

UFA 11

Interviewee: Jack Hariston

Interviewer: Charles Cote

Date: October 26, 1999; November 2, 1999

- C: October 26, 1999. I am profiling Jack Hairston, longtime sports columnist in the area. Mr. Hairston, in this initial part of the interview, I want to get into a little bit your beginnings growing up in Mississippi and some of your early experiences and then bring that forth to present day. So, when and where were you born?
- H: I was born in 1928 in Jackson, Mississippi. My family moved to Indianola [in] the Mississippi Delta when I was six years old, and I went to school there. I finished high school up there.
- C: Why the move?
- H: My daddy had been Adjutant General, the head of the state National Guard, of the state of Mississippi. It is a political appointment, and when they change the governor, they change the adjutant general. He went to work for [the] Internal Revenue [Service], which is one of the more cursed professions in the world. He was assigned the northwest corner of the state. Indianola, where he had lived once before, was in that area. It is kind of a central place in that area. So, that is where I grew up.
- C: Did your mom work at the time?
- H: No, she was a housewife. Women, for the most part, did not want to work in those days.
- C: Did you have any brothers and sisters?
- H: I had a sister.
- C: Younger or older?
- H: Older.
- C: Obviously, your dad, as someone with the IRS, had a sort of formal job. What were some of your early experiences when you first decided that sports was [for you]? Was there a game?
- H: Actually, I think I latched onto sports when I was eleven years old. I was playing with my dog, dragging a stick along the sidewalk, and I hit a rough spot. The stick [was] wrapped around my arm and broke my arm, and they had to put a cast on it. It swelled. I could not do anything for several days. This was a little

town of about 3,000 in Mississippi, and I started reading everything I could get my hands on. I was reading the newspaper front to back. I did not know what rape meant, but I would read the stories about the rapes, and the ball games, and the holdups and everything. It seemed to me—this was the summer of 1940—that the most interesting [thing] that was going on was the baseball pennant races. The race in each league was going back and forth. This was in June, and much of the summer went back and forth between the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Cincinnati Reds in the National League. In the American League, it was really a wild race with the Detroit Tigers, the Cleveland Indians, and the New York Yankees. Every afternoon, the paper was delivered, and I could not wait to get it and read about the ball games, the pennant races back and forth. Then I would get the magazines. I got an old magazine which had Hank Greenberg's picture, from the Detroit Tigers, in there, and it was telling about how a couple of years before that he had hit fifty-eight home runs and had come so close to Babe Ruth's record. So, I kind of adopted Hank Greenberg as my favorite player. The Tigers won the pennant that year, and so I really got hooked on sports.

When my high school football team would start practicing, I would go out there and watch them every day and follow all of their games. I was just excited about sports. When my arm healed, I played sports, I guess from the time I was eleven years old to the time I left for the Army. Anytime I had a day off, I looked for a ball game to be in. I was not a really good athlete, by any means, but I played on the sand lots, football, basketball, baseball. I was not very big. Well, I should not say not very big; I mean, I was tiny, until I got out of high school. I weigh right at 200 pounds now, and I weighed 170 about the time I was twenty-two. But, when I was in the tenth grade, I weighed about ninety pounds. In eleventh grade, I weighed about 105 pounds and, my senior year, I weighed about 130. Finally, in my senior year, I played some on the basketball team and on the baseball team. About two or three years later, at about 165 or 170 pounds, I was mad as hell because I had not been big enough to play sports when I really wanted to play so badly.

Later on, I became what you call a pretty good neighborhood tennis player. I played in some tournaments and, if there were not too many good players in there, I might win. I played a lot of softball. I played some basketball. You cannot play basketball much into your twenties, the right way. You cannot keep your wind up if you are smoking and drinking, which I was in my twenties. I had to give up basketball. I played a lot of tennis. I played tennis into my sixties. I played softball into my mid-fifties in the city league in Gainesville. I was a better athlete at forty years old, probably, than I was when I was sixteen. Mostly, your sportswriters are frustrated athletes. Real good athletes go into coaching, or else they get their fill... the guys who love sports and are really not very good at it are the ones who go into sports [writing]. I knew as I was coming along that I

wanted to do something connected with sports, but I did not know quite what it was. I thought it might be radio. I thought it might be writing.

When I was in the eleventh grade—I was the manager of the football team my last three years in high school—and, in the eleventh grade the coach called the Memphis and Jackson papers to ask them if they would run the stories on our games. They said, yes. I think they said to send 100 words, night press rate collect by Western Union. If he could get somebody to do that, they would run the stories in the paper, and he told me, you are drafted to do this. So, I would go down on Saturday mornings to the schoolhouse, and I took typing. I was able to get into the school, and I would go up to the schoolhouse to the typing lab and type these stories in five minutes, and then take them down to Western Union and send them in. I was not a great student in school. You could definitely say that. But, I always had good English teachers. They were tough old-maid English teachers who demanded that I do right, so I was better at English than I was at anything else. These stories would run in the Memphis paper and the Jackson paper on Sunday mornings, and they did not change a word. They ran them just like that. So, I felt like I was doing fairly well. Then, the senior class, the next year, always took over the school paper, which had a page in the weekly newspaper and I was, by acclamation, named sports editor. I did that, and then I began to think, this might be the way I want to go.

Then, the next year, I went over to the junior college nearby. I was hired, getting paid for the first time, \$0.15 an inch, by the Greenwood paper, a big regional paper in Greenwood, Mississippi, the *Morning Star*. I was making as much as \$60 a month at \$0.15 cents an inch. You can do the math on it. I was spending more time working for the newspaper than I was on my college classes.

They ran these long stories, ran them like I wrote them; they did not change anything. Then, after one year, I was getting ready to go back for my sophomore year in college, and I went over to the Class C baseball game, a professional baseball team in Greenwood. The owner of the paper was up in the press box, and I went by, just to say hello. He said, I want you to come to work for us full time, starting next week. I was eighteen years old and, pretty much, a mama's boy and I thought, my mother would never allow that. I said, well, I will talk to you. He said, well, come on over to Greenwood tomorrow to the office and talk to me. So, I went home and told my mother what he had said.

To my surprise, she said, you might ought to take that. I said, yes? She said, look, I can pay for one more year of college. And junior college cost almost no money then. It cost almost nothing. She said, now, with one year of college, you got a job; with two years of college, you might not have a job. I guess that was pretty good. She said, I do not know whether I can send you any further than the junior college. So, I was bored with school, anyhow. I want to say right here that I would recommend journalism school for every potential journalist.

I might be the last one of the ones with one year of college who went as far as I

did. And that was a lot of luck. But, I went over there and went to work as a city editor.

City editor was, handle the wire, and lay out the pages. The guy who was departing stayed around about a week and showed me how to do it and to write the heads and, virtually, to put the paper together. You would cover the stuff like civic club speeches, fires, and go to the fire department, the police department, the sheriff's department, and write the minor stuff. If something big came through, [like] a U.S. Senate candidate speaking, the ace reporter had the title of managing editor. That was just [the way] they did it. They had about four or five people. He would—he was an older fellow—he would write the big stuff. If there was a big murder of somebody, some store owner whom everybody knew, he would do the story. If it was the little stuff, I would do the story. But, it was good experience for a year, doing that. I suppose it is all right just to keep rattling on?

C: Keep going with it.

H: The owner of the paper was twenty-eight years old and had a heart attack and died. Everybody quit except me. By then, I was nineteen. So, I did everything [for the paper]. One of the guys who left tried to get me to go with him. He got fired and he tried to get me [to go] mainly, I think, to hurt the paper, because I was the last one there. I did not do it. I would not go. That is when it really got tough. I was a one-man newspaper at nineteen years old. I even had to put the type in the page and justify the page, put the leads in and everything and tighten it up, in the old hot type days. I got my thumb cut off trimming the heads. We had a head machine that set one-column heads and three-column heads. There were not any two-column heads. So, to set a two-column head, you had to set it on the three column slug and just leave space there. Then, you would have to take the slug and trim it, from three columns to two columns. You would hold it up to the saw like that, and I got too close. It was about two or three o'clock in the morning, and I was sleepy. It took the end of my thumb off, which is not really a handicap. But, we had a seventeen-year-old alcoholic as the only linotype operator, and he would pass out about eleven o'clock. So, that was my responsibility, to find somebody to set the type. I would have to sometimes phone Grenada, Mississippi, which is about fifty miles away and get a printer from there. I would drive up and get him and drive him back. When he would get through setting the type at about two o'clock, I would drive him back to Grenada, and then I would drive back to Greenwood. The typical day, I would come in at three o'clock in the afternoon. I would go over to the fire station and get a list of all the fires, go to the police station and get a list of all the arrests, go to city court and get a list of the action they had at the daily city court, and then go to the courthouse and get the sheriff's log and copy all the arrests out of that. Then, I would go back and write about twelve to fifteen stories. Then, the phone

calls would come in, and I would go cover a fire or a robbery or a wreck. They had fatal wrecks there almost every night. They had murders, and I would go cover the murders.

C: Did you feel overwhelmed? I mean, were there feelings where some days you would just think, I cannot believe I am doing all this?

H: I was thinking, this cannot go on too much longer but, like I said, I was a very immature seventeen-year-old and, all of a sudden, by the time I was twenty, I was very mature. I had the maturity of about a thirty-year-old. For instance now, one time we got a call--people would call the paper before they called the police station and say, there has been a shooting out here! Someone gave us an address on the edge of town. I jumped in the car and went out there. I got out there, and this house was burning up. There was a guy standing there. This was at night; it was dark, with the light of the fire. I walked up to him. He was covered with blood, and he was just standing there. I said, bad fire, huh? And he said, yes. I said, what caused this? Me and my brother got to fighting. I said, where is your brother? He said, he is in there. The thing was falling in and everything. Anybody inside was dead. I said, what happened to him? He said, I stuck a knife in him and left him in there. Then, I was thinking, boy, I wish the cops would hurry up and get here. Like I said, I was nineteen years old. You could hear the sirens in the distance coming. They got there in about three more minutes--I was never so glad to see the police in my life--and they carried him away. I think he was convicted of murder and sentenced [to] life [imprisonment]. But, he and I were sitting there watching that fire. That would make you grow up a little bit.

Playing basketball never had produced any kind of drama like that. But, I did all that for six or eight months, and that was my journalism school. You learn the importance of deadlines. You have probably gone through enough journalism. If you do not get the story written and to the Linotype operator, he cannot get it set and to the man who makes the page up and puts it in there, and then they cannot get the page to the guy that makes the matt and produces the curved lead page to go on the press. Then, the press cannot start on time to get it out and give the people to deliver it all over everywhere. So, you learn that the deadline is sacred. There was not any such thing as missing the deadline, ever.

If the president of the United States died and it has to go to the press in two minutes, I am going to have something in two minutes. It is going to the press. Then, we are going to come back, maybe in a half hour, and get a bigger story. But, it was just sacred, and you worked as fast as you had to and cut as many corners as you had to, to get the page out. I worked on a lot of papers where one person is putting together six pages. When you got to get it out at six o'clock or eight o'clock at night or whatever, there is no excuse for missing it. Just put something in and get it out. So, that was my education.

Then, the new owner came in and he said that, in effect, I was the managing editor, city editor, and sports editor all in one and he said, I am going to be the editor-in-chief and you can take whatever of those other three jobs you want, and I will hire two people to fill the other two jobs. Well, I knew that my interest was in sports. I did not want to be the managing editor. So, I took sports editor and did the job there for a couple of years. Then, I went in the Army during the Korean War. When I got out, I felt like it was time to move up from this little paper which was about 2000 to 3000 in circulation.

I had met the sports editor in Jackson, Mississippi, a guy named Carl Walters, who had produced more good journalism than anybody in the state. If you made it in journalism in Mississippi, you had to go through Carl Walters. You had to work for him, and then he would recommend you to New Orleans or Memphis or Atlanta or something like that. I went to him and was with him for about three years, which is a long time when you are in the twenty-two, twenty-four range. I learned a lot from him.

W: What was the effect of the Korean War? I know there have been some sports figure writers, such as Jimmy Ken, who have said that although he was not in the war, he covered the war, and that changed his writing style. The drama was right there already. Do you think that influenced you at all?

H: No. I never did get overseas. I stayed in the United States. I saw a lot of combat, but most of it was around Columbia, South Carolina. No, it did not, other than aging a year or two. But, at the Jackson paper, I had covered some college games. Even when I was at Greenwood, I started covering the Southeastern Conference games in the press box, in 1948. I was nineteen years old. I would go down and cover the Sugar Bowl in New Orleans. I covered a few basketball games at Ole Miss and Mississippi State. But I was mainly covering the high school sports. Then, in Jackson, Mississippi, I covered a little more in the college. They opened a new paper down there, and Walters went over there as the sports editor. He was about fifty-two, and I was twenty-four. He was something of a father to me. My father died when I was ten years old. [Carl and I] got to be very close. Actually, we were closer after I quit working for him than we were when I was working for him. After I went on to Florida, whenever he came down to cover a game in Gainesville, he would stay with me, whether I was living in Jacksonville or Gainesville. When I would go back to Jackson, Mississippi, to cover games over there, when the Gators would play, I would stay at his house. So, we got to be very good friends. We were close. It was almost like a father-son relationship.

We went over to the *State Times*, which [was] a third paper in Jackson. There were three papers in Jackson, the *Daily News* and the *Clarion Ledger* were

owned by the same people. We had been on the *Daily News*. Then, the *State Times*, the businessmen in town thought they needed a third paper, to make the advertising rates competitive. They did not stay with it long. It was a bad idea. But, they spent a lot of money at first. We hired people from New Orleans and Louisville and Atlanta. There was no telling what the payroll was on that paper. But then, after about six or eight months, it was kind of stalled. It did not have the circulation that the other two papers did. They could offer dual deals. Subscribe to one paper, and you get the other one free. And then, if you bought an ad in one paper, maybe you would get the other for 20 percent or something. We could not match that, so our ads were not as effective as the other ads. Believe me, when somebody buys an ad at a particular radio station or a particular newspaper, he has learned that, that is the best ad for him to have, the best place for him to put it. If you are on the bottom of the barrel, you do not get the ads. So, one day, after we had been in business for six to eight months, the paper was coming out every morning at about eleven o'clock. It would be a cause of great interest, and we would all sit down and start reading the paper. Carl called me over. Come here, Jack. He said, look at these ads; our owners have put their ads in the *Jackson Daily News*, the opposite paper. And he said, we are not going to last much longer. He said, all these big businessmen and all the department stores and real estate businesses and everything, their ads are not even going into the paper where they own the stock. So, he went back to the combination paper, which was a smart move, and stayed there until he died. I was, at the moment, the sports editor at the *State Times*, but it had a death sentence on it, and I knew it then. I made up my mind that I was going to work as hard as I could and make the best showing I could and get out of there.

We put out a seventy-two page tabloid on football in the state, colleges and high schools. We had every high school schedule in the state in there and a write-up on every conference. I put my life into that thing for about three or four weeks, and I proofread it. I still have one of those. Seventy-two pages, and there is not an error in there. I sent it to every sports editor in the South and on Labor Day weekend, I got offers from Birmingham, Nashville, and two papers in New Orleans. It was a long weekend. I had applied to all of these places. First I got a call from Birmingham and they said, we do not have anything on sports right now, but we have a job on the news side working on the copy desk. I said, no. Then, I got a call from Nashville and they said, we are going to have a job in about a month. I said, okay, you have my address; keep it. Then, later that day, I got a call from the *New Orleans States*, offering me a job covering LSU [Louisiana State University] football and covering all the basketball in the SEC [Southeastern Athletic Conference]. That looked pretty good but I was making \$110 a week at that time, and they offered me \$110 a week also. Gosh, my wife was seven or eight months pregnant with our first baby. I said, gosh, I have to quit a job and move to New Orleans and leave a house that I just bought, pay my moving expenses, and I am not going to make \$1 more? He said, well, I will see

if I can get you any more money. I was really shaking my head and not knowing if whether I was going to move or not. I knew this paper was going to die, and it did die a couple of years later.

Then, I was sitting home. It was a holiday. I was sitting home and the phone rang and I said, well, that ought to be Hap Glaudi from the *New Orleans Item*. My wife looked at me and laughed. I picked up and said, hello? Hi, Hap. It was. He offered me virtually the same job at the *New Orleans Item* that the *States* had offered me, at the same \$110 a week. You think salaries are bad now. And I still had about [six or seven] years of experience. So he offered me the same job at the *Item* that they had offered me at the *States*, covering LSU football and covering all the college basketball, working on the desk again. They got their money's worth out of it. So, I told them the same thing I told Harry Martinez at the *States*, that I sure would like to have more than \$110 a week. He said, let me see what I can do. So, the next day, now I am back at the office, and he calls. He said, I cannot go any higher. I told him the truth. I always believe in telling people the truth. I did not try to be coy about it, that I was not talking to anybody but them. I said, I am talking to these other people, and I am going to go wherever looks like the best deal. I said, if Mr. Martinez does not give me anymore than you offer me, I am coming with you. I said, he is supposed to be back in touch with me by this afternoon at five o'clock. He said, all right, if I do not hear from you by five o'clock, I am going to offer the job to somebody else. I said, okay. Well, it got to be five o'clock and no phone call from the other paper. So I am sitting there and I said, if I do not do something, I am going to let both of these slip through my fingers. So, I called Glaudi and accepted the job, at \$110. Half an hour later, Martinez called and said, sorry I am late, but I was out at the fairgrounds, racetrack, betting on the horses, and I got tied up talking to some people and the traffic was bad, and so I am calling you at five-thirty instead of five, and I can give you ten more dollars. I said, I am sorry; I have already taken the job at the *Item*. Oh, my goodness, he said, you are going to the *Item*. I stuck to my word. I believe in that. I know a lot of people would have said, hell, I would have taken that \$10 and told Glaudi to lump it. But I really believe you have to have a code, even if you are a small person, an insignificant person, and there is not much money involved. You need to live by your own code. So I took the job at the *Item*. The only bad part out of that was Martinez was getting ready to retire, about four or five months later. The sports editor of the *Times Picayune*--the other paper, was owned by the same people--he said, you ought to apply for that job. I said, no, they do not like people from out here; they probably do not like me because I turned them down to go to the *Item*. He said, well, you ought to call. So, I called this fellow who was the managing editor and he said, come on over. So I went over, and it was one of the dirtiest deals I have ever had played on me. He got me over there just to have the enjoyment of telling me that he would not hire me if I was the only one left. He said, you did not treat Harry Martinez right. He said, we

offered you more money than the *Item*. I said, I had already given my word to the *Item*, and he said, I am just glad to be able to tell you, you are not getting the job. Well, I said, I would have appreciated if you had told me and saved me the trouble of coming over here. He was about fifty-five years old, and I was twenty-seven. You do not get many experiences like that, but I thought it was just kind of lowdown. Then, when I got down to the *Item*, I liked it. I learned a lot from Glaudi. He was ahead of his time. Carl Walters was a good journeyman newspaperman, but he did not teach anything about interesting leads. It was all, Ole Miss ran the record to 5 and 0 by thumping Tulane, 42-12. But, Glaudi would say, he would show you how to interview the players after the game. A lot of times in Mississippi, we did not interview players at that time. I interviewed the players, I would need to come back about the guy winning the game for his sweetheart or his dying mother. It would be different. There would be a little spark to it. Then, he would put the package together—like everybody does now, but not many people in the country at that time were doing that—with a picture, story, and head, and he would, maybe, have another picture tied in with it. In Mississippi, we might run this story here and, then, if this story is on the same subject, it might be on another page, and we would not bother to dress in a picture. Glaudi, he was ahead of his time, way ahead of his time. He would have this drawn up like is common now. But, in 1956, that was not common. Everybody would buy an *Item* and try to copy him. So, I got the experience of working under him for six months, which was good. It was kind of like a master's degree in journalism. I learned a lot. New Orleans is a very competitive town.

W: Is it really a sports town? I usually do not think of New Orleans as being that.

H: It is. It has not got any baseball, which is amazing to me when they have that Superdome over there and everything. When they first got that Superdome, I thought it was going to become the best sports town in the country. But, it never got a baseball team. It has been in the NFL [National Football League] better than thirty years now.

W: Not a lot of success.

H: No. And they had some Super Bowls. The NCAA [National Collegiate Athletic Association] Finals has been in there a couple of times. It is a great boxing town, but they have never had any great fights there. The fights just all go to Atlantic City and Las Vegas and around there. Miami used to get some good fights. Ali [prizefighting champion Muhammad Ali, formerly known as Cassius Clay] fought down there. He dethroned Liston [professional prizefighting champion Sonny Liston] that time down in Miami Beach. Floyd Patterson and Ingemar Johansson [heavyweight boxers] did their third fight down there. But, now, the hotels make so much gambling money by bringing the big crowds in

that they just bankroll the fights. In other words, they give the promoters tremendous amounts of money, more than actual attendance bears, to put the fight in Las Vegas and Atlantic City because they make so much money in gambling. New York, Madison Square Gardens, seldom has any big fights there. They are all in the gambling casinos. But I thought New Orleans was going to be the number one town in American sports.

But, when I got there, I was the youngest guy on the staff, and I was the highest paid man on the staff other than the sports editor. Ike Morales was a very highly regarded boxing writer in his fifties, and he was making less (than I was at) \$110 a week. And Joe Englert, who was the assistant to [Glaudi], laying out the pages and everything, he was making less than \$110 a week. So, I knew right then that, that was not going to be my final resting place. Glaudi was around forty and was probably going to be there for a long time. As it turned out, the paper died in another two years and sold out to the opposition. That was the beginning of the shrinking, from having three papers in every town to having one. New Orleans has one now. So, I just kept putting out a few feelers for jobs. New Orleans was connected to Kansas City in the United Press hub. AP [Associated Press] in Atlanta was the hub for the South. But, for New Orleans, it went to Kansas City, so the Kansas City United Press people--it was not United Press International then, it was just United Press--they would come into New Orleans to see how everything was, to touch base with the papers. The personnel man came through and he said, I got a tip that you are looking for a job. I said, yes, I am looking for a job. I said, I am making \$110 a week here, and there is not much chance of raises in the future. So, he offered me a job as sports editor for the region out of Kansas City, which is a good job. I said, yes, that is great. He said, come in to fill out some papers. Then, all of sudden, he said, you have seven years of experience. I said, I thought you knew I had about that much. He said, what makes this so bad is that we are going to have to pay you \$135 a week, and we have never started anybody at \$135. I know you are probably thinking I am making these numbers up.

W: No, not at all.

H: And he said, we have a guild and you having seven years of experience, we would have to pay you \$135, and United Press has a policy of starting someone off; they like to hire people with two years of experience, at \$90 or \$100, and, then, five years from now, we would be glad to be paying you \$135. I said, well, look, just put me down there for four years or whatever, and I will come for \$110 or \$115. No, we cannot do that. He said, do you have any friends who work for United Press? When I was in Jackson, several of the fellows who came through there were about my age; we were pals and partied together. They had fanned out in different directions. One of them was bureau manager in Memphis. Another one was in Knoxville. One of them was in Jackson, and one of them

was number two, number three man in Atlanta. He said, get them to write headquarters in New York and ask them to make an exception and hire you even though you have seven years of experience. So, I did that. Now, the reason I am telling you this is [to explain] why I did not go to Atlanta. While I am waiting for this to go through, Furman Bisher calls. He was sports editor at [the] Atlanta [*Journal*]. He called and offered me a job and I said, Furman, to tell you the truth, Kansas City has offered me sports editor for the United Press and it is more money than you are talking about. He said, oh, that is a good job. I said, but, they might not let me have it because I have to write in and ask them to make a waiver for my experience, and I explained that. He said, well, I will hold the job for you; if you do not get the job in Kansas City, come to Atlanta. Also, while I am still waiting on Kansas City, Joe Livingston, who was the executive editor of the *Jacksonville Journal*, he called and offered me sports editor of the *Jacksonville Journal*. He had called Bisher to check on a guy named Ben Bird, a very good friend of mine from Knoxville who applied for the *Jacksonville Journal's* position. [Livingston] called Bisher and said, are you familiar with Ben Bird? He said, yes. He said, would Ben Bird be a good man for me to hire? And he said, yes, he would be. And Livingston said, if you were in my shoes, who would you hire? Bisher said, I would hire a young guy that would grow with the paper and who had some experience. And he said, do you have anybody, in particular, in mind? And he said, well, I am trying to hire the guy now. But, he said, I do not think I am going to get him, and he explained the Kansas City thing. And he said, Jack Hairston at the *New Orleans Item*. He said, he was sports editor in Jackson, which is a medium type paper. Then, he has been in a big city, in New Orleans, like as the number three man, and he would be just right for Jacksonville. At that time, Jacksonville was not as big as New Orleans in the newspaper business. So, Joe called me and said, would you come to the *Jacksonville Journal* as sports editor? And he offered me about \$135.

So, now, the bird in the hand was just as good as the one in the bush at Kansas City, and I knew that I could do this job. I thought I could do the wire service job, but I never had worked for a wire service. I knew there might be a pitfall in there somewhere. I did not think there was, but I knew I could do the job at *Jacksonville Journal*. They had a professional baseball team. It was sixty-five miles from the University of Florida and I knew, they explained to me, that was big news in Jacksonville. So, I took the job in Jacksonville and was there for fourteen years. I got along well with everybody. The *Times Union* bought the paper after about two years, and I got along well with them. They had AAA baseball there on a team that won a couple of pennants. I won some awards from the *Sporting News*, the best coverage in America in the minor leagues, and then the city lost AAA baseball.

It did not look they were ever going to get to the NFL. I asked Pete Rozelle [former commissioner of the National Football League]. Jacksonville [had] the

AFL All- Star game then. They just merged the NFL and the AFL in 1967. Rozelle was the commissioner. What does Jacksonville have to do to get an NFL franchise? [Rozelle] said, you need to get one man to own 51 percent. He said, we do not like to deal with committees. He said, we want one man to own at least 51 percent of the team and, that way, when we have a vote coming up we will know who to call on something, we do not want to have the Jacksonville team run by a committee of ten guys. So, I went all over town. In fact, I went to see four or five business people. They said there was not anybody in town who had that kind of money. As it turned out about five years later, Hugh Culverhouse [Jacksonville-based tax attorney and investor, longtime owner of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers football team] who lives right there in town, put the money up to get the Tampa Bay team. I asked Ash Verlander, American Heritage Life Insurance owner, who was a good friend of mine, I said, why did you not tell me about Hugh Culverhouse? He said, Jack, I have been eating dinner every Saturday night with Hugh Culverhouse and his wife at the country club for ten years, and I had no idea he had that kind of money. But Hugh Culverhouse had the Tampa Bay Bucs for years. He was a great money man, a tax man. He could save you the taxes. He had been making millions and invested it all over the world. The people of Jacksonville did not realize that he was worth \$1,000,000. By the time he died, he was probably worth \$400,000,000. Jacksonville did not look to me like it was going to get an NFL team. They were lucky this Weaver guy came down from New England and put up all the money and took all the risks and did it.

At about that time, then, Jim Minter, who had been the executive sports editor of the *Atlanta Journal* and who was named managing editor at the *Atlanta Constitution*, called me and said, do you want to come to the *Atlanta Constitution* as executive sports editor? You probably know the difference between the sports editor columnist, who usually does the columns and goes to the World Series and the Super Bowl, and the executive sports editor, who kind of runs the department and he can write a little bit, but writing is not his main job. But writing is the fun job. But I was willing to go to Atlanta as executive sports editor and be in charge of the [sports section]. I could do some writing. I could write a column a week. At that time, I had just turned forty-two. I had been there for [fourteen] years in Jacksonville, and I felt like that was long enough. I wanted some excitement and the charge of the sports department in a major league sports town, and so I went up there and said, before I take this job, I want to sit down with you and Jesse Outlar, the sports editor and the columnist, who had been doing all of it. He was a good friend of mine, too. So, I flew to Atlanta and the three of us sat down and I said, the one thing I want all three of us to agree on is that I am going to run the sports department. I said, I am not coming up here and giving up the Super Bowl and the World Series and all of that to be an assistant to you, talking about Jim Minter, who had been in that same kind of job on the *Journal*. I said, I want all three of us to agree that this is what we want,

that we understand what we want. I am going to run the department, and Jesse is going to write the column and cover the events. We all three shook hands on it.

Jesse kept [his word, did] the writing, took care of his columns, but Minter wanted a hand over everything. He wanted to give me suggestions. He gave me so many suggestions that it drove me crazy. We had the same conversation about fifty times where I said, Jim, you are not keeping your promise to me. He was my boss, but I still talked to him like that. You are not keeping your promise to me. He said, I know it; you are doing a good job, and I am not going to do it anymore. Okay, fine. The next day, I would come in, and there would be a four pink notes, one of them written at nine a.m., another one at nine-forty-five, and another one at ten-fifteen, suggestions about what to do. It just drove me crazy. He broke his promises to me on that, and he broke a lot of promises on moving expenses. He said, we have a company policy against spending that kind of money. Do not worry, he said, every month, you just turn in \$200 more for expenses than you really built up until you get the moving expenses paid. Well, I never cheated on my expense account, and I was not going to start cheating at the *Atlanta Constitution*. I just figured that was bad dealing, so I just wrote that off. But, he kept interfering with me and, finally, I told him, Jim, I am leaving. I will give you two or three weeks until you get somebody else. From that point on, he was wonderful. He said the same thing he had been saying before, and he kept [the promise] after that. He said, I am not ever going to interfere with you again; we have not treated you right and you stay as long as you want, until you find the right job; you do not have to leave in two weeks or three weeks; you can stay two years if you want to or you can stay forever, and take your time. And he never bothered me again, but I had another job in three weeks. He would [gone] back [to the suggestions]. He could not stand it. I think he just went and clinched his fists during those last few weeks I was there. Then, they had about four more people in that same job the next year there. He was hard to work for. He had been a good friend of mine. He was a good newspaperman. I am not saying that what he was telling me was wrong, but there are two ways to skin a cat. We had a deal that my way was going to be the way it was going to go. But the *Gainesville Sun* had just been bought by the *New York Times*. It was only 15,000 [circulation] then. It is about 55,000 or 60,000 now. It was considered a pretty small paper at the time. Jacksonville offered me [job, but not sports editor]--I knew that they could not [give me my old job]. It had only been about four or five months since I had left, and they had moved a bunch of people around. The editor of the editorial page moved to sports editor. The guy in the state news bureau in Tallahassee, in the legislature, was brought back and made the editor of the editorial page, and [the] assistant city editor took the Tallahassee job. These were important people in the organization. I could not expect them to move everybody back to put me

back in as sports editor. So I said, why do you not make me the news side columnist, like Jimmy Breslin does in New York? I never did that, but I thought I would like to give it a shot, you know, write about the funerals, the cop on the beat, murdered man here, or crippled children, or whatever. Just carte blanche, what I want to write about. They said, yes, that is great, and they said they had some meetings. Then they called back and said, the *Times Union* budget will take care of your salary as a news side columnist but the *Journal* does not have enough budget to pay for it. I said fine, [I'll go] to the *Times-Union*. I felt like, eventually, they would move me back [to] sports editor. I did not ask for a promise. But, then, my friend, the managing editor of the *Journal*, Elvin Henson, said, if you put him on the *Times Union*, it is going to ruin the morale of the *Journal*. So, [publisher Robert] Feagin called me back and said, We are just going to have to get rid of Elvin if we put you on the *Times Union* instead of the *Journal*, and we do not want to do that. He said, I am going to offer you a different job; I am going to offer you a job on the *Journal* as assistant city editor, and you would write two news side columns a week, and maybe this will develop into something. I said, I will think about it.

Then, Ed Johnson [executive editor] called me from Gainesville and offered me the sports editor's job at the *Gainesville Sun*. It was less money, but I did not like the sound of assistant city editor and two news side columns a week. So I took the job in Gainesville. When I came down here, it was the reverse of Atlanta. They kept promises they had not even made to me. Johnson immediately called the *New York Times* chain and said, I have a guy covering the Gators now every day; you are going to want him; and, we will send you the stuff, by ditto machine and fax... (there have been so many different things in the past twenty-five years). He would persuade them all to give me, like, \$15 a week [for my stuff]. It was actually different at each place. I might get \$20 a week from *Lakeland* [*Ledger*, part of the *New York Times* Florida newspapers] and \$10 a week from *Ocala* [*Star-Banner*] and \$5 a week from *Lake City* [*Reporter*], but it added up. At first, when I came here to Gainesville, I was making less than I had been making but then, within two months, I was making more than I had ever made in Jacksonville.

W: Was there difficulty with family involved when you were making these moves? Kind of like something, maybe, when you think, I would like my next move to be a little more stable.

H: Yes, you want to, but you have to take what you can. My wife went back to college in Jacksonville and was finishing up just about the time I was leaving Jacksonville. So she got a teaching job in Gainesville and put in twenty-something years and then retired. That kept me from taking one [job] that was a beauty. Do you know who Fred Russell is in Nashville?

W: No, I do not.

H: He is ninety-three years old now, but he is a famous old-school friend. He was still working up until a year ago. He owned some stock in the paper up there, and he has won every award, except the Pulitzer, that is associated with sports writing, [won] the Red Smith Award and the Headliners Award. He has been given every honor there is. He has been kind of a mentor to me over the years. Edgar Allen left the *Nashville Banner* as sports editor to go to Churchill Downs [home of the Kentucky Derby] as a vice president in charge of information or whatever they call it up there, so Russell called me. I was flattered that he called to tell me about Edgar leaving, but I could not understand why he would do that, why it was so imminent, or necessary. He said, Edgar's leaving to go to Churchill Downs; it is great deal for him, you know what that will mean. That is good, Edgar is a fine man, too. That is good. He said, we want you to take his place. I said, well, that is very flattering. I said, I may be making more in Gainesville than you think because I am getting paid by a bunch of different papers, and I told him exactly how the money broke down. He said, you are going to cost us more than Edgar, but I am willing to go to bat for you; I cannot guarantee it, but I will go to bat for you. I said, there is one more thing, and this kind of ties into what you have done. My wife was teaching, and by that time, maybe was in her forties, and teachers when they get seniority, they get paid more. If you hire a teacher with a lot of experience, it costs the school system more than it does to hire a young teacher. So, I asked for two things. I was really into tennis at that time, and I knew Nashville was cold as hell eight months out of the year. I had a vague idea of what the indoor court fee was. I said, I need about \$120 a month or so more than I am making to take care of that. He said, that is understandable. And, I said, my wife is teaching, too, and she is making \$25,000 [or a little more]. I said, I cannot afford to let her quit her job and come to Nashville if she cannot get a job. I said, I need a guarantee that she can get a teaching job. He said, we can handle that easily. I said, okay, let me know when it is handled.

So they tried like hell. Nashville has a lot of colleges and everything. They have a lot of people back there working on their doctor's degree and all that kind of stuff and their wives are forty and fifty years old and wanting to teach to help out while they are there in school with their husbands. So the waiting list of the teachers in Nashville is like that. So, they worked like hell. They looked into private [and public] schools, and they could not get her a job, even though she had a great reputation and credentials. So he finally called me. We worried about this thing for about three or four months. Finally, he called me and said, Jack, we just cannot get her a job. He said, we are going to have to go ahead and hire somebody to be the sports editor; we think we can get her a job next year, but we cannot be sure. So I had to pass it up.

W: Was that a real difficult decision?

H: Not when she could not get a job. I could not give up that \$25,000. I am a great believer in things working out for the best. I know people who sometimes talk about prayer and faith are suspected of being phonies, but I asked God to direct me where it would be best for me and my family. I did not want to go to a town and be making top dollar and have one of my daughters killed in the park by a mugger or something. So, then, I had not worried about it. Chips fall one way or the other. I go to what looks like the best decision at the time, and I do not worry about it. So, I was at the *Gainesville Sun* for twenty years. I enjoyed it, threw myself into it. I never worried about how I could have been something a lot bigger, at a lot bigger paper.

W: I am from around the area of Michigan, and I was amazed at game days down here, the passion and the ferocity. Has it always been like that?

H: It has gotten greater, recently. I hate to pat myself on the back to any degree, but I guess I ought to sometimes. I really put myself out. I mean, I went to every practice of the Gators for about sixteen years until the *Sun* staff got a little larger, and I wrote [about the Gators] every day. If anything happened out there at the practice, if a second-string player got injured with a sprained ankle, I would come back and write it and it would be in the paper the next issue. I put in a lot of hours. I am not saying that I was responsible for it, but the *Sun* grew from 15,000 to 55,000 in the next few years. Despite all the papers in Florida, and Florida has a lot of good papers, with good sports sections, despite all of them, we were the ones who were getting calls from Dallas and Washington wanting to know if the Gators would make it to the Southeastern Conference [Championship game]. We probably had about as much stuff in the paper about the Gators then as there is now, and I wrote it *all*. I worked a lot of hours. There *is* a lot of bombast down here about football, and it has just gradually gotten greater and greater and greater. Crowds got up to 80,000 something in the early 1980s. For the last sixteen years, I think, they have sold every ticket that they have had out there, for sixteen years or so, you know, even if they play Northeast Louisiana and West Texas[-type] schools.

W: Yes, I told my dad—we lived in Green Bay, Wisconsin—I compare it to the way people are with the Green Bay Packers.

H: Yes, it must be very similar.

W: Yes, and kind of the main focus is the Gator football team. Then, it kind of goes on from there. Is that always the way it has been? Obviously, so much about it started with Gator football, and then it progressed and covered other sports.

H: Yes, but the football has always been the most successful, probably, and the one that is prominent with the fans. I am trying to visualize the difference in Green Bay and in Gainesville. I think the Packers have always been on TV, the Packer games, so I imagine every person in Green Bay has had access to seeing every Packer game on TV if not in person, while only in the last fifteen years or so have there been all these tremendous number of games on TV. Up until, maybe, 1982 or something like that, there was only one [televised] college game on Saturdays in the country. I do not know if you remember that.

W: No, I do not know.

H: In other words, they might have an Oklahoma-Texas game on, and that would be it. The next week, there might be the Michigan-Michigan State game on, and that was it. The next week, there might be Notre Dame-SMU [Southern Methodist University], and that would be it. But, here, the Gators have been on TV every time they have played for the last twelve years or so. They miss a couple of early games, breathers, and they put some on Pay-Per-View. But, Green Bay, I imagine every little old lady [of] eighty-five years old watches that game. In Gainesville, it was not that way fifteen years ago, because the games were not on TV. So, in Gainesville, you have, maybe, 30,000 or 40,000 people in Gainesville attending the game, and then the rest of them could not see it. But Green Bay was probably more fanatical than Gainesville was.

W: Yes. Has it become, though, recently more fanatical?

H: I would think so because, now, everybody can see the game.

W: Right. Does a lot of that have to do with the Gators winning, too?

H: To some degree, yes. Having said all of that, I remember looking at the polls studying readership habits, and only about 35 to 40 percent of people care anything at all about the sports section. It is hard to tell that when you [are at] the stadium. But, if you are ever at the mall and the Gators are playing somebody out here at the Florida Field, you would be surprised; there is a hell of a lot of people at the mall. There are. So, I have looked at these readership survey things, and the number one thing read in almost every paper is the comic section, and right close behind that would be [the] "Dear Abby" [advice column]. Then, it would be front page headlines and the sports. But, no matter how big the sports are in the town, every survey I have looked at measures the sports readership as 35 to 40 percent, or something like that.

W: Yes. Now, you talked earlier about how you started initially being a baseball fan, but did it develop over the years into football?

H: I like football. I think football is a lot more exciting game. Baseball has timeouts between every pitch. The pace of the game is not the same. I think, maybe, when we were kids, we thought we were going to be baseball players. But then, as you grow up, which one is a more exciting game? I think football is. On Saturdays, even now, and I am seventy years old, from twelve o'clock until midnight, there is always a football game on that I am interested in continuously. I will watch Georgia and Kentucky and then go right to Tennessee and Alabama and right to the FSU [Florida State University] -Clemson. It is an inconvenience to have to get up and eat.

W: Who was a better quarterback, [Steve] Spurrier or [Danny] Wuerffel?

H: I would give Wuerffel a little edge, although the system ran a little bit different in 1966 and 1996. It was more sophisticated, and Wuerffel had more weapons there and he also had Spurrier as an asset, designing the plays and everything. The length of the games was not even as long in 1964 and 1966. They only started in about 1968 stopping the clocks on first downs, and that adds another twenty seconds or so after every first down. There are [about] forty first downs in a game, so you can see the amount of time [added]. And the plays. If you look at the total plays, now, you often see a team with seventy-five or eighty-five plays. I would say the average, now, is probably seventy to seventy-five plays a game, and the average in the 1960s was, probably, fifty to fifty-five plays a game.

W: Using these two Florida quarterbacks, how different was the coverage of Steve Spurrier from Danny Wuerffel? Steve Spurrier, now, has a reputation as being, to put it mildly, extremely confident. I do not know if he was like that back then. I know, around these parts, Danny Wuerffel was kind of seen as a very clean-cut straight arrow.

H: Oh, I thought you meant the coverage by the newspapers.

W: Well, that too, yes.

H: Quite often, at the football games of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Tom McEwen was on the *Tampa Times* then, an afternoon [paper] that came out on Monday afternoon; it did not come out on Sunday morning. He was sports editor there, and I was the sports editor of the *Jacksonville Journal*, which came out on Monday afternoon. We would be the only two in the dressing room, quite often. Now, if you have been down there, there are 350 to 400 people down there, probably, from newspapers, radio stations, TV stations, and everything else. We would have gone down there after the game and if we were playing [the University of] Miami, there might have been three Miami guys. But, if we were playing Auburn or Vanderbilt [Universities] or somebody, there might have been two from Nashville and McEwen and I. We would be the only ones. We

would go down and talk to the coach and sat around with some of the assistant coaches to see what happened and talked to several of the players. Now, every writer in the press box, almost, goes down. In those days, the writers for Sunday morning papers just stayed up there and started typing as soon as the game was over. They would start typing some of those leads like I was talking about before, like The Gators Beat the Bulldogs Saturday, 14 to 10. So, it is a tremendous difference.

W: And then TV, I mean, ESPN [cable television sports network]...

H: Well, the newspapers have emphasized coverage more. With TV, so many people know what happened in the game that the newspapers have to dig harder. The better writers [in 1960], and you can read some of their old stories, might not have a player quoted in there. They did not talk to anybody. They just sat down there and wrote their impression of the game, described what happened in the game. Now, if you have not asked Doug Johnson [Gators quarterback, 1999 season] why this happened and asked Spurrier why this happened and why did he not do so and so, you have not done a good job. The newspapers are sending four and five people each to the game now where they used to send one, and the TV people, they go in there, too, with their cameras and cameramen and announcers, and some radio people, too. But there is a crush in there, after the game, of 300 or 400. I covered every game Spurrier played, and Spurrier was somewhat shy. [That] might be hard to realize now. He was very confident. Sometimes, he would stay in the shower and try to outlast us, to wait until we would leave before he would come out. As the years went by, he got a little better. I remember before his senior year—I was at Jacksonville at the time—I called down here and wanted to talk to him over in the sports information office before practice because I knew that when he was around his teammates, he would always pass the credit onto his teammates. If you would say, hey, you [had] a great day today, three touchdown passes and 230 yards, he would say, oh, my blockers did that; I could not have done any of that without the blockers; do not write about me; write about that guy. That is the way he would always be whenever his teammates were listening, were in hearing distance. And I came down here, and he had overslept and got there just in time to say, I have to go and get ready for practice; I will talk to you over there. Then, over there, it was just what I thought he was going to do: oh, it all depends on how my blockers do; if my blockers do well, we will do well. Then, after his last game here, against Miami, he had been announced on Tuesday as the Heisman Trophy winner. Then, on Saturday, they played Miami and got beat 21 to 16. And after the game was over, there was a Miami writer there, and there were a few more writers. There were probably seven or eight, ten writers in there listening to him. [Spurrier said,] Hey, I want all you writers to get around here just a minute, and he said, I have played three years at Florida, and have thrown almost 800 passes, and they have never called roughing the passer on

an opposing team for hitting me. He said, I have been hit many times, and you can see these bruises all over my body. He said, do you not think out of 800 passes, one of them was late? He said, this is not going to help me because I have played my last game, but I hope this will help another quarterback. Now, you see roughing the passer and penalties almost every game, maybe two or three in some games. I remember writing a column about that and I said I thought, probably, Spurrier probably made a mistake [doing the criticism]. But, I said, he has got a good point, that he was roughed many times and it was never called. But, he really was a very [unselfish player]. He would hide in the showers his sophomore year and, then, the last two years, he would always say, my blockers and receivers are underrated people.

[End of first part of interview.]

W: It is November 2, 1999, approximately one-thirty. We are going to do the second half of the interview right now, and we will get started here. I just wanted to touch upon what we were last speaking about, about mentoring with Carl Walters. I just wanted to ask you, how important is a mentor to a young writer or a writer who, generally, is beginning, to have that kind of belief system behind him?

H: Well, you have to have somebody to look [up] to. You know, you can get it, I guess, from reading out of town newspapers, or other newspapers. It helps to have access to somebody who has really been through the grind. It helped me to go through Carl Walters and Hap Glaudi, in New Orleans. Both of them are long since dead. Then I always tried to read the out-of-town newspapers and pick up things. I remember the first time I went to New York, I went down and bought four newspapers off of the news stand and went back to my hotel room to sit down and read them. I was amazed at the make-up and the layout that was so poor. It was just thrown together. They did not put much emphasis on [make-up] in New York. You would think that is where the best sports sections would be. Now, I think the best writing was there, but the pages were just thrown together. It was awful looking stuff. They were liable to have the Kentucky Derby on page eight, you know, instead of on page one. But I learned an awful lot from various newspapers, from reading them. But, at that time, the sports editor was in charge of the make-up as well as the columns and primary coverage. I knew I had to scrap to get ahead because I did not have any education. I just had one year of [college]. There were times on the staff in Jacksonville where I would have six guys working for me, and all of them had college degrees and I had one year of college. Then, in Atlanta, I had fourteen guys working under me, and twelve or thirteen of them had college degrees. So, I knew I had to work hard, so I studied. If I could get a hold of something like the *Miami Herald*, which was a good paper, and then I subscribed to some papers. I subscribed to the *Charlotte News*, which was a real good paper. I

think, maybe, it is defunct now. The *Charlotte Observer*, I think, is the main one up there. But, if you have access to a mentor, he can tell you things that, once he tells you, you know it, instead of having to read it and then say, oh yes, he did this here and then did this here and did this here. Like I said, Glaudi was a pioneer. So, it is important. You can get it without having somebody to teach you about it, but it is certainly easier the other way. Nowadays, it is such a specialization. You are either a writer or you are a deskman. When I was coming up, the first forty years I was in this profession, you were both. A typical staff member in Atlanta would come in and work on a desk for three or four hours a day and then would cover events, and maybe covering an event that would take him three or four hours a day. He would write and edit and mark the capital letters and write the heads. It is really specialized now. There is almost no such thing, on most papers, people doing both. They do one or the other.

W: Is that good or bad, do you think?

H: I guess, in the overall product, it might be for the best but, for the writer, I do not think it is. You used to judge people by where a guy stood on a staff, and you could tell if he was a good prospect or not. If everybody on his staff thought he was one of the best and he would write and edit copy and do good jobs in both, well, he would be one who would be moved on his way up the ladder. If there was any laziness to him or if he was a prima donna and did not want to do anything but write, he would not have a very good standing on his staff. Then, we were always looking for ones who were good all-around people. It was more fun. I did not particularly like the desk, but I made up my mind that I was going to work as hard as I could and do as well at it as I could so I would move up to a position where I did not have to work on it anymore. I dug in hard and laid out pages as best I could and studied it and tried to do, absolutely, the best job I could. Then, when I got to be a sports editor, I could give somebody that assignment. I did not have to do it, hardly at all, the last twenty-five years I was in the business. I did not dislike it, but I wanted to concentrate on other things, like doing columns and doing the main stories and stuff like that.

W: What sports writers, during your career, did you always try to read and, maybe, try to emulate? Even today, what writers do you look at?

H: Probably, the two best today are Furman Bisher in Atlanta and Blackie Sherrod in Dallas and, until he died a little bit over a year ago, Jim Murray in Los Angeles [for the *Times*] was the best. And then Red Smith [sportswriter, *New York Times*] was great. Red Smith and Blackie Sherrod and Jim Murray were so great that you really could not emulate them. Everybody tried occasionally. You might try to emulate one of them on a paragraph or a sentence or a thought. Jim Murray was hired once to be the writer on a variety show on TV. He was going to write the jokes and everything for the TV, for a comedy series. He was

not as good that way because he really was not inclined that way. It was the Andy Williams show. Andy Williams was a big fan of his, and Andy Williams said, I want to talk like you write; you write me the jokes. He got a lot of money for it, but it was not his cup of tea. It was well-publicized. I could see where Andy Williams, or even Bob Hope, would want Jim Murray to write the humor part. Yes, I think it really helps you to read those guys. I would read every paper in the state and read Tom McEwen and Edwin Pope and all of those guys.

I think a lot of reading of those people helps you some. Then, I also wanted to not be more than one edition behind if they had something we did not have. I would go through every paper in the state and if they had a story about somebody of interest in the Gainesville/Jacksonville area, we would not be but one day behind. We would not be two or three or four days behind. We would be one day behind. Then, I usually got a chance to read the Atlanta paper the majority of the time over the years. Bisher is outstanding. So it is a big help to be able to read them. I would recommend to any young sports writer to read any paper that he got his hands on, just about. I guess now, probably, here at the journalism school, you probably have access to virtually every paper in the country, do you not?

W: Yes.

H: Well, you have not got time to read all of them, but I would certainly [read some]. Depending on whether you want to be a columnist or a beat man or are concentrating on being football coverage or baseball coverage or whatever, read the ones that you really admire. If you are a baseball man, you know, you might read Dallas and St. Louis and Milwaukee. If you want to be a basketball writer, read some of the different ones. But, yes, I think that is a good idea to do that.

W: How have the writing styles changed at all? For somebody like Mitch Albom [author of *Tuesdays With Morrie*] or John Feinstein or something, is it derivative, is it just evolving?

H: I guess anything evolves. I have been in and out of hospitals so much over the last seven years, and the changes and improvements in surgery [are] just amazing. I remember differences with my daughters. Each one of my daughters has two sons. I remember my wife telling my younger daughter what childbirth was going to be like. Of course, it had been a long time. My other daughter was four or five years removed from childbirth. When my wife got through talking, my other daughter said, there is no pain anymore; they give you so many pain killers, there is no pain like it was in her time. My wife has to go in this week for a heart valve replacement. For a long time, the artificial valve was what they put in as a replacement. They still do that, but then the pig valve got to be the most popular, now the cow valve. The consensus of advisors for my wife was that the cow valve was the best, so she is going to have a cow valve put

in her heart. I am just showing you that as, in surgery in a period of three or four years, the changes and improvements. And in writing or in anything, there are changes and improvements. Grantland Rice, God bless his soul, must have been a great person. I never met him. He died about two or three years before I got on the scene, where I was going to things like the World Series. So, I never met him, but he is supposed to be a wonderful person. But, I see some of the things he wrote, and it was considered tremendous in that day and time. I am sure you have read the Four Horsemen thing and the things like that. I read something the other day. I think it ran in the pages of several papers because it was picked up by AP in regard to the Yankees. He was writing about [Babe] Ruth and [Lou] Gehrig hitting home runs in 1928 to finish off the St. Louis Cardinals in four games. He would write things like Dr. Bombast bolted one through the skies, and it disappeared into the atmosphere. Gosh, if a young writer turned that in now, they would flip it back at him and say, write English! Like I said, he was considered the best. But, I have read books by Grantland Rice, and I read books by Red Smith and Jim Murray. If they did not know who it was and you took the works of Grantland Rice and the works of Red Smith and Jim Murray and put them in front of a journalism student and he read it, he would say, this one is not in the same class, and that would be Grantland Rice's. He was great in his time, but it changes tremendously. I knew Shelby Struther very well. He was good. He and Mitch Album shared the lead column in Detroit. He died at the age of about forty-two. He had liver cancer. He was dead about eight days after he discovered it. But he was a great young writer. I realized how great he was when he was writing in St. Petersburg, at that time. It was about Herschel Walker's [All-American running back, and later professional football player] third year in Georgia, and he wrote a whole page, [a] take-out piece, on Herschel Walker. I had six or seven papers I wanted to read. It was the middle of football season, and I had a lot of work to do. I turned to this page, and there it was and I said, I know everything there is to know about Herschel Walker; I am not going to read all of this. Then, I kept reading all of these papers, and I came back to it. I picked it up and started reading it, and it was so good that I read every word of that thing. It was eight columns, and I read every word of it. To me, he had to be a great writer for me to devote thirty-five or forty minutes to read this thing, when I knew so much about Herschel Walker. It was interesting, just the way he wrote it.

W: What was the thing that caught your attention?

H: It was just the description of everything he wrote about him, the questions he asked Herschel. I do not remember any one particular paragraph, but the whole package was just interesting. It was about Walker's outlook on coming from a little tiny town and suddenly being in headlines all over America. I think he had gotten married, and there was stuff about that and Herschel's view on what life held for him in adulthood. It was just tremendous writing because I did not think

there was anybody in the country who could make me devote thirty-five more minutes to Herschel Walker.

W: How has television changed sports writing?

H: It changed everything. It changed everything. I was invited to go to an APME, AP Managing Editors Association, and publishers and all that, down in Miami Beach. They invited three of us to come down there and be on the panel. This was 1963, and they invited each one of us to talk for about ten minutes and then sit around a table, and other people would be asking questions. All the editors and publishers from America were out in the audience. It was a real honor for me to be invited to do that. I was thirty-five years old. Then, they had a stenographer to take down all of it and print it into a book. Ed Johnson, who was editor of the *Gainesville Sun*, had one of the books because he was there to edit it. I took it and read it, and I predicted in there that the A.M. papers were going to what was then called a P.M. lead, because everybody got up the next morning and knew who won the ball game and had even seen a picture of [Phil] Rizutto [shortstop, New York Yankees] or [Yogi] Berra [catcher, New York Yankees] or whoever sliding across the plate with the winning run. So, you did not need to tell them that the Yankees won, and that Berra knocked in [batted in] Rizutto to win the game. Everybody knew that. I predicted that the A.M. papers would eventually be writing what was then becoming known as a P.M. lead. They would write all of that, and then the P.M. papers were going to have to go well beyond *that* in their approach to things. They would be more like a magazine because what was known as the P.M. lead would no longer be sufficient for them. This is probably taught in the first year of journalism school now but, at that time, the A.M. papers would quite often start off saying, the Yankees won the seventh and decisive game of the World Series yesterday when Yogi Berra doubled into the right field corner and Phil Rizutto scored all the way from first. Now, you would not have that. You would have something about what this meant or how Berra happened to hit the ball as well as he did and what Rizutto thought as he came across the plate or something. That would have been the P.M. story in 1963 but, now, the P.M. story would have to be, kind of, a magazine type thing, in-depth, is the manager going to be back or are the old players going to retire. The stuff about what Berra and Rizutto were thinking would be out of place by the afternoon paper. That would have already been used in the morning. I predicted that this was coming and, in three or four years, it did come. Eventually, the P.M. papers just could not survive anything, and they died all over the country. The advertisers prefer the A.M. market, and the readers prefer the A.M. market all over, just like me. A lot of them still wind up finishing their reading at night. Do you finish all of your reading in the morning?

W: No.

- H: No. I do not either. I tell my wife almost every day, do not throw the paper out yet [because] I am not through. I tell her that everyday because I do not get through in the morning. But, yes, TV has just changed it, totally. There is nothing similar. In the 1950s and 1960s, the A.M. sports writer going to the stadium took his typewriter, and he kept a score card and notes. He knew that when that game was over, the office was going to expect him in about forty-five minutes or an hour to have a story, back then, describing exactly what happened. The P.M. guy knew that he had to go down, that same game and talk to people after the game and come back and write, more or less, why it happened. Now, the A.M. guy goes out there and he knows that TV is going to show all of his readers what happened. He cannot describe what happened. He has to go to what the other guy did, the P.M. guy, and describe why it happened and what this means in the long run, whether, three years from now, the Yankees are going to have a whole new team or not. It is just a totally different game. There is no comparison.
- W: Was it difficult for you, personally? Did it come to point where you thought, I have to kind of change my style?
- H: Well, the Gator games...when I was Jacksonville, we did not have a Sunday paper. So, I would go to a game in Los Angeles, or wherever it was, wherever they played, but what I wrote was going to come out Monday afternoon. It was going to be delivered at the homes at four or five o'clock on Monday afternoon when it happened on Saturday. So, the morning paper had a shot at it Sunday morning and then they had another shot at it Monday morning, and then I was going to come back Monday afternoon. Many of the times, I thought, this is ridiculous; I am not going to be able to come up with something new all ten games this year. It is just inevitable, so do not let it crush you, I would tell myself. But, there was always something. Sometimes, I would leave the stadium not knowing what in the hell it was going to be, and I would see a possibility of some angle and call one of the coaches, maybe Sunday afternoon, but there was never a game—and I am sure McEwen was in the same boat with the smaller Tampa paper that did not have a Sunday paper at that time, the *Tampa Times*—there was never a Monday that came around where we did not have something different that the other paper had not gotten. It might be that in this game, the young sophomore quarterback, Steve Spurrier, indicates that he is going to be a great player next year and the year after. It would go from that angle and get Graves' [former University of Florida head football coach Ray Graves] quotes on that and compare what he did in that game to previous players. Or, it might be something that a wide guard jumped offside, and it cost them the game, or something. One time, just as an example, you see, they did not have TV, so they did not have instant replay. Florida was playing up at Georgia Tech, and it was a nothing-to-nothing game. There were several of those in those days, with no score at all. In the fourth quarter, Florida threw a

long pass and hit it for a touchdown, but they ruled that the center had gone down beyond the line of scrimmage [before the pass was caught], and you could not go more than five yards past the line of scrimmage on a pass [at that time]. Of course, Florida was screaming, he did not go five yards, but they called it back and the game ended nothing-to-nothing. The next day in the paper, the *Atlanta Journal* ran a full page [picture], and it showed as this ball was coming into Jim Rountree's hands that [Joel] Wahlberg, the center, was six or seven yards down the field. That was in the days when they had the metal plates. The picture was a metal plate. You do not know what that is, do you?

W: No.

H: You take this metal plate through an engraving and then bring it from engraving, and it had a place drawn out for it on the page and for all the pictures you were putting on that page. Some of them would be two columns. You would set it up there and have a little space for it. But, in this case, it was a huge thing, and it covered up the whole page. So I called Bisher and asked him if I could have that plate, that they were going to be through with it. He said, yes, come on down to the paper. So before I got on the plane to come back to Jacksonville, I went by the paper and he gave me the plate. I took it on the plane, and it was the size of a newspaper page, twenty-two inches long and fifteen and a half inches wide, or whatever, and it was metal. I took it, and I ran it in the Monday afternoon paper. We put a head up there, something like, yes, Wahlberg was beyond the line, and showed it. People were still bitching all over the town and all over the state until we showed that thing. That is just an example of how, Monday, you can come back with something. I always had something. It was enough to put in a great big head, too, because there were not any pro[fe]ssional sports in the panhandle of Florida then, no major league sports. The sports editor of every paper in the state covered the Gators, except the Miami papers, even the sports editors in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach. They went to every Gator game, no matter where they played, and Pensacola, Tampa, St. Petersburg, Jacksonville. There was always something.

W: How much communication was there between you and your contemporaries, like Tom McEwen? Would you say, hey, I am going with this; do not go with this. You know, so it did not overlap?

H: We would help each other occasionally, but newspaper people are kind of selfish about their information. I wanted the *Jacksonville Journal* to have it and nobody else, and he wanted the *Tampa Times* to have it. So, we were big buddies, and all of the writers hung around together. I guess they probably still do. There were always six or eight of us who would go to dinner on Friday night, and four or five of us would share a cab to go to the stadium. We would exchange ideas and information but not too much on that Monday stuff, because I was trying to

be the only one who had that and he was trying to do whatever he had to do. But, it is totally different now. I remember one time I came back from Auburn, and they usually have the TVs in the press box where you can see them. You know, there was one sitting over there, and you might be watching that, and there would be one right up there and one right up there. But, they did not have any TVs in the Auburn press box. It was 1983, and Neal Anderson [University of Florida running back] fumbled at the two-yard-line. The ball went into the end zone but, from the press box, you could not tell whether he was across the goal or what. About 70 percent of the people in the press box thought he scored, and the officials ruled he fumbled on the one- or two-yard-line and the ball went into the end zone. So, Auburn recovered it and got out on the twenty, and Auburn [went on] to win at 28 to 21. They were the two top teams in the South. We did not have any replay [in the press box] then. I remember my wife met me at the airport on Sunday afternoon and I said, I think Neal Anderson got gyped out of a touchdown. She said, oh no, he fumbled on the one and a half yard-line; it was on TV last night six times. She knew. That just shows you that in the modern age, the people at home know exactly what happened. Everybody in the world knew Neal Anderson did fumbled before he went across the goal line, and I was still hanging on to that as, maybe, something to explore when I got back home. She knew before I did, sixteen hours before I did.

W: What was your process for writing a column? Maybe it was different with the game, but with the story idea and ideas in your head, how would that evolve?

H: Well, at a game, at an event, you would pick out what you thought was very interesting and would be very interesting to the reader and would be different to the reader from what he would get from watching the game on TV and reading about it from the news column. You would write it in the press box, and you might go down and talk to people and come back and sort through what you had and go with your best and write it over the next hour and a half or two hours. Back at the office during the week, I would constantly read the wire over. I would come in at, like, nine o'clock in the morning, and I would read the AP sports wire, read everything on it. Then, I would get the newspapers from that morning, Miami and St. Pete[rsburg], Tampa, Orlando, Jacksonville, and I would read every one of them, and take the time to do it right, and being interrupted from time to time. Then, about every hour, I would go back and read the AP wire just to see if anything real startling had happened because, about half the time, it would have. Then, maybe, I would come back after lunch, and I would have made two or three phone calls and two or three people would have called me, I would take all of these notes and scribble them around. Maybe, I would have five or six papers that would look like that. Then, about one-thirty or two o'clock, sometimes I would make a list, what have I got? And I would, maybe, just look through it like that, and I would pick out what I thought was the most interesting point and then start writing it. I would make a phone call or two and,

usually, you would be able to tell real easily by looking at it what you thought your readers would be most interested in. So, I tried to write what most people the next morning would say, hey, look at this. You know, that is what you are looking for. Sometimes, if there was no one thing, I would write three things. Instead of writing one that would run that long, you would write one that would be that long, and another second one would down to here and a third one down to here. Then, sometimes, if you had no major point of any kind, you might just write twelve little shorts, anything from one sentence to three sentences. People enjoy those. Some people say, that is not a column. To me, it is a column. To me, whatever the reader enjoys [is a column]. Do not tell me that fifteen notes is not a column. If it is better than anything you have, if that is the best you have that day and people are going to enjoy it, yes, it is a column. You better believe it. Some people say, well, you cannot write but one a week. The hell you cannot, if that is the best you have three days a week. In Gainesville sometimes, you know, in off season, there might not be any huge issue here. You cannot fabricate a huge issue everyday. You have to take the issues where you find them. I never did fabricate some kind of issue. Some people think you have to have something to fuss about. You do not have to have anything to fuss about. If I do not have a crusade or a war or something but once every two or three years, I think it means a lot more. But, if I had one every two weeks, they would say, oh, Jack is baying at the moon again; Jack is howling. But, I might go two or three years and, all of a sudden, I might say the football coach or athletic director ought to get fired or the president of the university does not know what the hell he is doing on this sports issue and kick them in the shins as hard as I can kick them. I do not believe in having six feuds a year. I never did believe in that.

W: Was there a point where you finally thought, I have made it, I have been receiving recognition?

H: I guess there was, probably. The Football Writers Association of America is a real powerful group, and it has all the good writers in the country in it. Most of the presidents in that have been Furman Bisher or Blackie Sherrod or a sports editor in Chicago and New York and Los Angeles. In 1982, they elected me president, and I was really surprised. That was an indication. The people on the board of directors were connected with these guys I was talking about, the big wheels, and I thought, am I in the same class as those guys? [I didn't think so,] but, it was a wonderful acknowledgment on their part, and I appreciated it. Then, they have an award in that association. It is the Bert McGrane award. It is given once a year to a sportswriter, and it is for career service to the profession. It is the highest award that group has, and they elected me in 1990. They had a committee that elected me. I was having problems with my paper at that time. My first thought was, they are doing this to try to put me on a pedestal and help me with my paper, so my paper will say, gosh, this guy is one

of the best. So, I waited until I saw the three guys who were on that committee. Of [the first] one of them, I asked, did you know I have been having trouble with my paper? No. I said, you did not? No. I thought maybe that was why you gave me that award. That is not why we gave you that award; we thought you deserved that award. Then, I asked the other two also and they said, no, we had no idea. So, that is a very high award, and that made me feel that my peers think I rank somewhere in the upper level and, yes, that is a good feeling. I would rather have them think that than anybody else because I think they are the best judges of that, and they are certainly my heroes, all those guys. One time in Jacksonville, the executive editor called me [in] and said, you know there is a limit to how far you are going to go just in sports and how much money you are going to make? He said, you ought to think about going over into the administration, being a managing editor; we could, maybe, move you over there first as assistant city editor and then city editor and then managing editor and, eventually, executive editor to be the head of the whole thing. I answered him right there. I did not take any time to answer him. I said, John--Jim Murray and Fred Russell and Red Smith--this profession is good enough for them. If it is good enough for them, it is good enough for me; this is all I want to do, what I am doing now. That is the way I felt about it.

W: Actually, you have received a lot of awards, those two being the ones you are most proud of?

H: Yes. An association called the All-American Sports Foundation inducted me and, then, the Gator Bowl Hall of Fame, the Citrus Bowl Hall of Fame, and the Mississippi Sports Writers Hall of Fame. So I have been fortunate. I have gotten more awards than I deserve.

W: Let us get into a little bit about your departure from the *Gainesville Sun*. I will let you say what you want to say and what you can say.

H: I guess the best thing to do is just to tell you what I can say. I got fired, and it has been in all the papers and the radio and everything that I sued them for age discrimination. The thing went on after I was fired for four years and, finally, we settled out of court. The lawyers hassled as much about what I could say as they did about the other parts. My lawyer told me the agreement he reached with them, if it was all right on both sides, was that I could say, the lawsuit has been resolved, so that is all I can say.

W: When it was resolved, did you think about retiring, or did you think about stopping with your writing?

H: Well, when I got fired, I was sixty-two years old. My wife was teaching and was making a nice salary. One of my daughters lived in Gainesville and still does.

She is married and teaching school and has two sons. My other daughter was married to a science teacher from Chiefland, and they lived forty minutes away. We lived in the same house we have been living in, now, for twenty-four years, and it was almost paid for. I did not have too many more years and, if I had been a lot younger, I would have packed up and gone. I had good friends of mine who were running the sports departments in Birmingham and Chattanooga and New Orleans. I could have gotten a job somewhere doing something. I did not want to leave Gainesville. But, then, I would have commuted to Jacksonville or somewhere like that but, then, the papers all around Gainesville, closer than Jacksonville, were all owned by the *New York Times*, the same company that I was in this disagreement with. Ocala, Lake City, Leesburg; they were all owned by the *New York Times*. I have done some freelance [work] and have written some magazine articles, and I have been putting out a newsletter on the Gators called *Hairston's Gator Pipeline* ever since I left the paper. I do not make a lot of money off of it, but I make some and I enjoy doing it. It is just a newsletter of my take on the Gators and stuff that I have gotten interviewing Spurrier and the players and everything. I have been doing that regularly. It gives me a chance to keep my hand in. Then I have been working on two books. One of them is humorous things that I have either observed or have been told, and I have it about 90 percent complete. Then the other one is on the University of Florida football [program] from the years I have been covering it, which is from 1957 to 1999, and I have 1957 to 1998 done. I have to do 1999, and I have a few patchwork things to do. I have not found a publisher yet. I have not started looking for one yet. But I hope to finish up the Gator book early next year, get it printed and out, and then shortly thereafter, finish the other one up and do the same thing. I do not expect to get rich off of it, but I would like to make some money.

W: Do you enjoy going at your own pace?

H: Yes. I enjoy writing, and this is the kind of thing you can write twice a week, three times a week, and skip a few days. During the football season, I just go ahead and concentrate on the *Pipeline* and do not try to work on the books. But, I enjoy it. I have a computer at home, and I have all this mass of stuff in the computer. Those things are amazing. If they were on paper, now, the paper would fill this room up, but there it is sitting in a computer, all those pages. Yes, I enjoy it. I have made a lot of talks and speaking appearances around the North Florida area.

W: When your daughter went to Atlanta, how proud were you feeling? What was that feeling like? Did you ever think she would follow in your footsteps?

H: I did not encourage her to. I really did not, because I thought it was a tough

profession to be in, and the rewards are not as great as they ought to be. It is getting tougher, maybe, and it is even tougher for a woman. But she told me she wanted to go to the University of Florida. She went to the journalism school here. I never encouraged her, except when she said she was going to do this, I said, well, when you come out, I will try to help you find a job. I said, I will probably be able to help you find your *first* job and after that, you are on your own; nobody is going to hire you on my say-so; they will hire you for what you do on your first job. So, I wrote some letters out and put out some feelers. I had also told her that my number one recommendation was to go to a small paper where she would get to do a lot and get experience, and she went to Lake Wales. I get Lake Wales and Winter Haven mixed up. Which one of them is the one that has a newspaper? I think Lake Wales. She was a reporter and did a lot of writing down there. Then she went to Sarasota and to Bradenton. Then, she got an offer to go to West Palm Beach. She was working on the desk over there, mainly, and she went over there. Then, I still had some friends in Atlanta in the sports department, guys who used to work for me, and they were putting on a push about how the government was getting on them for not having enough women. So, they were saying, who are we going to get? They got some nominations from staff members. Darrell Simmons, who worked for me years and years ago, said, as long as we are going to get one, why don't we get a good one? He said, Jack Hairston's daughter has about five years of experience, and I bet you she is good. So, they called her and flew her up there, and she became the first woman hired on the sports copy desk up there. Actually, [after] she had been there about a year, she [was] making more than I made when I was executive sports editor in Atlanta. Of course, that was almost [thirty] years ago. But I was proud of her. She took the job there, and she worked hard, and when she became engaged and they tried to get her to stay there, she said, well, she was working nights, getting off at two o'clock in the morning, and she wanted to raise a family. She said, I just cannot keep doing that. So they said, we will find you a job with better hours. They had a month or two there, and they just could not do it. They were not able to do it. So, she became a housewife. She says that she is going to go back to some extent when her children are both in school. Right now, they are four and two, so it will be a while. I was proud of her, but I really cannot take credit for her. In this business there are some things that are holy to me: you do not break a confidence; you do not break a release date; you keep your word; you try to be fair. I guess my one peeve about modern sports writers is, they pick on and ridicule the visiting coach and the visiting team, over and over, every week. Whoever is coming in here, the coach is a boob, and the team is a bunch of louts. I do not understand that. It diminishes the *victories* if you do not beat anybody but boobs and louts. I think the opposing team should be treated with respect and dignity. Give them credit if they are good. Be fair. Being an ethical newspaper person is no different from being an ethical citizen. If it does not seem right to you, if it does not seem really fair, do not do it; do not write it.

When you write something controversial, go back and look at it and say, have I been fair, have I been accurate, and is this what this person deserves? Try to be fair. That is the one thing I do not like about too many, not all of them by any means, but too many of them make fun of the other teams and the other coaches. If you have a run-in with a Ray Perkins [former University of Alabama head football coach; former NFL coach, Tampa Bay Buccaneers], what are you going to hit him with, if you have already hit [all the coaches in the League]? I did not like Ray Perkins, and I tried to make life as miserable as possible for him, but he was the only one who, I think, I did that to. I was over at the SEC Basketball Tournament and the Auburn people said, Perkins has told Alabama's sports information department to get as much of Bear Bryant [former head coach] out of the [Alabama] brochure as they could. Perkins had just succeeded Bryant. [Then] Bryant had died. I did not know whether that was just a tale Auburn was telling on their hated opponent or not, but when the brochure came out, I got the brochure from the year before, the media guide you might call it, and there were, like, forty-two pictures of Bryant in there. The new one came out, and his name was not even mentioned but three times in there, and that was down where they listed the 1935 team and then listed the coaches or something like that, and I wrote that Perkins had told them to do this. He came out with a statement, it got on the wire and said, this man is a liar. I was not. He did a lot wrong, and I criticized him at every opportunity. He is the only coach, I think, I did that to. Then, when he left to go to Tampa Bay, he said that the reason he was leaving was he was bugged by Bear Bryant's image and knew that he would never replace Bryant; it drove him up a wall, and he could not stand it. Then, he went to Tampa and did not get along down there. There was a guard down there from Penn State, and [Perkins] hit him. It turned out what he hit him about was, they were getting ready to go back out for the second half. Perkins had gotten through making his talk, and they are getting ready to go out--Heller, I believe, was the guy's name--and he turned around at the rest of the players and said, all right now, let us go back out there; let us not quit; let us go win. Perkins drew back and hit him; [he claimed when Heller] said the word quit, it set him off. He [was strange].

W: I think I read somewhere that was when Steve Young [professional quarterback at Tampa Bay, later backup and starter for the San Francisco 49ers] was playing for him, and he has, obviously, been in the sticky situation with Joe Montana [professional quarterback, San Francisco 49ers] but he has really handled himself. It was the only time I have ever heard him be critical and he said, that was absolutely the worst situation I've ever been in.

H: Yes. That guy was bad news.

W: Because there is so much coverage today, obviously, with TV, radio, and the Internet, is that part of the reason why there is now, maybe, much more of a

personal attack?

H: I do not know. I just think it is immaturity. I do not know why. There is no good reason for it.

W: Is there too much coverage of sports nowadays, do you think? I mean, it is everywhere. We have twenty-four hour a day sports stations.

H: If that is what the public wants though, what are you going to do? One of the things that I do not like is the tremendous amount of space devoted in the interest of the high school recruits, but the public wants it, so you have to give to them. But a player who says he is leaning four ways, considering four schools, what kind of news value is that? It is of very dubious news value when he says, three months from now, I intend to sign with the University of Florida. Well, about 20 percent of them change their minds between then and February. What good is that? I hated to run news where you later had to say that it was no longer true. With this, you know some of them are not going to be true, but the public wants it. Now, you see that the *Times Union* might have two complete pages just on the Florida-FSU game, have six writers writing long stories. There is a little duplication in that, which is understandable, occasionally. I do not know whether you say it is too much. I think they are giving the public what they want. I think the *Times Union* gives the public more than they want on the Jaguars. They come back out on about Wednesday, I think, with a full-page of color action pictures from Sunday's game. If the [pictures] were so good, they should have been in there before Wednesday. Maybe this is old-fashioned, but I am a great believer in trying to put out a good sports section everyday. Do not just have a good one on just Sunday or just Monday and hold stuff back. If you have something good, put it in there on Thursday. Do not hold it until Monday. Sunday has to be a little different because you have so much more space. Everybody has more ads, and some are full pages. So you have to have more stuff on Sunday. But I have seen papers that hold back and have three extra pages on Monday and three extra pages on Wednesday and run stuff that should have been run several days before that. That is not my idea of good newspapering. If you had your druthers, and they never let you have all of your druthers, I would ask for space to put out as good a sports section as possible on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday and, then, Sunday, we will take the huge amount and try to do the best we can with that. But I do not like to see Monday's section this small and then Tuesday's section this big, and back and forth.

W: Be consistent.

H: Other than Sunday, the other six days, I would like to have the six days divided by six, and give me that every day. Give me one-sixth of my space every day,

and then we will do the best we can with it.

W: We talk about the Jaguars, but Florida now has hockey, baseball, basketball.

H: Two baseball teams.

W: Yes. How obvious were changes in newspaper coverage for sports, or some of the trends or differences beyond that, that you have seen with Florida? Now, all of sudden, I think arguably you can say, it is becoming one of the biggest sports states in the country.

H: Oh yes, it sure is. I do not have anything real learned to say about that. Obviously, we have all these teams, and they have these fans who want to go to see them. They are interested in it, so you have to give them a lot of stuff. It is just going to get more so, I guess.

W: Let us talk a little bit about some of your health problems. Four operations, am I correct?

H: Yes.

W: Two for lung cancer, is that right?

H: No, one for prostate cancer and one for lung cancer. The only reason I talk about these is, if this is supposed to be biographical, this is sort of the unusual part of my biography. I have had four of these things in the last seven years. In October of 1992, I had prostate cancer, and I had the surgery where they cut my prostate out. Then, just to be on the safe side, the following spring, they gave me thirty-four radiation treatments. I am supposedly totally cured from the cancer. Then, in January of 1997, I had lung cancer. I had a lobe removed from my left lung. I smoked heavily for many, many years, and I quit about eight or ten years before that, but it still got me. I deserve what I got because I was a heavy smoker for many years. Then, in March of 1998, I had an aneurysm in the aorta, and they had to go in there and open me up down the middle again and repair that. Then, [four] months later, in July of 1998, the various scar tissues kind of balled up and caused a bowel obstruction that almost killed me. I had to be opened up again in surgery on that. But, happily, I am doing all right now, and I feel good and healthy. I gave up tennis. These operations take a lot of energy out of you. After the second one, I said, I think, maybe, I have played enough tennis. So, I gave that up, but I walk two miles everyday and try to watch my diet the best I can. So, I am doing all right. I feel very good.

W: I laughed a little bit at the comment in your bio that you postponed one of your operations to cover the FSU-Florida game.

H: Yes. The [lung] cancer was behind a rib or something, and the X-rays would not quite show whether I had cancer or not. They said, maybe yes, maybe no, and they said, the only thing we can do is open you up and go in there and take a look and, if it is cancerous, perform the surgery and, if it is not, sew you back up. This was in early December of 1996 and I said, well, my wife and I have made plans to go to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl. Florida and FSU were playing for what proved to be the national championship. I said, how much would it hurt me if I waited until January to do that? Well, it would not any difference. It really was not as dramatic as it sounds. I really did not think I had it, and the doctor really did not think I had it either. So, we went over there and had a good time, watched the game, and came back. Then, a couple of weeks later, they took me in and opened me up. About four or five o'clock that afternoon when I came to, I said, what about it? And they said, yes, you had it, so we removed a lobe and patched you up. So that was it. Then, I went back in there [later] to see one of the doctors. She and I were talking, and she turned to one of the other doctors and said, this is the man that postponed his operation for lung cancer while he went to see the national championship football game!

W: Is there a point where, with four operations and stuff, you just want to throw your hands up in the air and think, what else?

H: I got pretty tired of being in there, I will tell you that. That aneurysm in the aorta, they were trying to get me to go in for that for a year and I said, look, I just got through with lung cancer surgery, and I do not want to go in there again. But, then, those things keep growing. They might grow a good bit in one year, and they might grow just a little bit [the next]. This one, they watched it for about four or five years before it became necessary to operate on it, but then it became, well, the percentage was, I was better off having the surgery than waiting. If the thing pops, you do not come back from that.

W: Did you keep writing the whole time?

H: Oh yes, I did not feel bad at all, kept playing tennis [until after the second operation]. You are fortunate to find out that you have one of those things. A lot of people have died who did not know that they had one. I had some kind of other ailment and had some internal bleeding, and they put me through some very extensive examinations. It turned out the bleeding was not much, but they found prostate cancer and an aneurysm in the aorta. They might have saved my life finding those two things when they did, so I am very, very fortunate to have that discovered.

W: We talked a little bit last week before we even started recording about the direction of newspapers. Will you discuss where you think they are heading?

H: I have not studied it as much as some of you, I am sure, or as much as the University of Florida journalism professors have but, to me, it is obvious that with the web sites, computers and all that stuff, I do not think we are more than a couple or three years away from getting up in the morning and, instead of walking out and getting the newspaper, you punch on your computer and then punch up what you want to see on the screen. They will put it all on the screen for you right there in your living room or den or wherever. Of course, advertising is what makes the newspapers turn around, turn over, and I am sure they will find a way to get the ads for you. Coupons are a big thing now. The coupons are worth a lot more than the price of the newspaper. If necessary, they will have somebody to come by and deliver your coupons to you. I think the day of the paper being printed up on paper and being thrown into your front yard is almost gone. When that era goes, I think it will be gone forever.

W: You brought a sheet in. What are some of the topics that you would like to cover?

H: I just made some notes. One thing, what I recommend to an aspiring young journalist. Number one, go to journalism school. Number two, start work on one of the smaller publications where you get real experience. I have worked in places like Atlanta and New Orleans, and a total beginner going into a place like that is not going to get assigned anything worthwhile. They might send you to go get the coffee, take some phone calls, and that would be about it. So, on a smaller paper, you get to do a little bit of everything. Number three, be fair in what you write. Number four, be accurate. There is no substitute for being accurate. This is one of the things I have stressed to everybody who ever came to work for me: if you make one mistake, one mistake of fact, they doubt your accuracy, and then they doubt the rest of the story, all of the rest of the story. If you say Florida lost to Georgia last year—the reader knows that Florida did not lose to Georgia last year—and then, in the same story, you start writing about what happened in 1960 or, maybe, a touchdown in 1992, he thinks you might not know what the hell you are talking about. So, you have to be accurate. If necessary, read back over what you have done before you turn it in, five or six times, if necessary, particularly if it is a lot of controversial facts. Be sure. Be accurate. Honor confidences. Keep your word. Then, if you cooperate with out of town writers and they ask you for help, if they say, what is the real story on the quarterback's ankle, or something, if you try to be very cooperative with them and honest and helpful, it will come back to you. Perhaps, more so in sports writing than in any other branch of journalism is the word of mouth and the network. You see each other. Sports writers see each other at events more so than the police beat writers. Tampa and Gainesville police beat writers might not ever be in the same room together. But, the sports writer in Tampa and the sports writer in Gainesville, they will be together, and the sports editor will be

together, and they pass the word around, that so and so is a good man. That is what pushes you along. When I was coming up, I would get calls from people I had never heard of, never knew, never had met, but people had passed my name along, had said, there is a good sports writer over in Jackson, Mississippi, or over in New Orleans. Most of the jobs I got, somebody would call me instead of me calling them, and I was not bashful about calling them, but that was usually the way it worked out. The only other thing, if you have a few minutes left, I understand the basic premise of this whole thing--are some stories worthwhile to be put in there?

W: Yes, certainly.

H: Okay. I am trying to think of ones that might be interesting. Joe Namath [quarterback, New York Jets] , after he won the Super Bowl in January of 1969 came to Jacksonville the next day for the AFL All-Star game. Jacksonville hosted that for two years. I went over to the hotel to talk to him. I had seen the game in Miami when they beat the [Baltimore] Colts [in Super Bowl III], but I had not gotten close enough to talk to him. There was a mob of people. So, I went over there to talk to him. He was out of pocket that first day, a day late coming in. So, I went over there about Tuesday. I had met him once or twice before, and it had been a very pleasant relationship. I saw him walking around in the breakfast room in this motel in Jacksonville. He had a glass of Scotch in his hand, and he was about smashed, about ten or ten-thirty in the morning. I walked up to him and reintroduced myself and he said, yes, I remember you; you are a good guy, and he put his arm around me. He said, first, walk with me around the hotel, or around the dining room. He went by and shook hands with all the All Stars and all. Bob Griese [quarterback, Miami Dolphins] was there. Then, [Namath] was swigging his booze and was getting pretty looped. I said, if you have a few minutes, I would just like to talk to you for a few minutes. All of a sudden, his whole mood changed and he said, I am not talking to no newspaperman today, and he let out a bunch of profanities and wheeled and walked away. I was forty then. I do not believe in adults settling arguments that way, but I had an awful temptation to hit him right in the back of the head, doubling my fists up and drawing back and just hitting him right in the back of the head, but I did not. I kind of seethed for a few minutes and I thought, people do not care whether I got insulted or not; they want to read about what Namath had to say. So, I went back over there where he was talking to somebody, waited until he got through and said, Joe, later on in the day if you have time, maybe we can get together finally. He let out with another blast of profanity. Then, the bus came up and all the players got on the bus and went to practice. My

inclination was to go back and write a column about what a rude bastard he was. Norm Miller from the *New York Daily News* was there and he said, can I catch a ride with you to practice? I said, yes, I will drive you there. So, on the way out there, I decided that I would try again. When I got to the practice, they did not have but about an hour of practice when they got through, I told Norm Miller what had happened and he said, I have the same kind of trouble with him. So he said, we will go over there together. So, we went over to the dressing room and walked up to Namath's locker. Miller said something to him, and he turned around with the same thing to Miller, all kinds of profanity and everything, get the hell out and all that stuff. So, I took Miller back to his hotel, and I went to eat. I was thinking the whole time I was eating that I was going to go back to my office and write a column about what a bum [Namath] was. Then I thought, the public wants a column on Namath; they do not care about how much trouble I have to go through; I am going to try one more time. So, I went back to the Sheraton or wherever it was they were staying in Jacksonville. I went to the house phone, asked for Mr. Namath's room and they said, Mr. Namath has left word that he is napping this afternoon and does not want to be disturbed until six p.m. So I put the phone down and went back to the office. When you go after somebody, do not be subtle. I hit him as hard as I could hit him. I told about Namath walking around with a glass [of scotch] in his hand, spouting profanities, telling sportswriters where to go. I said, this guy is supposed to be a ladies' man; if he was not a celebrity, he could not pick up a girl in Lannigan's Waterfront Bar. If I did this kind of thing twice a year, you would say I was a nutcase. I only did it once or twice in my life, but I hit him hard. Then there were three or four parties over in the Sheraton the next day, press parties and press conferences and this and that and the other thing. My wife said, you are going to get in a fight with Namath over there and I said, I am not worried about getting in a fight with Namath; if he hits me and breaks my jaw, we will sue and we will be millionaires. Well, I sold her on it. She is a very intelligent person. I got an awful lot of phone calls, most of them fans. They enjoyed it. A few of them cussed me out. People called her, and I could hear her on the phone as I was getting ready to go out to the Sheraton and she was saying, we hope he hits Jack in the jaw; we are going to make \$1,000,000 out of it. I thought, [Wow], I have oversold this. So, I went over to the Sheraton. I knew Billy Shaw, the guy who just got put into the Hall of Fame. He is from Vicksburg, Mississippi, and I had known him back in Mississippi. I got on the elevator to go up to whatever floor I was going to and he said, Jack, I did not think I would see you in this hotel tonight, after what you wrote about Namath today. I said, where is Namath? He said, oh, he is around the hotel, in and out of these elevators just like you. Well, maybe we will run into each other. I just went about my business. [We did not run into each other]. Mail came in from (not an exaggeration) all fifty states, about 50 percent calling me a bum and 50 percent calling him a bum. Dave Moffitt of United Press International came into town to write the pre-game story and stay over for the game. He came in and, by then, I had run all of these letters from all over the

country pouring in and he said, I do not need to interview anybody; I have my column right here. He took that thing and made the [national] lead on the UPI wire the feud between Namath and me. It went on for a couple of weeks. Bill Braucher from the *Miami Herald* told me six or eight months later that he was interviewing Namath a couple of months after that and mentioned my name and Namath said, do not put this in your story. [Namath] said, I admire that guy's guts. He said, I was the most popular sports figure in America at that moment, and he really worked me over. He said, as I remember what happened, I kind of deserved it. Now, [Braucher] did not write that, but he told me about it. Nolan Ryan, who just got voted the top pitcher of the century, he pitched for Jacksonville while I was there, but not [actually] in Jacksonville. When he joined the ball club, they were [leaving] on a road trip. He pitched a couple of innings in Syracuse. I made that road trip. I only made one or two road trips a year with the AAA Baseball team in Jacksonville. They went into Rochester to play, and they brought him in, in relief, about the second inning. He pitched something like six and two-thirds innings and struck out sixteen people, which is phenomenal. I think he struck out sixteen out of eighteen outs or something like that, and I saw it. The guy just had a blur, could really throw. I wrote about it and said, this guy is phenomenal. I went out to the ball park when he was supposed to pitch next, and it [was] the biggest crowd in the history of Jacksonville's minor league baseball. He is warming up. Every seat is filled, and they are standing up. I am looking down from the press box, and he is in the bullpen [the pitching warmup area for relief pitchers]. He is throwing, and you could hear over all of this tremendous crowd the pow, pow. He is putting it in the mitt, pow. About that time, the phone rang. I picked up the phone and the [coach] said, tell the PA announcer to scratch Ryan and put Larry Bearnarth in as the starting pitcher. I said, what happened? He said, Ryan has a blister on his finger. And [when the announcement was made], boy, the boos. [Ryan] never pitched in Jacksonville. The blister on his finger lasted about six or eight weeks. When he got well, they sent him straight to New York, and he never pitched in the minor leagues again. He wound up being voted the best pitcher of the century. But, what was strange was, any time when Ryan was young and he had a blister on his finger or a little bit of a twinge in an elbow, he would not pitch. Warren Spahn [pitcher, Milwaukee Braves] told me he always got pains and he said, I never pitched a game where my arm did not hurt. So I thought, and this shows you how wrong you can be when you are close to greatness and not know it, I thought Ryan was a wimp. I did not think Ryan would be pitching in the big leagues when he was twenty-six years old. He was still pitching there when he was forty-six! He broke [a lot of] the records. A little bit of humor, maybe, here. Always, one of the big stories in Jacksonville--we did not have many big stories--was trying to find out who were going to be the teams in the Gator Bowl. When the Gator Bowl committee went to meet, I would phone over to them and ask them who it was going to be and, maybe, talk to different members of the committee because most of them were friends of mine. I called

over there and George Olsen said, well, the *Times Union* had not been getting one of the teams the last two or three years; you have gotten them both. He said, we are going to try to make sure the *Times Union* gets a team. He said, if we get one of the teams nailed down today, we are going to give it to the *Times Union*, and we will give you the other team in a day or two. I said, I am going to be trying to find out, George, and he said, well, good luck. They had made a pact that they were not going to leave the room that year until the paper came out because they accused each other of slipping out and phoning me. I knew [the meeting] was at the Roosevelt Hotel. So it got to be about twenty minutes before the paper was going to press for the last edition. So, I dialed that room again, and a man was on the switchboard at Roosevelt. I got an idea that the professional telephone operator, the woman, had gone to the bathroom, and a desk clerk of some kind was running the switchboard for a few minutes, so I said, Room so and so. The next voice I heard was George Olsen, who was executive director of the Gator Bowl. I knew him very well. His voice was saying, this is a credit card call to Wayne Duke in Kansas City, Missouri. Wayne Duke was the commissioner of the Big Eight Conference. I was standing at [our sports] desk, and there were five or six sports writers there. Some people might say I was eavesdropping, but I felt like I had not asked to be put in that position and, all of a sudden, it was dumped in my lap, so I just listened. The next voice I heard was, hey George, this is Wayne. He said, Wayne, we have got Missouri for the Gator Bowl. Wayne said, that is wonderful; you have a good team, and it will be a great representative. I am thinking, ask him who the opponent is going to be; ask him, ask him. Finally, he said (I thought he would), who is the opponent going to be, George? George said, well, we are going to wait a couple of days on that. We are going to make this announcement, and then we are going to wait a couple of days and then announce the other team. Then, I am thinking, ask him to go ahead and tell you, off the record; ask him. Finally, you cannot tell me who the other team is going to be? [Olsen] said, well, I will tell you; it is going to be Alabama. I hung up the phone. I put a headline all the way across the front page: Alabama and Missouri in Gator Bowl. These guys up in the Roosevelt, in their room, said, okay, it is time to go home; Jack's paper should be on the street now. So, they get on the elevator and go down, and the door opens and there is a [newspaper] rack there, and it says, Alabama and Missouri in the Gator Bowl. Ah, you slipped out! And they got to accusing each other and went back. They went through the drapes and the light fixtures [looking for] a bug. I would not tell George how I got it because I thought he might get the [telephone] operator fired over there. So, when they closed the hotel down, I told him how I got it. He said, oh, I never thought of that. He and I were good friends. He would catch hell from the *Times Union* though because I would get most [of his] stories. They would not believe that George did everything he could to try to split them up. So, in the next year, he said, you are not going to find out this time because you are not going to know where we are. Sure enough, it turned out they went to the beaches to a hotel, and I could not find out

where they were. I had the idea that Florida and Tennessee were going to the Gator Bowl, but you do not want to put [a huge] head[line], Florida and Tennessee in the Gator Bowl, on a hunch. You want to know for sure. When you get in that big type, you do not want to be wrong. I have never been wrong in that big type, and you do not want to be wrong. I would have a hard time living that down. But, I went to [my] network. I called Pete Finney over in New Orleans. He was sports editor of the *Times Picayune*. He and I were big buddies, and we always talked about who was going to the Bowls and shared information. So I called him and he said, Jack, you all have a great game in the Gator Bowl. I said, well, I think we are going to have a great game in the Gator Bowl, but who is it going to be? He said, you do not know? I said, no, I do not. He said, it is going to be Tennessee and Florida. I said, that is great, now tell me how you found out. LSU had a 9 and 1 record, and they had three great teams to go to the Gator Bowl but could not take but two. So, they called Charlie McClendon, the LSU coach, and told him, we are not going to be able to take you; we have Florida and Tennessee; we hope you understand. He said, I do not blame you. So then, Finney called McClendon and said, do you know anything? And he said, yes, I know Florida and Tennessee are going to the Gator Bowl [and Finney passed the news to me]. So I wrote it, Gators and Tennessee in the Gator Bowl. [The Gator Bowl committee members] were out at the beach. George told me later, he said, they congratulated themselves, that the phone had not rung all day from anybody. Nobody knew where they were. Nobody knew. Okay, let us go. They went down on the elevator and the door opened, and there was the *Jacksonville Journal*, Gators and Tennessee in the Gator Bowl. They say George just went home and went to bed, took his phone of the hook. But it was just luck. It was not any great skill. One of [those two stories], an amateurish phone operator had hooked two lines into the one line. Some people do not think you can do that. Well, I do not know [how, but] they did [it]. Then, the other one, I called Pete Finney. Those kind of things, in a competitive newspaper town, it is always fun beating the other paper. That is one of the things that the modern newspapers are missing. There used to be at least two big newspapers in each town. Now, there is only one. In Atlanta, the *Journal-Constitution* is really just one. The employees are all with the same paper, and they use the same stories and the same writers. There is no competition. But, if you are competitive, it is a great pleasure to get the story before the other paper. People do not even remember which one got it and you do not get paid on it, but it is a lot of self-satisfaction.

[End of interview.]