is TV. People are now accustomed to getting their news in little bites. At one time, they were not, but TV, by necessity, cannot stay on a subject too long without losing.

P: What does that say about our society?

Pj: It says our society has changed a great deal. We are not nearly as interested in details as we once were. We are not interested in devoting a lot of time to any one little subject as we once were. People once sat and poured over a newspaper, read every story. My father was an omnivorous newspaper reader, read everything in it. I take that back, not the woman's page or the comics, but every serious bit. [Readers today] are very selective. I think the day will come, and it may not be as far away as you would

FNP 41 page 30

think, when people will be able to subscribe to sections of a newspaper rather than take the whole thing.

P: Do you think the newspaper as we know it today in its physical form is going to die out and that everything will be on the Internet?

Pj: At some time, yes. Quicker than I once thought, yes. I think the Internet has made tremendous strides....

P: So, what happens when you go down in the morning for your breakfast, and you want to read the newspaper? Do you think all the restaurants are going to have computers so that people can hook up to the *New York Times*?

Pj: I had never thought about the restaurant eater. That is a good question. Not too difficult to solve, I would not think. You get multiple copies run off, and you ask somebody before you serve them, would you like to see the news? Yes. Is there any particular field that you are interested in? Yes. And he tells you, and you accommodate him. You have been able, at no cost, to give him several services there and he goes away fairly happy, though he wishes you would learn to cook eggs.

P: Is there an intellectual decline here?

Pj: I do not know how much of a decline there has been. I think when you get into

FNP 41 page 31

heavy reading, there is always a heavy mortality rate. My guess would be that it is probably true that there has been a decline. I do not think it is a monumental one. I think it is a shift rather than a decline. I think that, mainly, you find that the heavy readers are heavy readers in spots. They have things that they really concentrate on and if there is anything about that on the editorial or op ed page, they are going to read it, [even] if they have to go to some trouble to track it down.

P: Is there anything that you would like to say about either your career or some unusual incidents that occurred while you were in the newspaper business?

Pj: I am tempted to mention the most interesting story I was involved in. It involved JFK. His father [Joseph P. Kennedy] was reportedly dying in Palm Beach. I went to work on a Saturday morning. I was the executive editor, and I was in Saturday morning just to see that things were going okay. We had a report from our entertainment editor that Jacqueline Kennedy was doing the dance of that time at a nightclub in Pompano Beach, while her father-in-law was lying on his death bed. She was not accompanied by her husband, who had stayed with her father. Our newsroom was excited by this.

P: This would have been when, 1961?

FNP 41 page 32

Pj: 1961 or 1962... I did not think the story made sense to me. Everybody else, including the managing editor, thought, we have got one hell of a story going here. I said, I think we have a lot of work to do on this, we have to get hold of the entertainment editor, and we have to find out if he saw Jacqueline Kennedy on the dance floor with this instructor; if he did, was it one dance? Was it more than one? ... Who was she accompanied by? ... We have to talk to the instructor... I said, I am bothered -- I am not a Jacqueline Kennedy fan, but I do not think she would do this, it does not make a lot of sense to me. So I said, the first thing we are going to do is, we are not going to give anything to AP at all, nothing, period. I said, if AP asks us about this, we are working on it; we are not at a stage where we might print it, but we are looking into it and if we get anything, certainly they will be the first to know. So, we started out touching all the right bases and, suddenly, somebody said, hey, look here, and he brought a tear of the AP wire over to me, and the AP wire said that Pompano Beach says and the *Sentinel* and *News* says that Jacqueline Kennedy was dancing at a nightclub with a young man doing the blah blah blah while her father-in-law was lying at death's door in Palm Beach. Well, somebody who thought that I was afraid of the situation had determined to flush me from cover and had called the AP....

... It had to be a staff member. Nobody else knew we were involved in it at that time. Well, this pissed me off considerably. I talked to a couple of people and asked them if they had made the telephone call. They were people who ordinarily called AP with some frequency. Naturally, I got a lot of innocence...

...So, the man(the dance instructor) got on the phone and after a great deal of badgering, he said, no, it was not Jackie Kennedy; it was a person who looked like her.

FNP 41 page 33

Jacob [K.] Javits, the New York senator, had a daughter who looked a great deal like Jacqueline and could make herself up to look even more like Jacqueline. She and three or four men who posed as Secret Service thought they would have a game to play, and it would be fun. ... Suddenly, we got a call from Kennedy's press secretary. Pierre Salinger said, the president of the United States would like to talk with you. This [brought me] to full wake. I said, fine. [JFK] said, I understand you are publishing a story about my wife, and I want you to know it is completely false. I said, first, let me say that we are not publishing it, per se, we are still working on the story and at the moment we are speaking, I do not think the story is legitimate either, but, there is still a possibility that it is, and I am not going to be able to tell you no, we are not going to publish it. But, I said, the odds are very strong against our publishing it. So he said, he appreciated that and he hoped that we would continue working the story until we found the right answer which was [that] his wife was home with him, and she was near her father-in-law as she should be. He was neither insulting nor threatening. He was logical and approached it. I thought, this man handles these things pretty damn well. He should be president. The story fell through. It was Jacob Javits' daughter.... we put out an attention: immediate kill ordered.... We went to press with a story about the falsehood of the story that had been circulated in the community. A lot of people had been exposed to it.