

FNP 65

Interviewee: Margo Pope

Interviewer: Jean Chance

Date: November 2, 2002

C: This is Saturday, November 11, 2002, in Margo Pope's office; in this wonderful *St. Augustine Record's* building that is very, very shiny and new. She is all decked out in her Florida Gators, orange shirt, which probably has something to do with tonight's fateful game between the University of Florida Gators and the Georgia Bulldogs. We're going to focus in this part of the interview, Margo, on the *Alligator* [newspaper] years. This is a two-part interview for the oral history project at the University of Florida, as you know. The *Alligator* is very interested in developing an oral history project of its own. So, we were linking the two. So, this first portion of the interview this morning is going to focus on the *Alligator* years. But really for you, [we will] go pre-University of Florida [years]. So, we're going to kind of go back in time. But let's begin with the basics. Full-name, please spell [it] correctly so that we will try to get things right.

P: Margo Barton Pope. [My] maiden name was Cox.

C: I am Jean Chance and, for the record, have known Margo for many years. I'm really pleased to have the honor to do this interview. I am looking at a certificate, Margo, that goes back to 1964. It is from the Sixth Annual High School of Journalism institute at the University of Florida. I gather that as a high school student, you had your eyes on the University of Florida. Is that correct? Tell us about that a little.

P: I decided to go to the University of Florida, Jean, when I was twelve years old and saw my first Florida football game. My father, J. Edward "Red" Cox, was a coach [and a] former Florida State league, baseball player. At the time I was growing up, [he] was the superintendent of the St. Augustine Recreation Department. Which also covered St. John's county under an inter-local agreement. He did that for thirty-nine years. So, sports were also one of our focuses—and particularly football, having a brother who wanted to play football. So, I saw a lot of sports from all angles, including football games. My dad knew Ray Graves [head football coach, University of Florida, 1961-1969], and I can remember going to a football game when I was twelve [years old].

C: Was this in Gainesville?

P: This was in Gainesville, old Florida Field. We drove around the campus ahead of time. That was back when you could drive all over the campus. We got a football program and a pom-pom and all the doings, and that was the beginning of the connection with the University of Florida, and I always told people that's where I was going.

C: Where did your dad go to school?

P: My dad went to school at Dean College in Massachusetts.

C: So, he was not a [Florida] Gator?

P: He was not a Gator.

C: By birth.

P: He and my mother are natives of East Hartford, Connecticut. Her name is Angela Mallion Cox. They came here after the war in 1946. Actually daddy came first. He had been stationed at Chatham Field in Savannah [Georgia]. He was in pilot training, but because of high blood pressure, he was knocked out of pilot training with the Army Air Corps, which was a great distress to him. He met Hiram **Favor** who was then clerk of the court in St. Augustine [Florida]. Hiram found out about his athletic ability and got him on the air force baseball team. The recreational league that traveled around from [military] post to post, or base to base. And so, he stayed at Chatham, outside of Savannah. Then, Hiram connected him with the St. Augustine Saints, and that's how he got to St. Augustine. Three months later, my mother, who had been with American Red Cross overseas during the war, came to St. Augustine. They were married in the cathedral on May 4, 1946, and I was born on February 23, 1947. So, I am a real native.

C: What about your high school journalism experience in St. Augustine.

P: Well, it really started when I was eight years old. I was in Bluebirds and I was the scribe. That's what they called it. I wrote the weekly Bluebirds' report and it was [called] the *Wetomachick Bluebirds*.

C: An Indian [name and then the] Bluebird name.

P: Right, and somewhere I still have that clipping.

C: Now, doesn't your mother have some roots in journalism that have influenced you?

P: Oh, she does.

C: In addition to the Bluebirds.

P: Right, she was a freelance writer and when she came to St. Augustine, she met Ms. Nina Hawkins. Ms. Hawkins was the legendary editor of the *Record* for

twenty years. She was the first woman chosen as an editor who didn't come to her job because she was the daughter or spouse of a newspaper owner. So, she connected with my mother and she hired her to do what then would have been called freelance articles. Then, through those *Record* connections, [she met] Bruce **Manning** at the *Florida Times-Union* [who] was then the editor of the society section [of the newspaper] You know, that was back when men ran everything. So, Bruce hired her to be the St. Augustine correspondent for the society section. So, every week she had a column on St. Augustine. She did that for, I think, about seven years. Every now and then, people find her stuff at the historical society and call her to pick her brain, which she loves even at eighty-three [years old]. That's how I started, because I can remember my mother typing in the middle of the night and then picking us up right after school, we got out at 2:30 [p.m.]. And then driving us to Jacksonville to the old *Times-Union* building on Adams [Street]. Then, if she couldn't find a parking place, my brother or myself would run the story in. When we couldn't go, she'd just take my sister, who was still a toddler, and drive up to Jacksonville. I commuted for eighteen years back and forth after the modern interstate went in. I can't imagine how she did it, but she did it. That was also when they used the Greyhound bus and we had a bus every hour. So, if she couldn't get up there, she'd put it on the bus and somebody from the *Times-Union* would run down to the station three blocks away and carry her column in.

C: Do you have any idea what she got paid to do that?

P: No. I'm sorry I don't know, because I'm sure it wasn't a lot but for then [it was a lot].

C: Because I was wondering if that wasn't during the period where stringers were literally paid by the inch for their string, their copy.

P: She probably was.

C: And it was something like ten cents an inch. I was wondering, in relation to what it costs for the gas to drive up there . . . .

P: Well, she put it on the bus because there were no fax machines. I know she got a check once a month. So, that was my link. Then, my father, as recreation director, used to write all his own press releases. And the *Record* let him have a desk and a typewriter in the old *Record* building on Cordova Street. He'd go in at the crack of dawn, because it was an afternoon paper, the editors where always there by five. Daddy would go in and he would write news for the recreation department. Then, I started going with him. I'd go with him some mornings and then I'd walk over to St. Jo's [St. Joseph's Academy]. So, I got to know everybody there. This was when I was actually in grade school and then in high

school. Actually, it was the start of my freshman year of high school that we had a Catholic Youth Organization [CYO] formed. The pastor wanted notices in the paper. So, I volunteered and the *Record* decided [that] I could have a weekly CYO news column. The first byline was July 14, 1961. And of course July 14, little did I know, that my mentor at the University of Florida, that was his birthday, Buddy Davis's. I didn't find that out until after I graduated, and somehow found out what his birthday was. So, I always thought there was a link there somewhere.

C: The Fates [mythological Greek gods that determine human destiny]. The Fates knew.

P: He didn't know it. Now, my parents recognized that I had this interest. So, when I was twelve, for my birthday, I got a Smith Corona. It was a portable typewriter. It had been reconditioned. My dad bought it from Standard Printing and that was my birthday present. I thought that was the greatest thing in the world. At the *Record*, my dad told Tom King, who was the managing editor, and he gave daddy a stack of copy paper for me. So, I was doing all this before I wrote this C.Y.O. column. Well, the day I went in and they said, yes, we want you to do this but we're not going to pay you, but you know you'll get your name in the paper. That was exciting when you're fourteen and just starting out in high school. They said, now, do you have a typewriter, and I said, oh, yes, I still have that Smith Corona daddy gave me. The defining moment in this career is when Tom King went to the closet and brought out a stack of copy paper.

C: You were a professional.

P: Yes and [he] put in a big manilla envelope and said, you're to type this, double-space [it], make sure names are spelled right, watch your grammar and turn it in on this paper. And when you run out, we'll give you more. And so I just thought I was the greatest thing in the world. Now I had what journalists worked with, real copy paper. So, that was 1961. Then by the fall of 1961, the editor decided that if I could, I should do a column on the school, "S.J.A. [St. Joseph's Academy] Highlights." And they sent me down to a professional photographer to have my picture taken. It ran for four years, I wrote more than 100 of these. I never missed a week.

C: Do you have copies of all the columns you wrote?

P: I do.

C: We're looking at a lot of clippings and scrap books and photos. This is a collector's/historian's treasure chest on top of Margo's desk right now [laughing]. So, get us to the first day you come to the University of Florida.

- P: It's August of 1965 and I'm there for orientation. They have us all outside over near, I think it was around by Walker Hall, because then they were taking us into Walker Hall for a big presentation. But we're all gathered out there, and we're all in groups. You had been assigned a certain group. I always thought it was alphabetical, but when I went to the *Times-Union*, I met a guy that was in my group and that kind of confirmed it because I was Cox and he was Cranford and he remembered that we had been in this group. So, they gave you the basics. Well, I can remember writing it all down and taking all the handouts that were given out, but my only interest was, I have got to find the *Alligator* office. I have got to find where the *Alligator* is [located]. I do remember this shy voice of mine said, where is the *Alligator* office? They said they would show us that on a tour and they would take us over to the [student] union. By the time I came to the University of Florida, in high school I was not only writing two columns a week, I worked whenever I wasn't in school at the *Record* doing proofing, pulling the exchange papers and sorting them out. I had done that for a year before. I also worked during the summers. So, I was there during the summer of 1964, which we can talk about later, the big civil rights movement.
- P: Yes, excellent.
- C: I also covered high school sports for the *Times-Union* and you asked about what you got paid. Well, I got paid \$5 a story. The way it worked was, you covered the game and at the end of game you called collect. And I can remember the operator would say, *Florida Times-Union? Are you paid?* If you said no, that meant it was a collect call. So then you would say no and she would say, who's calling, and so you'd tell her [your name]. And she would put you into the sports department and you'd dictate. There are many phone booths in north Florida that are still there today that were my branch offices and I was so distraught when the one in St. Augustine that I used to call from **Russell's** Barbeque, when the building was torn down and the property was redone for other things, the phone booth went away and I didn't think fast enough to buy that phone booth. Because I don't know how many stories I called in from a phone booth. But that was the way you operated and you learned to be a stringer. And the *Times-Union* didn't forget me either, because during college Mr. Bob Price who was the prep editor, called my father and said, get ahold of Margo. They wanted me to cover district basketball because of the playoff structure in basketball at the time.
- C: There were really not a lot of women who covered sports.
- P: Oh, no, there weren't a lot. Mr. Price knew me from a recommendation from the *Record*. He'd never met me, he just talked to me on the phone. I had a great time. I would go to these districts and I wasn't even covering St. Jo[seph's] at

that time. Even in college, I was covering district basketball. You never got a byline, but you got your report and you got paid. By that time, they were paying me \$20 a story. The *Alligator* was paying \$5 a week because I eventually got to the *Alligator*. During the orientation, there was an open house night, and orientation was like a week. So, I just found my own [way there]. Because when we went to the Florida Union to see the old Union building, there was no sign stating, here's the *Alligator* office, but I did remember seeing it on the board. It was kind of strange because it wasn't on the first floor, it was down in that basement. So, I went down there on my own and I met Steve **Vaughn**. And I told him that I wanted to work for the *Alligator*.

C: What was his position?

P: Steve was one of the editors. I believe Steve was the editor or the executive editor that semester. I would have to really go back and look. He said, well, what can you write? And so I told him that I could write something about St. Augustine because it was the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city. I had already done all the stuff that the *Record* was running on the history for the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, which was September 8, 1965. But I was in Gainesville by then. So, he said, okay. So I wrote a little story. No, it is not among my stuff here today, but it's in a scrap book somewhere. I wrote about that and the *Alligator* published it.

C: So, that was your first *Alligator* byline?

P: That was my first *Alligator* byline.

C: As a freshman.

P: Yes, in September 1965. Then I went back and they kind of gave me things to do. But somehow I wasn't getting too much attention. You know [what] being a freshman [is like], and they had all these important people around . . . .

C: Who were some of the names?

P: Well, Bob Menaker was the sports editor and that's where I met **Evette Cardozo**. Now, whether **Evette** was still on staff or had graduated, I was not sure.

C: Was she writing or doing photography or both?

P: She was writing. I met **Benny Casen**.

C: He was doing sports?

P: He was doing sports. Was he doing editorials by then? He sat in a different office from Menaker. The way the thing was laid out, it was it was a long narrow room. It was a bank of rooms because it had multiple doors.

C: Now, all the student publications at that time were sort of grouped together in a basement.

P: Right, and it was a lot of fun when it rained because then you went to the stacks. It would not surprise me if someone said, you know we don't have many from that era, well, I'm not surprised because you went to the stacks when it rained and you covered the floor with *Alligators*.

C: As in the newspaper.

P: As in the newspaper, because [of] those windows, the rain would just pour in. That was a lot of fun. It was exciting. I wrote police reports, but I don't remember getting too many bylines.

C: Now, the *Alligator* at that time was not five days a week as it is today. Is that correct?

P: No, no, it was, it was. It was the fall of 1965 when we were daily. I think we were a daily. I should have checked that out. Anyway, we were writing on daily deadlines. I wrote police reports and things like that.

C: Do you remember the format? Was it broadsheet or tabloid size.

P: It was a tabloid but it was large. It was that tabloid size that we don't see anymore. It was a little larger.

C: Who printed the *Alligator* that year?

P: It was not printed in Gainesville. It was printed somewhere else. I want to say Ocala, but I think that might have been from when it over in the new [student] union. But it seems like it was in Ocala.

C: Did you have daily deadlines?

P: Daily deadlines. And I must admit that I was more at home there than I was over in the journalism school.

C: Were you taking courses then as a freshman?

P: I took 118 which was the "Survey of Mass Communications." Jack Detweiler was my instructor and Buddy Davis was on TV. That's when I met Buddy Davis, through TV. That was the only class, but I was always finding reasons to go over there into that old library.

C: The journalism program at that time was in the stadium.

P: In the stadium. My mother has a picture of me standing in front of the sign out by the entrance. It's hard to find it now, you know where it is in the general area, but you still can't visualize it because of all the construction. We were up on that fourth floor and all the rooms were angled because the seats were right there and the plumbing was always messed up. But it was kind of a fun place.

C: How many students were in the [journalism] school. Do you recall?

P: A couple hundred, maybe.

C: More males than females?

P: Oh, yes. In that time period, there were still more men than women. I mean that survey class was more men than women.

C: What about at the *Alligator*?

P: At the *Alligator* it was more men than women. They needed a tennis writer my second semester. For some reason, right after the semester started I hadn't been over to the *Alligator*. I think it was because I was trying to keep my grades up, trying to do what I supposed to be doing, which was going to college and get a degree. So, I got this knock on the door in my dorm room in Jennings Hall and this woman who was a friend of Menaker's said, they need a tennis writer. Are you interested? Do you know anything about tennis. And I said, oh, yes, I play tennis. So, I went back over there and they hired me. And I covered the University of Florida tennis team for the rest of my freshman year. Spring sports 1966, I instinctively did things like kept scores for the games and all that kind of stuff.

C: So, your early training in Bluebirds at age 8 really helped you become a good record-keeper.

P: And then [at] the *Times Union* stringing sports taught me how to do this stuff on deadline.

C: When you were at the *Alligator*, was there a staff of what we would call career staff, separate from the students such as advertising or circulation, an executive

- director? Do you remember who those folks were?
- P: You know, my freshman year, I never saw any of those people. You know, I'd come at 3:30 in the afternoon and I would leave at 7:30 or 8 at night. Sometimes I stayed later, but that was pretty much the tone. That would be like, I'd show up Monday nights and I didn't go in on Fridays.
- C: What about weekends? Would you go weekends?
- P: I didn't go in on weekends. I don't know why, except that I think I probably didn't really have to be there, so I didn't want to get in the way. Because that place was crowded. You know it was a traffic jam all the time. You were sharing phones, typewriters, [and] desks. Because it was just that long narrow area. I would love to go back to now, what is it, Dauer Hall, and find that location and take some pictures. I'm sure it's storage now or something else. If it's anything. But it was home and it was a great place. I can remember hearing some of the long discussions over the phone that Benny [**Casen**] and Steve [Vaughn] would be having with the university staff.
- C: Were there conflicts that you can recall between the *Alligator* editors over particular stories, say with the administration. Was there friction?
- P: I can't pinpoint them, but I can remember arguments and discussions. The student government people were on the first floor or the second floor, and they would come down and there would be some long discussions. They were always at the other end, because they were down in the rooms where the editors were and we were in the other section.
- C: The newsroom was separate.
- P: The newsroom was kind of separate just because of the structure. But I do remember some discussions. I remember, and I probably shouldn't say this but I will, I remember deciding then that I was always going to be at the *Alligator*. I was never going to get involved in student government, except as a reporter. The whole idea of the power of the press and, you know, the freedom of access [appealed to me]. Of course, I was there in 1966. We were pre-Sunshine [law] then. Of course, Blue Key was very important on campus. I do remember that I was at the old College Inn and I was standing in line and a group from the *Alligator* came in and it was a photographer named **Evette** . . . .
- C: That would be **Evette Cardozo**.
- P: And two other people. It was the same night of the later Florida Blue Key incident and they asked me if I wanted to go.

- C: That incident really had to do with a tapping session, the *Alligator* deciding they were going to expose this secret society.
- P: They were going out there and they knew where it was taking place, and the only reason I didn't go was because I had called my house before I went to the C.I. [College Inn] with my roommate and [found out] my poodle Gidget was having puppies. She had already delivered one and they knew there were at least three more .
- C: You were not living in the dorms at this time.
- P: Yes, I was. I was in Jennings Hall.
- C: In keeping with university policy, were you allowed to animals in the dorm.
- P: Oh, no, my dog was at home.
- C: Oh, okay.
- P: So, I was staying by the phone. And you know the phones were at the end of the hall and so we ran over there to get something to eat and then we were going to go back. That's the only reason I didn't go. And of course, that Sunday night I did go into the *Alligator* and there was great consternation over this thing that had happened. That was kind of what I remember of it. I don't remember all the details.
- C: But you were aware that there was some form of inherent conflict between the *Alligator* as an institution at the university and Florida Blue Key as an institution.
- P: Yes. I do not think *Alligator* people were considered their friends, just like student government. Student government didn't look at us as their friends unless they wanted something in the paper.
- C: So, subsequently to that incident, were you aware as a staff member of the political conflict that went on within the university? That went all the way up, I guess at that time, to the Board of Regents or the Board of Control that got **Benny Casen** removed from the editorship of the paper.
- P: In fact, I came in and there was a great discussion that Benny was gone shortly after this. That's when I first learned about the Board of Regents, that's when I learned about Broward **Culpepper**. And his son was SGA [Student Government Association] president that year. His son, or SGA under him, initiated those straw hats with the orange and blue bands. I still have my straw hat. I'll probably wear it tonight. I mean, I have to keep repairing it, but I remember I

paid \$5 for it and it was a spirit hat. You wore it on game day and you wore it everywhere. You wore it to games and everything. I still get it out and wear it even though it's getting banged up. I haven't worn it to a Florida game this year, but I will to the homecoming game. But that is what I remembered of that time period.

C: At that time, there was a Board of Student Publications. Who was on that board, including a presidentially appointed chairman that usually was from the journalism college faculty.

P: See as a freshman, I wasn't involved in that part of it.

C: I just wondered how involved was the Board in the **Benny Casen** removal.

P: Oh, I think they were very involved, because there were meetings. I remember seeing people coming into the *Alligator* that night after this happened. [People] that I didn't know that were connected with the university. There were these meetings being held at the other end of the hall and you would get little snippets [of conversation]. At one point, I think Menaker was running the whole show. I remember trying to get his attention because the tennis team was getting ready to go to, I guess it was, their SEC [Southeastern Conference] tournament.

C: Now, did you get to travel?

P: No, I didn't. They were going on a road trip. It must have been this road trip to Atlanta, maybe. There were two games in Georgia. I did them by phone. Coach Bill Potter was the coach and coach **N. B. Chafin** was the assistant coach. And coach **Chafin** called me with the results.

C: Were these all men's teams? Was there a women's tennis team at that time?

P: I'm sure there was, but I was covering only the men. I covered the freshman men with **Armstead Neeley** and **Steve Beelind** who is now with the university. He was on that team [as was] **Jamie Presley** who is now a lawyer. I covered the freshmen, but I also covered the varsity [team], which included Steve Gardner, Rick Chase, and they were quite a force to be reckoned with. They were a great team. **Bill Perrin** was on that team. And then on the freshman team, **Armie Neeley** was the champion because he had been the 1965 national junior indoor champion when they recruited him to Florida. And **Jamie Presley** had been also recruited and they were both in my class, in my year. He was a finalist in the Orange Bowl junior tennis championships. So, that was big deal to get to the finals of that, because that was an international competition.

C: So, would you also string for other papers and maybe do some hometown stories for other papers besides Jacksonville?

P: I didn't, but I did [provide information for news wire services] like AP [Associated Press, which] called a couple of times and I was told to call them with the tennis information.

C: So, was that your first evolution into working with the wire service?

P: Oh, no, that happened in St. Augustine, the summer of 1964. I have a copy of the first check I ever got from AP, from the Associated Press, it was for \$3. It was a story, in August of 1964, on the city forming a biracial committee. I had been sent down to the city hall, which was down where the Columbia Restaurant now is in St. Augustine, to get the information. I came back and wrote up a short story and the Associate Press, Jacksonville Office, F.T. "**Fred**" **McFeely**, called on a Saturday afternoon and asked me to give him my information. Then he asked me for my social security number and my home address. So, I got this check in the mail from Associated Press for \$3. I don't know what I spent it on, but my father very wisely made a copy of it on an old copier machine. They didn't even call them Xeroxes. So, then I just progressed into wire [service material]. I did some stuff periodically. The wires would call and they'd just call me and ask me questions. They'd say, we understand something happened. What can you tell us? They would call the *Alligator* office and if I was there, phone calls would get switched to me. I remember a fatality involving two students and a traffic accident on old [Highway] 90 coming back from FSU. I had just gotten all the information from the highway patrol and Associate Press called.

C: So you were doing general assignment [work], it wasn't just sports for the *Alligator*.

P: It wasn't just sports, but I was committed, like I knew that every match, I had to be there. One time I wore a green dress, a lime green dress, it was back when all those citrus colors were in vogue. I wore a green dress and orange sunglasses. It distracted one of the players to the point that Coach Potter came over at the intermission and said to hurry, to move. [laughing] Apparently the player caught that and it was distracting to him. It was kind of the green on your shirt; the green on your alligator. So, that was kind of fun. It wasn't like, don't ever wear this again, but it was like, could you move?

C: To somewhere else.

P: Yes, because I moved and we won. And I remember going up afterwards and saying something [like], you know, I didn't realize this was going to be such a distraction. The greatest thing about being on the *Alligator* was that you were an

insider. You suddenly became an insider to everything. You were this grand viewpoint, which is what a journalist is. You could go out there. I could walk up to these superstars on the tennis team and talk to them. And they knew that telling me things was how their story was going to get out. Menaker wasn't sitting there, so they were kind of stuck with Margo Cox. But they were nice to me and I'd get good quotes. When they lost, they didn't want to talk to me. I can remember running behind them, because you know it was the old tennis field. I guess it's now where the law school is. That's where it was. They would head back to the field house, and of course I'd be running behind them saying, what happened here?

C: What about evolving out into the *Alligator* say your sophomore, junior, into your senior year? What changed?

P: Okay, I was not here as a sophomore. Sometime early in my second semester, my mother, they found breast lumps. You know, back then there wasn't all this mammogram stuff. You had a biopsy and you were in hospital for five days after it. I started to lose focus. In fact, I spent more time at the *Alligator*, because people over there I bonded with [more] than in my general education classes in Little Hall. So, Margo was bumping up on probation pretty quickly. My father decided that rather than let me come back, that I was going to the junior college in Palatka. Of course, that didn't deter me from my career, because I jumped right in over there and started covering things. And I was still doing my *Times-Union* sports stuff and still telling Mr. Price, tell them I'm coming to work there when I graduate. Things like that. So I kept that focus up.

C: Did you stay in touch with people in Gainesville?

P: I had two people that I knew as freshman that I stayed in touch with. And of course, I stayed in touch with these freshman tennis players: Armie and Jamie.

C: Where there people at the *Alligator* that you kept in touch with?

P: No, because at that time there was one other freshman. The ones that I stuck with the most, were the ones who were departing, the seniors.

C: The Steve Vaughns and Menaker and Benny **Casen**.

P: Yes, Steve and Benny and Menaker and **Evette**. So those were the people that I kind of knew. Of course, then **Evette** goes on to this big career and I start seeing her in magazines and everything, you know, in writing. And Vaughn was at the *Orlando Sentinel*. So, when I got back my father said, you're just going to finish at St. John's [Junior College] and I'm glad I did because then I had that AA

[Associate of Arts] degree. I was able to get in. Of course, I did have to apply to College of Journalism, and I did have to go over there and meet with Dean John Paul Jones. Most of the conversation was not so much about my ability to do the work. It was about the *St. Augustine Record*, about the Tebault family that owned the paper at the time, about Miss **Nina Hawkins**. The University of Florida journalism program used to send students to the *Record*. You know this connection with the *Record* goes back to the 1930s because John Paul Jones told me about it. So, I knew I wasn't going to have any trouble getting in and then, you know, I got a letter saying that I had been accepted. And then I pretty much fit right in. And of course, the second day on campus, after I got settled in my apartment down at Colonial Manor down on southwest Second Avenue. If you head from Tigert [Hall], that first block, heading east, that four story brick, we were in the corner on the second floor. I still go by there periodically and just stand and look up, and I know someone thinks, what are you up to, young woman. So, I went over there and I met Harold Aldrich, Dave **Reddick**, Dave **Osher**, and Dave **Doucette**.

C: What year was this?

P: This was fall of 1968 and [I met] Helen **Huntley**. And it was like, I want to be part of this group. Carol Sanger was there.

C: Who was the editor?

P: Harold Aldrich. Oh, Raul Ramirez was there. It's a bunch of the people that I still know today. Of course, Harold is deceased, but it's people that I'm still connected with today.

C: And most of them are professionally still in some form of journalism?

P: Oh, yes. And that's also when I met Skip Perez. It was like, that first week that I was back on campus, I met all these people that I email with regularly, I'm on the phone with, I'm on the journalism advisory council with. It's like we never lost touch from that point forward.

C: Do you think that's one of the strengths of the *Alligator* or any student newspaper for example? Professionally, there is this networking that extends.

P: I think, working for a student newspaper is what you make of it. Before I went to Gainesville, my freshman year, I talked to two students that were going into their junior year. Both of them were from St. Augustine. And all the nuns at St. Jo [said], the last place you want to be is the University of Florida. It's too big. Our graduating class was forty-eight. I've always told this to others, being at the

University of Florida is what you personally make of it. I always wanted to go to the University of Florida, I always wanted to be a journalist. My mother said she never knew what they were going to do if I had never gotten accepted there, because I applied to one university, the University of Florida. That was the only school that I applied to. I remember the day the admissions acceptance letter came. My parents opened the mail. My dad came down to St. Joe and we were between classes. I'm on the third floor outside my English class and he yells up. Somebody says, your father's downstairs and he's calling for you. And he's waving the letter, and I knew exactly what it was. It was March 17, 1965, because we were getting ready to do a presentation on Irish poets.

C: Great day.

P: And we were all dressed in green and I went downstairs and got my letter, came running upstairs, found my [guidance] counselor, told her, and I don't remember much else that happened. All I remember doing was, I kept opening that envelope, and that's somewhere in my other scrapbook, and reading those two lines, that I had been accepted. So, being on the *Alligator* was an extension of all that. What you will make of the University of Florida is what *you* make of it.

C: So, when you went back . . . .

P: That was the fall of 1968.

C: Did you feel a sense that you now had a window of two years at the *Alligator* that you needed to make the most of?

P: Oh, yes.

C: So, what were your . . .

[End of side A1]

P: President Stephen O'Connell.

C: I would call him because I would be there at night and we'd hear something. This was during the period when . . . . One of them I remember was when the judge Elizabeth **Kavocovitch**. What was she? Was she on the Board of Regents at the time? Yes, and then she went on to be a judge.

C: She didn't think men and women living in the same dormitory at a state university campus was a good idea. Do you remember the term that she used?

P: "Taxpayers' warehouses."

C: Okay.

P: And so, I remember there was some discussion on that. And I can remember calling President O'Connell on some of that. I can remember calling him one night, in my senior year, when we had heard somebody was leaving from the medical school, a key medical school person. I wrote that story. We had heard it as a rumor, and I remember saying to him, I'm calling to confirm this rumor, and he said, Margo, you can't confirm a rumor. But to his credit, you could call the president's house and he answered the phone. And he always answered the phone for the *Alligator*, whether he liked us or not. I was never in any of those meetings where the *Alligator* [staff] went in and sat in his office. You know, like little sit-ins, because I was always in class when those were going on. But I can remember sitting outside his office in Tigert [Hall], waiting for him to come out because his secretary said, well, he's very busy, but if you wait right here, he'll talk to you when he comes out. And I remember him talking to me. I did get to cover the Board of Regents while I was on the *Alligator* staff.

C: Who were the members that you remember?

P: Chester Ferguson, J. J. Daniel, and Elizabeth **Pierce** and it seems like **Burke Kibler** was on the Regents then, too. When I went to the *Times Union*, by the time I had been there in 1972, I was promoted to education writer. And I started covering the Board of Regents and Chester and Mr. Daniel, Mr. [Marshall] Criser, and Mrs. **Pierce, Burke Kibler**, [and] Fred Parker from FSU [Florida State University] were on the Board of Regents. Mr. Hopkins from Pensacola, who owned a big construction company, road construction, I think, [was a member of the Board].

C: Do you remember any conflicts at the time that the *Alligator* had with the Board itself?

P: No, this was pre- [before] the independence issue. But when they came to campus, they were always complaining about the *Alligator*.

C: For what reasons?

P: Just the stories. I always thought of us as independent, even while we were on campus because we would be sitting there at night doing stories, and the editors would be writing the headlines, and there wasn't anyone standing over us. Now, Ed was there.

C: Ed Barber?

P: Ed Barber was there and he was a full-time person [employee]. But Ed was

more like one of us. So it wasn't like Mr. **Miking**. And I knew Mr. **Miking**, Brent **Miking**, who was head [of the *Alligator*]. This was in the new Reitz Union on the third floor. So, we were still on campus, but they were in the new Reitz Union on the third floor. And I remember seeing Mr. **Miking** two or three times in that whole two-year period actually in the newsroom. I don't remember seeing a lot of it there. I can tell you, you know there was a big controversy over the editor, whether we could have a woman editor. And that involved **Karen Ing**.

C: Right.

P: And I remember that controversy. I remember **Carol Sanger** saying to me, we're all going to apply to be editor, all of us, all the women on staff are going to apply.

C: What year was this?

P: This must have been my junior year, so it must have been 1968-1969, because I graduated in June of 1970.

C: What was the issue about a woman editor as you recall?

P: I think there was just this general concern about whether or not, you know you never could pin them down, but I think there was just this general concern about whether or not . . . .

C: Was there still a curfew rule at that time?

P: Oh, no.

C: Were there issues about whether women on the staff could work as late as the men on the staff.

P: I don't remember because I was in an apartment by then and I remember a lot of times not leaving the *Alligator* before 11:30 at night, even though the paper was already on its way to Ocala. Or getting ready to [leave for Ocala]. And I was a night owl anyway. If I walked out of there and heard a fire truck, I would follow the fire truck. I mean we couldn't do anything about it that day, but we could sure do it the next day.

C: Was there competition? Did you feel competition as an *Alligator* writer with the *Gainesville Sun*.

P: Oh, absolutely. Oh, yes. And with the radio stations, yes. Because these

people would hang around our office. The Kent State [University] riots [event following shooting deaths of Kent State students by National Guardsmen], that was shortly before I graduated. That was in early May. We graduated in June and the TV stations started hanging around.

C: And these would be out-of-town as well as local [newspeople], and Channel 5.

P: Channel 4 and Channel 12 came over from Jacksonville, and I met George Chapman who was at Channel 4 and Stan **Brantley** from Channel 12 and Howard **Kelley** from Channel 12. And Howard went on to be GM [general manager] and George and Stan had long careers. You know, Stan died young. He died of a heart attack. He came back from a cruise with his wife and you know. But I knew them. I knew them when I went to Jacksonville, because I knew them through my *Alligator* days. And they'd come hang around the office because they knew if there was going to be a demonstration at the Plaza of the Americas, which there always was, that we would know about it, and that we would be there.

C: Now the demonstrations at that time, was it more civil rights or had it moved into anti-war.

P: No these were anti-[Vietnam] war [protests].

C: During your period, were the civil rights issues, with desegregation on campus for example, was that pretty well resolved?

P: No. My freshman year, there were two black women in Jennings Hall and their room was in the basement. Now, I think they got moved, but I remember the first two or three weeks you're there, you meet all the new people. And I was in room 2128 Jennings Hall, Jennings West. I would go down to the basement, because in the basement they had the big commons room and they had a piano. Anyone could play the piano. And so, you'd go down there, even in the evenings, and wait your turn to just practice. That's how I knew these two girls were even in the building, because they were in the rooms that went off the commons area. I remember early. I don't remember even seeing them, but I'm sure they were there. But I remember being surprised. And they were in a basement room in the west section. I don't remember having too many black students around.

C: Any black staff members on the *Alligator*?

P: Larry Jordan was over there. And that's kind of how Larry Jordan and David **Osher** got together and then had a partnership for a while in later years. But when the riots that we were covering and observing, and I wasn't the main writer

on any of this, I would talk to the cops, because I was covering cops and the fire department.

C: [Does] that include university police as well as Gainesville?

P: Oh, yes, the campus cops. Lieutenant **Holliman**, I knew him. I'd go over there. I'd just stop in everyday. **Audie Shuler**, I knew Chief **Shuler** and **Courtney Roberts** was the captain at the Gainesville Police Department. Don Powell was an officer and Don was also the full-time, I mean when he wasn't working as a cop, the security person for Colonial Manors. So, I got to know Don. But I really got to know Captain Roberts and Chief **Shuler**. And so I would be over there. And so I'd call. You know somebody would come in and say, oh, I heard there's going to be something at such and such a time.

So, I would call the campus cops and I'd get the detective division, because they were so clandestine. They would try to blend in like students. I mean Chief **Shuler** can never blend in like a student, but the rest of them could. There was one young detective, and I think he was also going to law school at the time. And so I'd call him. I'd say, is there something happening on the Plaza. You know he'd say, oh, maybe you want to be over there about four o'clock. He'd never say yes or no, but he'd say, if you're going to be in the vicinity of the Plaza around four, you might want to walk by. Or, I remember all these TV guys were in because they had gotten a phone call. We had a Tampa station there and all these Jacksonville guys. And they had gotten a phone call from someone in Gainesville that there was going to be a major demonstration that night. So, this was in early May. It was right after the guardsmen shot the students.

C: That would be Kent State.

P: Kent State.

C: Okay.

P: I think that we had just found out that one of the those guys was from Florida. One of the soldiers was from Fernandina or somewhere. And so there was this big thing. So, we all troop over there from the *Alligator*. We're all sitting in front row seats, on the grass, and Channel 4 pans the crowd and pans in on all these *Alligator* staffers. Only it wasn't obvious that we were staffers. It just looks like we were students participating in this demonstration. My mother saw that on the eleven o'clock news. At two o'clock in the morning, there was a knock on my door and it was my father and he was going to take me home. What was I doing demonstrating? [He asked,] how are you going to graduate? Do you expect to graduate? What are you doing? Are you going to classes? I mean, I can

remember this conversation with my dad at the dorm. I don't know where my roommate was. I had a roommate at the time, but she wasn't there. I just said, no, I'm not leaving and I'm okay. I proceeded to tell him that I was never going to have any trouble at these demonstrations because I knew all the cops [laughing].

C: Were there panty raids during the period you were there? Was that going on at all?

P: My freshman year there were some, but I don't remember one at Jennings [Hall]. But I do remember my freshman year there were some.

C: I remember my father being not pleased about that all.

P: I would hear about these things in classes the next day, but I never picked them up off cop reports when I was doing the police beat.

C: Let me ask about the sort of surreptitiousness of the UPD [University Police Department], particularly the detectives. Did you feel that [there were] clandestine activities that endangered, particularly students who were the demonstration leaders. Was there talk when you talked to your police sources about the outside agitators? Were they in any way looking at the civil rights issues? Was the *Alligator* concerned about defending a sort of overzealousness of the administrators?

P: Of defending the administrators?

C: Yes.

P: I can remember going back over there and asking a lot of questions.

C: Because I think you're father's concern is [in his] saying, you want to get thrown out of school? And what role did the *Alligator* play in observing the university.

P: Well, we were observers, we didn't get involved in it. I tried to explain that to him that night. And I think I succeeded. But we did. We knew we were the observers. But as far as what we did, I remember talking to Chief **Shuler** and the detectives about the issues of access. I don't remember using the word "access," but [asking questions such as,] are we going to have to have press badges to get into these things anymore? Are we going to have to show our student I.D.s? Isn't it enough just to say that we're from the *Alligator*? I remember questions like that.

C: Do you remember if the photographers were having any problems?

P: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

C: Were there injuries? Would their equipment be . . . .

P: I don't remember injuries, but I remember photographers would come in and talk about being pushed around.

C: By demonstrators, by police, both?

P: By the police.

C: By the cops.

P: You see there were a lot of police that were in plain clothes. They looked just like the rest of us. Most people did not know they were campus police, but because I saw them. One of my first stops before going to the *Alligator* everyday was shift change [at the campus police department], and if I didn't make it to shift change, I was back over there at 7:30 at night when I knew the night crew was coming in.

C: Was this both university police department and Gainesville police? Or campus?

P: It was mostly university [police]. I'd go by the Gainesville Police Department. If I found Capt. Roberts, I'd get everything. If I didn't find Capt. Roberts, or he was out, they would just show me the reports. And their idea of showing the reports was, well, you don't want to see this, you don't want to see that. It was like that. You don't want to see this/that. I'd say, yes, I do.

C: Sort of censored for you.

P: Yes, I mean you sat there at a desk and talked to them. But when Capt. Roberts was there he'd say, what do you need? And then I also took a self-defense class from Capt. Roberts. So, I guess that kind of helped him know that I was not going to do any harm, steal records, tear up reports, that kind of thing.

C: Usually, at the end of the year, there'll be an awards banquet or a recognition. What did you get recognized at the end of your *Alligator* career for?

P: I went to the banquet and I went and Helen and I sat together.

C: Helen Huntley?

P: Helen Huntley. Helen and I are solidly bonded as a result of meeting in the

*Alligator* and I remember going. I was graduating in May. Helen graduated in December. And so, we were both there. She got some kind of recognition. I remember they just recognized the ones of us who were graduating. A lot of people got certificates. I didn't get any kind of awards. But you know, I had my bylines and by that time I had a job. I was fortunate, the *Times Union* had a previous journalism graduate leaving the job. And when they told me in April of 1970, after I went up for an interview, that I had a fine clip file etc., but that they had no jobs, I didn't know what I was going to do. In fact, I was kind of leaning towards maybe going to graduate school to be a school teacher at that point. Because I was thinking, how am I going to do this?

C: Was the job market tight as you were graduating?

P: Oh, yes. Yes, 1970 it was very tight. It was also tight for teachers too, so I didn't know where I was going with this. Maybe I was going to do PR [public relations work] for this Florida State Fire Marshal's Office because I knew those people very well after hammering their report [in my] 100-and-something page report while I was at the *Alligator*. That created quite a stir on campus. It caused a lot of unhappiness because the university clearly didn't want that report out and, under the public records law, the Florida State Fire Marshal's Office not only released it to me in December of 1969 . . . .

C: Did you have to actually use the public records law in a request to get the report?

P: I remember calling the Tallahassee office because we wanted that report. It's somewhere here on the desk. I remember calling the Fire Marshal's Office in Tallahassee to find out if the report had been done, because we knew it was being done. We knew the whole thing had been done. They told me, yes, it was available. First, they said I'd have to come to Tallahassee. And I said, okay, I can come to Tallahassee. And then they decided they would send the fire marshal from Jacksonville, who had done the report, to St. Augustine. So, I was home on break and I interviewed him with my tape recorder, sitting at my dad's desk in the city recreation department down at Francis Field. That's where this report was laid out all over daddy's desk. I went through it page by page and I had a copy of it. Then, when we resumed publication, I went to work on getting the story together for us. That report condemned the Flavets [Florida Veterans Housing--old wooden buildings]. Of course I already knew they were fire traps.

C: Because they were left over from World War II, correct? Right?

P: They were Camp Blanding buildings. And I had a lot of friends who were married and who were living in them. I hated going over to those places.

C: They used them a lot for married student housing?

P: Right, it was married student housing. That's what it was. I remember just being terrified. How could you sleep in one of these buildings at night when it's cold with that heater running. That thing was a tinder box. And you know, you knew if one went [up in flames] the whole thing went because they were old heart pine buildings.

C: And later there were fires when they used them in prison camps. Remember?

P: Yes, the prison in **Jay**, in the summer of 1969, that's a whole other story, burned. Several prisoners died and they were in old military housing that had been converted.

C: Did you use that as part of your story?

P: No.

C: That was not a factor?

P: I didn't mention the Jay fire, I don't think. But I knew about it, because I was working in one of my other summer jobs the night it happened. I was working that summer for the Florida Peace Officers Association because the *Record* didn't have any jobs open that summer for me. So, I went to work at the Florida Peace Officers Association, which was an organization of law enforcement in Florida. It was headquartered in St. Augustine. Chief **Virgil Stewart** was the secretary treasurer, and I actually did that for two years. And we were at the Panama City convention and it was the night before the convention. We were sitting over in a restaurant in Panama City, Chief **Stewart** and all these officials. One of the people there was from the Florida State Fire Marshal's Office, because they had law enforcement people. And I remember while we were sitting at dinner, a waiter came to the table and told him [a member of the fire marshal's office] there was an urgent phone call. He took the phone call, came back and said to Chief **Stewart** that this had happened. And I remember Jean sitting there, next to one of the other women who was working at the Peace Officers [Association], who was a full-time person, and she read my mind. Because as soon as I heard this I thought, I need to be calling the *Times Union*. You know, I mean I had that connection because of my sports. And I thought to myself, I need to be calling the *Times Union*. And this women said to me, now you know that everything you hear at this table is off the record. I had never said out loud, I need to call the *Times Union*. I never even wrote anything, I never did anything. Except, when this conversation was taking place right across from me, it was running through my mind that those buildings in **Jay**.

Because I remember asking the question. Then I recovered and I said, isn't that like the prison at Marianna, the boys prison at Marianna that's all those old Camp Blanding buildings? Because that's what we called them, being from St. Augustine and the camp guard.

P: The Camp Blanding buildings?

C: And the Camp Blanding buildings were all over St. Augustine. The recreation department had several of them left over from the war when the field was a recreational camp for the [U.S.] Army. I remember this man from the Fire Marshal's Office just looking at me and saying, how do you know this. And I said, oh, I've been to Marianna, which I had been, but not to reform school [laughing].

P: As you're into your upper-division work in the [journalism] school now, how did this blend or not blend into what you were doing at the *Alligator*? Were there conflicts as well as harmony?

C: They were supportive of us doing *Alligator* work. Buddy [Davis] was very supportive of it, Hugh **Cunningham**...

P: Buddy Davis was?

C: Buddy Davis and Hugh **Cunningham**. They supported you, but they never tolerated you using that as an excuse for not having your assignment for class done. I mean, there were certain rules that you're expected to abide by.

P: Did that bug you in any way? Did you feel constricted sometimes? Would you rather be at the *Alligator*?

C: Yes, I would rather be at the *Alligator*. I mean, we had the advisory council pizza party about four years ago. And when all the professionals introduced themselves to the students, without even planning it, I said, I'm Margo Pope, I'm with the *St. Augustine Record* and I'm a graduate of the *Alligator*. And the room erupts in laughter. And then I said, and the University of Florida. Then I tried to correct myself. I got the degree at the University of Florida. I got my degree at the University of Florida, but I worked on the *Alligator*. And it just got worse and worse that night.

C: Do you think this is a common bond that the *Alligator* alumni share? Is this hardcore loyalty . . .

P: It is.

C: To what they learn professionally at the *Alligator*?

- P: You did. And you know, you learned it at the *Alligator*, but you had the training. I mean, the j[ournalism] school taught you, the professors like Buddy Davis and Hugh **Cunningham** taught you about deadlines and accuracy, and separating fact from opinion, and attribution, and all that kind of stuff. And then you went over to the *Alligator* and you used it. And it wasn't practice anymore. It wasn't sitting there in Buddy Davis's JM301 class writing against his deadline. You were doing it, and it wasn't just going to be read by Professor Davis the next day. It was going to be read by 20,000 people at least. That was our circulation, what our print was at the time. So, it was a great opportunity and it still is. Even though it's independent now. I mean, more of those students from the journalism school need to go over there and quit worrying about whether or not it's a qualified internship or not. My internships were at the *St. Augustine Record*, but it was that extra experience. In fact, when I went to the *Times Union*, they gave me an extra \$5 a week because of my *Alligator* experience. I remember Mr. Manning saying, it's because you know how to write on deadline. My foot got in the door because I had been a prep writer for them. That, and a wonderful recommendation from Buddy Davis to the Executive Editor **John Walters**, which probably really did it. But when I talked to Mr. **Manning**, the managing editor, he kept pinning it on, Bob Price thinks a lot of you, the guys in the sports department think a lot of you, Bill **Castels**, and everybody you know. You were always one of the first calls, and we never had trouble with your stuff. We didn't have to call you back. And so they knew all that.
- C: Let me ask a question about the *Alligator* in its different forms of independence. What difference do you think it would've made if you had worked for the *Alligator* if it had been a laboratory newspaper in the journalism school?
- P: Oh, boy, that's a tough question. I guess every story would have been graded before it got in the paper. And I guess, instead of a student editor saying, I don't like the way this is worded, I'm going to rewrite it. You'd have a professor saying, I don't like the way this is worded, rewrite it. Where's your lead? Where's the nut graph?
- C: Do you think there would be an issue of, is publication of this particular story going to harm the College [of Journalism], the university?
- P: I think if Buddy Davis was running the lab newspaper, no. I think he would sit and he would think about it, but I don't think he would censor it. I don't really think that any of the professors that I had, while I was there, would have done that. I think they were clearly uncomfortable sometimes when the president would call the dean. I don't know enough about it now because I'm not a student, but I think at that time there was a lot of healthy respect for the *Alligator*

all over campus, even though nobody wanted to come right out and say it. Nobody wanted to admit that they were reading the *Alligator* word-for-word and reading their students' [articles]. But yet, things would be said in class that you knew they had read your story. And even over in the president's office. But you see, that relationship between the dean, it was Dean John Paul Jones, this was 1968-69, he had that aura around him because he had all the state's newspapers. They all came, they all sent people. There was never a question, everybody came and talked to students. I mean they visited with the classes. Buddy got some grant money from somebody and he did that visiting professors thing. And the year after I graduated, I was the first student that came back as a reporter.

C: All right. Great.

P: Everybody had been editors. I mean even in his little mimeographed thing he sent out to the faculty about, you know, all the ones that were coming that year. He said that in it you know, that that's who I was. That I was their first reporter and student as a visiting professor. So, the administration knew, even when they disagreed, that there were too many opportunities for the editors of this state to pick up the phone and say, well, you're dead wrong over there because I'm on your campus and I see students and this kind of thing. I think there was a lot of healthy respect, but maybe we didn't see it as much. Maybe all we heard is the hostility.

To go back to the *Alligator*, I do not remember covering any functions that hyped the university. I remember going to convocations and writing about them. But I do not remember us, say, covering the announcement of a new building. We just took the press release. I mean we weren't visible. And you know, sometimes today when you're in communities like ours, you don't want to run that ground breaking. But you want to make sure you have a presence out there so that the next time you make that phone call, when they've done something wrong, you don't get this, well, you're only here when we have bad news. I always thought of us as independent. I never had a story yanked. Now, Sidney **Frascus**' stories about getting the birth control pills at the infirmary, that kind of thing. That was happening towards the end of my time at the *Alligator*.

C: Do you remember the details of who was involved in the monitoring of that story? Did it come from the Board? Did it come from the president of the university?

P: Well, I don't know because I was a reporter. I was not involved in it. They were probably holding those discussions with Sidney at the time. I can tell you another example where I was involved and we did get into [trouble]. Some of us, and the statute of limitations has run out on us. There was a story sometime in 1969, I don't think it was already the end of our term, I think it was early, where

a bunch of equipment disappeared out of the library. I mean thousands of dollars worth of equipment just disappeared. There was a police investigation and I found the police reports and all this. And some of us devised a plan where we would test the security of the library and we did.

C: Now that the statute of limitations is out, could you identify the other co-conspirators?

P: Well, I haven't asked permission to do that, but I ought to do that at some point. Anyway, so we did this. We just stayed.

C: How many were involved would you say?

P: Four, maybe.

C: And these are all staff members?

P: All staff members. We just stayed on one of the floors at the reading tables. We were trying to prove that that stuff could have walked out the door because people, when they came through to close the library, they didn't do a real security check. Even we knew at that time period what a security check amounted to. You walked around, you looked at every table. We were sitting in this reading room.

C: All four.

P: Four of us. And people were leaving.

C: What time is it?

P: It's about 10:45, they closed at eleven. People were leaving, I remember. And we just kept right on doing what we were doing. And then, a person came around, the person who had been there, the room monitor or whatever, disappears, [and] doesn't say anything to us. Then somebody else comes through and says, the library is getting ready to close. And we said, okay. And they left. And then about a half hour later, somebody comes to the door of the library. This is the old library. This is not all the modern part.

C: Library East? To the east?

P: Yes, I guess now [it] is Library East. And I remember somebody at the door, but you couldn't see us from the door. And they just came in and turned off the lights and walked out. They didn't make another scan. And by this time, it's after eleven o'clock. It seems like we waited for quite a while.

C: Was it all dark?

P: Oh, yes. But you know, I mean there were like security lights on and exit lights. We had flashlights.

C: How were you dressed?

P: As students.

C: No camos.[camouflage clothes]?

P: No, we didn't look like cat burglars. [We were] dressed as students. And I remember being a little nervous that, knowing my parents . . . .

C: I was going to say, does your father know this? Did he ever know the story?

P: No. He never knew it. In fact, the first time I talked about it was last year after I was inducted into the *Alligator* Hall of Fame. I figured if I had talked about ahead of time, somebody would have remembered. But no, at least two of the other people that were involved are also in the Hall of Fame. But I don't think they've ever publicly talked about it other than when we wrote the story.

C: So this was a story?

P: Yes, we were there several hours.

C: How did you get out?

P: [We] walked right out the door. I had an early class. The others did not have early morning classes. I had like an 8 a.m. class over in Norman Hall, because I was minoring in education. So, I didn't stay the whole night. After a considerable amount of time, several hours, I had to leave.

C: What did you actually do during those three hours?

P: [We] walked around, just walked around. And you know, [we] didn't touch anything. I remember that was one of the discussions, don't touch anything where you leave fingerprints. Don't pick up any books. Don't do anything.

C: But you were seeing examples of plenty of things had you wanted to pick-up equipment.

P: Oh, sure.

C: It wasn't just stealing books?

P: Equipment was left out. This was high-tech equipment, for the time, that was stolen. Then I remember going down and I remember telling 'em I had to leave. I walked down and walked out the main door.

C: Which was unlocked?

P: No alarm or anything. It had a panic door and it wasn't locked. I have some recollection that the cleaning crew might have been in there, but not where we were. They didn't leave all these lights. It was dark, but I remember we had flashlights. Of course, that's what, thirty-four years ago. Almost thirty-four years ago now. So the next day then, we went and met with the director, who didn't like what we had done.

C: Did you have any threats?

P: No, but we pointed out some things. And then, the story was written by one person.

C: What did the story say?

P: The story basically said that security was lax. I don't know that I saved the story, but it was a pretty big deal. Quite frankly, we always suspected it was an inside job because we saw things out. Remember those big old reel-to-reel tape recorders? But the kind of equipment that disappeared was high-tech: televisions, like stereos, things like that.

C: Things like the computer equipment.

P: Yes, it would be the equivalent of computer equipment. And that stuff, you know, there were rooms where you could get into it. Like the listening rooms, you know they had those rooms and there was stuff in there. But for so much of this stuff to just disappear and become the object of a police report? I just never. And I don't know that they ever solved it. But I do remember how, when we got back to the office, and we talked about it the next day, we sat there and had a lengthy discussion with everybody. Even after two of us had come back from meeting with the library director.

C: The editors were involved very much in the discussion?

P: Yes, and you know, what happened? Are you sure? We all had notes and we

all knew where we had been. I remember one of the things that I had done was taken room letters down. It was like keeping score at a game really. You know I had L, whatever it was, and then described what the room was and then what kinds of stuff was in that room. You know, whether books and tables and chairs, any equipment.

C: Do you think it's a good representative story of one of the roles that the *Alligator* has historically taken as being a watchdog at the university?

P: Oh, I think so. I think so. I think the *Alligator's* most important function was out there being a watchdog. Most students didn't even know that student government existed. And we told them about student senate meetings and about the contentiousness between them. So, I always thought that was important. There were a lot more criminal incidents on campus than most people realized. I remember coming into the *Alligator* once and just saying, if any parents of freshman knew the kinds of things that are in that police report every night, they would not let their kids live on campus. Because it ranged from petty theft to grand theft. And it ranged from muggings to physical attacks and purse snatchings and things like that. And I keep thinking now, how did we ever walk across the campus like we did?

C: Is it better today? Would you say the *Alligator's* coverage on the police beat is more sophisticated in that area today?

P: I think they cover the main things probably the same way any newspaper does. And I think the *Alligator* gets, I was just reading them because they had sent some [here], the to the heart of the issues. Those students know how to use public records. They know how to use the Sunshine Law, and that's probably one of the most important functions that they learn. I mean other than learning deadlines and accuracy and how to use spell check, which most people already know how to do, or at least you hope they do. But I think what's really exciting about being on the *Alligator* is that whole idea that you're still the window for all those students who don't have time to be involved and for all the faculty who wanna know what's going on on campus. Because, with all due respect, there's only so much that the news bureau on campus is going to reach everyday. What's the *Alligator's* circulation, 35,000? I mean, I don't even know what they produce now. I should ask that question myself. But, you know the student population and the faculty population.

C: It's got to be over fifty [thousand].

P: Probably over fifty [thousand] by the time you add in everybody. If I was an advertiser in Gainesville, I'd want to be in that publication every single day because there is big money on that campus. You want to draw students out.

For example, when we were juniors--

[End of side A2]

P: I remember reading in the *Alligator* that there was a sale on Villager dresses and Bass Weejuns [shoes]. Those were the clothes of choice in this time period. I remember going down, looking at the sale, and figuring out how I could buy three dresses. I paid thirty-five dollars for the dresses and I paid fifteen for the Bass Weejuns—which were also on sale. And I thought I was really hot stuff. I wore those dresses out. I wore them while I was at my first year at the *Times-Union*. I got those Bass Weejuns re-soled three or four times, until finally they told me that they could no longer do it because it was pulling the leather away from the sole. And the Bass Weejuns were in that cordovan color, which was the color to have. That was the power of *Alligator* advertising. I would have never gone shopping for that stuff, at least not down the street in Gainesville. I would have never thought about spending my money there.

C: And that's Real World.

P: Real World.

C: That is Real World newspapers.

P: Right. And so that's the power of advertising in the *Alligator*. Because I remember several friends also had seen the ad. And we all spent a lot of money. And I don't know how much those ads cost but it was just a two-column ad showing a Villager dress. And then the shoe store next door had one [advertisement], and it said, "Bass Weejuns On Sale."

C: Let's make a transition by backing up just a little bit because I want to now move away from the university and the *Alligator*, as being the foundation from your very, very distinguished newspaper career, now. But I think we have to look at the historical perspective that you were able to bring because of your presence in St. Augustine at a pivotal time in the civil rights movement in the country. [In the] summer of 1964, [in] St. Augustine, Martin Luther King [president, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1957-1968; Nobel Peace Prize winner for civil rights work], comes to bring the nation's focus, and really an international focus, on what was happening racially in the United States. You're still a high school student.

P: I am. I am seventeen years old the summer of 1964. It's [the year of] my first paying job and I was getting a \$1.25 an hour. I do remember that. The *St. Augustine Record*, the old building, was on the border between what was considered [the] white establishment and the black community, which is

Lincolntonville.

C: What was the address at that time?

P: The *Record* was at 158 Cordova Street, and we were there until October 14, 2001. The building was built in 1906 for the *Record*. I was seventeen [years old] and I was a summer reporter. I was a very cub reporter. I was a proofreader, I read proof, I learned to make coffee, although I wasn't the one in charge of making coffee, that was the men in the composing room. And I got to do stories about the city's historic restoration program, *Cross and Sword*, which was the official state play about the founding of St. Augustine. I have a picture of me with one of the lions from *Born Free* [television show about African lions and their keeper], that was traveling the state. I had a picture of me with that lion sitting in the *Record* newsroom. [I'm] petting the lion and my hand is there and the guy who's the trainer has one of those protective gloves on. By the way, lion hair is straw. It is not soft. It only looks soft. Straw. So, those were the kind of things I did. I'd occasionally walk downtown and check out what was going on in the plaza. I talked to shop owners and things. And that was basically it. And anything that walked in the door that literally nobody else had time for or wanted to do, came to my desk. I did a lot of rewrites.

But all this is going on while the summer of 1964, St. Augustine, is the staging ground for the last major test of the civil rights movement. [It is] before the passage of the Civil Rights Act [of 1964]. St. Augustine was a daily dateline in the world, literally. They [news reporters] camped out in the *Record* newsroom. UPI [United Press International] was our wire source at the beginning of the summer. We later became AP [Associated Press]. We were dying. We were on the cusp of becoming this great historic preservation city. Our 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was a year away, and tourism was drying up because of stories that talked about the riots. I mean, our mayor went to the *Today Show* [National Broadcasting Company morning program] to say it was all staged for the TV cameras. We would get phone calls telling us exactly where and when these [altercations] were. And [they would ask,] are you gonna send a reporter? Can you send a photographer?

C: What were the issues?

P: Civil rights. We still had the back entrance [into white-owned businesses and homes] for the blacks. We still had "colored" restrooms, the back of the Greyhound bus was reserved for the blacks. Schools were [racially] segregated. Those were the basic issues.

C: Were there any black news organizations in St. Augustine, newspapers, magazines, radio?

P: No, but the *Jacksonville Star* covered St. Augustine.

C: And this was a long time . . .

P: Long time black newspaper. [It] went all over the United States, but focused on Florida, Georgia, [and] the southeast.

C: [It] still publishes today.

P: [It] still publishes today [and] has gone through many tragedies and traumas. Even thirty years later, a big fire that a lot of people believe was not just [the result of ] an electrical thing [problem]. Because they were still a driving force. So, they covered St. Augustine, too. There was a black newspaper from Pittsburgh. I can't remember the name of it. But all these people would find their way to the *Record* because, not only were we the daily newspaper, but because we were practically on top of Lincolville. In fact, you walk out of the back parking lot heading west and you were at Washington Street, and Washington Street was churches and businesses, and then one, two, three [interviewee is counting streets from memory], then you had Oneida Street, which was residential. And then you came up to Central Avenue which was the main street of Lincolville at the time I was growing up. It used to be Washington Street, but it had moved to Central Avenue. And Central Avenue is where St. Paul A. M. E. [African Methodist Episcopal] Church was [and] is, [it's] still active today, and that was the center. Jackie Robinson [first African-American professional baseball player in the major leagues], the baseball player, came and ignited the crowd over there. Martin Luther King came and all of his lieutenants [in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference], Andrew Young [mayor, Atlanta, Georgia, 1981-89; U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, 1976-79; U.S. House Representative from Georgia, 1972-76; civil rights leader and clergyman] was there, Hosea Williams [Atlanta City Council, c.1980s; Georgia General Council, 1974; civil rights activist and clergyman]. I mean these were names that everybody new. And then on the other side of town, you had Halstead ["Hoss] Manucey, who was always considered to be the leader of the segregationist movement.

C: Were they not publically identifying themselves as the [Ku Klux] Klan?

P: Well, that's true. I could never tell you [who they were] because I could never put the names with them, but there were Klan rallies. I never went to any of the Klan rallies, but I remember seeing the marchers. Because they would form at St. Paul [Church].

C: They were robbed?

P: No, this was the . . . .

C: Oh, the demonstrators.

P: The black demonstrators.

C: Yes.

P: They would meet at St. Paul or at First Baptist Church, which was right next to St. Paul. And they would march north on Central [Avenue] and then they would turn at the corner of Central and Bridge [Street] and come by the *Record* and then go east on Bridge and then north on Bridge and Cordova [Street]. We were on that corner, our street address, because our door was on Cordova. And then they would go north on Cordova up to King Street and then head east again over to the plaza. This was a daily occurrence, day and night. I can remember Saturday nights at the *Record* when the composing room would still be there, the two editors would go to supper, and I would be reading the proof. The sports editor would be out covering the game or some event, softball. Softball is big in St. Augustine. They actually covered the games, they didn't just call in the scores then. So, Saturday nights everybody was out except me. I would be there with the composing room and they'd lock the front door while they were gone to dinner. Now, that front door was always open. Of course, you know, it took five keys to get in and out of that building when it wasn't open for business, I mean on the weekends. So we would see the demonstrators. I would watch them out of **Hoopy** Tebault's office window with anybody else. We'd hear them because the windows of the composing room were open at night to ventilate. So, you would hear the marchers coming up the street. You'd know it because we'd hear right through the windows.

C: What would you say the size of the crowd was then?

P: Oh, there be easily 100 people and it would be men and women and children, I mean like teenaged, maybe junior high [aged children] and they would do this. You know, one of the most telling things to me was, there was a black catholic church in Lincolnvile called St. Benedict the Moor. The whole time I was growing up, St. Benedict was where, during the summer, we'd go to church. Because we kids could ride our bikes. We could ride our bikes from Marine Street and South Street, across the dam at Maria Sanchez Lake, and go up Central Avenue into Lincolnvile and head north on Central, and right across from St. Paul was St. Benedict. And we'd just park our bikes; you never had to worry about locking your bikes up. We'd park our bikes and we'd go to mass over there. The interesting thing about St. Benedict was, most of the congregation in the 1960s was white.

C: So it literally was an integrated . . . .

P: It was an integrated church. It was run by the Josephites under the auspices of the Diocese of St. Augustine. The priest was white, the congregation was mostly black. But there were enough white families [in the congregation] and we were one of them. I mean, we'd go downtown to the cathedral during the school year, but during the summer time we could go to an eight o'clock mass. The earliest mass we [could] go to at the cathedral was nine at that time.

C: So this would be you and your brother and friends.

P: [These were] my brother, the **McCarters**, and we'd all go. We would ride our bikes, and we never thought anything of it until that summer of 1964, when things changed. What happened was, we were riding our bikes, coming back [from mass]. We had done this through 1963, we started to do it in 1964 and the deputies were cruising, you know, and they said, you can't do this. Our parents decided that we weren't going to do it either. But as far as we were concerned, we were still going to do it because we had done for so many years. I remember riding my bike over there at twelve [years old] and not having my mother with me and riding with my brother and our neighbors. [By] the summer of 1964, I was seventeen and I had done it, I guess, for three or four years but not that summer. It was just a change and we saw this change because pretty soon Lincolville became pretty much off limits. There was a local confectionary in Lincolville called the **Iceberg**. It was run by a black man who we called doctor, but he was a pharmacist, and his wife and he had the best home-made ice cream. Well, it became a place, one of the staging areas. You know it was kind of like the Cracker Barrel type deal, and, so, that became less of a white place to visit. So we didn't do that. There were a lot of things about it. I mean, I'd walk downtown at lunch time from the *Record* and I'd sit at the McDonald's drugstore counter, or at the **McCartney's** counter, which was the other store next door, the other lunch counter, the marchers would be coming by. There was this legendary group of, supposedly, rabbis and rabbis in training. They stayed out at old Florida Memorial College, which is now in Miami, but was located on West King Street. And it really was the place where all the demonstrators came to stay, and they would stay there and then come into town on buses, and come to Lincolville. West King Street was predominately black, but Lincolville was the heart of the black community.

C: Were you actually writing any stories during that period?

P: I remember writing some. Just taking notes that were . . . .

C: There was probably a lot of team reporting, staff reporting.

P: Yes, there were the editors. We covered the story, but we didn't cover it like other places did.

C: How big was the *Record* staff at that time?

P: Let's see, we had an editor, a managing editor, a sports editor who doubled as a news editor, a woman's editor, one reporter, two reporters . . . maybe seven [in all].

C: And [what was] the population of St. Augustine at that time?

P: Probably about 8,000 in the city. The county was probably 30,000 at that time.

C: What was the *Record's* circulation about then?

P: Oh, probably about 4,000 or 5,000. And it was a six day a week publication. It's now seven days, all a.m.[morning editions], but it was six days then, and the only day that was a.m. was Sunday. We didn't publish on Saturday. We worked all day Saturday for the Sunday paper. We ran small stories. We had kind of a standing head[line], "More Arrests as Demonstrations Continue." And I always thought it was a standing head[line] because it always looked the same when it came out. We put these things on our front page. We ran the story the day Martin Luther King was arrested in St. Augustine.

C: Did you have photo coverage?

P: Yes, but we didn't run a whole lot of photos.

C: In the whole paper or just about this issue?

P: Just about this [issue]. Several years ago, when our archives were being evaluated over at the historical society, or catalogued, somebody said, it looks like the paper systemically removed all its photographs of the civil rights demonstrations. So, I was in the room when this was said, and you know I'm sitting there as an observer. I say as soon as it's over, I grab the executive director and I said, you are absolutely wrong. The person that just made that statement is wrong. Yes, I said, I was there. We didn't run those pictures. I said, they weren't systemically removed from the archives. We didn't run them. I can tell you we ran one of the front of the *Record* building when it was fire bombed.

C: That was in that summer of 1964?

P: Yes. We ran a picture of the Monson Motor Lodge, where Officer **Billets**

jumped in to clear the demonstrators after **Jimmy Brock**, the hotel owner, had poured muriatic acid in [the swimming pool to prevent demonstrators from using it]. We ran that picture, but we didn't run a whole lot of others. There are some wonderful pictures of the demonstrations etc., that belong to the Jackson family because Mr. Jackson, **John Jackson**, was the school principal and the school photographer and did excellent coverage. Those photos are now being readied for an exhibit of that era. We've run them in recent years, but we didn't run this stuff. We ran the stories because that alerted people to what was going on. There were things like, if you were downtown by the plaza, you were going to see some kind of demonstration. You would see the Woolworth's sit-ins. You would see the aftermath of it [and] demonstrations in the plaza at night. The city went under a curfew that summer of 1964. You couldn't be out on the streets after eleven o'clock at night if you were under eighteen or under twenty-one [years old]. I remember that it must have been under eighteen, because they cancelled all the night activities after the St. Jo[seph's] and the St. Augustine High graduation in June of 1964. By 1965, when I graduated, it was okay again to do that. The curfew kind of locked down the town. It was between eight and nine o'clock at night. You couldn't be on the streets, young people. Farris Bryant [Florida governor, 1961-65] brought in the [state] highway patrol.

C: This was when he was governor?

P: This was when he was governor, and it became almost like a martial law.

C: But this was not the National Guard, this was the state troopers.

P: No. This was the Florida Highway Patrol. There were 300 demonstrators in the [old] slave market on May 28, 1964, where they confronted a large group of whites armed with clubs and tire irons. Police, deputy sheriffs, and state troopers avoided a clash. Martin Luther King was there on May 18. [He] promised to bring his nonviolent army to the city. Mrs. Malcolm Peabody had been there March 30.

C: I was going to ask about it. Her son was the governor of Massachusetts at the time.

P: Right. **Endicott** Peabody was governor and Mrs. Malcolm Peabody was the wife of the Episcopal bishop of that area. And she, along with a number of other demonstrators, were arrested March 30 of 1964. I remember being in school at St. Jo[seph's] and going over to the *Record* after school and hearing of this story. It was a big deal and [I remember] really being annoyed that I couldn't be around.

C: Because you had to be in school?

P: Yes.

C: Well, let's move now because this is really framing you prior to your college years and your *Alligator* years. So now you're ready to launch your career. The job markets bad. It's 1970. You don't know about, is there going to be a newspaper job after all this experience and training. Are you going to have be a school teacher? What on Earth is going to happen? How do you start your career as a newspaper woman.

P: Well, I was in school when Buddy Davis was constantly criticizing the *Times-Union* because of the railroad ownership.

C: And he had actually worked for the *Times-Union*.

P: He worked for the *Times-Union*. He actually worked in the capital bureau when Dan McCarty was governor [in 1953]. He wrote the story of Dan McCarty's death [in 1953], that I found years later and talked about at his retirement. There was no question, the railroad weighed a heavy hand over the paper. It liked owning the newspaper. And you know at that time, because of the railroad connection, and we're talking about the Seaboard Coastline Railroad, we're not talking about the Florida East Coast, but the *Times-Union* was owned by the Seaboard Coastline Railroad when I went to work there on June 22, 1970. No one said to me, this is how we deal with the railroad, but it was a given you would assume it. Trains did not hit cars. If there was a derailment, it got run in the back of the paper. If there was a fatal[ity], it was on the front of the B section, which was the Metro [section], but it wasn't on the front page.

C: What about airline crashes? Wasn't there a separate [kind of treatment for them]?

P: Oh, yes. We ran everything about airlines. We were always writing about airlines' misfortunes. No one ever said why, but you knew why. I can remember some of the old-timers saying, coming out of the news meeting because we didn't have wire access, this was [the] pre-computers [era]. I can remember someone coming out and saying, well, I guess we'll play that one pretty big, and one of the other old copy editors saying, yeah, well maybe more people will start riding trains. It was kind of a given that, get these people out of the air [and on to trains].

C: So it was kind of newsroom humor within the staff?

P: Yes, but you didn't say it too loudly because the editors, the managing editors, they were socially connected to the people at the railroad. They all were in the

same social circles. I remember going to cover an event that wasn't even related to [an] accident, crash or anything and being summoned into the executive editor's office ahead of time, that was John Walters, and being told who would be there and all of their affiliations: Rotary Club President, Chamber [of Commerce] President, member of St. Mark's Episcopal [Church], member of the Florida Publishing Company board of directors. I mean, it was all very connected. When you got there, it was a given that you would introduce yourself to the appropriate people.

C: What was your assignment area of coverage at that time?

P: I was a general assignment and my hours were kind of dictated by stories and time. I have to tell you how I got the job. Mr. **Walters** had interviewed me. Mr. **Manning** was off the day I was interviewed and Mr. **Walters** told me this was very nice and I came highly recommended. Then Mr. **Manning**, when he called me, told me how the sports guys loved me so much and what a good job I had done and all this. But Mr. **Walters** had told me that they didn't have any openings right now. That was in April and, well, you know, April, June, there's two months there. So I remember coming home and being a little, you know, deflated. But **Hoopy** Tebault, who owned the *Record* kept saying, well, you can come to the *Record*. But you know, I had worked at the *Record*. I had been an intern at the *Record*. I had grown up in the *Record* newsroom. My mother has a great picture of **Hoopy** Tebault, because, at one point, they [the Tebault's] lived on the first floor of a big old house on Marine Street that had been converted to apartments. They were in the big first floor and we were on the second floor. My mother has a picture of **Hoopy** holding a shotgun and me standing in front of him. So that's how long the relationship [had endured], because I'm like two years old.

C: How do you spell his name?

P: T-E-B-A-U-L-T. The Tebaults owned the *Record* from 1942 to 1966. They sold it to the *Times Union*, to Florida Publishing Company. I was beginning to think, well, maybe I ought to go to graduate school. My father wanted me to go to graduate school anyway and, maybe I should go into education and be a teacher. But teachers weren't doing to well because that was shortly after that state-wide walk-out by the teachers.

C: During the Claude Kirk [Florida governor, 1967-1971] administration.

P: Right, during the Claude Kirk administration. So, anyway, I worked Saturdays the first year I was there, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

C: Were you commuting from St. Augustine?

- P: I was commuting from St. Augustine. It was forty-four miles from my parents' house on Marine Street, to the *Times-Union* at One Riverside Avenue just west of the Acosta Bridge. So then I was off [from work on] Sundays and Mondays. Tuesdays, I'd work 12 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesdays, I'd work 4:30 to 1:30, but it usually got out earlier than 1:30. Wednesdays and Thursdays, I did that because I backed up the police reporter. Fridays, I worked noon to 9 p.m. and Saturdays 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. So there was a short turnaround because working noon to 9 p.m. If something happened at eight o'clock at night, you were never out of there before ten. So I was used to being on US-1 or Interstate 95 at all hours of the day and night, literally. I did that commute for eighteen years and I was never scared. I had a CB radio for a while. I had two flat tires and things like that, but I was never afraid. Now, I think, I don't want to be on any of those roads after dark heading home. I'm glad I finally have a cell phone. I got a cell phone in May of this year against my husband's better judgment. I was on the road so much my son thought I should have one. Ned works for Best Buy and has a cell phone. So he got a good deal. So I covered general assignment. My second day on the job, I was sent to a fire. I remember I had a camera on my desk because at lunchtime I'd been sent out to the Florida Yacht Club to cover the Channel 7 End of the Auction Luncheon [to] take a picture of the presentation from the president of Channel 7 to the top volunteer, the one who gathered the most money.
- C: What kind of camera are you using at this time?
- P: I'm using a Yoshika Matt. The same camera exactly like the ones we used in Buddy Davis's photo journalism class.
- C: And you used film and you developed the film and you processed [it].
- P: Right. We would roll film. I can tell you that I was one of the few Florida grads who had Buddy Davis for photo journalism. I had him in the summer of 1969.
- C: That's because he normally taught the reporting [and] writing classes.
- P: Right, the reporting and editorial classes. But he taught photo j[ournalism] during the summer. So I had this camera sitting on my desk and my desk was right there near the assistant city editor, the night city editor. The fire call came in on the scanner and he said, do you know how to work that camera? I said yeah. He said, does it have film in it? [I said,] yes, sir. Because they had reloaded. They'd given me another roll of film in the photo department. He said, well, there's a fire in the **Dial Upchurch** Building. And I said, Upchurch, are they from St. Augustine? He said, listen to me, **Dial** Upchurch Building. It's a six-story building. It's down right next to the foot of the Acosta Bridge on Bay

Street. There's a fire in one of the apartments up there. Go down there and shoot the pictures. I'll find the police reporter and send him. Because it happened right around seven o'clock and the police reporter was on dinner break.

I'm the only reporter now left in the newsroom. So, I take the camera. [He says,] go right out, go right out on Bay Street. I said, how will I know what I get there? Are there flames? He says, just follow the fire truck because by the time you get to the end of the parking lot, the Riverside truck will be passing the building. Now, hurry. So I hurried. I am dressed in a suit. I can tell you exactly what I'm wearing. I'm wearing a blue dress with a navy-blue jacket and the shoes were color-coordinated to the dress. They are light blue. They are two-inch high heels, not spikes, but pumps two-inches high. There's a little light-rain drizzle and I'm in my 1968 Plymouth **Belvedere**. I get right up to it, and sure enough, the fire truck is right where Dick **Starter**, the night city editor, said it would be. It's passing me and as soon as it gets past me, fortunately, there's no one else, I get behind it. I follow the truck all the way down. I'm not breaking the speed limit. I found a parking place right in front of this building and all these people are on the street, you know all the tenants and the cops.

Here I am with no press pass because this is my second day. The first day is basically orientation: read the paper, sign the papers and go home and come back to work the next day. So I have my notebook and my camera and it's raining and I'm trying to keep the camera from getting wet. I find this guy in a white fire coat that says Chief. I said, what's going on here? Because you can still smell smoke and the firemen are still in the building in there. He says, who are you? I said, I'm Margo Cox from the *Florida Times-Union* and I've got to be here to take a picture because the photographer and the reporter are out and I have to do this whole thing. Chief **Matthews** says, well, we're just finishing up in there, but if you want to go, I remember he was stumbling and he says, if you want to go up there to take your picture, you're going to have to go up this fire escape. Now, the fire escape hangs over the sidewalk, which kind of narrows because it butts right up to the Main Street Bridge, [with] two-way traffic passing back and forth. So, what do you do on the second day? Do you say, no, I'll wait? You say, okay.

I start climbing those stairs. I was smart enough, well, smart [or] stupid, [and] took my shoes off because that was an old metal fire escape. This building, I learned when I got back to the office that night, was the first skyscraper in Jacksonville after the 1901 fire and it's six-stories tall and it's that old. This is 1970. We're going up and up, and I'm saying to myself, please, God, don't let me slip, don't let me fall down, don't let me break the camera. You know, all these prayers. By this time, when we got to the first turn in the landing, I have taken off my shoes. So, now, I have my notebook, my purse, my camera, and

my shoes. I'm more worried about that darn camera than anything else I own. So we get up, and we have to climb in the window. Well, as we're climbing in the window, here comes **George Chapman** and **Stan Brantley** from Channel 4 and Channel 12 that I knew from the riots, the Kent State Riots on the UF campus. I said, how did you all get in here? They said, up the steps. I turned to this chief, who was old enough at that point to be my grandfather, and I said, how come I had to come this way? He says, well, I didn't believe you were a reporter. Then he says, but I knew you were after we had gotten to the second landing, but we couldn't go back. We could have, but he wasn't going to, so we preceded up.

I got my picture of the guys cutting into the wall with a hatchet, you know, the old fashioned way, and those two guys [with] the two TV cameras were just hysterical. They kept saying, well, don't we know you? I said, yeah, you met me at the *Alligator*. I just graduated, I was so proud, from the University of Florida last week. This is my second day on the job. Well, this chief obviously doesn't know what to do at this point. So then, you know, they said to the chief, we've hit a water pipe. We've got to get them out of here, because the water was just going to come. He takes us downstairs. Well, he's real nice at this point. He's telling me everything. I'm writing it all down. And as we walk out of the building, here's our police reporter and our photographer. The police reporter didn't know me, but the photographer had met me earlier in the day. He says, I'll take that camera, now. I said, oh, no I'm on my way back. The police reporter said, well, you can give me your notes. I said, I'll turn them all in. Well, the up-shot of it is, I don't get a photo credit and I don't get a byline or a credit line, and half the police story is mine and the only picture on the fire is mine. The next day, Frank Smith, who is the photographer said, oh, I told them to give you a photo credit. I am so sorry.

I complained loudly that night in the newsroom about my treatment. Of course, being the only woman and being new, I figured, what could they do? They're going to fire me the second day? Okay, that's fine. I can go back to the *Record*. The photo chief is **Foster Marshall, Jr.** at the time. Foster knew Chief Matthews, so Foster comes over and he introduces himself to me and he says, I know that man. I'm going to call him. He calls Chief Matthews. Then my phone rings and it's Foster saying, I got somebody that wants to talk to you. I pick up the phone and it's Chief Matthews apologizing, again, and then telling me, any fire that I go to, I'm to look for him if it's downtown. If it's not, he gave me the name of Jimmy Johnson, who was the Riverside fire chief.

That summer, whenever there was a fire during the daytime, God help us, I'm sorry, but there were many fires that summer. If they happened before the police reporter got there, the city editor says, [do] you want to go? I mean, I'd go out to a fire. I covered this big old Ford Motor Company [franchise], **Lynch**

Ford, burning up in downtown Jacksonville one afternoon, so much [that] I came back and I smelled like a chimney. My dress was ruined. And I said, is somebody going to pay to have this dress dry cleaned? The city editor says, well, you knew what you were getting into [laughing].

C: So there really weren't many women on the news site even then, right?

P: No. My closest friend was Julie Wilson from St. Augustine. Julie worked in the women's department there. So, I had a good time. There were a couple of incidents where there was one particular night copy editor/reporter, a man. I got real comfortable in the newsroom and I'd take off these shoes, these two-inch shoes at night because I bought several pairs and they all looked alike but they were in different colors. So they took my shoes one night and put them in the men's room. Of course, the managing editor was not there. Mr. Walters called me, this was the executive editor, to come down the hall. He needed to talk to me. I had been there, I guess, maybe two months. It was right around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July of that year. So yes, a month. Not even a month. And I said, I can't right now. He said, why not? I said, I'm working on a story. I'm the junior staff member telling the executive editor I can't come. He said, I need to talk to you in my office right now. It was all a set up, because he knew that I didn't have my shoes. So I said, okay. I walked down the hall, barefoot[ed]. He said, where are your shoes? I said, Jim Ward put them in the men's room and I'm not going in there to get them. I turned around and walked out. I said, is that all? I said, you know, nobody told me I couldn't take off my shoes under my desk. There's very few people here, nobody's complaining. So, Ward had gone to dinner. All night long I'm walking around on linoleum. It was linoleum, it was tiled linoleum floors then. There was no carpet on the floor. It doesn't bother me and I'm barefoot in stockings. I'm walking around the newsroom. So Jim comes back in and says, if you want your shoes, I'll make sure the coast is clear and you can go get them. I said, I don't need my shoes. I'm not going anywhere. I'm going home. I went home barefoot. The moral of that story, Jean, is that I never came to work after that, for the whole eighteen years, without a second pair of shoes in the car. I always had a second pair of shoes, dress shoes, that just sat in a shoes box in my car. I mean it never happened again and it was well understood that that wasn't going to work again.

C: Good for you.

P: Funny little things like that. I got to cover Governor Reubin Askew [1971-1979]. After he was inaugurated they had celebrations in a bunch of cities and they each had a big formal dance, ball, whatever. I got to cover him when he came, and I met all the wives of all the cabinet members and all the senate.

C: You were not delegated to cover features and/or women's issues in 1970.

P: No.

C: You are a general assignment reporter?

P: I was the back-up reporter for city hall and the school board. I did general assignment. I covered Reubin Askew at that event. I did not cover all these women. But the photographer was assigned to both, covering him. So when the governor retreated to go get dressed, I was with the photographer, and we went over to where the women were. It was like prom to these people. It was very exciting. It was exciting because everybody was excited. All the men were excited, everybody. In the Hilton Hotel, in downtown Jacksonville, is where this took place. I got to write part of the story. Then, I got assigned. We all covered different business clubs at lunchtime, covered speakers routinely. Judge **May** covered [the] Rotary [Club]. Paul Mitchell covered [the] Southside Rotary [Club]. There were two big businessmen's clubs. One was called the Northside Businessmen's Club, businessmen, one word. Then, there was the Southside Business Men's Club—business and men, two words. I alternated [between the two clubs], but I covered my original assignment, [which] was, I went to the Northside Club every single Tuesday. The Northside Club, and this was an active group of businessmen in north Jacksonville, were **spearhead** on the interstate to 95 that goes from I-10 to just north of the airport, on 95. They made it their campaign to get that road built. Reubin Askew was the governor. That was when you'd go I-10 and you'd have to get off at US-90. You'd go [on] 90 for an hour and a half, and then get back on I-10 to get to Tallahassee. Well, once you left Tallahassee, you were back on [US] 90 again to Pensacola. Here was Askew from Pensacola. What was his goal? It wasn't to build to 95 in Jacksonville where we already had a good network. It was to get I-10 completed between Pensacola and Tallahassee and Tallahassee and Lake City. But they [Northside Club] were constant. So my beat became the transportation beat. I covered it from top to bottom, that whole process.

C: Was this an invented, new beat for the *Times-Union*? Or did it evolve?

P: No, they had a transportation beat, but it had not been so focused on interstate [construction news]. You see, Jacksonville was one of the cities that got short-changed on the interstate money because they already had a transportation authority. They created their own transportation authority in the 1950's that built the network of roads later to become the interstate highway. But these beltways, the state was going

to\_\_\_\_\_.

[End of side B4]

P: . . . to Lake City to find out if we were going to get the 295 beltway. And I met with the district engineer in Lake City, who was Mr. Jim Ward. He was a graduate of the College of Engineering at the University of Florida. His assistant, deputy engineer, for District Two, which was our area, was Walter Skinner, also a [University of] Florida grad, also in engineering. If you ever wonder why the bridges in Jacksonville were orange and blue at one time . . . you had an orange bridge and a blue bridge. The Acosta [Bridge] was orange and the Main Street [Bridge] was blue. It was because, well maybe not, maybe it was only a coincidence that all the engineers in Lake City who picked the paint colors were Florida grads at the time. But the bridges became orange and blue. Then, later, they painted the Matthews bridge garnet as a concession. But I don't think they ever got a gold bridge.

So I covered transportation. I learned all about how to build a road. I can tell you today, when I ride down the interstate, what stage they are in the need for maintenance. I can tell you when they haven't done a road properly and there are some around St. Augustine that when I first came to the *Record* I could tell you, well, they didn't lay the foundation properly. In that beat I actually went out on job sites. I saw construction. I was in the first car that rode across the first leg of the J. Turner Butler Boulevard, which is now the big gateway to Ponte Vedra from Jacksonville. There was a one and a half mile stretch that went from Southside Boulevard to UNF [University of North Florida].

I covered transportation from a year and a half. Then the education writer was leaving to go work for Voice of America, so I applied for her job. It was interesting. When the job was held by a man, it was called education editor. When it was Rachel **Bales** job, it became education writer. When it got to me it was education writer. And the excuse given, or exactly, the reason, was that we didn't work on the news desk. See, the education editor also substituted as the night news copy editor for local [news]. So, he got to be education editor. But that was alright. Being education writer allowed me a lot of access. [It gave me access to] J. J. Daniel, who was on the board of the railroad, Seaboard Coastline Railroad, he was chairman of the Board of Regents. So, we covered the Regents, but we didn't go to the meetings before I got there. They would call him after the meeting, they'd take the wire story, and they'd call J. J. and get a few quotes from him. Then they would do a story that said, from staff and AP.

Right away I expected that I was going to be able to cover this. The Board of Regents were meeting in Boca Raton. It was three weeks after [that] I was assigned as education writer in November 1972. I went to Mr. Manning, the

managing editor, and I said, the Board of Regents are meeting in Boca Raton. What do I do? And he said, oh, you don't do anything. He said, call Mr. Daniel, find out when you can talk to him after the meeting, and then you'll get the wire story. He explained this procedure I just talked about.

So, I called Mr. Daniel, whom I had had the good fortune to meet six months earlier while covering the beginnings of what is now the Jacksonville Council on Citizen Involvement. He was the leader in that and I had met him. He talked about his time at the University of Florida and he was in Florida Blue Key. He told me how the Florida Blue Key and the *Alligator* never got along back when he was there, in the 1940s. I assured him nothing had changed. I call him and he takes my call. He's president at this time of **Stockton Watly Daven Corporation**, and here is the still junior reporter because they had hired a guy at the same time they had hired me, but he was already gone. He went to work in the PR department at Disney, big money. And so, I told Mr. Daniel that I was now covering education and that I would not be going to the Regents meeting, but [I asked] where could I call him afterwards. Mr. Daniel says, what do you mean you're not going to the regent's meeting? I said, because Mr. **Manning** said we don't cover them. And Mr. Daniel says, hold on. I can hear him shuffling the paper [over the telephone]. He said, I am reading the *Times-Union*. And he reads the date and he says, three sports writers are covering [the] golf tournaments today for the *Florida Times-Union*, and none of them are in Jacksonville. And he said, you tell Mr. **Manning**, if he can afford to send three sports writers out to cover golf tournaments outside of the city, he can send you to the Board of Regents meeting. I said, well, don't you want to talk to him. I was like, I don't want talk with him. He says, you tell him that and you tell him, if he has any questions, call me back. He was on the board [of directors] of Florida Publishing, but not the chairman of the board.

So I went over and Mr. **Manning** says, did you talk to Mr. Daniel? I said, yes. And what did he say? [Mr. Manning asked.] Well, I told him what he said and Mr. **Manning** looked over his wire-rimmed glasses and said, and what did you say? And I said, well, I asked him if he wanted to talk to you. Well? [Mr. Manning asked.] And he didn't [I replied]. He told me to tell you. And so **Manning** pushes his glasses back up, he disappears down the hall to **John Walters**, comes back about 20 minutes later. And by that time I'm off typing something else and I'm not even thinking about this. Mr. **Manning** says, make your hotel reservations, you're going to the meeting, but you can't fly, you have to drive. So, they thought I was going to say, oh, no, I'm not driving five hours to Boca Raton. And I said, okay. So I called Mr. Daniel back and I said, where are the Regents staying? I am covering the meeting. He says, well, I'm glad about that. I said to him, I just felt really comfortable, did you call someone? And he says no. I said, are you sure you didn't, Mr. D.? No, I didn't. I'll look

forward to seeing you on Friday, [he said]. This was, of course, on Wednesday.

So then his secretary called me back and said, I will be dropping off the itinerary, the agenda. Because see, we never got the agenda from the Board of Regents meeting [before] because we never covered it, and the thing [the agenda] was as big as the Jacksonville telephone book. So she said, Mr. Daniel said that you can take his agenda. He has made notes on everything he needs to know. And when you get to the meeting, he will make sure that there is a new copy for you and you can switch it out. But this will help you do your homework. So, was that a message?

C: Oh, boy.

P: Read this before you get there? Which I did.

C: Too bad I'm going to be driving. Too bad I can't read it on the plane [laughing].

P: So, I covered the Board of Regents from the first meeting. I covered December 1972 until, I covered them for ten and a half years, the middle of 1982. And then someone else took over because by that time I was doing [covering] education, [which] was still big, you know public education. And I had had my fill of traveling that kind of trip. But I had a great time because, while I covered the board of regents, that also got me into the state and national scene. So I went to Tallahassee every year for at least a week, put up by the newspaper, covering all kinds of elements. I worked in the [news] bureau. And then, anytime there was a higher ed[ucation] issue or a public ed[ucation] issue during the session, I could go over for an overnight [trip]. I really planned those trips out like a travel agent. Boy, I maximized my time and new how much I could get out of it. And I always wrote more than one story anyway. So I was a good mark out of town. I didn't spend a lot of money. And covering the board of regents was also **Helen Huntley**.

C: Old *Alligator* pals.

P: Old *Alligator* buddies. So we linked up and shared hotel rooms and we shared rental cars. Well, when the two of us stopped covering the Board of Regents, I think it was a rude awakening for our accounting departments because suddenly we were not splitting everything in half, you know. But that was real ideal. We'd plan these trips, well, my plane gets in at such and such. Well, I'll get the rental car this time. Or, are you going to go out to the hotel? I'm not going to be in until midnight and then comeback? Or do you want to take the shuttle and then I'll pick up the rental car?

I mean we planned these trips. I can remember the trip to Pensacola. You couldn't get to Pensacola from Tampa or Jacksonville unless you went at six

o'clock at the morning. So, she left Tampa, it was a National Airlines flight. She left at 6 a.m. from Tampa. That flight went to Jacksonville. I got on that flight at nine, and we went to Pensacola. We had all this time in Pensacola, so we toured the city. I have a scrapbook, a small scrapbook. It was like a mini-vacation that day. We are all over historic Pensacola. And I kept saying, gosh, St. Augustine is so much better than this. We are the oldest city, the oldest permanently-occupied European settlement in the United States. They only were [the] first city. Now you've heard it. A hurricane, they couldn't survive a hurricane. We survived everything over here. That's the difference.

Covering the Board of Regents was exciting. I can remember breaking some stories when the AP somehow didn't send someone to the Regents meeting. The AP would call Jacksonville looking for the story, because they knew I was covering it. Somehow they would get rejected. Nobody else would turn loose their stories early, but they always thought we would. The rule in Jacksonville was, yes, we'll give you the story, but you have to credit the *St. Augustine Record*. If you want the story, you have to credit the *Record*, if you want it to send out to everyone else. And they did.

C: The *Record* or the *Times-Union*?

P: I mean the *Times-Union*. I'm sorry, you have to credit the *Florida Times-Union*, which they did. And I'm not so sure they always liked doing it, but then they did start sending someone regularly. Now, covering the Board of Regents, at one time, in, I guess around 1975, that year, was **Helen Huntley** from the *St. Pete[rsburg] Times*, a graduate of the University of Florida and the *Alligator*, **Skip Perez**, of the Gainesville Sun, a graduate of the University of Florida and the *Alligator*, and me. By that time, my friend Julie Wilson was in Orlando and she was covering the Board of Regents for the *Orlando Sentinel*, but she didn't graduate from the University of Florida. So they had these four people who were kind of a pack. And we knew everybody. We knew the presidents and we knew the agenda. We knew **Hendricks Chandler**, who was the executive secretary. We knew George **Bedell**, the vice-chancellor. We knew Bob **Mautz** [Chancellor, Board of Regents, President of Florida University System] and we knew E. T. York, his successor. We knew all the Regents. And Mr. Daniel, God bless him, to his credit, all those years he was on the board, he never said to me at any time, don't write that story.

Everyone thought there was all this big control. I remember hearing that E. T. York was not going to get the University of Florida presidency, they were going to appoint **[Bob] Marston**. E. T. was going to be named chancellor. I called Mr. Daniel in his office as publisher, from the newsroom, and I said, I have heard this rumor. And Mr. Daniel said, and what do you want me to do. I said, I want you

to tell me if that's going to happen tomorrow. And he said to me, I'm your publisher; I am not your source. And I said, well, if Helen calls, will you talk to Helen? And he said, that's talking to the *St. Pete[rsburg] Times*. You have to get your stories on your own. That line was rigid with him. I mean, after that one time, where he gave his agenda to me because it was my first time, I got nothing through Mr. Daniel. If I needed to talk to him as a source, he was a source and I had to make it clear quoting him in the story. But there was none of this business that he was going to be my tipster. I ended up using a very good source at Florida State University, who happened to be in the old Regents' offices when E. T. [York] walked in and was taken into the inner sanctum. He turned to someone else and said, is he going to be the new chancellor. And someone else said that. So, then I called and got the rest of the story because all of us were chasing this story. Helen and I weren't speaking to each other. None of us were speaking to each other because we were all going to get this story. Of course, as it was, we all had stories.

C: Different sources.

P: Different sources, but that was the way Mr. Daniel handled it. And one more funny story about covering the Board of Regents. Dr. Andrew **Johnson** from the University of North Florida, a black educator [and] well respected. We were told he was going to be named next president of Florida A&M at this particular time. Mr. **Gardener** from Ft. Lauderdale was on the Board. Mr. **Gardener** was black and an alumnus. He was doctor in education and he and Andrew **Johnson** were close friends. I got word from UNF that Dr. **Gardener** had called Dr. **Johnson** and said, the votes are there for you. And I'm going, Sunshine Law violation. But I can't even begin to prove this story because right now our story is, is this respected black educator from Florida going to be the A&M president? So, I start calling Regents and nobody will talk to me. Dr. **Gardener** is in the hospital and I finally get through to him. He won't talk to me about it. And you know I'm going, well, where is Andrew getting all this information? So I called Dr. Johnson at home and I said, do you know who's going to vote for you? He didn't know, but he just knew that he was going to get it and that Dr. **Gardener** was in the hospital and he was very sorry. So I wrote this story. I talked to a couple Regents' staff who said nice things about Dr. **Johnson**. I talked to **Marshall** Criser [Board of Regents; President of the University of Florida], and he didn't come right out and say it, but he said, well, he gets high marks and all this; talk to a couple of other people. J. J. [Daniel] wouldn't talk to me at all.

So, I get up to the airport the next morning at 6:45. I've got the *Times-Union*, I'm reading my story. I've got my bag of stuff, by this time we're flying to Regents meetings, and Mr. Daniel walks up and I said, what are you doing here? And he

says, oh, I didn't go down last night. And he says, [are] you all right? I said, yes, fine, big day. We get on this plane to Tallahassee. After we're in the air, Mr. Daniel comes out of first class. He was a big, bulky man, so he couldn't sit in coach. I'm riding in coach and I've got the paper and I'm looking up. I look up and it's Mr. Daniel. And he said, good story this morning, but it's not Andrew. There's only like ten of us on this flight to Tallahassee. And I said, what! What do you mean it's not Andrew? Come on, Mr. Daniel. And we were having this long discussion. By this time, he's sitting on the arm of the coach seat across from me and the flight attendant is saying, can I help you? He says, no, but there's nobody else up in first class and I need to talk to this person. She works for me. She's my reporter. And he flew enough with them that they said, fine, Mr. Daniel. So not only am I sitting in first class the rest of the way, but they are bringing me coffee [and asking me,] did you get breakfast? They don't even serve breakfast in coach at this point, but they serve it up front. I'm going, no, thank you. I'm saying, how do you know this? He says, I know it's not going to happen. So, then I start giving him a lecture on the Sunshine Law. And he says, there wasn't any Sunshine Law violation. I certainly know that. I'm a lawyer, etc., etc. I'm on the Board of Regents, what are you accusing me of? And I'm thinking, This is the last time I'm going to have a conversation with the publisher. But he told me, he said they had one of those screening committees and he said, It's not Andrew. And here I am. Because I know that back at UNF right now there are two press releases being prepared because the PR guy told me. One of them is, I accept and I'm flattered. And the other is, you know, I'm glad to have been . . .

C: Honored to have been . . .

P: . . . honored to have been [considered]. Whatever. Then we have that dilemma: Do you call the university and say . . . ? And I go, no, I don't call anybody. I go to the meeting and see what happens. Well, I go to the meeting and see what happens. Sure enough, there's a long parade of people supporting Andrew **Johnson**, but there's also a long parade supporting the other guy, **Humphreys**, I think it is. After long discussion, the vote is taken and it's the other guy. It's not Andrew. I remember going over to some of the people from the UNF throughout the meeting and they were just floored. Everybody was floored.

I never could, and I tried for two years after that, to put together what really happened. But that was one of those time where you're covering something and your boss, your top boss, has an opportunity to make or break your career and he was very clear. He wasn't going to help me because his code of ethics said, I'm on the Board of Regents, and when I'm on the board of regents, I'm not the publisher of this newspaper and it's not my job. And you know, periodically he'd call me after that and he'd say, what do you hear from the Regents office? I'd

tell him and he'd just chuckle. I'd say, [do] you want to tell me anything? No, [he replied]. Or he'd say things like, well, good luck with your story. I'll read it in the morning. Or he'd send word through the editor that he would be in Tallahassee the next day on behalf of the Board of Regents in case I was coming.

But I was also at the *Times-Union*, covering the Regents when there was a big turning point for us. Mr. Daniel, when he came to the paper as publisher in 1976, it was a big turning point for us because the railroad gave him a lot of independence. He was now publisher, he was no longer just on the Board. His grandfather, Col. J. J. Daniel, had been one of the original publishers of the *Florida Times-Union*, Colonel J. J. He was named for his grandfather. He had great fondness for this job. But he was still on the Board of Regents.

We were in Tallahassee when the Regents were meeting and it was keyed to the legislative session. But it was also on a Sunday, when there was a gigantic derailment of a Seaboard train over in the panhandle, chlorine gas and all that, and evacuation. I heard about it. The *Times-Union*, the press center, was right near an AP office. So, I had checked in that afternoon with the guys in the Tallahassee bureau and I had heard about this train wreck. I said to the guys in the Tallahassee bureau, do they know about it in Jacksonville? Oh, yes, they're on it. They're calling Seaboard and all that. So I went on to this afternoon Regents committee meeting and Mr. Daniel walked in and said, have you heard about the train wreck. I said, yes. He said, what do you know? I told him what I knew, and he said, does the office know? And I said, yes, do you have any messages? He said no. He's the publisher. I mean he wasn't going to say anything.

So the next morning he walks into the Regents meeting carrying, it must have been, nine newspapers. You know, all those newspapers on that rack by the Hilton, which is now the Double Tree downtown? You could buy every daily newspaper, and he's carrying them all in there. I thought, what did he do, buy a paper for everybody in the Regents? Because it looked like he had nine. He sits them down next to his place and he comes over to me and he says, come and look. So I look. He spreads them out because it's like a half an hour before the meeting starts. He's got all these newspapers spread out. They all have the same big vertical [photograph] of this derailment, which is the AP photo of course. And there we are, right next to him. He says, what do you think? Isn't this great? They are big papers. Our coverage is as good as anyone else's. And that, I believe, was the turning point. After that, I do not believe we ever wrote another story that said "a car hit a train." I know that we got to the point where train wrecks came up on the front page, derailments that belonged to Seaboard. I remember going back to the office and telling this story, blow-by-blow.

C: Have you ever shared that story with Buddy Davis, who has been so critical of the *Times-Union*?

P: No, I don't remember if I ever did.

C: It would be interesting.

P: Because you know, the time, you know, they changed. And of course, then the railroad sold us to **Morris** Communications in 1982 and things really changed.

C: Do you want to take a break?

P: No.

C: What precipitated your move from Jacksonville to the *Record*?

P: Well, after I was education writer, I was the assistant city editor for planning, which was kind of like assignments and long-range planning, when the two papers merged. See we were independents before **Morris**. We were owned by the same company, shared the same building, but if the education editor of the journal saw me hustling down the hall, he came behind me. We didn't hold the elevator for each other, you know. I mean, we were fierce competitors. And that was all the way through the *Journal* and the *Times-Union* staff. The *Journal* considered themselves the scrappy paper and we were the grey lady.

C: So, the *Times Union* was the a.m. [morning edition] and the *Journal* was the p.m. [evening edition].

P: Right, and the *Journal's* sole mission in life was to have something they could strip across the front page, six banners. Now this is a *Times Union* person talking, so I don't know what the real mission was. But that [goal] we didn't have. Our goal was that even if it was one sentence, anything we could get in, even if it was one sentence tacked on the end of big story, it could kill their front page. Don't leave any stone unturned. That's why you'd come back, you'd write your story for the eleven thirty deadline to have it to the copy desk, and then you would turn around or your backup would sit over there to the bitter end, long after the presses were running. Just in case something came in before the drop dead date that you could beat the *Journal*, that was our mission. So then they merged the two and I was the assistant.

C: What year was that?

P: This would have been June of 1983. So I did that for almost three years.

Then, the features department had an opening for assignments editor. And Ron **Littlepage** was AME [Assistant Managing Editor] for news. Ron called me in and said, I don't want to get rid of you, but if you ever want to be anything like an editor at the *Record*, you're going to need that features experience. They have an opening. You know, I can't guarantee you the job, but I've already talked to Mike Clark. There were like nine candidates for the job. And so, I ended up getting the job the day Mike told me. He said he didn't have to tell anyone else who got the job because, when he called me in his office to tell me, I screamed loud enough that people could hear me all the way into the newsroom.

**Littlepage** swears that's true. I don't know if I screamed that loud, but I did scream. So, I did that. I was doing that when I ended up getting a Poynter [Fellowship]. There was a Pointer [Institute, *St. Petersburg Times*] session/seminar on ethics that you had to apply for. It was funded by Poynter, and they were only going to select sixteen [applicants]. So, you had to do a big contest-type application. I was one of the people selected.

C: So this would be in St. Pete, the **Whiner** Institute for Media Studies?

P: Yes.

C: Okay.

P: By this time it's 1986 and I had been promoted to features editor by **Sarah Wood**, who was then the assistant managing editor for features. I had been back about a couple weeks from it, the phone rang and it was Richard **Allport**, who had been with the *Times-Union*, and is a UF [journalism] school grad. Maybe he's not a J. school grad, but he did graduate from the University of Florida. He had worked on our copy desk. He now had a big executive position at Morris corporation in 1986. He called me and he said, call me, it's urgent. Well, I thought it was gossip. I ignored the phone call and a week later he called and he said, well, I can finally catch up with you, etc. He said, we want you to go to St. Augustine. He said, we want you to go as Sunday editor. I said I'm not going anywhere as the Sunday editor. I said, if I'm going, I'm going as managing editor. Well, they already have one, [he said]. I said, well, then I'm not the person for the job. I never thought anything about it.

About a month later he calls me back and said, okay, they'll take you as managing editor but John Hunt, who is general manager, wants you to come down and do an interview with him. I said fine. So I went down and interviewed with him. Right away, he and the then editor, Steve **Cotter**, are telling me all about the Sunday paper they are going to create. Their creating a Sunday paper. I said, well, that's fine, but I don't want to be Sunday editor. That's somebody else's job, not mine. So they thought about it. About a week later,

**Cotter** called and said, if you want the job for managing editor, it will be managing editor for special projects or something, because they weren't ready to announce the Sunday publication.

C: Now what were your objections to being Sunday editor?

P: Well, I felt like if you were designated the Sunday editor a) the staff would perceive that you could have no role in the daily paper that affected what they did, and b) that your focus would become more soft news than hard news. Not that I had anything against it because I had just completed almost three years. Actually, I had completed three years by the time I left. Actually, it wasn't 1986 that I went to St. Augustine, I'm sorry, it was 1988. Nineteen eighty-six was when I left the city desk and went to the features as features assignment editor [and] was named features editor in 1987. Then, in 1988, I was named at the *Record*. See, I should have my cheat sheet in front of me. But anyway, that was my objection because I really didn't want to be somebody that was going to sit in an office and just think about Sunday and not being able to access local copy during the week and say, gosh, this could be written better or this police report is incomplete and things like that. I wanted to have that role because I'd had that role on city desk, even though I was called assistant city editor for planning. In the features department I had had a role everyday in the daily news meeting that editor Fred Hartman ran. Everybody was equal when they talked about things. So that took, I guess, at little negotiating because they already had a managing editor here. They gave him a different title. I came down and worked in the old building and did that June of 1988 to June of 1993, five years.

The most difficult[ies] we went through, we had three publishers during that time period. The most difficult part of it was not the publishers because we had John Hunt, who was very good, Will Morris who was very good, and Tyler Morris. We had a direct connection to the Morris family. That brought a lot of good attention to our needs. In fact, it was under Will that they started talking about a new building. It just took almost ten years to get it. But I was working every weekend. I was working Saturday nights and every three-day holiday I was working the Sunday night shift as an editor [and] then major copies because we'd always put out the morning paper on those days. At that point, in 1993, we were still p.m. except for Saturday and Sunday. I wasn't seeing much of anyone. Tyler was the new publisher at that point. The editor had left at that point. So it was Tyler, publisher, editor, [and] me as managing editor. It was just not the kind of lifestyle . . . .

C: How old is your son at this time? I mean how are you being a wife and mother and having an outside life?

P: Well, I had my wonderful parents and my wonderful husband and a wonderful

*Times-Union* that would let me bring him to work. I'd bring him to work. I'd bring his porta-crib and everything else and set it up.

C: Was this the *Times-Union* or the *Record*? He's coming to work.

P: This was the *Times-Union*. He was coming to work with me when he was seven/eight months old. If I felt that I couldn't leave him with daycare that day, I called and said, you have a choice. I'll cover the school beat from home and I'll do it all long distance and I'll pay for everything, or I will get all my work done, phone calls and everything out of the way here, drive in, but I'm bringing Ned because I can't leave him today. I had a wonderful city editor at that time. His name was Paul **Herald**. Paul had young children, a wife in high profile job in Jacksonville. He said fine. I'd set up the porta-crib and all this stuff and Ned kept coming to work with me. I think his interest in graphics and design was honed by the *Times-Union* art department. Some of those guys are still there and they always ask about him, because they would sit him up there at a desk and he learned how to do all that stuff. Of course you know, I mean, it was a kid's dream. He had a desk, he had a light table. He had 10,000 magic markers, all the paper in the world, all the crayons in the world. This was pre-computers for graphics.

While I was at the *Times-Union*, I took on being Cub [Scout] master for three years. In a weak moment, when the previous Cub master quit and I wanted my son to have the experience, and it worked out because he eventually became an Eagle Scout. Only 2 percent of the kids that start finish as Eagle Scouts. So, I think I helped him in that fashion. So, yes, it was always a balancing act. I was in the Cathedral madrigals and I would take my costume to the *Times-Union* and I'd know that we were performing during the holiday season at 7:30. I knew how long it took to get from One Riverside Avenue to the Ponce de Leon Country Club, because that was always a big performance for us. I had the whole costume. I would figure, I have to be leaving the *Times-Union* by 6:00 p.m., right in the heart of rush hour. I would dress in the bathroom in a Renaissance costume that included a side hoop, it's like an Elizabethan hoop, and put on my makeup and my hair and I'd be out the door. There were a couple of times when I actually stood in the newsroom, answering questions, putting my hair up for a costume [laughing].

C: What a photo op[portunity].

P: Oh, yes. They took pictures, but I didn't invite pictures. But you know it'd be things like, I gotta get there. One night I was pushing it so hard, I didn't have time to dress. I just got in the car. I got into the lobby of the Ponce [de Leon]. I ran in the bathroom, got the dress on, but I couldn't zip it up. I was standing there and, finally, here comes Judy Bernard. I said, Judy help me, quick. She

zips me up and the Sister is just at that point turning around to make the introductions. She looks to the door, and I'm number two in the door, in this twelve person line-up. And she said to me later, I didn't see you when I walked in, I knew you weren't going to make it. I was worried that the altos weren't going to have a balance. And she said she looked in the door and, there you were. I said, don't ask, don't ask anything. I don't know why I didn't get stopped [pulled over for speeding] that night. But I did that for five years, commuting and keeping up with local events.

But by that time, 1993, Tyler had things he wanted to do with the paper. I wanted to do things with my life. I knew that I wasn't going to be named editor. I just knew that I wasn't because Morris is a big corporation and this is a prime spot. When I was named managing editor, the Morris corporate paper, the magazine wrote me up because I was their first woman managing editor of a Morris paper in the chain.

C: The chain now has how many?

P: The chain covers fourteen states now. Back then it had Lubbock and Amarillo [Texas], Athens and Augusta [Georgia], and Jacksonville, Winter Park, and Crescent City [Florida]. So the chain has expanded greatly. But I was a daily newspaper managing editor. They had a managing editor of the Morris news service, who was a woman, but the daily newspaper, this was kind of a different thing. I would have never gotten that opportunity in Jacksonville. Jacksonville would have never named a managing editor if I had stayed. **Mary Crest** became the managing editor long after I became managing editor in St. Augustine. So it was a golden opportunity, and I never knew that that's where I was in the Morris profile until the editor at the magazine said, we're profiling you because of this position. There were women in other senior management positions, but at that point, that's what I was told. And quite frankly, I don't remember any other having women in that job. Morris was really good to me.

Tyler and I worked out a proposal. He said, I'm thinking about doing this, what do you think. And I said, well, I don't have any problem with that kind of plan. I said, do I get off Saturday nights. [He said], oh, yes, you can get off Saturday nights. [I said], thank God! I don't ever want to work another Saturday night. It was crazy, going at 2:00 in the afternoon and you'd still be there at 1:45 in the morning. Then I was going to church and singing at the nine o'clock choir. You're kind of like, where's your life. So, then we developed a feature structure, where I would coordinate features as features editor. But we would instill more features on the front page and across the front page, across the paper like we would emphasize more feature reporting and sports, business features. We had all these feature plans. We were able to do it even maintaining the staff. It was kind of fun. We'd find a story and it really had more of a wonderful personality

on it, than just a straight-on news story. We all learned from it.

I did that for several years, from 1993, I can't remember, to 1996 or 1995? I have to look. I'll have to figure that one out. There was a transition in there because we had a reporter leave who was covering schools. Oh, no, I was still being features editor, but I also became school reporter, because we had a reporter covering the school board who left and we didn't have someone covering it. The editor said, we need someone covering schools that knows what's going on. I said, well, I can do that one night a week. [The editor said,] well, you know you can't cover the school board one night a week. So pretty soon we're back to sixty hours and I'm in the office on Saturdays writing stories for Sunday and Monday about the school board. Features are all taken care of. And so, then Jim Sutton became editor here and he decided that he wanted me in the newsroom writing. This was 1997 and I said, what is this going to entail? Because I can't be features editor and be a full-time reporter. The whole time I was features editor, I'm still writing the local issues column that I had already been writing since 1988. I never really left the hard news at the *Record*. He said, well, I guess it would be, you know, kind of a senior position. I said okay, we can call it Senior Writer. He said, okay, let me make sure, because they had to check and make sure there was a job—

[Tape error]

P: There was. Then I started covering county government and I was there. I covered county government and someone else covered the school board, thank God. County government became a big issue because we were one of the fastest growing counties in Florida. The meetings were lasting twelve/fourteen hours a day, and they knew I would go and I would still write. But there were many a day on this program where I'd be there at 8:30, if the meeting started at nine. I'd be leaving the building when Fred **Whitley**, the then associate editor who ran the morning news desk because we were still a pm at this point. Fred **Whitley** was coming in to put the paper together. I scared him terribly one morning. I came around the corner and he just [gasp]. I said, oh, my God, I'm sorry Fred. He says, what are you still doing here. I didn't see your car. I said, well, I parked on the front [row]. And so then I was told by Sutton that day not to come in at all because I was probably already over sixteen hours for two days-worth of work. I said, actually, I'm at fifteen. Jim says, don't come in. So that Wednesday I stayed home and then we regrouped. Jim says, Rodney Hughes doesn't want to hear of you leaving this building at 3:30 or four o'clock or five again. Because when I said it to Fred, I said, I usually am out of here by four o'clock. Fred says, what? You've been working here at four o'clock in the morning? I said yes.

Well, the computer system would crash. One night I rewrote a story five times

because the printer wasn't working. But that was the fun. That's the fun of being on this wonderful newspaper. We were in an old building, we believe it has ghosts. We're convinced that Miss Nina Hawkins is still with us. We really are. You know there's great stories about real small town community journalism, and here we are in one of the fastest growing areas and we are the newspaper.

[My meeting with] Jim Baltzelle was December 1. He talked to me, what do you want to do. I told him what I wanted to do. He said, well, I have someone else in mind for that job. I said, okay, so what do you want me to do? And he said, I want you to beef-up the county coverage. I'm committed to expanding the county coverage and getting someone to help you full time, so we divide up the load. And I want you to start doing some other things. Maybe you can help me write editorials and things like that. So I said okay. And he wanted me to do representing the *Record* out in the community. I had done that, limited, before. I said, all right, I can do this. Then he wanted me to coordinate the legislative coverage and go to Tallahassee. I said okay, because the county was so necessary, needed all this state money. So I said yes . . .

[End of side B4]

P: So Jim Baltzelle becomes editor in December of 2001 and he inherits me.

C: He came from the *Ocala Star-Banner*?

P: No, he comes from the *Florida Times-Union*. He was urban editor at the *Florida Times-Union*. He had been at Palatka and then went to the *Times-Union* and had come from both of those, from Ocala. He had been in the University of Florida, too. Jim gets me right before my last session of chemotherapy.

C: Your cancer diagnosis was?

P: June 26, 2000. I had my surgery July 5<sup>th</sup>. I worked from home most of the summer because the doctor wouldn't let me back in the office. He was afraid of infection because I had a bilateral mastectomy and I had over 210 staples and I did not have reconstruction. Because it took a long time to heal, he was worried about infection. So I commuted to the office via the computer and the telephone. The then city desk administrative assistant [was] bringing my mail to me, or Allen running by the office and picking up my mail. Ned was also, that summer, interning in our press room. They would leave a box that he would bring. I just couldn't go in the office for nine weeks. But I was working.

C: How many hours a day would you say you worked when you were recuperating?

P: The home health people would come at nine. I would be on the phone to the office around 7:30 because I knew I could talk to someone then. Then I would be in the groove by ten o'clock. I'd be working the phones at the county. I'd call county offices that I knew people would be in before eight o'clock. The home health people came. They were always at the house about thirty-five/forty minutes and then I'd do the rest of the day. I would watch the county government meetings on Tuesday even though we had a reporter there. I would call Jim Sutton, who was editor then, and say, Jim, when Mike gets back he needs to know this is part of that story, and I will e-mail you the reference or I will sum up who he needs to talk to. I would do a lot of that.

One time this woman is standing up there [talking] about this new county housing committee they are organizing. She says to them, she needs five appointments, one from each of them and then there would be two ex-officio. One of the commissioners said, is it covered by the Sunshine Law? She said no, it is not. I am sitting there recuperating, watching this. I pick up the phone and call the county attorney's office because I know that the county attorney's office has a phone in there. I get the secretary of the county attorney's office on the phone. I have my Sunshine Law book right next to my computer at home. Now, you have to picture this, I am dressed in one of those mu-mus. It is a blue paisley cotton mu-mu, because that was the most comfortable thing for me to be in. I am telling the paralegal on the phone what was just wrong with that. I said, did you hear what she said? Did you hear, did you hear? And she said, yes, I heard it. I said, it's wrong, it's wrong. She says, well, I know it's wrong Margo. I said, they've got to fix it right now. I said, you have to get Pat **McCormick** and tell him that's wrong. I said, if they're not going to fix it right now, I'm writing the story tomorrow. I said, I'm writing it anyway, but I'm writing it tomorrow. She says, you're sick, you're home. I said, no, I'm not, I've got that TV on. Thank God for the government channel. Then I wait and nothing happens. The woman is still up there talking about other housing issues. Finally, she finishes and I hear the assistant to the county attorney say, excuse me, commissioners, I think she misspoke when she said to you the following. He said, we've already had a call from a listener questioning whether this committee is covered by the Sunshine Law. And the listener has said that she cannot tell you it is not covered by the Sunshine Law, that that committee appointed by you is covered by the Sunshine Law. Well, they were stuck because now we were at step two. Do we go back and say, okay, we're not going to cover this, we're not going to appoint these people, we're going to let you appoint them so they're not covered by the Sunshine Law? And of course I still believe they are. Well, they let it stand and that afternoon that assistant county attorney and he says, I thought you were home recuperating. I said, you just keep that government channel up and running. I am watching over you guys. I said, you were asleep at the switch. He said it was so innocuous it just went right past him. But you know, he worked for the county another year and a

half and he was a great champion of that kind of element of the meeting. But yes, I mean she got up there and she says, and you don't have to worry these people are going to be covered by the Sunshine Law [laughing]. I'm having a stroke at home.

C: Has that not been a kind of Margo Cox-Pope, day-in, day-out, mantra? This open government, public meetings, public records.

P: Oh, yes.

C: Why?

P: Because it's our business they're doing. It's our money. They're spending our money. They're making decisions that affect our quality of life. We elect these people to represent us and they have to do their business about our money in public. I write columns about it regularly. I say things like, after all, it's our money. I never say, it's your money, it's our money, and you get to sit in those big chairs because of us. In fact, my column tomorrow is about this whole idea that members-elect tend to forget that they are covered by the Sunshine Law as soon as they are elected. I get into that in my column tomorrow, about it, that very point, that whole issue of Sunshine [law] and public records. I don't do it to be me. Because I always include it in my columns, that it's not our laws, it's the public's laws. I say that. I didn't say it today though, in the column for tomorrow. I think I was so wound up in getting the point across. See, we already know that some of our local officials in this election, in the general election for 2002 are courting certain candidates and they've had meetings with these candidates, they've had them out at the local government meeting, you know the one that they expect will win. So you can't tell me that November 6<sup>th</sup> or the night of November 5<sup>th</sup>, when it becomes apparent that these people aren't going to be doing what's come naturally for them the last three or four months. That's pretty much why I do it.

I believe these laws are the only laws that we have that protect our interest, in terms of government decision making and government policies. It's the whole business about, we pay taxes, we elect people to do what we want them to do, they get to sit in the big chairs, they get to go to the A-list parties, they get to shake hands with the President of the United States, former president or whatever. They get to hob-nob in the governor's inner-sanctum. They get to do all these things and in return, they have to do things for us. And what they have to do for us is make those decisions in public and make those documents public. I mean we, the *Record*, came out against a sitting commissioner who is otherwise very effective, because she flaunted the Sunshine Law. She made derogatory remarks about it to me and derogatory remarks about it to the editor. She made comments in meetings. She was in discussion over the keeping of

public records. She says, what do you mean my letters are public. I throw them in the trash. She gave some of us heartburn in a meeting where she actually said, I don't keep anything. The county attorney's office had to sit down with her, and fortunately they found out that she was keeping it because the secretary was saving the stuff because she was having a fit when she knew that this was happening. So that's why I do it, Jean.

I think that I was very privileged, and I say that sincerely, to be at the University of Florida and learn from the people that got that law passed. I wrote a column with Buddy last year. You know, every time they create another exemption, they're not protecting us. And people don't understand that. They don't understand they're not protecting us because all these things that they're going to protect us from other people are accessing. Databases are already out there. What are we protecting? Who are we protecting ourselves from? That's why I do it. I don't want to be the one that has to stand up in the meetings, although I have done that at least three times that I recall, where I have stood up and objected to access. I want the people who are sitting out in the audience, who parade up front. I'll have to send you these columns. There's one column where I wrote about three community activists in St. Augustine and said that they didn't know people like Buddy Davis and **Red Cross**, Senator **Cross** from Gainesville. But they had them and their committed followers to thank for what they can do and that is, get up and rail the commission and go into the planning department and access minutes, get into a planning department meeting, at least get the minutes. I always explain, the Florida public records law was here from 1909, but it took this other law a lot longer to get on the books. But yet, in tandem, these are the people. I hike the book, I tell them to call Barbara **Peterson** [Chair, First Amendment Foundation], I run the 800 number, I run the website. I forgot to call yesterday and tell them over at First Amendment that I'm hiking the book again, because they tell me they have people that have actually responded and said, how do we do this.

C: So what do you see down the road ahead? Where is your career moving? In what direction?

P: Well, in November of a year ago, November 19<sup>th</sup>, he actually called me on the 18<sup>th</sup>, Jim Baltzelle named me associate editor. It's a shared relationship in terms of leadership. He sets the tone, I make sure that the tone is carried out. I don't know how long I [will] serve it. [It's at] his pleasure and the publisher's pleasure. I really don't know how long it goes on. I think we have a good relationship now. I think we can share things. I think we can agree to disagree on certain things. You know, would I like to be editor of this paper? I think so. I think I would like to be. If they called me at the *Times-Union* and said, would you like to managing editor, I don't see that happening, but yes, I wouldn't mind being managing editor. I wouldn't mind going back on the road.

I am fiercely competitive with the *Times-Union* but, at the same time, I'm very loyal to Morris Communications. The Morris family gave me extensive opportunities. Billy Morris himself was here about six or seven months ago, it's been since the grand opening, and said something about, well, you know, when you came to St. Augustine we just figured we'd send you down for three months to help them and then pull you back. I laughed and I said, yes. He said, how long have you stayed, fifteen years? I said, fourteen. But I've had a lot of fun. I've had a lot of opportunities. Some people have said to me, you never went anywhere in your career. Well, the *Times Union* was big enough that I went from being a reporter to assistant city editor for planning, which put me on all kinds of committees. Then I was assignments editor in features, then I was features editor. I've been managing editor and senior writer. I've been features editor here and now I'm associate editor. A lot of people come through this operation. Everybody that I have worked with, I've grown under. When Jim called me at home out of the blue and told me this was my job, I was astonished, I cried. I said, are you sure? I hope he's still sure, because November 19<sup>th</sup> is coming up rather quickly now [laughing].

My goal is now get this place cleaned up. They recently put me on a billboard for new *Record* promotion called "We cover St. John's county." So at least for the life of the billboard I guess [I'll be in this position at the newspaper] But I see myself strengthening my ability to write tough editorials and columns that wake people up. I want this local issues column to tell people how to do the job their supposed to do. And that's, get out there and fight for the community. Make sure when government speaks, they speak on behalf of all of us. I mean, we've got a controversy right now in a parking garage. We're going to lose, I will be real surprised if we retain, two incumbent city commissioners and the mayor because they did nothing to stop the process to get it back on track with public hearings. After they made all the decisions, then they held the public hearings. They can't understand why there were so many candidates against them. These are bitter campaigns. These are as bitter as the campaign for our congress [seat] between **John Micah** and Wayne **Hogan**. The campaign for our city commission seats had never been as bitter. And the Mayoral.

C: And why is that?

P: Because they did not respond to the public. The public came ready to say, we don't need a parking garage right in the back of the historic Lightner [Museum], down in our historic preservation area, south of King Street, where we still have old homes. We don't need a four-story parking garage backing up to the back of the Lightner. The planning and zoning board approved it a year ago. But people didn't rally around it because it was so vaguely worded, they didn't realize it meant four-story garage right behind the Lightner Museum. The mayor didn't

even tell the Lightner board of trustees, on which he sits as a member, that this parking garage was coming down the pike. They find out about it, hearing it at a meeting. So all these people line up to come in and talk about this, and the mayor says, well, all we were doing was authorizing the sale of the bonds. We've already made the other decision. So now he's in a war for his seat and the other commissioner who is up for re-election is in a war for his seat. The mantra of these two opponents is, you didn't let the public speak.

C: And what has the role of the *Record* been?

P: The *Record* encouraged the city to let the public speak. They won't admit it, but I believe we are the reason they finally held public hearings. Albeit, they were too late, but they did hold public hearings. But I'll tell you what this parking garage controversy has taught the city. Now, they are doing what the DOT does, the Department of Transportation holds informational meetings. From the very beginning, when they decide they're going to rebuild a road or cut a new road, they hold an informational meeting and say, look, people, this might not happen this year, it might be twenty years away but we're starting the process. Well, they've got two big controversial project: rebuilding the seawall and draining Maria Sanchez Lake and rebuilding Maria Sanchez Lake, which is down in the south end of town. In both of those instances they fully admit, we made a mistake. We've had the commission say, we've had the mayor say, we've made a mistake. Now they're having this process that's similar to the DOT, where we're going to have informational meetings to death for the next year and half on the seawall before we even get to letting a bid. People are turning out for these meetings. We are covering them and we are making that point. I made that point in my column last week and I said they should have been doing this process with the garage. So that's what I do, that's what I see my role. And reporters come in and they ask me questions about public access and I email Barbara or I tell them to call Barbara direct or I call Barbara direct, depending on the circumstances of the issue. We're working on one right now where the school board has in effect reopened negotiations with the teaching union, even though the contracts have been signed. The school board is holding strategy sessions behind closed doors. So we're pursuing a story on that. Because Barbara says, what! What were they doing? Barbara Peterson, she's going, they can't do this, they don't have negotiations. Well, what they're doing is they've agreed so, even though they've adopted a contract, now they're going to meet periodically to discuss how they can do better by the teachers. And the teacher union president says oh yeah we've agreed to meet to do this quarterly. We're going, what! And they say they don't have to treat them as executive sessions under 268.11 or .011. They said they don't have to do that. They said there's a section in the collective bargaining statue 447. And I don't remember it off the top of my head. And so we are reporters working on the story now. And once he gets the story to where its ready to go, we're going to deal with an

editorial stand on it. It's the whole issue of access. What are we doing? So that's exciting to me. It's exciting and that's why . . . I'm talking long again.

I went to the investigative reporters and editors regional conference in Savannah, two weeks ago this weekend. And I listened to discussion on Georgia's law. And Georgia has a book about this big. Their manual is about this big. And I listened to these women from North Carolina talking about trying to access email—which we did a big project last year on. And I'm listening to all this, and every point I can make a comment on, I keep saying I'm in Florida newspaper state and the best state for access. And I said your model laws are in this book.

And the Georgia First Amendment Foundation woman, she talks about it, but she didn't have enough background on Florida's laws to be talking about them. So I was doing the talking. I've since had emails, people wanting to know about this that and the other thing that Florida has. And I said that's our job. You need to get this law beefed up. You need to get that executive session provision out of there unless it's very finite. And ours is very finite.

So, you know five years from now I will be, I'm fifty-five so I'll be sixty-one. I haven't slowed down. I'm still as insistent about public records and access as I was when I was twenty-six covering the board of regents. I guess whatever I'm supposed to be doing then, I'll be doing. But I'll be having a great time, I really will. This is a great business and I learned it best at the University of Florida, I did, and the *Alligator*.

[End of the interview.]