

FNP 48

Interviewee: Lucy Morgan

Interviewer: Jean Chance

Date: February 6, 2000

C: This is February 6, 2000, and we are in Tallahassee at the home of Lucy and Richard Morgan. Lucy has been sidelined for the last month. She has had surgery and is recovering from a major fall. If we could start, Lucy, [by having you] give us your full name.

M: My name is Lucy Morgan. I have, at various times in my life, traveled under other names, but I was born Lucile Bedford Keen. Keen is my parents' name, but for all of my years as a journalist, I have either been Lucy Ware, who was my first husband, or Lucy Morgan, and, at time, Lucy Ware Morgan. I managed to get rid of the middle name, so [now] I use only the two.

C: You were born in Mississippi?

M: Actually, I was born in Memphis, Tennessee. My mother happened to be there the day I decided to make an appearance, but I grew up in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

C: When did you come to Florida?

M: In the summer of 1960.

C: And what were the circumstances that brought you to Florida?

M: I married a high school football coach who took a job in Crystal River, Florida, and we moved there. I stayed in Crystal River until early 1968. It was there that I first began working as a reporter.

C: What was your first job in journalism?

M: Let me start by telling you how I got here. I am not sure there is anything like it. I had three small children at home in 1965, and a woman knocked on my front door whose name is Francis Devore. She is alive yet and, I think, still does some work for the *Ocala Star Banner*. She introduced herself as the area editor for this Ocala paper and explained that their local correspondent had been killed in a traffic accident and wondered if I might be interested in writing for the paper. I told her that, well, I had never done anything like that before, or even thought about it, and asked why she would come to my door with that kind of request. She told me that the local librarian in Crystal River had told her that I read more books than anybody else in town, and she presumed that if I could read, I could write. I needed money and I decided, well, I will try it; after all, it was only

part-time and should not take much time. About two months later, they put me on their full-time staff because, at \$0.20 an inch and \$5 a picture I was making more money than they wanted to pay me.

C: You and I come from an era where we understand what being a stringer can mean. Did you literally clip out your copy, excluding the headlines, tape it up and measure it, and send it in to get paid?

M: Yes. I glued it together, end to end, one column deep, and measured it and charged them \$0.20 an inch, and they paid me \$5 for any picture that ran, \$2.50 if it was a head shot, I think. That was the way I got paid, and that was my initial contract with the Ocala paper, strictly as a stringer.

C: How long did you work as a full-time staffer for the *Star Banner*?

M: Almost three years. Maybe a year and a half or two years into my time on the Ocala staff, the *St. Petersburg Times* approached me and asked me if I would do some stringing for them in Levy County and areas north—I had been working Levy and Citrus Counties for Ocala—so I agreed to do some part-time work for them. The two papers at that time did not consider each other competitors, so I remained a full-time staffer for Ocala and a stringer for the *Times*. I made more money stringing for the *Times* than I made as a staffer for Ocala.

C: Do you remember some of the journalists who worked at the *Ocala Star Banner* at the time you were there?

M: Other than Francis Devore who was area editor, David Cook was the editor; Vernon Watts was managing editor; Jack Edger was their police reporter/local character who was probably capable of doing almost anything; Van McKenzie was their sports guy. I am sure there are other names that I just cannot remember.

C: Any recollection of particularly memorable stories that you covered at that time?

M: My assignment, at first, was to do civic clubs, city councils, traffic accidents, anything that happened in the Citrus County area. I remember one of the early city council meetings that I went into. All of the other people who covered governments back then were like I, stringers who were paid by the story, and most of them had never had professional journalism careers. The city council in Crystal River would look over to the three or four of us who were reporters there at various moments in the meeting and say, now, do not write this, and these people would very cooperatively not write this. I very quickly ran afoul the establishment because it did not seem appropriate to me. I had no training, but it just did not seem appropriate to let the mayor decide when we would write about

what the city was doing, so that I was very quickly in trouble with the mayor and have probably never gotten out of trouble since. But I tended to write what was occurring in front of me, and they took a very dim view of that in the Crystal River City Council, although the citizens of Crystal River and most of the cops loved it. They thought it was great sport. [In] those early city council meetings, they were having a huge controversy over the police department and a sewer system, and I remember a lot of those early stories that were just sheer battlegrounds. There would be council meetings where the crowd would be out the door, some of them leaning in the window. The city jail was in the back of the same building where the council met, and if they had a drunk in jail, the council meetings would be permeated by shrieks by some drunk in the drunk tank. It was a very colorful scene to cover. Back then, you did not write a lot of color, and I am afraid the early stories probably missed a lot of what was really there.

C: Were you using a tape recorder or pad and pencil? Did you use a telephone a lot? Obviously, no computers at that time.

M: No, we had no computers. I used a pad and pencil to take notes. I do not recall ever using a tape recorder in that time period. I did not take shorthand. I sort of developed my own code of shorthand. [The notation] CHG might [mean] charge today and change tomorrow if I failed to interpret my notes quickly. But, I would then go home and type it up on an old portable typewriter and then read the story over the phone to an editor who took it down in Ocala. If it was a feature with less of a deadline, I might send it in by bus or mail, but most of the time back then, we had to read the story. Sometimes, you had to make up the story as you went along and read it at the same time, if you were filing at night for the next morning's paper. The Ocala paper at that time was an afternoon paper, so what I would usually do is go home after a hot city council meeting [and] stay up and write the story. The editors would call me at six the next morning and I would lean over and pick up the copy off the floor and read it from my bed, because I have never been a morning person and it was easier for me to make sense of what had happened by staying up late.

C: How old were your children at the time?

M: When I first went to work, they would have been six, four and three.

C: Any difficulties juggling being wife, mother, and newspaperwoman?

M: Always. Sometimes, I took them with me to news stories. They have probably seen more fires and traffic accidents and things like that than most anybody's children. I had a compilation of sitters, a husband who was occasionally available to sit, and, at one time—maybe three or four years in—I had a housekeeper who slept at the house. I divorced in 1967, and so I was a single parent trying to

juggle these two jobs and three children. I had a housekeeper and either she or her daughter would sleep at the house in case of something happening at night. I was responsible for fatal traffic accidents in Hernando, Citrus and Levy Counties, and we seemed to have a lot of them back then. So, I would often be at one of these four a.m. accidents where an entire family was wiped out on [Route] U.S. 19 on a bridge or something.

C: Were most of the journalists that you worked with and competed against male at that time?

M: If they were staff, they were male. My competitors for Ocala were primarily the *Gainesville Sun* and the *Florida Times Union*, and those were male staffers who had full-time jobs. Of course, at that time, I had a full-time job at Ocala. It was entertaining to work against them because most of the people that we covered were men, and it amused them to see me beat the men, so that often I would get a call from, say, a Levy County commissioner who wanted to leak a story to me. It would not be the best story in the world. By the stories I work on today, I probably would not even bother to write it, but at the time, it greatly aggravated the men I worked against, that I would often beat them because of the largesse of men who were playing with them, and me too, probably.

C: Let's get to St. Petersburg.

M: In late 1967, I agreed to go full-time with the *Times*. I was working for a morning paper and an afternoon paper, and being a single mother of three children, I was sort of burning the candle at all ends. I knew I could not keep it up. The *Times* offered me enough money to compensate me for the loss of the other job and the stringing. I was actually making very good wages for the time out of both papers, but I knew I could not physically do that [for] long. The *Times* wanted to put a staffer in Pasco County. They had not previously had one there. They asked me if I would go to Dade City, the county seat. I had been to Dade City, and I did not want to live there. Now, today, I would probably choose Dade City, but I said no, and they said, well, how about if we put the bureau in New Port Richey. I said I might consider living there. I had lived along [Route] U.S. 19, and it seemed more hospitable. So, they put the bureau in New Port Richey, and I was the first news person there. We opened that bureau in February of 1968. I was the only news staffer. We had an advertising salesman, a circulation manager, and a secretary. All four of us occupied the same room in a very small office there.

C: Was it on the highway?

M: Right on U.S. 19 in New Port Richey. If a wet paper got delivered, if it rained that morning, we all answered circulation calls, until we had the appropriate papers backed up. It was a very different way of doing journalism with a big newspaper

at that time.

C: Who were the editors at the *St. Pete Times* at that time whom you were working closely with?

M: Bob Haiman was the executive editor, [and] Ray Mariotti was the managing editor. **Bob Stiff** was the state editor at the time who hired me. Then, at the time I went full-time, the job in New Port Richey reported to the north Sun Coast bureau chief, which in the beginning was Bob Henderson but shortly thereafter became Richard Morgan, a familiar name in my current life.

C: So it was a single-reporter bureau.

M: I was reporter, photographer, and answered the phone for circulation at times.

C: And how long did you do that?

M: We added staff beginning in the fall, I think, of 1969. In June of 1968, we did something very radical there. We created a regional weekly tabloid section to give local news and advertising, mostly news features, and a local advertising rate to readers in west Pasco County. The advertising people could not sell full-run advertising to small business people who only needed to reach the west Pasco market. This became the first of the *Times* regional efforts. So, we started, in 1968, this regional paper and at first hired only a photographer, I think, to back me up. Then, in 1969, when we took that regional to a three-day-a-week publication, we added other reporters, and we moved the north Sun Coast bureau to New Port Richey, splitting it off from Clearwater so that the bureau in Clearwater supervised only Pinellas County. The New Port Richey office became the north Sun Coast bureau and supervised everything north of there through those suburban counties, Pasco, Hernando, Citrus, Levy.

C: About what was the circulation of the *St. Pete Times* at that point?

M: I am embarrassed to tell you I do not know.

C: Substantially less than today?

M: Yes, probably 200,000 less than it is today. At that time, we were outnumbered in west Pasco, ten to one, by the *Tampa Tribune*. I think, today, the reverse is true. It was certainly true by the time I left there. At one time, we had the *Pasco Times*, which became the daily regional later, and had close to 100,000 in circulation. It has always been a part of the *St. Pete Times*. From that first regional that we created in June of 1968, we then developed the *Pasco Times*, *Hernando Times*, and *Citrus Times*. Now, there are sub-versions of Pasco. I think there are three

different editions in Pasco now. Then, we created the *North Pinellas Times*, *Clearwater Times*, *Largo* and *Seminole Times*. Ultimately, I think we now have eleven regionals that deliver local news. The aim of them was to keep the weeklies weekly, basically, in all of those suburban areas. But it developed among the citizenry, that this is my newspaper, despite the fact that it was the *St. Petersburg Times*, mostly because they got all of the local news, obituaries, weddings, the local Girl Scout troop news, whatever was happening.

C: In 1968, Richard Morgan is the bureau chief, and there was a news event between you and him.

M: Yes. He told me he wanted to marry me. I had been paying attention to raising three children and working and not thinking about things like that, but I agreed to give it some thought and we began to see each other. We actually married in August of 1968.

C: You were both divorced at the time.

M: He had two children from a prior marriage. I had three children, and he went on to raise my children. We continued to work together at the *Times*. The *Times* had a nepotism policy at the time, but the board of directors voted to let me remain at the paper. I had to go part-time. Back then, you could not both stay and remain full-time people. Since Dick made more money, it was only logical that I become the part-timer. So, for several years, I worked as a part-timer and was returned to the full-time staff about five years after that.

C: 1968 was a notable period in which you got attention in court circles, including a state attorney in Pinellas County, dealing with grand jury investigations.

M: Yes. In 1973, I was still working in Pasco. By then, our staff had expanded substantially, and we had been doing some stories on corruption in city government in Dade City. I was asked to go over and babysit the grand jury one day. The grand jury returned a sealed presentment. I wrote about that, speculating on the contents of that presentment, somewhat successfully, apparently. The state attorney, on the day the story was published, dropped a subpoena on me, demanding that I appear and give him the source of the information in the story. I refused and was immediately sentenced to five months in jail. On that day, we raised an objection to the state attorney's legal ability to do what he was doing, which he apparently decided might be correct. So he issued a second subpoena for me a few days later ordering me to appear before the grand jury. I again refused to divulge the source, although I did give him a nicely colored copy of the story. I colored in blue the stuff that I had observed, you know, the state attorney walking into the grand jury room with the Dade City Charter [and] the names of the witnesses of people who went. I painted in green

the two paragraphs that came from a confidential source, and I painted in bright purple the information that had come from the state attorney himself. It made the state attorney very happy, and I gave that to the grand jury. I was subsequently sentenced to another three months. We appealed both sentences and ultimately won.

C: Did you actually serve any length of time?

M: No, it was really kind of disappointing. I bought all these books to read while I was in jail. Like the complete works of Tennyson, I have yet to read them. But they let me out on bail from the courthouse. I did not have to get locked in the cell.

C: Richard was prepared to take care of the children?

M: Yes. At the *Times*, Gene Patterson was editor and made every court appearance and immediately said, Lucy, we do not think you are going to have to go to jail, but if it ever happens, the *Times* will hire a housekeeper to take care of the children; we want you to write a daily column from the jail. So, the *Times* was prepared to do whatever had to be done and certainly gave me all the legal support that I needed.

C: Ultimately, there was a Florida Supreme Court vindication of that act that you took to protect a confidential source.

M: Yes. Up until that time, there was no court protection in Florida. The reigning case was an old Miami case where the person subpoenaed had been forced to testify. In July 1976, the court came with a ruling written by Justice [Joseph] Hatchett, which said that only under certain compelling circumstances could a state attorney compel a newspaper reporter to testify. What he did was follow very closely the three-part test that was set out in *Brandsburg* originally, that there had to be a compelling state interest, they had to prove that they had looked elsewhere for the information, and they had to prove that I might be the only source of that information to subpoena them. They had done, of course, none of that having subpoenaed me on the day of publication. So, that became and remains the law today. It has been through a few curves since then, but was now reiterated just as recently as last year in a decision. That is still the law in Florida.

C: Between 1968 and 1975, how did you find time to go to Hernando Community College and graduate with honors?

M: I took one or two courses a semester, almost all at night. In fact, my curriculum was determined by what was offered on the days and hours I could take it. I had

always felt I needed a college degree, and that was the only way I could get it. I could not afford to just take off from work and go to school, so I did it that way. Then, I kept on taking classes at USF [University of South Florida] for another couple of years.

C: And what did you study?

M: I took the basic courses for an A.A., history, English. I even survived a math course. Whatever the courses were to get the junior college degree. I first declared a major in political science at USF and then changed it to history after encountering my first political science course and a professor that could not speak English. So I majored in history and took a lot of various kinds of history courses at USF. I probably lack about a year, if I were to go back, depending on how they have changed the standards for a degree, but I figured in my old age, maybe, I will go back and get a degree.

C: None of this was about journalism? In high school, did you have journalism experience?

M: No. I am told by my relatives that I worked on the high school newspaper staff, and I have a vague recollection of it, but I do not have any specific recollection of anything I did. I signed up for a journalism course. I tried to take one, and the dean of the campus decided that my experience as a reporter exceeded that of the instructor and booted me out of the class. This was at Pasco-Hernando Community College. He decided that I should not be in that class. When I got to USF, I talked to the journalism people there about taking some, and they told me they would have to exempt me out of everything except underwater photography or something. I said, well, there is no point in that. So, I just decided to take a history major. Now I am afraid to take a journalism course. I might flunk it.

C: In 1982, you investigated drug smuggling in Dixie and Taylor Counties. How did that come about?

M: At the end of 1979, my husband wanted to leave the job as bureau chief on the north Sun Coast and to take a job as editor of editorials. My youngest was almost turning eighteen, and I thought it might be a good time for me to quit working for the Pasco section and do something else. I sent a note to Andy

Barnes, who was then ME [managing editor], saying that, if they ever would like to create a roam-around-the-state-and-cause-trouble job, that I would be interested in doing it. I had envisioned this as something in the distant future and he called me and said, can you meet me in Clearwater for lunch tomorrow, and decided on the spot to create the job. I started it by spending about a year looking, at about the same time Richard Kelly, the congressman

from Florida, fell into Abscam [a national scandal stemming from FBI investigations into Congressional corruption], and he was conducting his own investigation. I had covered him when he was a circuit judge, so I had a good road into both him and his attorney, Tony Battaglia. I began that year by spending almost all my time on Abscam and covered the trial in Washington at the end of that year, and the election that swirled around it. I had been fascinated by some of the old Florida drug cases. We had a drug smuggler from Tarpon Springs named Raymond Grady Stansel, who had disappeared on the eve of trial and declared himself dead. [There were] a few stories like that which I got into, and I started looking at the statewide grand jury, which had been an early tool used against drug smugglers, to no avail. Every time I would go ask prosecutors or cops or drug people questions about drug prosecutions, inevitably someone would say, you know, you should go and look at Dixie and Taylor Counties; the drug smugglers own the counties. I sort of tossed it aside the first few times that I heard it, but I was in Tallahassee interviewing the head of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, who at the time was Jim York. He gave me a great quote that day. He told me they were never going to stop drug smuggling in Florida until they could drive a stake through the heart of **Bubba Capo**, a drug smuggler in Dixie County of some renown. I went back to the office and called the editor I reported to, who at the time was Rob Hooker, and I said, I really ought to go look at Dixie and Taylor [Counties]. The state attorney for that area told me that a majority of the county commissioners from Dixie County had gone to a drug trial and testified for the smugglers. I knew there must be a record of this. The potential for a story, I could see there. I really thought I was going to go there, write a few stories, walk out the door and not spend a whole lot of time on this, but before it was over, I had spent several years. A chief deputy in Dixie County had come to me, offering to rat out all of his fellow deputies and wear a wire if I could turn him over to an honest cop; he did not know any. I gave him to the U.S. attorney's people from northern Florida. Before I was able to finish there, a whole bunch of deputies, a school board member, a county commission chairman and 250 other souls went to jail, because the Feds took an interest in my stories and pursued the smuggling. It was a rather interesting chapter, where the smugglers had pretty well co-opted the local officials.

C: Why do you think they felt so safe to be so openly corrupt?

M: Part of it, I think, is the lack of journalism. One of the stories I did during that era was, I subscribed to the local weekly papers. There were three at the time, the *Dixie County Advocate*, which at one time was owned by the sheriff in Dixie County, and the *Taco Times*, which was owned by a renegade guy named Ken Smith. The other one was another Perry paper; I think it might have been the *Perry News* or something. Of the three papers, only the *Taco Times* reported drug arrests as being real. The *Dixie County Advocate* would often not report them at all, or report them if some out-of-towner was arrested. They did have to

report when the Cadillac owned by the Dixie County school board chairman was found parked next to 30,000 pounds of marijuana in neighboring Taylor County. However, they ran a correction the following week saying that Cadillac did not belong to Gene Van Arnam, the school board chairman. What they did not tell you in the correction was that it belonged to his wife. I interviewed the editors of these papers. The guy at the *Advocate* told me that when he first came to Dixie County, he wrote an editorial about the illegal [hunting] of doe deer, denouncing it, thinking that he was on the side of motherhood in an area like that, only to wake up the next morning and find a dead doe's head on his doorstep. He subsequently wrote an editorial about illegal dumping of garbage, only to wake up the next morning and find his lawn strewn with garbage that had been dumped there. He said those were his only two efforts to get into journalism that was at all controversial. I think the lack of a daily newspaper in that area simply allowed those officials to run roughshod in any direction they wanted to. In fact, the county commissioners who went to testify in Wakulla County on behalf of Bubba Capo, a convicted drug smuggler of some renown, urged the judge not to send him to jail, saying it would be an economic loss to the county if Bubba was sent to jail. They apparently did not realize that the court reporter sitting in the front of the room was recording all these words. When I went up and read and bought the transcripts and went to interview them about it, they denied ever having said these things and kept telling their friends that none of this was true, only to have it hit them broadside when I wrote the stories. One of the most fascinating things about Dixie [was] we did not sell a paper in Dixie County or Taylor [County]. We had no circulation. We had a truck that went through there every day on its way to Tallahassee. Often, the sheriff would stop our truck and demand a copy of the paper to see what was in it. We began to leave a couple of bundles with a local guy who wanted it and took the risk of distributing it. He would only give a copy of the paper to somebody who had a Xerox machine. These stories started running in about February, I think, of 1982. I was there when they picked a jury in a drug-smuggling case in August of that year, and every single member of the venire had read the *Times* series, and none of them had ever seen an original paper, or would own up to it if they had. We were just giving copies away enough to distribute it there.

- C: Were the other newspapers in the area, say, Gainesville, Ocala, the *Tallahassee Democrat*, would they pick up, or would there be just wire stories?
- M: They did not pick up any of the original stories. The wires, I think, picked up some of them, and they may have run some of them. They would pick them up once the arrests started to occur. They would pick up the arrests, but none of them were doing any original journalism on it over there. They were merely spitting up police reports.
- C: That coverage was nominated for the Pulitzer in 1982. I am interested in how

you utilize public records in the kind of reporting you do. Would you be offended to have your type of reporting defined as investigative reporting?

M: No, not really. I have at times in my life taken offense at that word. I suppose I take less offense, having won a Pulitzer in a category called Investigative Reporting. I think a lot of what many of us do is investigating. If you are going beyond simply walking out of a public meeting and writing what occurred in it, there is some level of investigative reporting. I think a lot of reporters see that title as rather pretentious. I knew a reporter here in Tallahassee a few years ago who could not understand his lack of success, and all of us could have told him that anybody that walks in and introduces himself to public officials as, hi, I am an investigative reporter, would not fly. So, yes, I would not label myself that if someone were to ask me what I was, but, clearly, a lot of the work I have done over the years that has been well-received has been investigative in nature because I have gone beyond taking what was given to me on the surface. I have gone into every conceivable record. If I am going to take a project, I will isolate the principal names that I know in the beginning I am dealing with, and that is essentially where I start. I strip the public record of every record that is there. Nowadays, it is almost too easy to start, with the electronic systems that are there. You give someone the results of, say, an AutoTrack, and you have there your Social Security number, date of birth, the property they own, the vehicles they own, the accidents they had, their driving records, their criminal records, all kinds of different records just handed to you in the space of a few seconds. However, experience tells me [not] to trust those as being all that is there, or as even being correct all the time. But, I would strip the records that are available [and] go to wherever those people have lived in their lifetime, if I am seriously looking. Now, there would be a different level depending on how deep I was looking. [I would] just pull the addresses they have lived at in their lifetimes. Before there was AutoTrack and where you cannot find it on AutoTrack, you can go to city directories and things like that. [I would] then pull all the deeds [and] records. Contrary to what I would have done in the beginning of my career, now, I would say always pull a copy, even when it costs you money to pay for it.

C: The purpose for that has to do with litigation?

M: Well, it is two-fold. First of all, you bulletproof yourself from an attack. You have the record in front of you. Secondly, if you look at a deed that was recorded twenty years ago, and you see that the subject of your story bought a piece of land somewhere and paid X amount of money for it, that might be the focus of what you are looking at, at that moment, but down the road, it may be that one of the people who witnessed that deed is a figure in the rest of what you are doing, and you are looking to establish a relationship between that person and another person. The witnesses at a wedding, if you pull the application for a wedding, you will find the names of people who had to sign up as witnesses. Those are, in

most instances, not strangers, and if you are looking to prove a long-time relationship between people, you may find that kind of record. If you have a copy of it, you can go back and review what you have. Also, in the moment that you get sued, you are not scrambling around trying to prove what you have already written; you have the documents there. I am a big advocate of keeping very good files. I can go now back to files of virtually any project I did, including that Dixie County drug project in the 1980s, and pull the files. I have them boxed now. I do not have enough file cabinets to do that. I keep them at my office. I will ultimately move them home because most of those files would mean very little to somebody else. I can go back and pull them and confirm or find a fact from many years ago. I recently had a call from the Tampa bureau asking me if I remembered a drug smuggler named Forrest Sink, and I said, hold on, let me get my file on him. It was from the mid-1970s. He was arrested for drug smuggling, but he was the son of a prominent Tampa family. I kept a fairly extensive file on him, and the contents of that file recently aided a reporter in the late 1990s who needed information on him.

C: How important is meshing public records with human sources?

M: I think it is important to also talk to the people. If what you have is a public record trail, you have a pretty dry account. People can add information and context to that record. For instance, in the Dixie County series, a lot of those smugglers were people who had never made more than \$13,000, or \$14,000 in their lives, but they were paying cash, \$20,000, \$30,000 for vehicles and things. I went to interview the car dealer in Dixie County who had sold them all these vehicles, and he put that in a lot of context in talking about them. [About] Bubba Capo, the notorious smuggler, [the car dealer] said, you know, Lucy, you need to get to know the whole Bubba. He taught me one of the best lessons I have ever been taught. He said, you know Bubba, the drug smuggler, who makes a lot of money and pays cash for cars, but you do not know the guy who buys a boat for his neighbor when his boat sinks, pays for surgery for a neighbor's child when the child is ill, or builds a church with the money he has made from it, and unless you know all of those things about him, you do not know the whole Bubba. From that moment on, I have realized how important it is for us to know the whole Bubba, in anything that we are looking at. Now, a lot of defense attorneys try to keep us from knowing the whole Bubba. When you are dealing with a person who is charged for a crime, the first thing his lawyer does is build a wall, saying, no, he is not to talk to you; we do not want you to know anything about him. I would argue, and frequently do argue with defense attorneys, wait a minute, the cops are going to tell me every bad thing they know about your client; the people who are pursuing him for doing them wrong are going to tell me every bad thing; if he does not tell me that which is good, I do not know the whole Bubba here. That works a lot of the time.

- C: Back to 1982, that investigation is fairly well completed, and a lot of attention to the *Times* coverage merited a lot of national review at the time it was nominated for the Pulitzer. The next three intervening years, you are working in another county with reporter Jack Reed on Pasco County corruption charges.
- M: In the beginning, I was working on it myself. All during the Dixie-Taylor [stories], I lived in Pasco County. My husband worked for that edition of the *Times*, actually was editor of editorials for all those regionals. And I kept running into people at home who would say, quit going out of town--you need to be looking at the local sheriff. And I had covered that department years before, I knew it fairly well. [In] February, early March, of 1983, I accepted a speaking engagement at the local police academy, which trained sheriffs, deputies, local police, and anybody around there, and it was run through the junior college, to talk about press relationships. I just had assumed in accepting it that this would be raw recruits getting their initial police training and did not think much about it, but when I got to the class, it was about fifty veteran police officers. It was a refresher course of people who were already in jobs. Our paper, in just that week, committed a rather egregious sin in their eyes, and actually in mine, too. One of our reporters had quoted an anonymous spectator at the scene of a police shooting, saying that the police murdered this guy, which was against our policy and certainly not conducive to good relations between reporters and police. So this whole audience was ready to fry any reporter they could catch in their grasp. I spent the night defending--although I did not defend that conduct, I told them I agreed that it was wrong--but discussing police relationships, in an atmosphere that was first very hostile. By the time we got to the end, I think most of the guys in the audience were at least cordial to me on the surface. The next morning at about seven o'clock, I got a call from one of the men who had been in that audience. I had known him for years and knew him to be very close to the sheriff in Pasco County, and I would have considered him to be totally the sheriff's person, but he called and said, I would like to talk to you; I have come to the conclusion that the sheriff here is quite corrupt, and somebody needs to do something about it. I said, well, I am not sure I am your person. We have a bureau filled with reporters whose job it is to cover this department. He said, well, I am not going to talk to them. I said, why would you not, if I could find one who is good? He said, I do not know [if] the reporters in your office today [will be] doing public relations tomorrow. He said, I see this happen all the time, but I have a pretty good feeling that you are not going to wind up working for any sheriff, any time, and that you would be the only one I would really trust, because to do this, I am trusting my job, if not my life. So, I agreed to talk to him that day, and he and his wife came to the house that day, put their car in our garage so nobody could see it, and they spent the entire day telling me, with some documentation, of the broad outlines of what they thought was going on there.
- C: Did she also work for the sheriff?

M: No, she just came along with him. In fact, she became an important part. She became a conduit. As things developed and got hot, she and I would often both go shopping at Belk's at the mall, and when we went to try on clothes, she would pass under the booths in the fitting rooms, in the ladies' room, the documents that he would need to get to me, or I would hand back stuff to him, because most of the people that the sheriff assigned to follow me were male. We just found that was a good way to circumvent them.

C: Was that your idea?

M: Yes. It sort of came to pass because she was supposed to meet me at the mall to give me some documents he was sending, and we realized I was being followed when we got there. So, I just got out of my car and went into Belk's, and she came in behind me. We saw the guy come in following us. I do not know whether he knew who she was or not, but we did not speak to each other. I picked up the first item of clothing I came to and went into the fitting room, and she followed. I do not think they ever caught on to what we were doing because we never acknowledged each other's presence, but we did it a number of times over the years that passed. We had all kinds of ways of trading documents. Sometimes he would drop them in my mailbox at night and put the flag up to let me know he had been by, so that when we went out to get the paper in the morning and saw that the flag was up, we would know there were new documents in the mailbox. There was one hilarious incident where he was trying to deliver an entire box of documents that he had come upon to me. I had parked my car and left it unlocked in a K-Mart parking lot and had gone in the store. I was tooling around the store and, usually, whoever was following me would follow me into wherever I went. So, the guys who were following me had come into the store. I looked out the window of the K-Mart and saw that as he was transferring this box of documents from his car to mine, he dropped the whole damn box and was scampering around in the parking lot getting them picked up. So, we had some near hilarious misses. Anyhow, in this first day of talking to him all day, I realized there was a whole lot of material for a potential series of stories on the department, but I worked for our special projects division at the time in St. Pete. Generally, the stories I was covering were stories where we did not have reporters regularly assigned. Most of the time, we would have used that manpower, and I would take the far-flung stories that involved counties outside of the Tampa Bay area. So, I went to St. Pete with a memo of the stories I thought were there to chase and told them that I had pitched and would pitch again an attempt to get him to cooperate with some local reporters but that I thought somebody ought to take a look at the department. I warned everybody from the beginning that we were dealing with a sheriff who absolutely hated me and the minute he were to see me on his tail, he would assume the worst and be the worst. So they decided that I should follow the story, primarily because of the

source that was there. This was March of 1983, and I thought any story that was done should be finished and in the paper before the end of 1983, because 1984 was an election year and I did not want whatever we did to be perceived as an election attack. I still think that is a very important part. It is a real problem for journalists. You get the most negative information on a public official during an election campaign, [but] it is absolutely the worst time to unveil it because the politician can say, oh, those are just my political enemies after me, so that [the story] gets, in a sense, the least credibility at that time. So that was one of my recommendations. I started that way. About this same time, the captain of that department was indicted with Santos Trafficante [Mafia mob boss from Tampa], and one of his allegations was that a lot of the members of that department had organized-crime ties and that the department had done inadequate backgrounds on them. I went over with this original source the entire 300 or so men who worked for the department in a roster of them which he had provided and identified the ones he thought had a problem of some kind. I subsequently did this with a lot of people, and I found this to be a very helpful process, just to take the list of the entire department and sit down with people who knew the department well or who had once worked there, and say, tell me what you know about this guy [or] that guy. I developed a lot of my working-plan to look at from doing that. I think it saved a lot of time and made it less random than it might have been. I may have missed somebody in it, but what I found was remarkable. I decided that I would have to do background, certainly on these that [were suspicious]. I began working in Tallahassee at police standards. At the time, they had to file with the state a copy of the officer's birth certificate, training records, employment history, a number of various pieces of information that included any prior arrest record and their fingerprints, and they ran them. I was able to get a basic look at each sworn officer by doing that. Now, I do it on computers, but at the time, I created an index card for each officer, which gave me his basic information, where he was born, educated, his date of birth, Social Security number, and his work and training experience, so that if at any time he came up in something, I could quickly pull that card and see who that was and what he had done before. I had one for every sworn officer at the department. Although I did not look in more depth at every one of them, I did look that far. Then I took the ones who were either in leadership positions, had rank, or had been in some sort of trouble or who had been identified to me as potential trouble sources and did a more thorough background on them. What I found by doing that was that one in every eight officers had a criminal arrest record. More than half of them had lied about that arrest record to get certified as cops. That did not include things like DUIs [driving under the influence arrests]. I took only criminal arrest records, non-traffic and non-DUI. And [nothing] juvenile. One of them, in particular, had been arrested by some of the officers he was now working side by side with, for theft-related [reasons], like stealing stuff that he was caught in possession of. One of them had been a Hernando County deputy, had his driver's license suspended. At the time he went to work in Pasco, his driver's

license was suspended, he had an arrest record for theft, and he was given a badge and gun and a green light to drive in Pasco County. My favorite of the deputies was a guy who had been the wheel man in several armed robberies in Tampa, and the Tampa cops had given him immunity from prosecution because he ratted out his co-workers in several armed robberies. When he was caught, he tried to kill himself, missed, and shot out a hole in the side of his trailer. So he was a guy who ratted out his co-defendants, was an armed robber to start with, or the wheel man for them, and a bad shot. He could not even kill himself when he tried. He was wearing a badge and gun in Pasco County. One of them had an outstanding grand theft arrest warrant for stealing the police dog when he left a similar job in the Keys. He had stolen the dog. I mean, most of them were funny if you were not thinking of the liability that the department was creating for itself there. One of them had been a sheriff's deputy in the Keys who had been drunk and high on cocaine and had a minor traffic accident and pulled a gun on an elderly couple who were involved in the accident. The couple fled into a Holiday Inn. A trooper arrived on the scene and had a dramatic description of this deputy holding a gun out at the crowd. The trooper called on him to drop the gun, and he turned toward the trooper aiming this .38. The trooper, just at the moment he was about to fire, thinking that he was going to have to kill this guy, recognized him as a local sheriff's deputy and managed to get him to drop the gun, rather than simply shooting him. But they let him resign and go on his way, and Pasco picked him up without ever determining that about his background, although it was clearly in the public records of Monroe County. I went down there just to see his personnel file, and his employment ended rather abruptly after a traffic accident with no real descriptions, except that there had been a referral to the state attorney that was not prosecuted. I went to the state attorney's office and asked for his file and, in it, got the description the trooper had given in testimony there. It made a dramatic story.

C: That drama is sort of a Lucy Morgan trademark that pops up in your stories.

M: Yes. I did these backgrounds on individual officers from about March to June [and was] also meeting almost daily with the source, or at least talking to him. I realized by June that I was not going to be able to do this and finish it by the end of the year because we had such an embarrassment of riches and tips and things that were unfolding. There was so much that needed to be written. I asked if they wanted to assign another reporter to help with some of the stuff that needed to be done, and they then assigned Reed to help for a few months.

C: At that time, was Jack Reed a cityside reporter?

M: He was a Pasco reporter covering the county commission in Pasco. So what I did was assign him the financial side of it. You can get an idea when you are looking

at public officials; this was a sheriff who had been a city police chief, [and] he had been in the public arena most of his adult life; he had come into office with a net worth of, say, \$70,000 [and] within a few years, earning nothing more than the salary we knew about, he had become worth \$300,000 or \$400,000, net worth, and acquired a lot of property. He had not inherited any; his family was very poor. He had been through three divorces, I think. So, just looking at his financial disclosures, you knew there was something going on in this, other than him being a law enforcement officer. I assigned Jack to sort of looking at the financial side. We found, as a matter of fact, that he would put the departmental money in a bank; often on the same day, he would get loans of \$400,000 or \$500,000 from this bank to invest in private property schemes. He got himself extensively involved in the ownership of a small shopping mall, of a funeral home, of a lot of property. He was way overextended and making a bunch of money on the side. Some of the people who worked with him, like his partner in the funeral home, was the guy who he assigned to be his administrative chief in the office, who was supposedly doing backgrounds and did such a poor job with backgrounds. So, there was a blending of his business and professional [lives]. We also found one of the original tips from the deputy that came to us had involved a millionaire deputy. This was a part-time deputy who bought his own patrol car and his own gun and his uniform and put himself on the road and directed a lot of investigations, some of them against his enemies. This was (let's call him) an eccentric millionaire, who was almost running the department, or at least running the things he wanted to run, and the sheriff was letting him. He gave the sheriff a house and a lot of other things. All of these things we were finding, it was such an embarrassment of riches that we knew it was going to involve...I had to go to Vegas and to Illinois and to several other places to get records. One of the things we had to confirm [was], we were trying to determine if this millionaire was a legitimate millionaire with money honestly earned or if this was dishonest money. This millionaire had a home in Las Vegas and a lot of unsavory friends that made us wonder if he was not organized-crime himself. He had come from Quincy, Illinois, out of a family called **Morman** that owned an animal-and-feed operation there of some renown. It was a privately-owned company. We knew how much stock he owned in it because he bragged about it a lot, but we did not know the value of the stock. I had to go to Quincy, Illinois. I spent a lot of time in the basement of that courthouse there. What I did was take the wills of a whole bunch of different family members who died over, about, a forty-year period and established the value of the stock from the time he inherited it in the 1940s, when his father died, to the most current I could find at the time, which was in the late-1970s, I think. It was a great use of public records, because what I did was take the quarterly probate reports filed by lawyers into the estates of his elderly aunts and uncles who owned shares, and I was able to come up with how the value of that stock moved up across the years and what he would have gotten off of that stock, in income, over the years. A tremendous amount of public records went into that, and I did that deliberately. [This was] the standard I set in the very

beginning, and I told [the] editors. This is not the most ideal situation; ideally, the reporter working on an investigative project like this should have no discord between him and the subject of the investigation. You cannot have that most of the time. In my case, I was the one who knew the most about this guy, had the most access to people, and I knew he hated me because I had caught him with his pants down before. But I also knew, because of that dislike for me, that everything we wrote better damn well be exactly right and documented.

C: And he did sue.

M: Oh yes, but I required from the very beginning that nothing go into print that did not have a paper document to support it or a taped interview, that there would be no unnamed sources [and] there would be nothing we could not simply prove in a court of law. I had covered the courts for years, so that became my standard, that it had to be something that would pass muster as evidence, and we did that. Nothing in that series, which began running in December of 1983 and wound up in April of 1984, was un-sourced. I mean, you could use it as a textbook case. He did ultimately sue us. We itemized and numbered to inventory 14,000 and some documents, when it got down to the lawyers. I would not ordinarily count the documents I use on a project, but on this one, the lawyers had to index every document, and they had over 14,000 indexed by the time we went to trial on that. We won a jury trial. [It is] very rare to win a jury trial in a libel case, but the jury came back and said, each and every fact challenged was absolutely true. It cost us a fortune to defend it, but we won it in the end. I suspect that is a deterrent to a lot of other people who might file libel suits.

C: There were two separate suits, were there not?

M: He and the millionaire deputy sued, and I think they sued jointly. I cannot remember whether we countersued. We would not have pursued it had we done it. We won the legal fees back out of it, and we always give legal fees to charity when we win. It was a great victory. It probably should never have gone to trial because he was a public figure and he had no initial showing of error, but we were dealing with a retired judge who was being paid by the day to sit on the case. So, you know, he leads us into a six-week trial, taking Fridays off. It was just, for him, a leisurely pace. For us, it was maddening, because I was already working in Tallahassee at the time, and we had to simply move to Tampa Monday to Friday and do it there. I had already, in the Dixie and Taylor [Counties] stuff, begun...I had always used public records, in part because it is the easiest way to protect the source; if you get a public record, you do not have to have a source that is identifiable. So, in most of my career, I have used sources to point me to public records and assembled them. The Pasco case is probably the most records I have ever assembled up until that point in my career on a single case, but I always keep an enormous number of records and I keep

my notes. That in itself is controversial among reporters. You will have lawyers who will advise you to throw them away. I think that if you are accurate and good at what you are doing, your notes are the best defense you will have. I have to tell you, one of the great moments in this trial involved my notes. I had at various times been cross-examined and examined on the contents of notes that I took. At one moment in the trial, Benny Lazzara, the Tampa lawyer who was representing **Short and Mormon**, asked me, right after you published all of this, didn't people tell you that these facts were not true. I said, no, to the contrary, everybody told me they were true, including you, Mr. Lazzara. He, stunned, stopped and said, what do you mean? I said, Mr. Lazzara, you called me after these stories were published and told me that you had been approached by Mr. Mormon to sue the *Times* and that you, in reviewing the stories, could not find any factual errors in them and wanted to know the source of one particular piece of information in the stories, because you were trying to convince your client that he could not prove a lawsuit against us. He said, very sarcastically, well, I do not suppose you have a note on that, do you? And I said, as matter of fact, I do, Mr. Lazzara. Now, in asking for the discovery, he had asked for everything that preceded the writing of the stories, not notes that came afterwards, and it had never come up in their depositions of me. So, I said, as a matter of fact, I do. I asked the lawyers to hand me a particular file that was in the files we had around our desk, and I was able to read him a note taken in March of 1984, and dated, of my conversation with him. It was one of these great Perry Mason moments that you rarely really get in a trial.

C: How long did it take him to sit down?

M: Not long. It was really a hilarious moment. So, my notetaking has become, sort of, a household joke around the *Times*. I do take more notes than I need, and I rarely throw away anything. This means at some point, I am going to be overcome by the documents. I really do need to go back and throw away things, like Abscam. It may take me about two years to prepare to retire, just to go through the stuff I have on hand in office.

C: What was it like to learn that your work has won the Pulitzer Prize, in 1985?

M: It is interesting. I had never even thought about a Pulitzer. I had never thought about contests. I had never entered one myself. I did not know that the Dixie County stuff was heading in that direction. I remember when he was editing the Dixie County stuff, Rob Hooker had jokingly said, Lucy, this stuff is either going to win you a Pulitzer or get you killed. I did not know until the day the Pulitzers were announced that we were the runner-up for it.

C: So the editors did not tell you.

M: No. [Eugene] Patterson knew it, but he did not tell me. He called me that day. He was our CEO at the time. I was really sort of stunned. Charlie Stafford, one of our reporters who had won a Pulitzer in 1980, had called me and said, Lucy, take heart, sometimes getting to be runner-up brings you to their attention. But, really, that was way out of my mind. I did know we had entered the Pasco stuff, and I knew it was a finalist, but on the day they announced the Pulitzers, I did not hear from Patterson. So, I had assumed we probably did not win. I had been through so much torment in that project. Not only were the stories good and it was fun to report, it was a tremendous strain to report on a sheriff in a county in which you lived. He waged a vehement attack against me, us, the *Times*. He had bumper stickers out that said, Screw Lucy Morgan, and, I Do Not Believe the *St. Petersburg Times*. I mean, he waged a lot of personal attacks. His friends threatened and were very aggressive toward my daughter-in-law and her baby who lived there at the time, threatening her, terrified her several times. On occasion, they would give me a description of what my grandchild had worn to daycare. There were just all kinds of threats that came in that project.

C: They would call you anonymously?

M: Oh yes, my phones were tapped. The telephone company found where there had been taps on the phone. There were just enormous pressures of that project. Anyway, the day after the Pulitzers were announced, I came into work and Dick said, a source wants you to meet for lunch and asked me if I would come with you, called this morning, has something to talk about the sheriff's thing. Well, I was sort of out of the sheriff's thing by then, and I thought, I really do not want another source on this sheriff's department; I am tired of this story; go away. But, I went to lunch, and when we got to Pappas, Gene Patterson and Andy Barnes, our then executive editor, were waiting with champagne to tell me. Then we had to keep it a secret for two or three weeks before it was announced. It was a great way to go about telling me and a great secret to have to keep for a couple of weeks. I was amazed, the avalanche of people you hear from at moments like that, including my high school English teacher whom I had not seen for years. This dear woman is now in her nineties and is blind. Her name is Evelyn Steadman, and she called to congratulate me for something I got noticed for in the last few years—I cannot even remember what it was—and I wrote a column about her. The funniest thing, when I was in Mississippi visiting my aunt a couple of years ago, the local paper sent somebody down to interview me and did a story on me, and I credited her with being a large part of my ability to read and write. She was, but I described her as a terrorist, saying that this was a woman who would, on Fridays, tell you to read *David Copperfield* and bring in a written report on it on Mondays, a sure way to wreck your weekend. As things will happen, the word "terrorist" wound up in the headline of the feature on me that they ran, so my aunt spent the next few months explaining to Ms. Steadman that I meant "terrorist" in the nicest sense of the word. I recently, maybe within the last

year, wrote a column about her, and I mailed her a copy of it and had just a lovely note back from her. She was just an amazing teacher, in the things she demanded out of people. But that was the kind of people I heard from when I won the Pulitzer. The *Times* gave me an immediate pay raise, I think of \$100 a week. The editor I worked for spent the rest of the week beating the weekender I had promised him out of me, because there are so many distractions. You learn quickly that it is the next story that is important, not the one you just finished.

C: After that, what were you working on, and where are you doing day-to-day jobs?

M: That would have been 1985. Most of that year, I spent doing some of the trials that fell out of the Short thing and sort of cleaning up on other stories. By then, some of the Dixie County stuff had come to trial, and I had a few of those trials to pick up and cover and finish up. At the end of that year, of 1985, in early December, I was in St. Petersburg for something, and Gene Patterson wanted me to go to lunch with him. We had been at the lunch table five minutes when Andy Barnes appeared and sat on the other side of me. I have always said this was a set-up; they have said, oh, it was a mere accident. I do not believe them. But, in the course of conversation, Barnes asked me what I thought we ought to do about the Tallahassee bureau, which had the vacancy of bureau chief at the time. I said, you should give it to Laurie Holman, the woman who worked here, a young reporter who had only been here a year or so but who was very good. I thought they should give those jobs to women when they could. Patterson said, Lucy, why don't you take that job? I said, I cannot move to Tallahassee, and he said, I remember that about ten years ago on an annual evaluation, you said you would like to go to Tallahassee. I said, Gene, I do not believe that, but the two of them did a number on me. When we finished lunch, I said, no, I cannot do it; I have my elderly mother living with us, and I do not see how I can transpose all of this to Tallahassee. I ended up walking away saying, no, no, no, I do not want to do it. Well, I called Dick, who was still working for the *Times* in Pasco. He said, wait a minute, I am thinking about retiring next year; maybe you should go back in there and say, maybe--let's talk about it and see what we might want to do. Well, that was the beginning of the downfall. I walked back into Barnes' office and said, okay, my spouse says I should say maybe until I have time to think about this overnight. So, I go back a day or two later really intending to tell him no, because I was looking at it from the financial end of it more than anything. He said, let me tell you this before you open your mouth to tell me whatever it is you were going to tell me. He said, we will pay for an apartment for you to keep a residence there and one here and for your transportation back and forth, and you do not have to be in Tallahassee five days a week; you can be there as many days as you think you need to be; we would like you to take that job and, ultimately, move permanently to Tallahassee to do it, but we are willing to pay for whatever length of time you wish to be in transition. So, when I talked to Dick, I decided to go ahead and do it. I had resisted any kind of management job up

until then, on a lot of grounds. I liked being out among people. I did not want to be locked up in a cage where I was responsible for everyone else's mistakes and got to do nothing on my own. So I had said no to everybody for years who had tried to put me in one of those jobs. Patterson's logic here was that I could still write and report and help teach younger reporters as they came through under me, and he also wanted me to continue to do some investigative projects. The Tallahassee bureau at the time was a two-person bureau. One of my first objections was that it was impossible in a two-person bureau for one of them to be off doing investigative projects, that it would be unfair to the other reporter, placing an unnecessary burden on them, and he immediately said, okay, we will add a reporter. And they did, so I came in with an advantage. I came up in January of 1986 to take over the bureau with two other reporters, David Dahl and Laurie Holman. David was a cop reporter in St. Pete whom I picked to be the third person up here.

C: So, it was your call who would come in?

M: Yes, it was my call. Actually, it has always been that way. The *Times* has been very good to let me pick who comes. I do not know that they have ever vetoed one. I was close last year on them vetoing one I wanted because they did not like his credentials, but I thought he had the right stuff and, as it turns out, he has done beautifully. I would have made sure; if I had to write his damn stuff myself, he would have succeeded. So I went from looking at drug smugglers and public corruption and organized-crime into state government and politics. Somehow, it seems like a natural transition. The drug smugglers were more candid than the state officials to deal with. But it has been an easy transition, and it has been a lot of fun, because I have been able to take the investigative techniques that I developed along the way and apply them to state government. It is amazing how much you find when you do not take what comes to you at face value.

C: When you first got to Tallahassee, was this when [Robert] "Bob" Graham [Florida governor, 1979-1987] was completing his governorship?

M: Yes, Bob Graham was in his last year as governor, and [Bob] Martinez [Florida governor, 1987-1991] was running.

C: What are your observations about the various governors and administrations that you have covered?

M: It has been interesting. Graham was by then very comfortable as governor. He was very open. Of all the governors that have come along, he was the most accessible, of those we have had since then. We had free run of even his office, except for his own office. We could go down and talk to the top of his staff without having to go through a gatekeeper. In fact, we were invited to the

mansion more than we wanted to go. We always paid. We still do that; when we are invited to the mansion, we go and eat or drink whatever is going on there and make a donation to the mansion fund equivalent to it to pay for it.

C: And that is a *Times* policy--not necessarily everybody's.

M: No. Our policy at the *Times* is, we take nothing from nobody, and, believe it or not, that is sometimes hard to do. I adhere to the policy. Sometimes, I simply am in the position of handing cash to a lobbyist who has picked up the tab. I do not have a clue what he is doing with it, but I know that I have paid my share. In the case of a governor, you can usually make a donation to somebody. I recently went to Israel with Governor [Jeb] Bush [Florida governor, 1999-present], and I was faced with a situation where Holland & Knight's [law firm] Israel office was paying for some of the meals we were having. I did not want to be rude and bring out my shekels in Tel Aviv, but what I did when we got back was make a donation to Holland & Knight's Holocaust Fund. You usually find some appropriate way to repay the money. So, I have done that several times. I went to Spain and Italy with Bob Martinez when he was governor, and we were in situations where an Italian host was providing something and there was no graceful way to repay them, so what I did was make a large donation to Mary Jane Martinez' favorite charity in the name of the Italian woman who had been the host. So, there are ways to pay even when there is no obvious way to pay. Where possible, we buy our own tickets. I recently went to the Sugar Bowl to tag along with [Talbot] "Sandy" D'Alemberte, the FSU president [1994-present], and there were a number of functions, one, a dinner which we paid \$150 to get into which was not worth \$150. I paid for my game ticket, \$125. I thought clearly the game ticket was worth it.

C: For FSU to win the national championship, it must have been worth that.

M: But I am not sure the Sugar Bowl dinner on the night before was all that worthy. But we wanted the access to the president, and he granted us total access. He said that he would not exclude me from any meeting he had over the course of the Sugar Bowl festivities, but I did have to pay to get into some of the places.

C: Did he surprise you about that trip, what you observed?

M: Yes. D'Alemberte has been somewhat remote from his football team. In fact, the reason the *Times* wanted me to go [was], during the fall, when Peter Warrick, one of the best football players in the nation--some would argue the best--was caught in a petty theft episode, and I was interviewing D'Alemberte, he told me he had never met Warrick before. I said, does that not make you awfully remote from your players? I said, Warrick is arguably the best-known football player in the southeastern United States, if not the U.S. as a whole, and you had never

met him before this trouble arose? He said, well, I do not spend time in locker rooms. I used that series of quotes in the story, and our sports editor called me the next day and said, you know, if these people go to the national championship, would you go along with D'Alemberte and write about him? So I went without really a good definition of what I was doing to go, except that I was going to write about him, and got several good stories out of it. I mean, here was this very academic president, who was not known for being an academic when he went into that job, and yet he has raised more money than anybody has raised for [FSU]. It was an interesting look at what a president does in the midst of a championship football team, most of which had nothing to do with football and yet everything to do with it. There was a moment in the French Quarter at about two a.m. after they won the game when, among other things, D'Alemberte signed a football for somebody, which brought me into much laughter. He said, look, I did not take credit for doing anything in the game! Anyway, it made several interesting stories and, I think, gave interesting insight into the sort of academic rewards that flow from an athletic championship.

C: And monetary, the fundraising that goes on with wealthy supporters.

M: Yes. And it was good access. One of the events we went to was a party only for the people who had given a million dollars or more to the university. So you got a really good look at people who were in that category in the life of the university.

C: There was an election and you were chosen to be a member of the *Times* board. What does that mean to you? What does that represent?

M: It was interesting. My whole career, I have been overly frank with everybody everywhere. It is just my nature to be too frank. I had always assumed that there would be a day when I would get fired for being too frank, that I would call some editor a shithead who had really been a shithead. I had been really fortunate over the years at the *Times* that most of the editors I had worked for had been people who could take it when I dished it out. I had just assumed that trait in me would get me fired some day. Well, Barnes calls me in, in the summer of 1991, and says, I really want to complicate your life; I would like to put you on the board of directors. The year preceding that, or the two years preceding that, I had been closely involved with the directors in the Robert Bass fight, the millionaire from Texas who tried to take over the *Times*. I had been the conduit between the *Times* and the attorney general's office. In fact, at the time the suit was settled, I had agreed to give up reporting for a year or so and help the legal team on the lawsuit, if it required that, mostly on the research that would be required for it, so I had been close to that lawsuit and close to the things the board was doing. But, Barnes said, I want to put you on the board of directors. To my knowledge, there is no reporter anywhere in anybody's organization that has crossed over that line

and been put on a board like that. My immediate response was to say, Andy, I do not think you are ready for anybody who is as frank as I am to sit on that board. He swelled up like a toad and said, you really do underestimate me; that is why I want you on this board.

C: How large is the board?

M: At the moment, I believe there are eight members, although we just recently lost one. There are usually nine members. At that time, there were eleven or twelve members. The bylaws, I think, require that number to be somewhere between eight and thirteen or something. At the moment, there will be nine as soon as there is a replacement of one who fell by the wayside. But that board runs the *Times*, *Congressional Quarterly*, *Florida Trend*, and governs a group of shoppers that we own and whatever else we own at the moment. To say 'run' is an abusive term. The CEOs and managing officers of each of those organizations really run it; that board is more in the role of oversight than day-to-day operations. We try not to get involved in the minute doings of each, but we do approve the budgets for them and the fringe benefits for staff and all that kind of thing.

C: But you have been known to ask what might be considered impertinent questions about personalities in a newsroom?

M: Yes, I have sort of continued my role of being too frank, and I am usually the one who asks the embarrassing questions in a meeting.

C: Which makes Andy Barnes happy, I am sure.

M: Yes, I think Andy really wants those things to come out. I am sure there are times when I ask a question that he regrets having given me this portfolio, but for the most part, I think he has been very tolerant of my tendency to ask. One of the sort of touching things about it was that I had assumed that I would be considered the newsroom advocate on the board. I understood that. But, in one of the first meetings I attended—actually, it was a company staff meeting—I was out at the production plant where I know the least people. I have never worked in St. Petersburg, so I tend not to know most of the advertising, production and circulation staff that people who work there might run into and know. I left the meeting to go get a Coke down the hall, and as I put my money in the machine, obviously somebody out of the press room, covered with all of the dirt of the pressroom, came up to me and grabbed me and he said, I just want you to know, Lucy, that we consider you our board member. It was just very touching. I mean, the rank-and-file staff saw me not just as the newsroom. You know, usually, there is such a division between news and all of the other sections of a newspaper, because there just is so much distance between us. I thought it was very touching that the rank-and-file people there see me as their member as well as

the newsroom. I think it is good for the company, and would be good for any company. It is a balancing act. It does complicate your life. Most of the editors who handle my copy are editors who, technically, I outrank in many ways, so that I have to be very conscious not to pull rank and try to proceed as though things were without me sitting on the board, but they and I are always conscious of the fact that I have that additional clout, if you will. It enables me to get things approved faster. For instance, the last campaign that Lawton Chiles [Florida governor, 1991-1999] had, he made a demand ten days out from the election that no reporter could travel with him unless they could produce \$4,000 up front to pay their expenses in advance. I guess he was trying to cut out the number of people who were travelling with him, and I was the only member of the Capitol press corps who could immediately produce a \$4,000 check, simply because I could call St. Pete and say, cut me a \$4,000 check and FedEx it up here, so that I was able to do that on the spot without having to go through a chain of command that went to Chicago and back or something. I know when I request a payment for something, it is going to get approved, and I am not at all reluctant to simply approve the expenditure. It is not that there is any official piece of paper that says I have that authority; it will just happen.

C: You mentioned Lawton Chiles. Talk about your observations of his administration and your coverage of his funeral.

M: I think [when] Chiles came into office, all of us had great hope that this was sort of dream governor. You had a governor and a lieutenant governor with Buddy MacKay who were enormously experienced, had good reputations, and came back from the dead, so to speak, to run this state and did nothing with that.

C: Did you think he was going to win that election?

M: Yes. I thought from the moment he entered, he would win. Martinez was not a charismatic governor. I think that Martinez would have won re-election if Chiles had not come in, that Chiles essentially came in and saved the Democratic party from itself. In a sense, he also killed it. I do not think that Bill Nelson [Florida insurance commissioner and former congressman] could have beat Martinez at that point in life. He was going about it in too clumsy a fashion, and he would never have succeeded. But Chiles had this sort of mystical quality about him that made people just worship him, just lots of charisma. When compared to Martinez, he would have won in a landslide in any situation. I think the liberals saw him as a guy who would be willing to pass taxes and to do the uncomfortable things that needed to be done to govern. The conservatives saw him as still sort of a good old boy. Actually, I think the conservatives were more right. I think Lawton Chiles was basically a good old boy from Polk County who was most comfortable around his own cronies. The people he appointed to jobs were generally his cronies, not necessarily the people best qualified for the job. I

think he made a lot of mistakes. I think he generated a lot of goodwill, and that may have been his best asset. He came in, and everybody thought, okay, we will get the taxes we need to solve the public school problems we have. T.K. Wetherell, who was the House Speaker when Chiles came in, has told me since, he went to Chiles and said, look, Governor, if we are going to pass a tax, it has to be this year; we will never get it done in an election year. I can deliver the legislature to you; we have Democrats in control of both houses, and that may not be true after this year, but we can do what needs to be done to solve the state's problems. Chiles balked and would not do it; he would not go there. He let himself pledge No New Taxes during the campaign, and he kept it. He never got in a position, got enough ahead of the game, money-wise to be able to do some of the things that he had championed in his lifetime. Only in his final years did the state really have enough money to do anything, and by then, I think he had sort of lost interest in doing a lot of things. I think much of his time as governor, he was not interested in the day-to-day job of governing. I think he liked being governor and liked using that role for things he was really interested in, but there was not a whole lot that interested him.

C: In your view, did you see him turning a lot of the day-to-day interest in what the legislature was doing to Buddy MacKay? Did he delegate authority in that sense?

M: I expected him to do that and, yet, he did not. I think there was always some residual reluctance to turn it over to Buddy, that he did not want Buddy to have the role. A lot of us thought that Chiles would take that job and then step out of it and, in essence, will it to Buddy, let Buddy be governor for a time, but I think Lawton did not want to let Buddy be governor, that he so enjoyed the title and the things that came with being governor. The biggest disappointment that I had in Lawton [was] I had always assumed him to be very ethical. When he went in, he established this rule for his staff that nobody could take anything valued at more than, like, \$2.50 from anybody, which was a great standard to establish in government, where you had, for contrast, legislators taking expensive meals and trips and bottles of wine and everything from lobbyists and [coming] under fire for [this]. So, it was a great contrast, but Chiles did not himself adhere to that standard. He took free hunting trips, free trips to games. He took free shotguns and things from sugar interests. So it was a disappointing contrast. I think he saw himself above the fray. There was a sort of arrogance to him, where he thought, these things do not influence me, so I do not need to have a rule. The standard that he set for the people who saw that happening was poor.

C: What about the cast of characters in the legislature that you have observed during the time you have been bureau chief. Dempsey [J.] Barron, for example, President of the Senate?

M: I enjoyed Dempsey a lot. Unlike many people in the legislature, Dempsey was

pretty frank about what he was doing and where he was going. You could disagree with what he wanted to do, but he knew how to use the process to reach an end, probably better than anybody since then has ever achieved. Dempsey knew how to horse-trade and how to get something done. He knew what everybody wanted, and he knew how to trade what one senator wanted for what another senator had and how to use that to get a bill through the system. I rather enjoyed Dempsey. I did not know Dempsey well. In fact, my only exposure to Dempsey before I took over the bureau here was, a few years earlier, I had written a story which accused him of taking a \$50,000 bribe, which he remembered well on the day that I took over here. But it had come out in a court case where Mallory [E.] Horne, former president of the Senate [1973-1974], had been taped by the FBI promising Dempsey and other votes for \$50,000 to each. To this day, I do not have a clue of whether it was true or not, but it had come out in a court case and I had written about it. So, that was my initial experience with Dempsey.

C: How did he remind you of that?

M: Oh, he reminded me the minute he met me, the first day I was here, that the last time I had written about him was to accuse him of taking a bribe. Dempsey was very forthright about things like that. He and I had a great relationship. When his office would get too filled with lobbyists wanting something, Dempsey would call me and say, would you drop by? Of course, the minute I would come and start to spend a little time in there, the lobbyists would leave, so I was the periodic cleaner-out of lobbyists who did not want to ask for favors in front of me. Dempsey would make it clear to them that I had entre and that if they wanted to speak to him, they had to do it in front of me. So, it would keep his office free of certain lobbyists. I am sure he would not call me if it was a lobbyist he wanted to have a discussion with. I do not have any illusions about that. I learned very quickly that the easiest way to know what was happening was to go where Dempsey was because he was usually at the center of it. When there was a huge power struggle in 1986 over who would become the Senate president, Ken Jenne had thirty-nine signed pledges from members of the senate to make him president of the Senate. He never achieved that position because Dempsey overthrew him. I was sitting in Dempsey's office when I realized that it was final because the sergeant-at-arms delivered to Dempsey the parking cards for the chairman of the rules committee and the leadership positions for Dempsey to distribute to whoever he wanted to have them. The key to all power in Tallahassee is the best parking spots. I just found Dempsey highly interesting to cover, quite a character and usually very direct. I watched him one year. Sam Bell was the appropriations chairman in the House, and Dempsey was rules committee chairman in the Senate. This year probably would have been 1987, or 1988, and I watched him bring all of the process to a halt in the final week or ten days of session because an elderly retired teacher from FSU—Ms. Fay Kirtland

was her name—was lobbying for a group of retired teachers who had been left out of a benefit by some sort of timing problem: they had retired in a certain year, and there were a few years where they did not get adequate health insurance. [It was] some sort of bureaucratic snafu, and they had been lobbying for years trying to get a bill passed to fix this problem. Harry [A.] Johnston, when he was president of the Senate [1985-1986], would not even give Ms. Fay an appointment. So, it appealed to Dempsey not only to give Ms. Fay an appointment but to bring the whole budget process to a halt until somebody was willing to put the item in that would fix this little problem for Ms. Fay and her retired teachers, most of them elderly women spinsters who contributed a dollar to Dempsey's campaigns each time. Dempsey was perfectly capable of using his power for that kind of person as he was for the head of St. Joe Paper Company or somebody. I think it probably amused him more to use his power in moments like that than it did for the big-deal people. Of course, Ms. Fay loved him to death and praised him to the skies for it. I think that is part of what made him such a charming political character; he learned how to deal with the powerful people in this world and the little people in this world who he had once been part of. Early on, when I first came here in 1986, I was appalled by the free stuff that legislators took from lobbyists, including Dempsey. I mean, they could eat every meal, just constant gifts of things. They took them on trips, hunting or golfing or whatever else they wanted to do.

C: Did you write about it?

M: Yes. In 1987, I decided to compare the gifts that legislators reported getting with the gifts lobbyists reported giving. The law required a legislator to report any gift valued at more than \$25. The lobbyists were supposed to report the aggregate, but they did not have to identify who got the gift. I know you would be shocked to know that there was a difference of several million dollars in what was reported given against what was reported gotten. I kept notes during the course of the year when I saw a legislator leaving on a trip with a lobbyist or something like that so that I had some basis, but I did a story. At the time, it was a criminal misdemeanor for a legislator, or any public official, to violate that law. Well, the legislature's reaction to the stories I wrote in 1987 on this problem was to go back into the law in 1988 and eliminate the criminal penalty from the law and raise the amount of the gift they could take to \$100. That was their initial reaction. Then, in 1989, I decided to go back and look at it again and look at all the gifts that they were taking and not reporting, particular trips. Dempsey always preached that a trip was not a gift, that you could not make that comparison, which, I think, even Dempsey knew that was a ludicrous position to take. But, one morning in the midst of all my reporting and questioning the legislators about this, Dempsey calls me at the office about nine-thirty and he says, Lucy, you are right. He said, last night, I went out with a bunch of lobbyists, and they bought this huge steak dinner with a big baked potato with all this sour cream, and I

drank all kinds of whiskey throughout dinner, and after dinner, they bought me all these fancy after-dinner drinks, and I drank all this brandy and stuff. And, he said, this morning, I feel like a bouquet of dog-asses; I should not have taken those [gifts]. I used that as a sidebar in the story the next day. That is the way Dempsey was. I also think that Dempsey, somewhat like Lawton Chiles, saw himself as unreachable by this largesse. He felt that everybody gave him things and that none of them bought him by doing it, that it was an entitlement.

C: There was no payback.

M: Yes. I think he just saw this as something he was entitled to and that he was not repaying them by giving them anything. In some instances, he did not give anything. His tendency to give somebody a gift in a bill was often more oriented toward somebody he liked than somebody who had given him something. Now, sometimes those were the same people. There was a group of lobbyists that sort of surrounded him. Some of them were great with guitars and songs, and they would entertain at any Dempsey gathering. Others of them could put on an apron and serve drinks. Lobbyists at that time were, I thought, tremendously demeaning of themselves. You would see them cleaning up the garbage or serving drinks or slicing the ham, doing things like this at events that Dempsey or other legislators had. I mean, if your picture of a lobbyist is a guy in a suit passing information or explaining the complexities of insurance to a legislator, that was not a lobbyist of the mid-1980s that I found here. The successful lobbyists were those who could drive them around, extricate legislators from drunken incidents, pave the way for them to get from point A to point B, or, if it was a legislator's birthday, stage a party for him, and those kinds of things. That is what I wrote about in the late-1980s.

C: Who is the lobbyist of 2000?

M: The lobbyist 2000 is much more a person who knows the issue, and this is evolving; I think this is probably going to change as term-limits come. At the turn of the century, the best lobbyists are those who thoroughly know the issue, know the process, and know the member. The best lobbying firms have employed black males and females, Republicans and Democrats, and people who know, personally, the legislators. We are almost at man-to-man lobbying, where, on an important issue, you will see a huge team of lobbyists deployed, some of whom are hired only because they happen to know a group of, say, Broward legislators and have easy access to them. You will have some members of that team who know the issue real well, some of who have had long party traditions with each of the party members who are going to affect it. But, as term-limits impact [politics], the one underlying influence that is always going to be there is the lobbyist who has contributed money to the campaign and has gotten his clients to do it. Probably, one of the smartest lobbyists around is Ronnie Book from Miami.

Some lobbyists work hard only during a legislative session. Ronnie works all year. He goes out and raises money. I have even seen him carry the luggage of legislators who are coming into the Capitol from the airport. Ronnie is sort of your all-service man. He will help them raise money, help them run whatever campaign functions they need done. He was a staffer for Bob Graham when Graham was governor. He goes back into the roots of government. He knows it well, knows the process. He cultivates the secretaries everywhere in the building. He will be sure they get an appropriate gift at times, nothing lavish, flowers or candy at the right moment. He will get things done probably quicker than most any other lobbyist that I can think of at the moment.

C: Do you use him as a source?

M: Yes, I talk to Ronnie a fair amount. Ronnie is one of those who is pretty brazen about what he does, most of the time; there will be some things he will keep secret in any session until he has it in a law somewhere. One of the things I have done more out of sport, I guess, than anything is to try to find the hidden things in bills. Ronnie sort of enjoys this sport, and will participate. Once you learn that you can use one lobbyist against another in this process, much in the same way you learn to use one party against another in the political arena, you know when you are looking for something about a given piece of legislation to go to the natural opponents of that to find out what they know about it and what you can get out of them. I suppose one of the funniest examples [is], some years ago, I heard from a source that Mac Stipanovich, who had been chief of staff for Bob Martinez, had been hired by Alamo Rent-a-Car to keep the governor from vetoing a bill and that he was to be paid something like \$150,000, which told me that was a pretty big issue for Alamo. Now, that year, we had a huge rental car issue going that involved collision-damage waivers. I immediately figured out that it was not that issue; that was the surface issue that was involved in whatever Mac was doing. The tip had included a suggestion that Alamo had gotten buried in a bill that had passed in the preceding three or four days in committee a clause that would make a lot of money for Alamo, but I did not know what bill that was. I set out pulling all of the bills I could find that had been up in committee anywhere that might benefit a rental-car company, and I could not find to save my life what it was. That particular year, I knew that Alamo was in a war with Avis and Hertz over the collision-damage waivers [CDWs]. Alamo made a huge percentage of their income from the CDWs. Hertz and Avis did not, so Alamo wanted to keep the right to tack those on to car-rental contracts in Florida. Hertz and Avis were less interested in it. It was such a divisive issue that Hertz and Avis were willing to sacrifice that issue to get other benefits. So, I simply went to the Avis lobbyist whom I knew well and said, I have reason to believe that Alamo has buried something in a bill that has come through committee in the last few days and that it would be a huge benefit to Alamo but not to anyone else, and Mac Stipanovich is involved in it. The lobbyist said he could not figure out what it was, and I knew

they were tracking closely anything. He said, but give me overnight. Well, he worked for a firm who hired a reader who read every amendment offered for every bill anywhere in the process and tracked exactly what that amendment would do and whether it affected any of their clients. So, their reader went back through all of the amendments that he had been going over and found an amendment that had been offered on, like, page thirty-five of an eighty-six page bill, and that amendment did not refer to rental cars or Alamo or anybody, but what it said was that anybody covered under statute number so- and-so, subject to statute number so-and-so, would be free of paying any fee beyond the cost. What it did, as a matter of practice, was it would require the airports not to charge Alamo for the privilege of picking up passengers at airports. See, Avis and Hertz paid a huge fee to airports to pick up on the premises and have their rental cars rented on premises. Alamo paid a smaller fee, but a substantial fee, for the pick-up privilege there. This would have wiped out that fee. For the airport in Tampa, it would have been about \$4,000,000 a year; for Orlando, about the same; for Dade, \$10,000,000 a year. So I immediately called the airport managers around the state and had a story in the next day's paper. On that day, I determined that the amendment had been offered by Kurt Kiser, senator from Pinellas County, who told me he had offered it at the request of Ralph Haben [former speaker of the House], who was also among the Alamo lobbyists. Kurt did not realize what it had done. He thought it sounded fair to charge only the cost of what it would cost the airport to do something; he did not realize how much income was involved for the airports. When I ran into Haben that day, I said, I need to talk about this amendment you put in. It was in a special taxing district bill. I said, I need to talk to you about this amendment, and he said, oh, you know, I could really tell you all about that tomorrow, if you just wait until tomorrow to talk to me about it. I said, no, I am writing a story for tomorrow, and he said, really, if you wait until tomorrow, my client will give me permission to talk to you. I said, no, I think I have to have this in tomorrow's paper. I got it in the next day's paper. Those who were downstairs for the early morning breakfast that a lot of the lobbyists have in the Capitol say that Haben walked in and they showed him the headline, to which he replied, oh, f! (with less expletive deleted than that.) I found out later that I had blown a \$1,000,000 fee for Haben. Alamo was paying him \$1,000,000 to get that in the bill and a contingency fee if it survived, and he was going to pay some of the money to Stipanovich to keep it from being vetoed.

C: So that is the sport.

M: Yes, this is the sort of sporting element that you find. I love to find these little buried treasures in a bill. Unfortunately, I fear that we find very few of them. These things are put into complex bills that relate to insurance and very dull issues and things that you think are not interesting at all. I think a lot of things get into law that you just do not realize until later, way down the road, you see the

impact, if you see it at all.

C: Do you think there are a lot of honest mistakes that the legislators make, or are they in on it?

M: Probably more often than not, it is an honest mistake. It is a deception, or a point of view. See, Alamo, I think, would take the position in that case that, well, it is unfair to charge us all this money; all we do is pick up a passenger there. The airport ought not benefit from it. So, that is the lobbyist's point of view, if he tells the legislator that much about it at all. Sometimes, I think the legislator is simply dumb and misled by a lobbyist who knows more about what he is doing than he does, or busy.

C: Are they also more overwhelmed the closer you get to the end of session?

M: Yes, you have so many bills and so many issues floating around that it is very easy to technically tweak a bill, to greatly benefit one business or another. Most legislators do not have the time or the expertise to understand what a little tweak here or there does on the other end once something gets into law. In these last-minute amendments, you do not have any staff to analyze them most of the time so that it gets onto the bill, usually in the final week of session or the final day of session, and it gets into law without anybody really having looked at the consequences of it; they are fooled that way. Really good legislators who are conscientious would reject an amendment like that from a lobbyist at the last minute, saying, wait a minute, this should go through the process. Ideally, any change in the law ought to go through that process where it is heard at public hearing and staff can analyze it and you know what it is going to do at the other end. In fact, that does not always happen. For many lobbyists, it is equally a sport. I mean, they want to win, and they want to get it through the process with the least change to benefit their client. Some of these lobbyists make a lot of money. We probably have a number of lobbyists here who make more than \$1,000,000 a year off their lobbying. Contingency fees are now illegal, but I suspect they are called bonuses and still paid from time-to-time when somebody does a good job for their company. But, the business community has learned that they can get the playing field un-level, if you will, by running a bill through the process that benefits them. Sometimes, it may exempt them from a tax. Sometimes, I think, we do it and we know we do it; we know that we have benefitted this business, to promote it or to help citizens or to do whatever. Right now, for instance, there is a tax-exemption we are moving through that would make diapers tax-exempt. Well, that would help the poor mother out there trying to struggle to buy diapers; it would also help the people who make diapers and sell them.

C: St. Joe Paper Company would love that.

M: Yes, so, sometimes, we do this with full knowledge of what we are doing, and I think that is fine. It is when you are burying an amendment that would help a particular business, and this is a time-honored tradition. In the 1940s, the legislature buried an amendment that made the Fennholloway [River] exempt from pollution laws to help the cellulose company there.

C: Does being on the board, a reporter, a bureau chief, and column-writer impact your role as reporter? Covering the legislature, for example, and then you write a Sunday column taking a viewpoint . . .

M: Yes. I try to take less a viewpoint than comment on what is going on. It is a fine line. For instance, I would never write a column that said I either supported or opposed abortion, or something like that, but I might comment on the way public officials handle an abortion bill. I try to keep it in that vein. I often poke fun at politicians. I recently wrote a column that said the governor looked like an idiot, and I had an editor who called and said, wait a minute, we are a little squeamish about calling the governor an idiot. I said, no, no, I only said he looked like an idiot; I did not say he was an idiot. Well, they wanted to change that to say, it looked like he was in over his head or something, and I said, okay, if you guys are squeamish, do it. Then, I ended the column by saying the whole event looked like a circus with the governor as ringmaster. Whoever wrote the headline decided that the governor looked like a clown and wrote clown into the headline. So, I called him and I said, let me get this straight; you guys are squeamish about letting me call the governor an idiot, but you call him a clown in the headline; what, pray tell, is the difference? Well, that, of course, was a mistake, and the editor who wrote that headline was thumped on the ear or something. It is a fine line, and I am aware of it and try to dance along it. I very often do comment on the behavior of legislators and public officials, and, sometimes, I do make them mad—I know you find that hard to believe—but most of them are still speaking to me. In fact, I cannot think of any current sitting legislator who is not speaking to me at the moment. There have been moments when they got mad enough at me not to speak to me, but not usually.

C: Will they literally not respond to questions or not return phone calls?

M: Rarely. I cannot think of anybody who would fall into that category at the moment.

C: They just snub you if they see you in the hallway?

M: No, I cannot recall that I have had that. I have had a few of them chew me out over the years and not want to respond, but I cannot recall any of them who have ever carried through on that.

C: Do they ever go over your head and call St. Pete?

M: Occasionally, but rarely. At the moment, the legislator most likely to be mad at me at any given moment is probably Jack Latvala, the Majority Leader in the Senate, who has got a hot temper. Last spring, he was returning a call to one of my reporters, and when I answered the phone, I said, oh, while I have you, I have a question for you, and he said, I would rather have an enema than answer a question from you.

C: What did you respond?

M: I said, well, I am not about to give you an enema, but I do have a question. But I have found that, generally, by being frank with them, they appreciate where I am and generally answer my questions, and most of them will tell you that I have been fair to them, that I have bent over backwards to listen to their side of something and to present their side in a story.

C: In 1992, you were recognized in the Kappa Tau Alpha Hall of Fame at the University of South Florida. What did that achievement award mean to you?

M: I do not know much about the history of the award. It is always nice to get any award, when people say, you have been a nice person and you have done good. I liked that, from that standpoint.

C: They had a banquet in your honor, said it was the university's thirteenth annual award to recognize individuals who have made a significant contribution to the mass media in Florida. Do you see yourself as having a leadership role, a responsibility?

M: I think I am looked at by other reporters and by students as having a leadership role, and I am conscious [of that]. I do not know that I feel it any more than I did twenty years ago. I have always felt that a reporter had to set an example, that if I am going to throw rocks at a public official who misbehaves, I need to be behaving. I cannot establish a different standard of behavior for myself, so that I have always expected to be arrested if I broke the law, to have a listed phone number, to meet the criteria that I would expect of a public official. I have always tried to live by a standard that is, if not above reproach, as close there as I could get. From that standpoint, I have always been conscious of the fact that I am out there, and consider that I live in a fishbowl as much as anybody else does. Certainly, the older I get, the more aware I am of that. I now run into competitors who come up and say, oh, you talked to my class when I was a student and now I am an old lady here. Yes, I am aware that people look to me and expect a certain standard, which I hope I adhere to.

C: One of the quotes attributed to you when you received the award at the University of South Florida was, it has been an enormous benefit being a Southern woman dealing with good old boys; when they hear that Hattiesburg accent, they think you do not have a brain in your head. How is that related to how you do your job?

M: I think it is true that part of my success has been that I am a Southern woman, and this was particularly true in the early years in my career; after you win a Pulitzer, it is a little hard to convince people that you do not know what you are doing. When I open my mouth and speak Southern, it is disarming to the average man who has been in control of the world and not expecting women to play much of a role in that. They assume I have no brain when they hear this Southern brogue, until it is too late. Many times, I have had men just walk themselves out on a limb, terribly, and get caught out there lying to me or being dumb, because I am smart enough to catch them doing it. And they just haven't realized it. I would much rather be underestimated than overestimated. I mean, if you go in to interview a guy who has done something bad and you are trying to catch him and get him to admit it, you are much better off if he assumes you incapable of understanding it than if he thinks you are Wily Fox about to get him.

C: Are a lot of your sources uneasy or on edge, just because you are Lucy Morgan and you have the reputation? Are they wary of you?

M: Yes, people are wary of me. People tell me, the worst thing in the world is to come in your office and have a message that Lucy Morgan is looking for you. But I think the people who have a reason to be wary are wary of me, if they have done something they know that I could catch them doing that is wrong. People who have gone about their business in an honest fashion, and have done the best they could, do not worry about me. They understand that I will be fair. One of the things I have tried never to do myself, and I try to keep my staff from doing it, is what I call shooting rubberbands at people. When I write a bad story about a public official, I want to focus on the fact that they have really been bad. If all they have done is stumble, phone home on a cell phone, or do something that technically might be illegal but is not really serious, I try not to pick on them over it. Public officials get shot at from every angle all the time, and I know that. I do not want to be guilty of picking on them for minor offenses. When I shoot at them, I want to load the gun, and I generally have that reputation. For instance, if I catch a public official smoking in a public building, I am probably not going to write about it because it is so minor. Some reporters develop a reputation of, I am going to write about every bad thing you do. Almost everybody does something bad, so they do not have good relations for those people. I am not out to curry favor with them; I am just not going to pick on them for something minor, and I do not waste their time by calling them when something is minor. Generally,

any public official who knows me well knows that when I call, it is serious; they better return the call; there is a reason to call me back. It is odd. I always find it odd that people who I have just done in will still talk to me and will sometimes thank me for being fair. Fred Lippman was a legislator from South Florida whom I caught involved in a sexual harassment scandal; the House had illegally and secretly paid a House employee \$47,000 to disappear and not file suit against him, because of Fred's behavior. Actually, the tip came to me through a lobbyist who had been in a bar and had overheard one legislator to another complaining that the House had to pay a substantial amount of money to keep Fred out of trouble in a sexual harassment case. The way I found it was to go to the public records. I went to the comptroller's office and found money that had been paid to a House employee after she left the payroll. When I tried to pull the voucher on it to find why the money had been paid to her, the comptroller did not have any records of why it was paid to her, just at the order of the Speaker. So I had discovered that and written about it. There had been this huge number of hearings. It had become the *As The World Turns* [soap opera] of the Capitol. I mean, Fred Lippman was a little short Jewish guy, the most unlikely to be accused of sexual harassment in the legislature. But, when it was over, in fact, on the very day that Fred was stripped of all of his power in the House, I ran into him in the back hall of the Speaker's office. Assuming he was going to be quite angry at me, I simply said, hi, Fred, about to brush on past him, and he grabs me and hugs me. This is his response. I cannot understand that. I do not know why, except . . .

C: That is probably what got him in trouble in the first place.

M: Yes. I have always thought that was sort of interesting. But most of the people I have written about, even in the most negative of ways, would still speak to me, in many instances because they know that they have been caught fair-and-square, that I have given them ample opportunity to answer, and that I have been fair in the handling of the story.

C: Do you see that simply as part of being a professional journalist?

M: Yes, I think it is. I think you do have to develop a tough hide. People are going to yell at you when they are caught doing things wrong. Usually, the lower they are in the food chain, the city councilmen will squeal the most, because they are the least experienced at having bad things written about them. I can go into almost any town and tell you whether there is a good newspaper there, because if it is easy to get public records, if public officials are responsive and appear to be candid, odds are there is a pretty good newspaper working there. If you find it very difficult to get at records, if public officials are unresponsive and unwilling to give you records or information, the odds are that no real newspaper is covering that community, even though somebody may think that there is a real newspaper

there. You can go county-by-county all over Florida, which has a reputation for easy access to public records, and you would see that unravel out of any attempt to get records in a courthouse somewhere.

C: I know you travel around the country and talk to professional groups, investigative reporters and editors, the Society for Professional Journalists, the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Is that an important part of your job now, support of press issues?

M: I have always thought it was important to talk to students and to young reporters. One of the things I did last year, I was auctioned off by the Associated Press Managing Editors to go spend a day in somebody's newsroom. They sold me into doing this by telling that the papers that would be bidding on it would be Portland and Seattle and Honolulu, all over the world. The paper that bid the highest and won me for a day was the *Bergen Record* in Hackensack, New Jersey. I flew in one night and left the next night. What I found in that newsroom [was], they had an editor and a managing editor, both women, highly energized, and I found a highly energized staff who wanted to know how to do things. I met with the investigative team for awhile and gave them some suggestions on how to do what they wanted to do, and I had lunch with their Capitol bureau people and some of their statewide reporters. Then, I spent the afternoon talking to a large group of staff and answered questions. I think more and more, we need to do that in journalism today, for a couple of reasons. So many papers cannot afford or will not afford to send reporters who are in the midst of their careers to places where they might listen to other journalists and get additional education, so that the ability to bring somebody in to meet with them and talk to them about real problems and answer their questions is a real benefit that more and more papers ought to take advantage of, because you can, for relatively minor expenses, bring someone in to teach journalism. So I do some of that. I almost always try to talk to student groups that ask, where I can work it in. I just feel that is some of my responsibility. I have become, sort of, the mother hen of the press center here; if anybody has a problem, they usually come down to me to talk about it. That may just be because I am the oldest one in the building. No, I am not the oldest, but I am almost the oldest in the building.

C: What about other jobs? You have got to be a very rare person in this field. You really have only worked for two newspapers in your entire career.

M: And for thirty-two years at the *Times*, which is rather unusual.

C: Have you had opportunities to go to other newspapers?

M: Yes, I have others call me. I have had politicians call and ask me if I would take jobs working for them. I have had universities that tried to hire me. When Betty Castor took over at the University of South Florida, she tried to get me to leave

the *Times* and come to work for her. I have really had no interest in working outside of journalism. I have stayed with the *Times*, in part, because they have tolerated me when I tell them what idiots they are, but also because of the independence of the paper. I am, by nature, a rather independent person, and I think that I would have trouble working for some of the corporations that so limit the ability of the newsrooms to develop the news. I can give you a couple of examples of our horror stories. The *Tampa Tribune* is our chief day-to-day competitor in the Tampa Bay area. It is only one of a dozen or so in Tallahassee. Media General owns them, a firm in Richmond, Virginia. On election day last year, their reporter was in Miami, as were we all, to cover Jeb Bush's winning night. Jeb had called a press conference for the next afternoon at two, the day after the election. There was a hurricane moving across the Gulf, and the morning news on that Wednesday morning was that the airport was likely to be closed in the early evening hours. Most of us were booked back to Tallahassee on a plane that left at seven, a little plane. I immediately flipped to the Delta jet that left at five-thirty. A, I wanted to get out of Miami, and, B, I wanted to do it on a plane big enough not to be rolling around in. So, I ran into the *Tampa Tribune* reporter during the day, and she asked me if I was still going to try to get out at seven on that plane most of us were booked on. I said no, I had flipped to the earlier Delta jet, and she got the number of Delta from me and went on her way. I saw her later and I said, were you able to get a seat on that plane? She said, well, they have seats on the plane, but I have to get permission from Media General in Richmond to change my ticket to do it, and I have not had the time to get ahold of the accounting people. Now, this is a reporter in the middle of the field with a hurricane, and she does not have the authority to change a plane ticket. The cost of the change, by the way, was \$40. I cannot imagine working for a company that was that restrictive on whether you could spend money or what options you could take. I think I would have a lot of trouble there. Those are the kind of horror stories I am hearing out of the chains these days, and it frightens me terribly for the future journalism, because those people who work for them are very disheartened. There is no *esprit de corps*. There is no fun for them in what they are doing. The *Times* has let me pursue stories and things that are fun. I mean, why should I look anywhere else?

C: The *Times* is a very unique newspaper, is it not?

M: It is.

C: The entire organization.

M: It really is, and I do not think you know it until you have worked somewhere else or know a lot about somebody else. I think we have a lot of reporters who came in through our intern system who have never worked for another organization in their lives, and if they do not know a lot of people well who do, I do not think they

understand the difference, the independence. I mean, the *Times* is often branded as being arrogant. Well, I think we are different and, in many ways, we are better, because of our independence. Nobody in Richmond or New York or Chicago or San Jose is dictating what we do in St. Petersburg or Tallahassee. We can make decisions fast, and a lot of our people can make decisions. It is not that everything funnels up to one person who is the only one that can make a decision. And, we are willing to spend money to develop news. I was the only reporter that accompanied the governor to Israel in November. Even I was reluctant to spend that kind of money, but when I told our editor that no other reporters had signed up to go, he felt that we had an obligation to go, not for competitive reasons but that some organization needed to be wherever the governor was, and so we took that obligation and I went. It was an expensive trip, but we have generally done that. None of the others would pay to go. The most hilarious thing was, among those whose reporters tried to get them to send them was Gannett, which has *USA TODAY* and *FLORIDA TODAY* in Brevard County. The biggest news development on that trip was a big new business for Brevard County, aligning a local business with an Israeli business, and they wound up eating our dust and having to pick up the pieces after we got back from Israel and wrote about it. Their bureau chief was among those who had tried to get approval to make the trip, because a lot of the people going on the trip were in the space industry.

C: I think we need to at least get something into the record about this injury that has waylaid you. It may have slowed you down, [but] it certainly has not stopped the way you do your job. Talk about breaking your ankle and what has transpired in the month since that happened. This is a month and two days, right?

M: Even the governor might have guessed I was on a bed of pain when I wrote a column calling him an idiot. It was a stupid fall. During a special session on the death penalty, I went into the Capitol, less than twenty-four hours after I returned from New Orleans covering the Sugar Bowl and the president there. They had just remodeled the House press gallery, and where there used to be one step, there are now two. It is also dark in there, so you cannot see where you are going, unless you are watching closer than I was. I stepped off, thinking I was stepping down one step and found I was in midair. My right foot folded underneath me and shattered itself into about twenty-five pieces. I lay there on the floor with my foot at right angles to my leg. They had to haul me out on a stretcher, by ambulance to the hospital. It is not a good way to leave the Capitol. I do not recommend it. However, the first call I received that night when I was coming out from under the anesthetic from surgery was from the governor and the second one from the House Speaker, so it did catch a good bit of attention in the Capitol. I got almost back to the office and got an infection in the wounds. They put in a bunch of screws and plates. I am now part bionic. I got an infection that hurt worse than the original break, and I have now managed to keep myself

in the hospital ten days and in bed for a month. I have hopes of getting back in the office in another week or so and back to the Capitol shortly thereafter. The main thing it did was derail a trip to Cuba—I was supposed to have left for Cuba two days after I fell—so I did not get to go harass Fidel.

C: Did it frustrate you not to be there when the governor was having this sit-in?

M: No, in a sense, because I was almost there. I had a reporter in the middle of it, and I was directing his operations by cell phone, by his cell phone, my home phone. Up until midnight that night, I was getting calls from the governor's staff begging me to take my reporter out, and I was insisting that he remain. So I felt like I was a part of it, since I was directing the coverage from my bed and, you know, having a good time. I wrote a column about it from my bed and did things like that. As long as I can talk and type and answer the phone, I can do something.

C: So what's here in your bedroom that allows you to do your job?

M: I have my trusty laptop computer and a phone and a line I can pull from the phone and attach into my computer. I have a series of files that I am working on. I am working on a legislative project where I am looking at the conflicts-of-interests that legislators have. So, in the files that surround me, I have a file on each legislator and their various conflicts-of-interest. I have a daily mailbag my husband runs to the office with and picks up the mail for me and leaves stuff I am sending to people. I get the paper brought here daily, and I keep whatever I need in pads and pens to answer the phone. I talk daily to my own staff, to the staff in St. Pete, and to various lobbyists and public officials who call me at home or whom I call for some reason. I have managed to pretty well stay in touch, by telephone. It is not as good as being there. I would much rather be there to see what is going on, but because I have been there so much, it is easy for me to visualize what is going on from my bedside. I hope not to be here much longer. Surely, by session, I will be back, stumbling around the Capitol.

C: How many sessions have you covered now?

M: I came up for partial sessions back in the late 1960s, when I first worked for Ocala. At the time, the leaders of the two houses were from the area I covered, E. C. Rowell from Sumter County, and Nick Connor was president of the Senate from Citrus County. So, I came up from time to time and did profiles on them and on some of the other legislators. Off and on through the 1970s, I came up to do, usually, particular stories or profiles. Then, when I started working for special projects in the 1980s, I came up to do, sometimes, some issues and to interview people throughout the session. So I was familiar with the process and had been in Tallahassee a lot before I took over the bureau in 1986, and I have been here

for every session since then.

C: Can you think of anything that having a journalism degree or a bachelor's or master's degree in something or a law degree would have added to your capability doing this job?

M: I am sure it would have made me better educated. Most of my education has come from the two-year degree and the reading I have done, probably far above that, but I would have liked to have had it. I think that it gives you credibility that you do not have without it. I guess I have a Pulitzer instead of a degree. That gives me some credibility. But I think a basic education is now a requirement. I probably could not get a job at the *St. Petersburg Times* with my basic credentials now. The competition for jobs, for good jobs, is so high that I think you have to have that basic degree to have the credibility to go beyond it.

C: You seem to have come from a family of strong women.

M: Yes. In fact, my mother was one of two children, and her father died when she was three and my aunt was a year and a half. My grandmother was notified of his death when they brought the body to the doorstep and laid it down and said, Ms. Sanders, your husband George died in a train wreck today. She raised two daughters, both of whom were very strong women. My mother died in 1994, after years of strokes and other physical problems. I have a ninety-four-year-old aunt who lives on and who is in better shape than I am at the moment. But, yes, very strong women who believed deeply in education. My grandmother was a college professor, and my mother was dean of women at a college at one time. All of the women in my family--in fact, I am the only uneducated one. My sister has a Ph.D from Harvard.

C: And she is a psychologist?

M: Yes. She has now just retired this year, but she is twelve years older than I am. She is seventy-one, I guess, now, and she has just retired, lives in Kansas as a clinical psychologist. She was at the Menninger Foundation for years practicing and in private practice out there.

C: Are you going to retire?

M: When I am sixty-five, yes.

C: How far away are you?

M: Five and a half years from it. I am fifty-nine now. I am going to retire and not work a regular full-time job, which is not to say I might not write something or do

something. But I have a lot of other interests. I plan to live part of the summers in North Carolina, at a place we have there, and part in Tallahassee, as long as our health holds out to do as much of that as we can. I might write. I have thought about doing something more formal in the way of talking to newsrooms and reporters, maybe do something for the Poynter Institute, but do something to help the journalism industry. I do not expect to go to work in somebody's public relations job. Somehow, I do not think I would work out. I do not say, yes sir, good enough to be anybody's flak, so I doubt that I will do anything like that.

C: Has it been helpful to have an understanding spouse who understands this business, as a colleague from the business?

M: Yes, I think there is an immense amount of help in it. Like most high-pressured careers, there is a lot of divorce in the newspaper business, and I think it is very important to have a spouse who came out of the business, who understands that when the phone rings at three a.m. with a major news story, you have to go at three a.m.; you cannot wait until nine o'clock in the morning for that news story to develop, that you have to go. You have to get to have a good stable private life to be able to do the kind of work that I do. If you do not and you cannot lay it aside, you are always in trouble at work. So, having an understanding spouse becomes the essential element. My husband is ten years older than I am. I thought that when he retired, I would have trouble, that he would not be as understanding of a wife who shows up at nine o'clock some nights, seven o'clock other nights, and ten o'clock some other nights, but he has been great about understanding it and finding something to do. He sometimes wonders when he had time to work now because he has so many other things to do. But, yes, I think it is a big element. I do not think necessarily that you have to be so incestuous as to have every journalist marry another journalist to be successful, but I think whatever your spouse does, if you are married, it ought to be something that is as consuming as this. If he is a lawyer, he ought to be really engaged in the practice of law, or a doctor or whatever, and he needs to understand the immediacy of the news profession, in the same way that a policeman's spouse has to understand that when there is a crime committed and they are there, they have to go, or if there is somebody ill and you are a doctor, you have to go deal with it. In journalism, it is the same. If somebody shoots the governor in the middle of the night, I have to get up and go deal with it.

C: Let's close with the Chiles story, because I thought that was a very impressive story for you to cover, with the sudden death. At the time it happened, people seemed to have forgotten about the earlier illnesses of Lawton Chiles, and it just struck people so suddenly.

M: Yes. He died two weeks before he was to leave office. People had sort of assumed he was going to fade off into history, and all of sudden he died as a

sitting governor. It was a Saturday afternoon, and the first day of my vacation, first and last. He died at the mansion. His death was not discovered until about four in the afternoon, although he had died earlier in the day. I got a call right about the time that the body was discovered, from a source who told me he was dead, and I went to the mansion directly. I got the other staff I had out and working. Fortunately, we had in-house a piece that was almost finished that our political editor was doing, summarizing his years in office, which we were able to quickly convert over into a day-after-death piece. I wrote a column about it, and we had a news story about it. I think we were the only ones that [understood] that he had to have been dead all day. First of all, knowing anybody's habits, this was not a man who exercised in the middle of the afternoon. That is a morning thing, and when they told us that he died on the exercise bike, I was pretty sure that it had not just happened, and no one would answer my questions about how long he had been dead. The fact that nobody would answer it added to my speculation. On that night at about ten o'clock, I was able to get Dexter Douglas, his old friend and general counsel, to confirm that he had been dead at least since early morning. But we got a lot into that first-day coverage out of it, and a lot of it was working the same sources we had been working all along with the administration. It was an interesting end. I think Lawton Chiles went out in the way he would have wanted to, as governor with a lot of fanfare around it.

C: What have we not talked about that is of interest about Lucy Morgan?

M: It may be clear, but I think that reporting becomes a highly personalized thing, whether you want it to or not. There are lots of people in the Capitol who will tell their secrets to me but not to my staff. So I think reporters most of all need to be nice to people, need to develop that line of contact so people feel free to talk to them. If I fail to teach that to people I speak to, I have failed at everything. I do not think there is any need for the arrogance I see among some reporters and journalists, who come into a situation almost saying, I am important; I am the journalist here; you need to tell me what I know. I think we need to be nice to people, respectful of them, and ask them for information rather than demand it. Only in that way can we be successful in getting to the bottom of what we are doing and finding all the information. Nothing turns off the average person who possesses information like the arrogance of a reporter who comes in demanding something. So I would urge an end to the arrogance I see among many reporters out there who think that is the way to go about getting news.

[End of the interview.]