

FAL 6

Interviewee: Horance "Buddy" Davis

Interviewer: Mark Ward

Date: April 21, 2003

W: This is Mark Ward. It is April 21, 2003. I am with [Horance] "Buddy" Davis, and this is for the oral history project for the Florida *Alligator*. Sir, where were you from originally?

D: I was born in Manchester, Georgia, in 1924. My family were railroad people, more or less, and so they moved around. Quite a few years, we lived in all sorts of towns in Georgia. We even spent one year in Detroit, where my father worked for some motor company up there. I was four years old when we were up there. That would be 1928. What I remember particularly about that of any historical significance is my mother took me downtown when Herbert Hoover was campaigning. It was raining slightly, and I saw him get out of his convertible and get a raincoat and put it back on. That pretty well pegs that time for me. My mother and father divorced, or they separated, let's put it that way, probably around 1930. It was the Depression time, and money was a big problem. My mother moved to Florida with me. I was in Jacksonville as a latch-key kid from the age of six to about twelve. Basically, that is where I got a great respect for reading because I was a loner, so to speak, and I read pulp magazines, Doc Savage and westerns and all that sort of stuff. For those years, I really became a reader. My mother remarried in 1936. At that time, we moved to Starke because her husband was the first educational director of the Florida state prison. We had a library in Starke, and I really read there. I was reading Hemingway. I was reading, I remember, a German writer [Erich Maria] Remarque, *The Road Back*, a very great book. It made a great impression me. The librarian was a lady named Ms. Young, who asked me if my mother knew what I was reading because I was reading quite a bit. I graduated from high school there in 1942.

W: When you graduated, why did you choose to attend the University of Florida?

D: I remember in 1942 being interviewed by my high school principal, Mr. Williams, who wanted to know what my ambitions were. I said I wanted to go into forestry. I was very ignorant about things, and also I had no money. I mean, that was an absolute fantasy. But I had an uncle over in Pensacola. He had just married, and all of a sudden, it turned out that he was willing to take me for the summer so I could work. I was seventeen years old and it was really not legal to do what I did, but I got on a train and went over there. He was a wonderful person, my uncle. His name was William **Beavers**. My mother's maiden name was Beavers. He lived in a two-room place, a living room and a bedroom. To go to the bathroom, I had to go through the bedroom, and he was newly married. You can imagine what a sacrifice this was for me living in one room and having to go through their's to get to the bathroom, and sharing that [bathroom] with somebody else, another apartment. It was wartime. It was 1942. I had to join

the union to even get on the base. It was amazing to learn that you could not get on the naval base without this. I had to go down there and give them \$50. I had to save that money and give them \$50 to join a union, and they finally called me in. [William] was a civilian welder and a superb worker. The company, Hathaway Construction Company, loved him. He had a helper at that time named **Waterboy**, and so I had to go work on a big old barge, and chip paint and chip rust. The guy who operated that barge had a hundred-foot boom, a gigantic boom. It was probably diesel operated. These workers were really a different breed of cat. He would move the boom and put a big, gigantic weight on it, and it would tilt the barge. We would get waist deep and we would chip paint down there in the middle of the bay. Across the bay, the naval aviators were being fired off of a ramp. It was very exciting to hear them start the engine. They started the engine with something like an explosion and then, boy, they'd rev that thing up, and they'd fire it off of a catapult. So, we were waste deep in water, and right across there, they were flying that airplane. That was quite a deal. [It was] amazing the way that guy handled that piece of machinery. One time we were moving one of these things, one of these big weights. I was working with two black guys, and one of them got a hand on this cable and it was drawn up into the pulley, and he started screaming. That guy was 100 feet away, and he just stopped, probably chewing tobacco or something, and he thought a minute, and he slowly let it down. That guy's hand came out with hardly a scratch on it. It was just a miracle. I fell off the gangplank one time. I still got a scar here from that. It was funny working like that. It was a big thing, and I could see the fat flowing around in there and it wasn't bleeding much, but it was pay day. I wasn't about to go get it fixed on pay day. By the time I got it fixed up, they couldn't sew it up. It was inflamed, so they had to tape it up, and I ended up with a big scar. Anyway, it was very interesting.

Finally, **Waterboy** left, and I became a welder's helper with my uncle. You just wouldn't believe the jobs we had. One thing we did was to lay **beads** of electric welding on these gigantic axles of a piece of machinery so they could then turn it down and reuse it. You could not buy axles. An axle was about eight inches thick. After about five or six days of that, my whole skin peeled. I just turned pink, and it peeled all over. I mean, it was like laying in the sun for two weeks. We had an assignment. The civil service workers, the welders, had been on this 100-foot tower trying to weld the brackets on the top of it. Wind was up there, and they quit. They couldn't do it. So, we went out there. Once again, metal was scarce, so it was wooden, straight up, a wooden ladder just nailed to the side of the thing. And he says, go. 100 feet up, straight up, and I tell you, there were older men doing it with me and they were putting off on the side and breathing, but I wasn't about to do it. But I had to go up and pull up the two cables to weld with. One was a **ground** and one was **line**. I had to sit there on a ledge like this with my feet there and pull on this thing and get 100 feet of heavy cable up. When he came up, he tried to weld while he held onto this thing

and swing out to over the opening, over the area to weld. The wind caught him, so I took the rope they were using for the water bucket, and I tied it around his waist and hitched it. The men were complaining I was using their water bucket rope up there. Anyway, that was some job, and I picked up other injuries. I spent a day or two in the hospital, [and I got] a cut here.

W: How did that compare to going to the university a scant few weeks later?

D: It was a different situation, I guarantee you. Anyway, I had a full summer doing that. We were working ten hours a day and then 8 hours on Saturday, and I was making \$75 a week with all that overtime and everything. The only I would do, we'd knock off work, and everybody was sharing rides because nobody had cars and gasoline was very hard to get. They would stop at a whiskey place, and I would buy a pint of whiskey. That was the only thing my uncle ever took out of me, was a pint of whiskey out of my salary. Anyway, when I ended up, I had \$500, and that was for my first year of college. In the fall of 1942, I registered. I registered in, of all things, engineering. I had changed my mind, and I had decided that aeronautical engineering was the way to go. I did very well in mechanical drawing, oddly enough I made an A. Old-man Professor [Edwin Stanton] Frash taught that. I had the tools, I had the stuff, and I did very well with mechanical drawing. But chemistry, boy, chemistry. I had an old professor there, I can't think of his name at the moment. But the prime example of this was he walked in one day and talked about atoms. I came from a country school, and we did not talk about atoms in my country school. He looked at this desk in front of him and said, this is made of atoms, and they are too small to see and they are moving all the time, and he said, the world is made of atoms. You picked up that. A day or two later, he comes walking in there and he has this tinker toy thing, and it's got this and that and the other, and he said, this is what the hydrogen atom looks like. Well, I hardly believed another word that man ever said. I mean, if he could see a hydrogen atom, something was seriously wrong here. That was all there was to it.

They had the chemistry exam in the Seagle Building, and they used the bubble system. Well, to get through chemistry, I used the old, you know, do this one, this one, this one [I guessed on my answers], and I got a D. I did have a lab, and none of my experiments came out, not one of them. This business of putting something in a crucible, weighing the crucible, none of that came out, none of it. Oddly enough, in the lab, we had one woman. Even though it was not coed, if certain things were taught, they could be there. So, we did have one female there. I put in one full semester. The war was going on pretty strong, and they moved me out of the dormitory. I was in Murphree Hall. They were bringing in the military, so I got a room off campus and shared it with some people. It was really kind of moving. One guy there was a graduate student, and he was in there shaving and crying because he lacked only a few hours of getting his

degree, and he had just been called back. He was apparently in the Reserves. I shared a room with a guy named **Terry** from Connecticut, and he got called in. He was in Biology, and I remember he brought his frog in and he cut it in little pieces and flushed it down the commode because he was called in. I mean, people were going to war. I decided that was the route to go. I decided I wanted to be a flyer. I had a draft number and that sort of stuff. Oddly enough, the family lived by this time at the prison. The draft thing was in Union County. I decided I would enlist in the Air Force. At that time, you had to volunteer for induction, and then they would swear you into the Air Force. But I had to pass the Air Force physical first. My family got in the car, and we drove to Jacksonville. The guy said I had an astigmatism in my eye, and I ought to go home and practice eating carrots and practice crossing my eyes. So, I went home, and I ate carrots and I practiced crossing my eyes. I went back a week or two later, and I passed that physical. Simultaneously, my mother was going over there for another medical reason, and she found out she was pregnant. Here I was eighteen years old. I turned eighteen on that job in Pensacola. The first half of the job I worked illegally at age seventeen, but at eighteen, I was okay. So, she learned she was pregnant, so there were eighteen or nineteen years between me and my brother. That was something. Then, I left school. I remember I met the coach. I wish I could remember his name. I have run across his name once or twice. But I had to go my teachers and tell them I was leaving. I called him [the coach] out in the field just north of the stadium, and I told him what I was going to do. He looked at me very sadly, and he said, you, too. That is the only thing I remember, is him saying that. So, I told the professors goodbye, and I went over. Then I had to volunteer for induction so I could get into the Air Force. I did that, and I was sitting around waiting. I got a job with the Corps of Engineers as a gopher. Finally, I got my notice to report to the Union County Courthouse. I got there, and there was a handful of us there. One guy was there in his overalls and I talked to him, and he couldn't read or write, and he had walked something like six miles to be there. He was a farmer, and he had left a wife and a kid. [It was] pathetic, going to war. We got on the bus, and we went out to Camp Blanding, and we had these little mental tests. They gave one of these tests where you match up triangles and circles and stuff. And this guy, I told the sergeant who was viewing him, I said, boy, I sure hope you guys don't need that guy. I mean, it was crazy. Anyway, one of the guys there entertained me by telling me about an airplane crash where he saw a pilot burned to pieces. You know, he made me feel very good about that. Anyway, that went through alright, and I guess within a very short period, I was called in to the military.

W: During WWII, you flew a number of combat missions over Japan.

D: Yes.

W: And on your return in 1946, you re-enrolled in the University of Florida.

D: That is right.

W: How had the university changed in that period?

D: Actually, the first time, there were only about 3,000 there. It was very, very nice. Everybody was in the dorm, and the town was small and whatever. When I came back, enrollment was about 10,000. I guess the summer of 1946, I went to register, and it was in what they called Language Hall – I don't know what it is now – and I was damn near crushed to death. Practically everybody wore their old uniforms without the brass. All of us did that for practically all of our careers. But I got pressed against the rail. I mean to tell you, to get in there and try to get registered was really a hassle. It was a change, without a doubt. I joined a fraternity, Delta Tau Delta, and I, frankly, was not a good fraternity man, and I finally decided I did not belong in it. But I did have a little brother to look after, and he pledged. **Paul Langston** was his name. He was from some little old small town, DeFuniak Springs. He was raised by his mother. Paul was a tremendous pianist. He even took organ under Willis Bodine [University Organist and professor of music, UF College of Fine Arts] Paul was a sensitive, delicate person. He ended up, career wise, being dean of music at Stetson [University]. The point is, he was thrown into a two-room deal with three hardened veterans, and their underwear was all strewn around, their crap was all around. They were just something all together. Paul complained to me about it, and I went to the head of housing who, at that time, was a guy who had polio. Somebody will remember him, I forget his name right now. I told him what the problem was, and he moved Paul. I think he moved him up with us. I can't remember whether he moved in with me or with somebody else, but he got him out of that situation. In other words, housing was rough.

Also, when I first came back, the first three floors, maybe two but I think three floors, they put married couples in Murphree Hall. Those halls had two rooms, and they put the married couples in there, and there was only one john in the hallway. I'm sure Paul must have moved in with me, and they put us on the third floor. So, there were single boys on the top floor. To handle this bathroom business, they hung a sign outside, "Occupied/Unoccupied." [laughing] When we went up, we would flip the signs all the way up the hallway, which I am sure caused some concern with people. The facilities for many of the classes were in temporary buildings that had been moved over from Camp Blanding.

W: When you first started on campus, you started at the *Alligator* almost immediately. What interested you in the paper?

D: In that era, the *Alligator* was a political plum. The editors must have been picked by the Board of Student Publications. According to who won the elections decided things. I was in the journalism college, and the political ____ in the Delta

Tau Delta house was a guy named **Jack Doherty**, who later became, with his Ph. D., head of the C-Course, social sciences or something. He also was editor of the *Orange Peel*, which was a humor magazine. I'll mention something interesting about that. Jack one time was publishing a very racy piece in the *Orange Peel*. I was down there looking at it and I said, how can you get away with that? He flipped the page, and on the other page was a very unreadable piece by U. S. Senator Spessard [L.] Holland [D-Florida, 1946-1971; Florida governor, 1941-1945]. His idea was to balance the content. Incidentally, I think the editor of the *Alligator* when I was here pre-war was Homer Hooks [1942]. Homer, I knew later when he was spokesman for the phosphate council. Anyway, I think the editor at this period that I am talking about was Pen Gaines [1947]. Jack came to me and said we had won the election. Apparently, Pen had won the publications board position, and so I was to take the job of fraternity editor. I guess I was fraternity editor in my junior year, I don't know. I can tell you now that it was a non-job. It was a title. I didn't do a damn thing. I mean, I wandered around, but I did not do anything. I did not learn anything. I did not interview anybody. It was a non-job. I do not remember how I got into column writing, unless Pen or somebody asked me to get into that. I remember very little about the column. I remember naming it "Ordinary Times." It was basically a conservative column. It seems to me I remember arguing against veteran's bonuses, for one thing, which is shocking. I believe that particular piece caught the eye of the *Florida Times Union*. The editor, my [journalism] professor, [Elmer J.] Emig, asked me if it was okay if they reprinted it. So, they probably reprinted. I mean, that would fit their conservative philosophy. They were owned by a railroad, so that would fit their conservative philosophy real well.

W: When you wrote this, you were under the G.I. Bill at the time yourself.

D: Yes. That was a beautiful system, and it ought to be put back. I was being paid \$100 a month, which was plenty to subsist on, and everything else was paid, books, supplies, everything. It was a wonderful system. I was on the G.I. Bill. That is true. When I got married, it paid \$200. Anyway, I do not remember who invited me to write it, and I do not remember much about what I wrote about. I am trying to think of other things of that era. Oh, one thing that ought to come up on this era is the name **Bobby Beard**. Bobby was the **back-shop** man for the *Gainesville Sun*. I mean, he just nursed those editors like nothing you've ever seen. This was the hot type period. Everything had to go through that Linotype and the printing process, and they just could not get along without Bobby. He died a few years later of cancer. The editors of that period ought to mention him. The other editor that I remember is Morty Freedman [1946]. Morty and I graduated together, and we sat together at the graduation. The funny thing about it, though, Morty sort of went with the other party, and I became sort of a little spy. I remember one time Jack Doherty wanted him to embarrass himself. I staked out the Florida Union knowing that Morty was coming to this meeting.

Morty saw me when he came up the steps, and he started to turn around and go back. But then he came on up, and we confronted each other in a political sense there, and that was it. So, politics were a big deal. Then along somewhere in there, Jack probably put me up to running for the Board of Student Publications. Of the six or so running, they were going to pick three. I came in last. I was number three, but I made it. That was an interesting experience. First of all, the guy who was managing publications, the so-called advisor, was Ralph Turlington. Ralph was, when I moved here years later, my insurance man, and then he was a legislator [Florida House-D, 1950-1974] and finally the state superintendent of education [1974-1986]. So, that was some contact. I think he was a graduate student in business or something at that time. Serving on the board with these professors was very good. One of them was my own professor, Elmer Emig, and then we had Professor [Harwood B.] Dolbeare [economics and business administration] and Professor [Franklin W.] Kokomoor [mathematics]. Kokomoor, later, was the father of my two kids' pediatrician. So, it was a nice relationship. There, we picked editors. That is the way I remember it. I guess we picked Freedman. I don't know when I was on, I really don't, but that was a good experience.

W: How did you get involved in journalism as a major?

D: That is an interesting thing. We did not go into the military aspect, but that has got a hell of a lot to do with it. I was not anywhere near the combat experience that a lot of people had. Even then, it was not a lot. I only had about nine missions. But when you are faced with these missions and, all of the sudden, happily the war ends, you begin to feel like somehow or another you must have been saved for something. You toy with the ministry, you toy with journalism, you toy with social services, you toy with something besides running a filling station or something like that. I had already had my chemistry experience, remember. So, I had written some items for the local paper from Saipan and Guam. One piece was about our flight leader. Our group leader had been shot down over Japan, and when the war ended, he had come and made a talk to us. I think I had written it up a little bit. I can't remember exactly. Anyway, I sent that little bit to the local paper, and they printed it. When I came back, I don't know, it just seemed like this was one area to go into, possibly. It had a lot to do with surviving the war and feeling like, hey, there is some reason for doing this. I guess if I had not been over there and hadn't seen some of the things I did see, towns burning and that sort of stuff, maybe I would have done something else.

W: Your columns from this period cover a lot of those things. They have religious aspects.

D: Yes.

W: They are also not written like a normal college student would write.

D: Well, I had an influence on that. I had a couple of excellent religion teachers. My minor was religion. One of the them was Harry M. Philpott, who later became President of Auburn [University, 1965-1980]. But the main one was [Delta Lewis] Scudder [head of religion department, 1946]. Scudder was a Methodist minister and a wonderful person, and he taught. You've got to realize this was comparative religion. We dealt with Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, the whole smear. Scudder was very good. He introduced us also to *A Study of History* [by] Arnold J. Toynbee. He was reading the whole six or eight books [ten volumes] of Toynbee, and we got the condensed version. It had a lot to do with morality and with civilizations falling and so forth and so on. So, it was a wonderful influence with him. Also, I had him in graduate school. It was a wonderful input at that particular time. Scudder had taught in Beirut. He was a very well-rounded fellow, and so I think that had a lot to do with it, too.

W: How did your fellow students react to your columns? Did they ever talk to you about them?

D: I do not remember.

W: Where were the *Alligator* offices located at this time?

D: The offices were located in the basement of the Florida Union, which is now another building. It was very cramped, but remember they did not have to do any significant layout. They did not need the tables and stuff. They took it down to the *Sun* for that.

W: About how often do you think you put in a week working on your columns or working on the paper?

D: I have no idea. The type of student I was, was that I worked and studied until two or three o'clock in the morning and then slept until ten and then went to class. This was the way it worked out.

W: Are there any particular individuals you remember working with while you were at the *Alligator*, either faculty advisors...

D: I remember a guy named Ted Shurtleff, whom we haven't mentioned yet. He must have been an editor in that period [1948]. I remember Pen Gaines very well. Pen later had bad health, as I understand, and I know he went to work for the motel industry somewhere or another. Morty Freedman, I remember very well. Those are the guys I remember. I am trying to think of who else was there. Al Burt [Florida newspaper columnist and author] was putting up the orientation thing, the F Book. He may have done some work for the *Alligator*. I am not so

sure.

W: Did you hang out or become friends with on a day-to-day basis with anyone working at the *Alligator*?

D: Not really. You served on the board, and they asked you for things, and you addressed them and whatever. But I don't remember any great problems in that era at all. It was a weekly, you know.

W: At the very end when you were writing columns, they were twice a week.

D Okay.

W: When you were on the Board of Student Publications, did you write for the *Alligator* then or were you not allowed to?

D: I think I was writing.

W: There was a conflict of interest or not?

D: [Laughs] I do not know. I do not remember.

W: After graduation, you returned to the University of Florida in 1954.

D: Yes.

W: One of your initial jobs also involved the Board of Student Publications.

D: Yes. I graduated in 1948, and then I got married. I went to work for a weekly, and then I stayed another year, but I do not remember any involvement with the *Alligator* for that year. I came back in 1954 to teach. That was a hard decision to make. I was state capital correspondent of a major Florida newspaper. I covered the governor. I was getting front page, back page, bylines everyday almost. I was making about \$4,500 a year, which was good for that time, and I had about a \$16-a-week travel allowance – I didn't need it anymore because I spent a year here before I went over there working for them – which they forgot to cancel. So, I was in high cotton. But I had been over here making a speech at the request of the Journalism school. Rae Weimer of the Journalism College [dean, 1949-1968] wanted me to come. It was involved. I had the mumps when he called. I had to live through that. Then, we had a house to sell. It was just ridiculous, and he was offering me \$500 less. But I got to admit I was unhappy with the newspaper. It was too conservative, and I did not like the political compromises it was making. They got a new state editor who was tampering with my copy a little bit. So, I decided it may be a good move. I told Weimer I would come if I sold my house, and damned if that house didn't sell right away.

My wife was pregnant with our second child . It was complicated getting over here, but I came. My assignment was to teach a couple of courses, or at least labs in the course or whatever, and sort of be advisor to Student Publications, which was the old job that Ralph Turlington had held. There are only two things that kind of stand out with me about that. One is, frankly, I wanted to get the hell out of it. I mean, it really was not that much fun.

But a couple things happened that were notable. One of them was there was a guy here who had a lock on all the photography [around campus]: yearbook, F Book, this book, that book, *Alligator*. He was not charging them much, it was \$3 or whatever, but it was a matter of getting people there on time and this and that and the other. He was not too pleasant to deal with. And here came this short, little guy. I always said he had a squeaky voice. He would not like that, but he [would say in a squeaky voice like this,] “Can I take some pictures for the *Alligator*.” I said, “*Can* you take pictures for the *Alligator*?” His name was Fred Ward. Fred became the publications photographer in no time flat. Of course, he ended up with *Black Star* covering earthquakes, interviewing Castro, doing this and that and the other. He started writing books about gems, jewels [8-book Fred Ward Gem Book Series]. He published a book on diamonds. Also, one time he came down here for journalism emphasis week in his own helicopter. He even had a helicopter. He called it his mobile tripod, or whatever he called it. Anyway, he was one guy I hired. I do not think he ever got a journalism degree, he got some other degree, but he was really a great *Alligator* staffer. The other thing was not so good. There was a staff member, a girl, last name **Coadla**. She came in and broke the news to me that the business manager of the *Alligator* had insisted on, and she was giving him, a kickback on her pay. I imagine she was not in editorial; I think she was probably in advertising. I called the guy in, and he admitted it and said it was traditional, that all the staff was supposed to kick back 10 percent or whatever it was. I told him that was the end of that. That is the other major thing I remember happening in that era. I had no problem with the *Alligator* and no problem with the board. I was dealing with the publications board, again, and I had no problem. I had that job for one year, and those are the only two things I can remember happening.

W: In the time you were a professional journalist, how do you think your *Alligator* career had helped you?

D: I think the column writing was extremely important to me. I wrote a column later for the *Florida Times Union*, and I think it made you give a grasp of things beyond your eyesight and personal perception. It helped that I was a good reader in the first place, but the fact that it makes you think about these things that are not immediately on perception is kind of important. So, it made a contribution in that regard. Don't forget, I have never been a journalistic technician in the sense of layout, design, [and] headlines. Now, I have done it. I

wrote heads for the *Miami Herald*, I wrote heads for the *Atlanta Constitution*, and *Florida Times Union*, but it was not my choice, it was not what I wanted to do, and I was pretty good at it. I did okay. My colleague, Hugh Cunningham [director of information services, UF, 1955-1973], was great with newspaper layout, but it just has not been my interest. I know what a tombstone is and this and that, but it has not been my interest. I have been a public affairs writer. I think that is about the way to put it. So, in terms of that column giving me a start, it was a great thing.

W: As a faculty member, how did you see the *Alligator* grow through the years?

D: I guess I was impressed with the general demeanor, the way it progressed.

[End side A1]

D: Over the period, you know, it flashed back and forth, and on top of that the editor quality. You get a completely separate editor in the summer. It is very hard to figure, now. When we get to some of them we had trouble with, I can tell more about. We get to Dave Lawrence about 1960 [*Alligator* editor, 1963]. Dave was to me, obviously, a superior journalism student. He was very good. I do not remember what year he got in trouble.

W: It was 1963.

D: 1963. What I remember is this: it was near the end of the year. What I did within the last four years was send him a copy of a letter I wrote in his defense. I was published probably in the *Alligator* or maybe in the *Gainesville Sun*, but it was a letter that I wrote in his defense. It was a flash in the pan type issue, somehow or another. I do not remember exactly who fired him, and I don't remember what the issue was, except that I was irritated and I wrote this letter. It was, to me, obviously a mistake to fire a good editor.

W: I think in that instance, it was he wrote an editorial based on the decision of the Board of Student Publications on who would follow him on the front page. It got some people up in arms.

D: I think if it had not happened so near to the end of the year, it would have had a different impact, but my impression was we only had another month or so to go and that was it. During that era when I was on the faculty, there was another incident involving the *Alligator*. I had read two paragraphs of an Associated Press item. The editors, nationally, were attending some conference, in Detroit probably. I read a little item that Ford was going to offer them a leased car, and I read a little item that one editor had accepted. They named the editor, some guy somewhere. Then the rumor got to me that the *Alligator* editor, whose name escapes me, that they were preparing a Ford for him. I called him in. Now, I was

a faculty member. I had nothing to do with it. I called him in, and I read him the riot act. And he gave me some static. He was saying there wasn't anything wrong with this. I said, I tell you what, you do this, and I am going to call the Associated Press myself. He didn't take it. That little incident happened when I was a faculty member and didn't have a damn thing to do with the *Alligator* at all.

The next thing involved the Benny Cason [*Alligator* editor, 1965] case in 1966. This was a very, very traumatic experience for me. I will start from the beginning and try to follow it all the way. I was teaching. I must have taught Benny, [but] I did not know Benny that well. He was a cracker from Worthington Springs, and he was editor of the *Alligator*. I was not following the *Alligator* that close. I was teaching a lab that did not get out until about six o'clock, and I would go home to a wife and two kids. I was trying to eat supper, and the phone rang, and it was Benny Cason. He said, you have got to come down to the Board of Student Publications meeting. I said, forget it. He said, they are going to fire me. I said, Benny, you're full of shit, you're crazy. [He said,] they are going to fire me. I need you to come down here and talk for me. I did not know Benny that well, I had not been reading the *Alligator*, and I knew nothing. I mean, it was just a stupid appeal, really, but he was begging. He was really just [pleading], you have got to do it. So, I finished supper, I guess, and I went down there to that Florida Union, same place. They were having this meeting in the honor court facility. There was an office and a room, and then you go through a door, and then there was the honor court room. He told me that was where it was, so I went down there and I parked. I walked into that anteroom, that first room, and there were two guys sitting there, and one of them had a telephone. [He said] go in there. So, I went into the other room, and you would have thought this was a bunch of blackbirds on a phone line. The Board of Student Publications were sitting at a table. People were standing all around, [and] people were sitting on the ledges all the way around. The damndest thing I've ever seen in my life. The student editors were there. Cason, I know [was there], and the other one I can remember was [Yvette] Cardozo, who was the assistant managing editor. Presiding over this was a colleague of mine named **John Webb**. John sat there and he said, well, we've got to vote. Cardozo and that bunch said, let him speak! If I would have had anything to say, I'd have been impressed by that. Let him speak! No, we are going to go ahead and vote. It was that sort of a deal. The students kept [saying], let him speak, let him speak! You had this small group here [saying] let him speak, and everybody else was around there not saying a damn word. Finally, I guess the committee [agreed], let him speak. Well, the first speaker was a guy who was editor of a magazine called the *Charlatan*. This was a guy who had shocked this campus by photographing a half-nude coed in the elevator of the library, for God's sake. He and I were going to share the platform. Anyway, he made it very brief, you know, Benny is not bad, Benny is good, Benny is okay. And then me. What could I say? I do not even know what

I said except I was not able to make a strong defense for the *Alligator* or Benny because I did not know that much about it. I did not even know what the hell was going on, but I did say something. I left, and they voted to fire Benny. I do not even know what the vote was. I went home, and I did not think that much about it. I had no idea that it was anything but little, small campus politics. But then it turned out in the next day or two that a whole new dimension blew open. First of all, one of the guys in the anteroom had been Bruce Culpepper, whose father [John Broward Culpepper] was chancellor of the damn university system [1965-1968; and formerly executive director of the Florida Board of Control, 1954-1965]. He was on the phone to [UF President] J. Wayne Reitz [1955-1967]. When I walked in, they passed a note to John Webb saying, vote now. When John Webb got up to leave, he dropped the God-damned note, and somebody got it. All of a sudden, there was a whole new dimension here. It was an administrative thing. It was not a little political thing. It was not Blue Key doing this. I did not even know Blue Key was involved initially. I did not know Benny had violated Blue Key [code]. But I did know in the next day or two J. Wayne Reitz fired Cardozo and the other one. There were three of them. He did that outright. He did not wait for the Board of Student Publications. Then I knew this was not just a little innocuous student thing. It was a big deal, and I was concerned.

I was advisor to this society of professional journalists. We called a meeting. The president was C. B. Daniel, who is now a local banker. I recruited C. B. for president because he was older and he had leadership qualities. We got a resolution to pass to the president against this thing. Oddly enough, the faculty had here a very weak society of professional journalists. Maybe it wasn't, maybe we met as a faculty, but we met anyway, and they adopted a thing against it. So, things were moving to let Reitz know that this was not proper procedure. I thought that was pretty good. But he went ahead and fired Cardozo and them anyway. There was going to be a regional meeting of six [members of the] society of professional journalists in Birmingham. C. B. Daniel had bought himself a convertible. We were going up there to this regional convention, and C. B. said, I will drive my car. Well, we went up there in that convertible, and we got up there. The society at that time, incidentally, was a known as Sigma Delta Chi, but it was a society of professional journalists. The head of the society was a guy named **Ray Spangler**, from California. C. B. and I took Ray to the side, and we told him what was happening down here. Ray got fired up and he said, I'll tell you what I will do. He said, I will commit \$5,000 to send two professionals and a professor from another campus down there to conduct an inquiry. I said, boy, that is absolutely wonderful. So, C. B. and I came back, and I wrote J. Wayne Reitz, and I knew I had him over the crapper. Boy, I had him good, but the letter was very nice. [It read] "Dear President Reitz, You will be happy to note...." The Florida newspapers were raising hell about this anyway, so Reitz knew he was in trouble. Let's see, this was 1966. I was writing editorials for the

Gainesville Sun myself. Anyway, I wrote him a letter, "Dear President Reitz, You will be happy to note that the president of the society of professional journalists, Ray Spangler, has committed to spend \$5,000 to send to the University of Florida campus an investigative group of two professionals and a professor from another campus to see if we can't iron this *Alligator* relationship out." I sent that letter to him. When I did things like this, I always gave a copy to the dean of the journalism school. He always knew what was going on. He was being very quiet about this thing. That letter hit Tigert Hall, and about a day or two later, I get a phone call from John Webb, who presided over this fiasco. He said, J. Wayne Reitz has formed a committee. I will say this, during this period before I got the \$5,000, I worried about my job a bit. I guess I had tenure, but there was no union. If I there had been a union, I would have joined right away. I think if I ever joined the American Association of University Professors, it may have been that year. We will end up with the AAUP in a minute. Anyway, I worried about my job. I had a wife and two kids.

So, I got a phone call from John Webb. Now, Manning Dauer [eminent political science professor and head of department, 1933-1975] was God on campus. Manning Dauer was the guy who drew up legislative apportionment things that the legislature adopted. Manning Dauer was a guy who said yea or nay when they proposed constitutional amendments. Manning Dauer was a guy whom everybody on campus looked up to. Manning Dauer was *the* guy on campus, and he was in political science. Webb said, Manning Dauer has been appointed to form a little group to try to iron this out. So, I went over the Dauer's office. Webb and I and Dauer, we were the only three, as I remember. Dauer was sitting there with all these papers piled up all over his desk. He was a very disorganized man, but a great guy. I had been to Miami with him to be on TV with elections and stuff, so I knew him pretty well. Manning Dauer says, "Wayne has told me that he has put his foot in a cow pie, and he wants some help in getting it out." He says, he wants us to try to iron this out. We agreed right away that the three fire-ees would not get back. There was no way that you could get Reitz to do that. I said, what we need is due process. We need everything that Benny Cason did not get – advance notice, a chance with defense, the whole schemer. He looked at me and [he said,] draft it. So, I went to the office, and I drafted a whole process. If they wanted to mess with the editor, they had to advise him what was wrong, and they had to tell him he was going to have a hearing and [notify him of] the date for the hearing. They had to have a public hearing. They had to have a right to appeal. Everything that you call due process, I wrote it in there. I carried it back over there, and Manning said, that is okay. At that stage, the faculty met again. You have got to realize I never really had high regard for the faculty backbone in my whole career. They met again, and they started backtracking. [laughing] I already had the \$5,000 commitment, I had Reitz over a barrel, and here they were nitpicking and worrying about it. They reversed their remarks dealing with Reitz and the firing. I was pissed, but I

did not say a word. I let them do it. I mean, you guys do what you want to, make asses out of yourself if you want to, but I am just going to sit on this back row and do nothing. And they did. They reversed themselves. These brave journalists who teach students, boy, they melted like hot butter.

Anyway, the final thing is the due process was presented in almost identical form, and the university senate adopted it. Meanwhile, the American Association of University Professors had a little hearing in the med center and had me go over there and testify, and they adopted a resolution or whatever against it. So, the general faculty expressed itself against it. I called in Cardozo and Cason and I guess the third person whom I don't remember and told them they were not going to get their jobs back. I told them that right away, but we got the due process in that case. The only time that I ever interfered with faculty politics [was] when John Webb was nominated to be head of the journalism department; I nixed it. I said, any colleague who will do what he did and try to quell debate on something like this, no way. He was a nice guy, and everybody loved John Webb, but I did not. So, that little deal of his kept him from being head of the journalism department. No big deal, but that much of a deal, anyway.

W: Do you think your due process had any ramifications later down the line for the *Alligator* independence?

D: Well, we can now come to Ron Sachs [*Alligator* editor, 1971]. I guess that was about 1972.

W: 1971 is when it was.

D: Okay. Ron, first of all, frankly, was a real showman. Even his current career shows that, his career in Miami [investigative reporter for *The Miami Herald* and editorial director for Miami's ABC affiliate, WPLG-TV; Sachs is now president of Ron Sachs Communications]. Ron is a real showman, and he likes this sort of thing. I will say this, I think he really was pushed into this by someone, maybe Jean Chance [associate professor of journalism and communications], who had a lot to do with it. Maybe talk to her because, you know, she is a woman, and she was a feminist and so forth. What I was doing was watching. The *Daytona Beach News Journal* had a court case challenging the abortion law, and it was going to the courts. I knew that. Then Ron does this sensational thing [ran an abortion referral list with his story in the *Alligator*; this was against the wishes of the university administration because it violated Florida Statute 797.02, which prohibited dissemination of abortion information]. Ron came to me and said he wanted support, and I would not give it to him. I said, there are a couple of things about this. First of all, you are not just against the administration; you are against the law, and I am no lawyer and I am not dealing with that. The second point is that the Daytona Beach thing is underway. I mean, I did not start writing fiery

letters or anything for Ron at all. He and I are friends still. He hugs me when he sees me and that sort of stuff, but I did not dive into that one at all. When [UF President Stephen C.] Steve O'Connell [1967-1973] decided that he wanted [Hugh] Cunningham [director of information services and press secretary to university president] to do something about it, I hoped they would find some solution like they found [the *Alligator* became independent of the university, 1973], and when they did, I was enthusiastic about it. Cunningham – God, he's dull when he talks about it – but I think overall he did a good job. They got office equipment, they got something like \$80,000 **due bills** coming in [the university helped launch the *Independent Florida Alligator* by loaning it \$95,000], and they managed to survive and have done very well. I think it has done a lot for the *Alligator* to get off campus and escape what we had in 1966. That is all I can say about it. It is just that I did not get all fired up over the Ron Sachs case.

W: You did write an article in the *Sun* stating pretty much what you said just now, and the *Alligator* replied with a bit of criticism.

D: Yes.

W: Did you ever have students in your classes from the *Alligator* who would criticize you?

D: I guess I did, but it never really scarred me. I taught classes where we had debates because I was teaching editorial writing at times, but that usually dealt with some other issue other than the *Alligator*. So, I do not remember.

W: Did students after that period when the *Alligator* became independent or even before then ever come to you for advice on stories?

D: Oh, yes. What happened when it moved off campus in regards to me being a professor was very simple. I was teaching news writing, and in teaching news writing, the danger is that a student will fictionalize. I hate to say it, but if he feels like he can make up a little something, he will do it. The fear of publication is an important threat. What I have done for years is to make them turn in two copies, and one copy I gave to the *Alligator* with the idea that if they did not use it, at least it could be used as a tip source, and sometimes they would use it. I also always accepted *Alligator* copy if it was okay. I mean, I did not accept much sports. I did not want them to specialize that way. In fact, I accepted copy from other newspapers if they were stringing. The relationship with the *Alligator* became firmer over the years when Ed Barber got in there. They were getting his copy and doing whatever they were doing with it. I had that relationship for years. Also, I would funnel students over there. When you are teaching news writing, about the third week you find out that somebody is pretty good, and then you say, hey, why don't you go over there and work for the newspaper. I always

funneled talent to them. I do not remember having any strains with the *Alligator* after the Ron Sachs case at all.

W: As a professor, did you ever see a difference between a student who worked at the *Alligator* and a student who did not? Could you identify any differences?

D: I think *Alligator* editors tend to be superb journalists. We've got Walker Lundy [*Alligator* editor, 1964] on the *Philadelphia Inquirer* now [editor, retired 2003], and we've had Dave Lawrence [*Alligator* editor, 1963] on the *Miami Herald* [former publisher], and we've got somebody they just honored in the Minneapolis paper. I think they tend to be better, superb journalists without a doubt. I do not know where I am going.

W: Just can you identify any differences between the students you would send over there.

D: Yes. I think most of them ended up writing. I know **Jenny Hess** worked for the *Gainesville Sun* before she went down and worked for Disney World. There is a staff writer for the Sacramento paper right now whom I had breakfast with about two weeks ago. She has been a reporter over there for years. Yes, I think they tend to do a better job, without a doubt, when they have had that experience.

W: What do you think the role of the paper was while you were a student, and how did that change through the years?

D: I do not know whether Hugh Cunningham helped with this a great deal or not, but I can remember the stage when, probably, times were better. They would have a double-page spread on something like poverty, and it would be something they originated. I do not know what the factors are, whether it was economic or talent-wise or what, but I can remember days that they did do more stuff of what I call sociological significance. Now, they sit and they want cable and wire service, and then the wire services do this and that and the other. I guess when they did not publish as frequently, maybe, and they were not devoted to everyday news, they did more of this sort of stuff. I can remember some significant double-page spreads of things that I thought were significant that you do not see now. That is all I can tell you about that. I cannot peg it to an era or an editor or circumstance, but it did have it.

W: Do you still the read the paper nowadays?

D: Only when I catch it. Publix has it, and when I am over there three times a week, maybe, I get it.

W: Any comment of how it has changed since you were a student?

D: If you are on campus and not reading a daily newspaper, it fills a real need, definitely. I imagine a great many of the student body are like that, that they are not reading a daily newspaper each day. It has gotten to where it does carry, I have noticed, war news and stuff that it never carried in the olden days. I guess as a publication, it fills a real need for that sort of stuff as a daily newspaper. If there is anything missing that I am talking about, it is just leisure and space used to devote to big sociological issues, and that may not be its mission anymore.

W: Do you ever keep in touch with your former students you used to work with?

D: Oh, yes. I am on email to Walker Lundy on the Philadelphia Enquirer. I am on email with the Minneapolis editor. I nominated him for the award he just got. His name escapes me for a minute. Dave Lawrence, we corresponded off and on when he was publisher at *The Miami Herald*. Yvette Cardozo, I have not heard from her in quite a while, but I have her email address. She is a major freelancer now. She and her husband are both major freelancers, and I have her address in there. I went down to get this award that was being given in the Newspaper Hall of Fame, and I met a number of them down there, and I got some email addresses from them, but I am not regularly in correspondence with them. So, when we see each other, we connect.

W: You won your Pulitzer in 1971 dealing with civil rights issues. How do you think the *Alligator's* coverage was on civil rights during that period?

D: I have no idea. I do not remember. In fact, it would be very interesting reading, I think, to read the Vietnam War stuff and refresh my memory on that, because we had some things happening out there and I was writing editorials about them. I do not know. I deplored certain things happening out there. For example, when O'Connell tried to speak, somebody would jerk the amplifier loose and that sort of stuff. I did not approve of that at all, but I defended things like, the atheist who delivered the seven dirtiest word in English, I think I defended her being on the plaza [Plaza of the Americas]. My feeling about this was, great social change was only going to happen if there were disturbances, and it was up to the students to do the disturbing. That was really my feeling. I can tell you one thing that had a very, very great emotional effect on me was the killing at Kent State. If you read the editorial I wrote about that, what I thought was the commander of the National Guard would be court-martialed. What had happened was, [Spiro] Agnew, the vice president [of the United States, 1968-1973], had been down here talking about bums on campus and [U. S. President Richard] Nixon [1968-1973] had been talking about the same sort of stuff up at the Pentagon. He had made some speech. So, I wrote this editorial about the Kent State shooting and deploring it and whatever and I put the wrong... I did not like the heads they put on them, so I put them on. I put "Four Dead Bums," and that made everybody believe when they first read it that, you know, he is happy that these bums got

killed. Of course, the reading was entirely different.

Well, I had an early class and I was there about seven o'clock, and a fellow faculty member who had been in the military crashed in the door. He was crying, and he called me a Communist and a non-patriot and this and that and that other. I never had such a run down in my life, because I had defended those four students. The damndest thing you've ever seen. It was a terrible period of crisis. I would go in early to work, and at that time, there was a building where the O'Connell Center is now. Originally, they kept horses in it, but they closed it in and made it the ROTC building. When I would come to work every morning at the crack of dawn, there would be somebody out there guarding that thing because they were setting them on fire all over the United States. It was a tough period. It really was. I would be interested in just what the *Alligator* did do during that period. I do not remember.

W: Just to change gears completely, here is an earlier question that I failed to ask. What did your mother think of you, first off, going to the university, and secondly, working at the *Alligator*?

D: My mother was really not an intellect. I am trying to think if anybody ever disapproved or approved of anything that I did in that particular department. I guess they were reasonably proud of me when I was writing for the *Times Union* and giving a byline all the time and whatever. She was living when I won the Pulitzer Prize, and she was proud of that. But I do not remember her having any particular feeling about this. Remember now, we came from a class of people who did not go to college. My stepfather had only had two years, even though he was educational director of the Florida state prison. It was a beginning program. It was not a big thing. I had some uncles and aunts who had been to college, but that was the closest.

W: You also mentioned your interest in reading when you were young. Do you think that might have led to some of your instincts in journalism?

D: I do not know about instincts, but I will tell you one thing. You cannot get very far without reading. I have seen so many generations of students go through who do not know that and do not do it and never fell into it. I include in that group my granddaughter. It is a real, real shame that somehow or another they do not get into this. I mean, after all, my reading started innocent enough with those pulp magazines, but once you get started, you always end up doing it. Carl Hiaasen [Florida newspaper columnist and author] is a former student of mine. I have had students write books about the treasury department and one thing and the other, and it is nice for them to go out and do that. I had one student put out a book for kids going to Disney World, just kids. I mean, what do you see? That is interesting to see them do that.

W: Do you remember Carl Hiaasen as a student?

D: Oh, yes. Carl was a very good student. While he was here, he did PR for the campus police. Carl is a handsome guy. He is even handsome now with a little gray hair, but he was a handsome, tall guy with a good bearing to him. A very good student, no doubt about it.

W: Is there anything else I missed that you would like to talk about?

D: No, that is it.

W: Thank you very much.