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Malcolm Steele Dale (Deceased - 1978)  
Interviewee

P.O. Drawer 549

Monticello, MS  
Address

May 13, 1977  
Date of Agreement

Priscilla P. Johansen  
Director  
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin  
Regional Library

History of the Lawrence County Press; Different types of printing and presses used; Area publishing; Printing processes; Reporting;  
Subject of Tape(s)

Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library  
Oral History  
Data Sheet

FULL NAME Malcolm Steele Dale (Deceased - 1978)  
ADDRESS p. O. Drawer 549, Monticello, MS PHONE 587-2478  
BIRTHPLACE Hattiesburg, MS DATE OF BIRTH May 2, 1939  
EDUCATION Monticello School System - 12 years; University of Mississippi,  
Oxford, MS; BA in Journalism, minors in Political science and English

OCCUPATION Newspaper editor, Lawrence County Press

TRAVELS Washington; St. Louis; California; Miami

SPOUSE'S FULL NAME Grace Montjoy Davis Dale  
BIRTHPLACE Lafayette, LA (Rapides Parish) DATE OF BIRTH July 9, 1942  
OCCUPATION Housewife; newspaper assistant

NUMBER OF CHILDREN Three (3)

NAMES OF CHILDREN

Mary Grace (Midge) Dale

Maureen Allen Dale

Mark Exum Dale

FATHER'S FULL NAME Joseph Malcolm Dale

BIRTHPLACE Monticello, MS

DATE OF BIRTH January 1, 1900

OCCUPATION Oil field; gas company; newspaper editor and publisher

MOTHER'S FULL NAME Mary Olive Steele

BIRTHPLACE Clinton, MS

DATE OF BIRTH October 27, 1903

OCCUPATION Housewife; newspaper assistant

MAJOR NATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL EVENTS OF IMPORTANCE DISCUSSED

INTERVIEWEE'S AREA OF INTEREST AND/OR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY

History of Lawrence County Press in Monticello, MS; Different types of print-  
ing and presses used; Area publishing; Printing processes; Reporting;

Evelyn Benham  
INTERVIEWER

May 13, 1977  
DATE

Lawrence County Press  
PLACE OF INTERVIEW

Malcolm Steele Dale  
INTERVIEWEE'S NAME

An Interview with  
Malcolm Steele Dale  
May 13, 1977

Interviewed by  
Evelyn Benham

Mississippi  
Department of Archives and History  
and the  
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library  
Oral History Project  
Monticello and Vicinity

BENHAM: This is an interview with Malcolm Steele Dale, P.O. Box 549, Monticello, Mississippi. Interviewed by Evelyn Benham. Mr. Dale, what is your full name?

DALE: Malcolm Steele Dale.

BENHAM: What is your address and phone number?

DALE: Monticello, Post Office Drawer 549. Phone number in 587-2781 at the office and 2478 at the house.

BENHAM: When were you born?

DALE: May the second, 1939.

BENHAM: Where were you born?

DALE: I was born in Hattiesburg, but I was raised in Monticello.

BENHAM: Now, is Hattiesburg in Mississippi?

DALE: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: What is your father's full name?

DALE: Joseph Malcolm Dale.

BENHAM: When was he born?

DALE: January the first, 1900.

BENHAM: And where was he born?

DALE: In Monticello.

BENHAM: What kind of work did your father do?

DALE: Well, he did a number of things. He left home at the age of seventeen (17) and joined the army in the First World War, 1917. When he returned, he primarily went into the business of working in the oil fields

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in Texas, Oklahoma, coming over to Arkansas. Then all the way up to Illinois, he worked as a trouble-shooter for the gas company, United Gas - well, the predecessor to United Gas Company - that type work. And worked for a number of years in that. Then later came back to Monticello and did several other odd and assorted jobs until the time my grandfather died when he went into the newspaper business.

BENHAM: And what year was that?

DALE: That would have been 1941.

BENHAM: What was your mother's maiden name?

DALE: Mary Olive Steele.

BENHAM: When was she born?

DALE: I am not positive. 1903, I believe, was the date of her birth. Month and day, I believe it was October 27, I think, 1903.

BENHAM: And where was she born?

DALE: I am not positive of that; I think it was Clinton. Her father was a professor at Mississippi College.

BENHAM: And this was also in Mississippi?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: Did your mother work outside of the home?

DALE: Yes, she did. She helped at the office until she was physically unable to do so. She suffered from a number of strokes in the latter years of her life which incapacitated her as far as assisting at the office. But prior to that time, she had done a number of things in the newspaper work.

BENHAM: All right. Tell me something about your education.

DALE: Well, it consisted primarily of course of what was in Monticello

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Elementary, Monticello Junior High, and Monticello High School, having graduated from there.

BENHAM: Wait just a second, we have to start at the beginning.

DALE: All right.

BENHAM: All right, like how old were you when you started school?

DALE: I was six (6) years old.

BENHAM: What was the name of the school?

DALE: Monticello Elementary.

BENHAM: And how did you get to school?

DALE: My mother carried me to school each morning by automobile. First two or three grades, I know, she carried me. Well, she must have carried me a little longer than that. There's a span I don't remember before I started riding a bicycle myself and then a motorcycle later and then an automobile.

BENHAM: Well, about how far did you live from school?

DALE: Four-fifths of a mile.

BENHAM: I remember you singing in the elementary school programs. How did the teachers know about this talent of yours?

DALE: My mother was quite interested in my participating outwardly in things. I took expression lessons and I took singing lessons and what-not from the time, I guess about five (5) years of age and so I can remember vaguely having performed at Co-Lin and at Mississippi Southern and places like that. I was what was known then as a little boy soprano and it changed somewhere along the line. Now I can hardly sing at all.

BENHAM: Well, I really enjoyed hearing you sing.

DALE: Well, thank you.

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BENHAM: And there was one in particular, one song in particular that I liked and that was about the Easter bonnet, but I don't remember any more about the words. What did you do when you finished high school?

DALE: I went to the University of Mississippi or "Ole Miss" and pursued a bachelor of arts degree with a major in Journalism and minors in Political Science and English.

BENHAM: And what year was this?

DALE: That was from 1957 through 1961.

BENHAM: Let's see, you said that your major was in Journalism?

DALE: Right.

BENHAM: All right. Was this something that you always wanted to do or did you feel that you were obligated to carry on your father's business?

DALE: No, I grew up being a number of things. In that day and age, I think young people had more heroes than they do now. So quite naturally from Saturday matinees, I at one time wanted to be a cowboy. Lash LaRue was my favorite. Others had Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, but Lash LaRue with his whip was one of my favorites. I don't ever recall having wanted to be a fireman. A train engineer - I thought riding on a train was great. I wanted to be a soldier because having grown up in the time of the second World War was a very impressionable age for me, of course. And at one point I was going to be a minister - that looked like a good calling - and several other things that I thought of. Professional football players. Several other things. But along about the middle years and high school - I'd say around the tenth or eleventh grade - it began to dawn on me that I was going to have to choose a profession. I assume I talked with my parents about this, as well as other

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teachers and what-not. I can remember very vividly my father telling me if I wanted to go into medicine or law, he would do everything in his power to put me through school. If I wanted to be in the newspaper business, it was mine. He would turn it over to me once I had acquired the education and skills to do so. And so I began to lean toward doing that. Of course, naturally, throughout the junior high and high school years, I was always elected class reporter and editor of the paper. I was just supposed to be able to do it and somewhere along the line I guess I learned a little about doing it and always accepted those, those jobs.

BENHAM: So it started from way back and some of it rubbed off.

DALE: Well, I can remember resenting, resenting having to work. I started at the age of six (6) folding papers. We used to fold them by hand. There were a couple of girls that used to come in after school on Thursday afternoons and we'd fold papers and they'd make me a little place on the floor and I could fold twenty-five (25) or thirty (30) during the time they were folding several hundred, but that was the way I began. At the age of twelve (12), I ran the hand-fed press that we printed those on.

BENHAM: How interesting.

DALE: And so I grew up learning the mechanical part of it in particular and I guess there were times other youngsters were going swimming or playing baseball and things of that type and I was having to work. And there were times when I wished I was not having to work so that I could be out doing those things too. Now a days, of course, I guess that training that I received is paying dividends as far as being able to carry on some of that work.

BENHAM: Well, that's right and you are involved now in the Little



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League, too.

DALE: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: Now you are kind of getting back, aren't you in a way?

DALE: Well, we're trying anyway.

BENHAM: Yes, yes. Well, what year was this that you finished college?

Did you tell me that?

DALE: 1961.

BENHAM: Was it at this time that you met your future wife?

DALE: Just a few weeks prior to graduating from high school was when we met as a matter of fact.

BENHAM: All right. What is your wife's full name?

DALE: Grace Montjoy Davis.

BENHAM: And when was she born?

DALE: Now you are going to ask me a date that is going to be hard for me to recall.

BENHAM: Well, don't feel badly.

DALE: July ninth and she is three (3) years younger than I am, must be 1942 then?

BENHAM: Don't ask me. I have asked this question to a number of husbands who have been living with their wives for years and years and years and they don't even know how to spell their wives' names. And where was she born?

DALE: She was born in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, which is Lafayette I believe is her place of birth.

BENHAM: Did your wife work away from home?

DALE: She works in the office part-time.

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BENHAM: I mean did she work, do that before she got married? Did she have a job outside of the home?

DALE: No, no. She always said she went to college to get her M-R-S degree and she got it.

BENHAM: Well, that's good. How many children do you and your wife have?

DALE: Three (3).

BENHAM: Would you tell me their names?

DALE: The oldest is Mary Grace. "Midge" is the nickname that we use. She is named after both of her grandmothers. She is thirteen (13). Her birthday is in August.

BENHAM: I can't believe it.

DALE: Oh, yes. The middle is Maureen Allen and she is ten (10) years old. And the third is Mark Exum and he is six (6) years old.

BENHAM: Why was a newspaper ever put out in Lawrence County? Why was it?

DALE: Well, there were several here back through the years. We have never been able to ascertain exactly how many there were. It has to go back, of course I'm sure, interrelated to the economics of that day and age. Natchez of course had become a principal city in Mississippi after settlers left the coast and river traffic was of course the only means really of rapid movement. You didn't haul things over land in our climate too well. We had too much water for oxen to drag too much, I imagine, so river barge traffic was the best form of travel. And the Indians were eased out of certain territories and the settlers moved in to occupy those territories, of course one of the principal places to come along would have been Monticello. Ideal on a high bluff, next

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to a river, it just made a good place for people to settle. As the population grew, of course one of the freedoms of this country is freedom of information. People demanded to know. And there were a group of people in the publishing business that were willing to tell. Now, sometimes they didn't always tell the truth and sometimes they embellished the truth and sometimes they just reported what they could find out. And of course the time came when Lawrence County, which of course originally embraced most of Lincoln and most of Jeff Davis County, had a sizable population that would have wanted a county newspaper. This being a county seat town, effort was made then to begin a newspaper. As I said, I do not know all of those. I've never been able to trace all of that history. The Mississippi Press Association and various members interested in historical events of it have traced the beginnings back, of course, to Andrew Marchaux at Washington at Natchez in Mississippi and what all the papers that were in Lawrence County or even in Monticello are not known. But the Southern Journal is the earliest that my family had any connection with. It was apparently begun in 1841 according to the volume numbers.

BENHAM: All right. Now wait, wait, you are kind of getting a little bit ahead.

DALE: All right.

BENHAM: I am going to come back and ask you that.

DALE: Okay.

BENHAM: But I just wanted to know why you felt that there was a newspaper and you have answered that question very well. In fact, you have told me a lot of things I didn't know. What was the name of the first newspaper that was put out here in the county?

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DALE: As I said, I have not been able to ascertain that. My earliest recognitions are with...

BENHAM: Well, of your family?

DALE: Well, in 1861, we found a deed not too many years ago where my great-grandfather, S. W. Dale, Steven W. Dale, purchased the Southern Advocate here in Monticello.

BENHAM: Was he the editor?

DALE: He became the editor at that point. Why he would have purchased this in 1861, I can only surmise. Possibly there was a Union sympathizer editing the paper that fell on hard times, wanted to sell it, and he dumped it in \_\_\_\_\_ time.

BENHAM: Well, your grandfather bought, so why shouldn't he be the editor.

DALE: Right, right. Back in that day, of course, you hand-set the type, you ran the press by hand, and you almost distributed it by hand. There would have been some circulation up and down the streets but no mass circulation as we have now a days. The mail could have been used to some extent, but it wouldn't of course have been as free and widely circulated as it is now because of the service that would have been rendered at that point. But that was in 1861 and I said this newspaper apparently was begun in 1841. We have a copy of it in 18-- , well, I have forgotten the date of the one that we have. We must have a copy of it in 1866, because it carries William H. Seward's proclamation by him. He was the fellow that bought Alaska, you know. Talked us into buying that. Quite interesting to see that on the front page of this paper. Incidentally, this is a rag content paper and it is in better condition

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than the newsprint that we printed last year's newspapers on.

BENHAM: Okay. Well, I am going to ask you something about that after, when this is over. But right now I won't do it. You have already said some of the topics that were discussed in the paper.

DALE: Right. Well, this same edition carries the wedding of Mrs. G. A. Tunieson, who was known as Grandma Tunieson at that time. I forget all the details and particulars of it, but people in Lawrence County have heard that Tunieson name for years and years. Her wedding account is carried in this same edition of the paper. There were professional cards by doctors and lawyers. There was a serialization of a story with a moral concept to it. It was a preachment, really. Somebody that went off and did morally wrong, like the prodigal son and how he learned his lesson. And the editorial content was limited to a column of short paragraphs and comments of that type. There was not a long editorial as we know it today in this particular editions. Now, what might have been in other editions I do not know. There would probably have been a column and a half gleaned from other newspapers, because there was no television to get the news from Jackson or from Biloxi or from Greenville or Memphis or New Orleans or Washington or Paris or anyplace else. So the weekly newspaper editor swapped papers called "The Exchange" with papers across the rest of the state. And the Jackson Clarion would have been one of those that he would have exchanged with and others. And he sat down and he read those columns faithfully and he picked up an item and condensed it to the paragraph and reprinted that for the benefit of the people here so that they might know what was going on in the rest of the world.

BENHAM: Oh, yes, now I see. Well, that is even more interesting. Now,

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what were the rates at that time?

DALE: Startlingly enough, they are not too far from what they are now. Carrying on the masthead are the words, "A dollar, fifty cents (\$1.50) for six (6) months in advance." That would have made three (3) dollars per annum. And of course today's rate is only four (4) dollars a year. So we are woefully behind and we know it. We are still one of the few papers that sells for ten (10) cents a copy at the newsstand. Most of the rest are fifteen (15) and there are even some in the South as well as especially in the North that are twenty (20) cents in the newsrack each week.

BENHAM: All right. What, where was the newspaper office located? The first one?

DALE: We are not certain where S. W. Dale would have had the Advocate. He later had a, I mean the Southern Journal. He later had another newspaper known as the Monticello Advocate. Why he ceased publication of the Journal and went to the Advocate, we do not know. We have the last copy of the Advocate ever published and it was in the forty-second week. It had been begun in 1881 on April the twenty-second, 1882 - the same date, that's a Saturday dateline, for the Advocate. The same day that the cyclone came through Monticello and blew it off the map. He was struck and killed by flying timbers at the courthouse in Monticello. And of course there was no publication here then for six (6) years until 1888. At that time, my grandfather started the Lawrence County Press and as far as we know, the original building was located on Broad Street. It was in a frame building with a porch, which I have heard a number of older residents say people always used to love to congregate there and sit on that porch and I guess pass the news back and forth. It must have

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been a favorite gathering place. It was across from what is South Central Bank today. And next door to what is now Ball's Clothing Store. And Triple A would have been located right on the same spot the Triple A Flower Shop is located today.

BENHAM: All right. Now, was this a weekly or daily newspaper long ago?

DALE: No, of course it was weekly. It has always been weekly.

BENHAM: Is it that way now?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: Was there other newspapers put out later by your family?

DALE: My grandfather attempted to put out one in Columbia around the turn of the century and then in the 1920's I believe. He contemplated first one in Hazlehurst and almost, well, I believe if the account is correct that I ran across, he had sold this one here, had gone to Hazlehurst to publish that one there, and a week later came back and repurchased the Press and never missed an issue under him, as a matter of fact. But times were good at that particular time. I think Wesson was a thriving metropolis. Hazlehurst, the railroad must have been coming through then. Things looked mighty good economically over in that area and so he apparently wanted to get over there and get another newspaper. At one time he also contemplated one for Georgetown and as far as I know, that's all that my grandfather did. My uncle, James Pendleton or Jack Dale, the baby brother in the family, edited and published in Water Valley, Mississippi, a newspaper called The North Mississippi Herald which is still in operation today. He published that from the time he graduated from the University of Mississippi until he went into the service in the second World War at which time his wife, of course, had to let it go. She couldn't

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continue to run it at that time.

BENHAM: All right. Now you said that your grandfather came over and published - you know, after he went to Columbia and he decided he would do something there, start a newspaper, and then he gave up the idea, but then he decided to come back to Lawrence County and published the paper - well, who had the paper at that time?

DALE: Well, he had the paper.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: At that time there was another paper at Columbia and apparently in that day and age a particular group of merchants maybe didn't like the way the newspaper was doing and they tried to organize them another newspaper.

BENHAM: You mean organize it here in the county?

DALE: Well, no, in Columbia, at that time.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: I'll give you one minute background on newspapers. When they began in this country, they were part of political parties. They were some person who wanted to get his ideas across. He was wealthy enough he paid for the publishing of that newspaper. Then advertising came into being when a shipload of goods came over from England and this merchant came down, he put a little classified ad in. Said, "Just arrived. New shipment of goods from London, England. The finest cloth or the finest tea or the finest flour or whatever." This became advertising. Well, he paid for that to go in and after a while publishers said, "Well, if I got enough of these folks putting these ads in, I can put this out and I don't have to depend on Mr. So and so to come down whenever he wants to put out his little newsletter telling his news or



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something." And that's where the public print actually came in in this country.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: It just grew and flourished because the country allowed it to do so. And as I say, what happened in Columbia - if I have the details straight in my mind from having heard them years ago - a group of merchants apparently were not getting the newspaper in Columbia at that time to do what they wanted done and so they attempted to organize a new newspaper and they wanted somebody to come put that newspaper out for them in Columbia.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: And this my grandfather took a look at, but did not want to get into and of course, continued with the Press at that time.

BENHAM: And what year was this? Do you think you could remember that?

DALE: This must have been in the early 1900's. I'd say even prior to 1910, somewhere in that neighborhood. Of course, he had a solid foundation here in Monticello, but apparently he was still a young man. He began at the age of twenty (20) in 1888, so he would just have been in his early 30's even by 1910. Apparently, if this town was not booming - which it was not - in the early 1900's, maybe he had a wanderlust and he said, "Maybe I'll go someplace else to make my fortune." And so I'm sure that is why he looked at some of these other places.

BENHAM: Perfectly natural thing for him to do it.

DALE: Yes, yes, definitely.

BENHAM: Let's see, what number Dale in line are you?

DALE: With the Lawrence County Press, I'm the third. In the newspaper

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publishing, I'm the fourth generation.

BENHAM: All right.

DALE: In line of Dales, I guess if you count my uncle in there, of course that was two in the same generation, but I would be the fifth one to do newspaper publishing. So scattered out there three, four, or five, take your choice.

BENHAM: You're right. Well, I can see why you just fell into it. You just couldn't help it; you were surrounded. And you had it fed to you say, from the time you were four (4) years old. But that is very interesting. Now when did you become editor of the paper?

DALE: Well, I actually came back right after graduation in June of 1961 and went right to work. Now I have often wondered could I have gone to work for somebody else? I did have another job offer to go to work for the Commercial Appeal, but I never sought any jobs any place else. As I said, from the middle years in high school I knew I was coming back here and of course I did correspondence work while I was on the college campus for Birmingham and for Jackson, both papers in Jackson. The Birmingham News and some other miscellaneous publications along the way. But I never sought a full-time job or employment with anybody else, because I just always knew I was coming back here to do this work. (Pause)

BENHAM: Mr. Dale, what were some of the problems that you encountered when you became editor?

DALE: Well, the problems that I would have encountered would have been of course inheriting some old, used equipment. Now, my father was always interested in updating his production procedure and trying to stay abreast of

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the times, but handicapped by a lack of finances as he was, he couldn't buy new stuff, so we usually got secondhand. When somebody else at a small daily or a very large weekly was fixing to buy a piece of new equipment, we just stayed in touch with the people that dealt in these things and we would try to find a good bargain and pick up some good used equipment and in that way we gradually updated the equipment that we have and while I am mentioning that I will go on and say today we are printing by the most modern method known today in printing is off-set lithography. It's a method of printing and it's all photo composition. We shoot pictures - made-up pages of type - and these are printed very rapidly on a rotary press and this is a far cry from the day when we used to print by sheet-fed, when I started.

BENHAM: Now just a minute. You are getting ahead again.

DALE: Okay.

BENHAM: Okay. Because I am going to have to ask you a little bit about that too, you know. I don't mean to interrupt. It is so interesting, but then if you go on then I will have to back track with the questions. Well, when you became the editor, what was the paper called?

DALE: Of course, it was the Lawrence County Press. It always has been. At that particular time, we published about eight (8), sometimes ten (10) pages a week. We carried a variety of news. I always have tried to cater to all the interests of Lawrence County, not just to Monticello, but also to include all of our communities throughout the county. From New Hebron to Jayess and from Oma down to Oakvale. If we could get a community correspondent in those communities, we wanted them to send us in their news. Then of course we tried to cover as much of the governmental action as we could. Tried to cover as

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much society as we could. In other words, we tried to give a complete package. If there was probably one failing, it was in the area of crime reporting. We didn't try to go into...

(Begin Side Two of Tape)

BENHAM: Other paper by this name?

DALE: I really don't know. There would have been, of course at the time that this paper started, my grandfather borrowed the equipment from Mr. B. T. Hobbs, who was the editor of the Brookhaven Leader. One of the older newspapers, it's now the Daily Leader through a combination of the Lincoln County Advertiser and several other papers over there. But he borrowed this equipment from Mr. Hobbs. Some hand-set type and old, old beat-up press and a few other things to get started. And of course, Brookhaven was at that time a part of Lawrence County.

BENHAM: That's right. They had to take a part of Lawrence County to make Lincoln County.

DALE: Well, let me back up on that. That's 1888; Lincoln would have, may have already come out of there. I guess Lincoln County had already been founded prior to that. We still had Jeff Davis County; that was what was still part of the Lawrence. I'll back up and correct myself. Lincoln County had been formed. The newspaper envisioned, according to the words of my grandfather in that first edition, envisioned serving all of the people of Lawrence County and that included Bluntville which is now Prentiss, over in that area of Jeff Davis; all the way up to White Sand and all of that area; Carson and what-not, south of Prentiss in Jeff Davis County. It was an ambitious project, but just the same, he intended for it to be a county newspaper.

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I would say probably seventy (70) percent of the Mississippi newspapers are, even the weeklies, carry a city name, the community name. Now, I can think of, we have the Simpson County News. We have the Copiah County News. We have several others, but now the Tylertown Times carries the Tylertown name yet it serves Walthall County.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. But, I see.

DALE: So there are several. The Franklin Advocate is for the county, so it was the common thing back in that time to take your geographic, governmental subdivision, I guess, for your area service but others have chosen the community name itself, but they have never limited their service to the surrounding area.

BENHAM: I see. Well, so then it was your grandfather then who named it?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: What are the subscription rates for the Lawrence County Press? I think you said per year.

DALE: Currently they're four (4) dollars per year in Lawrence County, five (5) dollars in the State of Mississippi, and six (6) dollars throughout the rest of the world. Now, the reason for that variation is the post office charges in mailing second class, a second class mailing permit. They charge by zones. I can remember in my childhood, you had free distribution in Lawrence County. You paid actually nothing. And now a days we pay a quarter of a cent a pound and they're talking about raising that to more. As you go further away you get on up to, I think the highest rate that we paid is two point four (2.4) cents a pound for those that go overseas under the second class mailing permit. But that is the reason for graduating that payment.

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BENHAM: I see. All right, where is the Lawrence County Press located now?

DALE: Well, we're still on Broad Street. After we had the office on Broad Street, I guess the years would have been in the late 1930's. Denny Lambert, D. F. Lambert, wanted to build a modern merchandise store, clothing and merchandise store, on Broad Street and he had part of a lot but he wanted some more of a lot. My grandfather's frame building must have been deteriorating to some extent plus it may be I can theorize that he had too much company sitting on that front porch. He couldn't get his work done for all those people visiting. He was strictly in the newspaper business. Today we have office supplies - he did some job printing too - but we have office supplies. We want some walk-in traffic out from on the street; he probably didn't. He wanted to concentrate on doing his news and printing his job printing and so he, in a gentleman's agreement swapped out with Denny Lambert. Denny built a nice modern brick structure and gave him, I guess he had an area - I'm going to guess, because I grew up in that same area back there - twenty-five (25) feet by forty (40) feet in the back end of this building. And he swapped out a lot of about twice that size on the front street in order for this new facility on the side street in the back of the building back there.

BENHAM: I remember that now right well.

DALE: Right.

BENHAM: Yes, I had forgotten.

DALE: Right. It was on Green Street on the north side of Green Street toward what's the water tower now. I grew up playing in the ditch around there and running around on Broad Street and visiting back and forth and what-not

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while my parents worked down there. Of course I began to work some, too. We moved I guess in the late Forties or early Fifties. I was big enough to help move so it must have been in '49, '50, or '51 - that would have been about right. We moved across the street to what used to be the Selman Building. Has been torn down now for South Central Bank to be constructed. There was in the Selman building, Mr. J. C. Bourne had a general merchandise store in the very center of the building. On the east portion of the building was the old post office, on the west portion was the Lawrence County Bank as it was known then, and in the rear had been as old pool hall. And this building was about twenty (20) feet wide by one hundred (100) feet long - here or there, the portion that we had - and we moved all of our equipment in about two (2) days' time. All the heavy equipment. It took several weeks to move all the little stuff and get it all straightened out because I remember that was part of my job. We moved over there and we stayed just three (3) months short of ten (10) years. I remember it because the Rileys of New Hebron owned this building at that time and we, there were several heirs in the family and we had never gotten all of them to sign the lease. A portion of them had signed the five (5) year lease and the five (5) year option and we were getting a little nervous, because we had been there almost ten (10) years and we didn't know when the rent may go up or anything else. And the opportunity came available to once again buy a lot on the main street and build our own building. And we currently are on the south side of Broad Street directly across from the courthouse back in our own home again.

BENHAM: Right.

DALE: Building this concrete block building we constructed there.

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BENHAM: You couldn't be in a better place, really.

DALE: We think not. We think not.

BENHAM: No, I don't think so. You're right in the middle in the hub of everything.

DALE: Right, right. We're close enough to everything to get our work done. Of course, there are days when I wish that I...

BENHAM: And you don't have a front porch.

DALE: No, but there are days that I get more company than I wish that I had, but that's just part of it.

BENHAM: That's right. What type of printing press was first used by your family?

DALE: I am not certain what my grandfather would have used originally. He later purchased a Babcock Standard, a flat-bed press which would print two (2) pages at a time. Had a great big drum cylinder that came, circled round and round and round and the teeth would open up and grab a sheet of newsprint, carry it down under, and make contact with the type on the bed of that press. And this bed revolved, rotated back and forth on a runner under there, a set of gears. This was acquired from the Gulfport newspaper apparently shortly after the turn of the century.

BENHAM: Well, is this, do you still use this?

DALE: It's still sitting there. It hasn't been used in about seven (7) or eight (8) years. The last thing that was done on it was football programs and posters for football season and then we shut it down. We acquired in 19, I guess, 65, the Hope, Arkansas, daily newspaper was converting to the off-set method of printing and they had a modern rotary press which was a web-fed machine and they wanted to sell it and we went up there and moved it in the



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worst snow storm that they'd had in twenty (20) years. Johnny Clyde Ready from right here in Monticello helped us move that back and install it in this new building. To give you a little background, the old Babcock Standard that I learned to print on - as I said, you fed a sheet of paper down and it printed two (2) pages on that and delivered it out the back end of the press. When you finished with that you picked all of that stack of papers up, put them back up on the top and fed them back through to print the back side of that sheet with two (2) more pages. When we quit using this particular press for newspaper production, we were printing about twelve (12) pages most weeks and about two thousand (2,000) copies and the press would run a little over a thousand an hour; it would run about a thousand and sixty (1,060) papers an hour, so we were spending approximately twelve (12) hours just running the paper. That's not the time that we put it together, but one person was standing up there feeding pages through for twelve (12) hours out of the week. The press that we acquired from Hope, Arkansas, put a roll of newspaper on there and you could put up to eight (8) pages - four (4) on the bottom deck and four (4) on the top deck - and run through continuously. These came out on a former that folded the paper and a little cutter bar that clipped them off into individual papers. And by the time we quit using it we were printing about sixteen (16) pages a week and almost three thousand (3,000) papers each week and still ran this in about two (2) hours time. So we had cut our physical labor down from twelve (12) hours to two (2) hours. Then we expanded to go into the off-set printing production. We currently set the type, shoot pictures, make up the pages and then make a negative of these pages, but we do not print them now.

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BENHAM: Okay. Now wait, that's going ahead. Okay. I'm just going to call you back just a minute. First, I want to know what kind of ink did you use when you did printing? Is there any special kind of ink that you used?

DALE: No. It was a printer's ink. This is composed, there are ink companies in the business just for this. And I am not sure what their chemical compositions are, but it is, it's an oil base...

BENHAM: I am not interested in that. Well, how did you get it? Did you get it in a big gallon?

DALE: We got ours in five (5) gallon drums for the earlier press because, well, you just had a little water dipper and you'd dip up a dip of that and you could probably make two (2) press runs off of a two (2) cup dipper of ink. Then when they went to, when we went to the other press - this mechanized one - we had the duplex model, a duplex press, we had a fifty-five (55) gallon drum with a centrifugal pump. You'd turn that pump and it squirted ink out a tube that you ran up and down and you had to fill these troughs. And these troughs would probably hold forty-five (45) gallons each on the top deck and the bottom deck. You wouldn't have to fill them but about once a month, but it was a lot more work involved in putting the ink in for them than it was in the older days.

BENHAM: But in trying to cut down.

DALE: Saves our other time and labor.

BENHAM: That's right. Well, what about the paper, did you have to have some kind of paper, special type, kind of paper for being copied?

DALE: Not at that time. We used...

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BENHAM: Where did you get your paper from?

DALE: Well, the paper houses in Mississippi. Of course the standard one that we bought newsprint from was Jackson Paper Company in Jackson. Bought fine papers from Jackson and Central and Townsend paper companies, but most of the newsprint came from Jackson Paper Company. Some from Townsend. But it came in a great big bundle that weighed - when we had the cut sheets these bundles would carry approximately twenty-five hundred (2500) sheets. And it'd take a little bit more than four (4) of them; let's see, it'd take twenty (20), take twenty-two (22) of them to make a ton, and that was. I remember when we progressed to the point where we didn't buy four (4) bundles any more; we bought a ton because we saved a little money when we bought the ton. But the truck driver would really be, he'd really have to work hard to haul that ton of paper in there because well, he didn't have but a little hand truck most of the time. They'd pick it up on the shoulder and tote it in so to speak. Then when we went to the duplex, these came on rolls and these rolls weighed anywhere from six hundred (600) to eight hundred (800) pounds each. And they were on the back of hydraulic trucks which dropped them off on a little dolly which you rolled around on the floor. You didn't pick them up and just carry them wherever you wanted to.

BENHAM: Right. All right. Now Mr. Dale, when I talked to you the other day you mentioned some of the mechanics that you used to set up a newspaper. Would you please describe more fully each of these steps and what was the purpose of each one of these things, steps that you used? Very briefly.

DALE: Formerly, you had to set the type. You had to have a type high

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character that an ink roller would roll over and place a coat of ink on and then a sheet of paper would come in contact with that and it transferred the image onto the paper. Now we use a computer. This computer is going faster than the speed of sound; a light flashes through a stencil-type negative onto a piece of chemically treated photographic paper. All of this is in the dark and you take this out in a little cassette and run it through an activator and stabilizer processor and when it comes out, you have the printed image on this sheet of paper. This is cut out and pasted up to a page and a negative is shot of this. This is etched onto an aluminum plate which wraps around a cylinder and can travel, well, yourpress cruises at about fifteen thousand (15,000) copies an hour and it can run up to twenty-four (24) pages. So where a while ago we were comparing twelve (12) hours of press time and two (2) hours of press time, we now have fifteen (15) minutes of press time. And this aluminum plate, of course, it first hits a water roller and then it hits the ink roller. Wherever the water sticks, the ink won't stick and wherever the water won't stick on the image that's been burned on this chemically treated plate, the ink will stick. And that transfers to a rubber blanket and this rubber blanket transfers to that continuously moving web of paper as it comes through.

BENHAM: Well, is this aluminum plate thing, is it on a roller?

DALE: It is on a cylinder.

BENHAM: A cylinder.

DALE: It's hooked to a cylinder and of course ink rollers come in contact with that cylinder.

BENHAM: I see.

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DALE: Water roller and ink roller and then the cylinder contacts a rubber blanket cylinder. And that rubber blanket cylinder is the one that actually contacts then the paper itself.

BENHAM: I see. All right. Now, the people, did the people in general always agree with what was printed in the press?

DALE: Oh no, no, no. They have always been highly complimentary; we are thankful for that. Most of the time, for some reason, people are more hesitant to comment when they are in favor of something than when they are opposed to something. You'll always get more criticism from the negative point of view than you will from a positive point of view. But if we didn't get some criticism, we would think that we were doing everything perfectly and if we didn't get some praise, we might give up for fear that we weren't doing anything right. So it's a balance, a general mixture.

BENHAM: Well, that's a good way of looking at it. Let's see, you know looking over the old Lawrence County Presses I noticed that there was a lot more worldly news talked about than there is today. Why is this?

DALE: Well, of course again this stems from the electronic media and the instantaneous news that they brought into the home. As far back as 1940, let's say, when as a child, that was when television began to become popular. The radio had a little advantage, but while the radio could bring you spot news in a hurry - you heard that World War I had broken out or World War II had broken out or the atomic bomb had been dropped or what-not - you didn't get all the details. That radio announcer could only give you a hundred fifty (150) to three hundred (300) words in his news broadcast. That won't even make four (4) good paragraphs in the newspaper. So if somebody wanted all

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the details, they wanted to read about it. Out in the country so to speak, as we were, there were a few daily newspapers that got down here. About two (2) days late probably by the time they got here. Later when the Rebel came, maybe they got here overnight and got the next day's as the trains were able to bring them in. But still, the news was read in other newspapers and condensed and carried again. Now, at one time we got a preprint out of Memphis and in Memphis they put together two (2) pages and four (4) page sections. They carried serialized stories, they carried patent medicine ads, and they carried news about the war or they carried worldwide news of what was going on because the citizens of Lawrence County, all of them couldn't subscribe to the daily newspaper. While there was a little electricity, not everybody even had a radio. So their only contact with the outside world, so to speak, would have been what they read in the Lawrence County Press. Today, well, of course the tragic Vietnam affair is over, so have been some other bad chapters of history - assassinations, Watergate and other things - but you and I sat right there. We saw Jack Ruby pull the pistol and shoot on live television. We went to Vietnam with reporters every day and were in the war. We sat through Watergate hearings. So there's not as much demand for the community newspaper to give you that worldwide news, because there's plenty of electricity. Almost every home has if not two (2) televisions, at least one (1).

BENHAM: Right. Of course.

DALE: So we have tried to confine again, as we did probably originally, more of our coverage to local folks and local happenings, because NBC, ABC, CBS, The New York Times, they don't even know there is a Monticello, Mississ-

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ippi, or a Lawrence County, Mississippi, and they're never going to report ten thousand (10,000) people's names out here in the county. But maybe in somebody's lifetime we're going to get their name in and probably their picture in. And so we serve some use in their life.

BENHAM: Yes, I can see that now the way you have explained it. Let's see. How many sheets of paper did the original Press consist of and how many is it in the current issues?

DALE: The original Press was a four (4) page paper; it was only one sheet, but it had four (4) pages printed on it. They were five (5) columns wide and about nineteen (19) or twenty (20) inches long. Today's paper is a little bit bigger. This week's edition, as have been the last five (5), have been eighteen (18) page papers. Now, they are six (6) columns wide, but this is an extra-wide column. Most of today's papers are back to a six (6) column format. For a while we went to seven (7) columns and eight (8) columns with a real narrow little column. We have gone back to a wider column because reading experts say that this is the size that the people can handle better today to read a wide column. So while we are six (6) columns wide, we are almost, almost two (2) columns wider than that original five (5) column paper because of the width of the sheet that we print on and we're twenty-one (21) inches deep. So we probably are carrying, production wise, we are not quite five (5) times larger.

BENHAM: So the width of the paper has some, that's a format, right?

DALE: Right.

BENHAM: And you just mentioned how it has changed over the years from the small, little columns, narrow columns, to larger ones. Do you think that

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this change has been for the best?

DALE: Yes. There are very few tabloid size newspapers now. In fact, there is only one that I am familiar with still in Mississippi. Since, used to be the Keesler News was a tabloid which is half a standard newspaper size. The Summit Sun is the only one I am currently familiar with today. There are some suburban papers in Jackson, of course, in a metropolitan city. To a specialized market they use that smaller compact form. The tabloid was very popular in the east, in New York and Washington in the Thirties and Forties because the commutor train became to be used and as all these people were packed in little cars trying to get back and forth for an hour to two (2) hours a day, they couldn't take a big wide newspaper and spread it out at arms' length and read the pages, but they could take the little tabloid and spread it out or even fold it over and very compactly stand there or sit there and read their paper without offending their neighbors. So that's why it became popular. But today we're back in the home most of the time being read at people's leisure time, so we've gone back to a wider format which gives us more possibilities in display and printing pictures and headlines and all that sort of thing.

BENHAM: I like that. I like that idea of more pictures, you know. Everybody likes pictures. I've always liked just looking through magazines. I don't even like to see the reading in them; all I want to see is the pictures because they say a picture is like a thousand words. Although I do like to read, don't get me wrong. Let's see now. Do newspaper editors ever have any differences of opinion which they may run into from time to time? And how would they come together and make the peace?



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DALE: This is between newspaper editors you're speaking of?

BENHAM: Right. Do they differ in opinion?

DALE: Oh, yes. Certainly. As many opinions as there can be on a subject, there'll be an editor to back that opinion. Of course, they run the gamut from others taking sides in a political issue to a moral issue. Today, right now we are faced with the energy verses ecology situation and there would be editors all across the country on both sides and in varying shades and degrees. Very few could just steer a middle of the road course; they have to fall on one side or the other to one degree or the other.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: Because, well, traditionally newspapers have been pretty progressive. They always want their community to grow. Well now, at whose expense do we tear down every tree we have? Do we dam up every river that we have? Or do we do away with all of nature in order to grow and make progress and get jobs and a big economy? Or do we try to preserve a few things and save a few things in nature that those coming after us might at least know what it used to look like. Because, well, we've seen in our own lifetime, we've gone pretty much from almost a total agrarian society in Lawrence County to now we have a pretty good mixture. I'd say we're almost fifty-fifty. We are not much in row crops, but there are as many people I think still living off the land as there are living in manufacturing or commercial jobs. Where at one time there wouldn't have been one-tenth of the population living off of jobs in town as compared with the other nine-tenths living off of the land or off of the agrarian economy.

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BENHAM: Right. Well, was there a power press ever used in the printing room?

DALE: Power press?

BENHAM: A power press.

DALE: Yes, the original one that my grandfather had was run by hand a number of the family children told me. Of course they are on up in their sixties and seventies and eighties now. But a number of them told me about how they used to come in after school and they made the revolution with the press; they cranked it all the way around twice and all the way back around twice to make a complete revolution with it while my grandfather fed the sheets in and got it printed in that method. This Babcock Standard that we've gotten next from Gulfport did have a, had a two and a half horsepower motor originally on it and I think it was later upgraded to about five horsepower. This latter one we had had a three phase, seven and a half horsepower motor on it. Of course, it'd pull a much greater load with it.

BENHAM: All right. Did you have to change different presses to do different jobs? Like when you made the paper, printed the paper, did you have to have another press, say like to print stationary or tickets or such?

DALE: Oh, yes. These little job presses they're called, are put out by various manufacturers, but the earliest one we had in that one was a hand one. Had a great big wheel that you pulled around real hard by hand and it had a foot clutch. The operator stood there turning with his left hand (assuming he was a right-handed person), picked up a piece of paper, put it on the bed, and this came up in contact with the type that was set up there and the ink rollers ran up over a platen and picked the ink up and that continuously

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made a revolution back and forth. Later, power was added to that simply by putting a belt and a motor at the back and running it over that big wheel. It was a very simple thing to convert that one to power. And of course, now we have two (2) other types: one the off-set type press and the other is still a letter press, but it is completely powered. It uses a vacuum air to pick up the paper and deliver it and retrieve it from the press bed and drop it back down on the stack so it can be put back in the box or patted or trimmed or whatever else has to be done to it.

BENHAM: All right. Now, how was the news gathered when your grandfather and father had the Lawrence County Press?

DALE: Fortunately, they had a wonderful lady named Mrs. Hazel Cannon Brinson who covered most of it. I imagine she got ninety percent of everything that went in the papers from the Twenties through the early Sixties. Because she was still working some when I came along.

BENHAM: I remember her very well.

DALE: Miss Hazel would walk from one end of town to the other. They used to joke about Miss Hazel. They said if she saw somebody pass in a car with a hat on she knew they were going out of town and she just, she just checked on them until she found out where they went and what they did. These were the local news items that were reported. She of course was such, had the personality and the capabilities. If somebody was giving a wedding reception, they invited her. And they didn't have to take a whole lot of time giving her a bunch of details. She knew what she was after and she got the information and she wrote it up. She was not probably as adept in sports as a man reporter would be.

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(Begin Side Three of Tape)

BENHAM: Mac, you were telling me something about Miss Hazel and how she covered the paper, the news.

DALE: Right. We were mentioning about sports. Of course, she always gave credit to who scored high, who played a good game, that sort of thing. She picked this information up from the coaches. We probably did considerably more reporting of school events in that day. One of the reasons, we can't report what we don't know about. Now it's funny, sometimes people play little games with us and they'll call and say, "You didn't put so and so in," and well, we didn't know about it. If you don't tell us, we can't put it in. But if they let us know, we'll certainly try to get it in. Miss Hazel taught music in the public schools and as I said, she would cover the town. She was very active in her church work and if she heard any little tid-bit of news, she traced it down. She used her telephone. She got her money's worth out of Southern Bell in those days, because she called folks up and got the details and wrote stories. And as I say, all of them probably. Now, my father was not an editorial writer; he was more inclined to production. My mother would occasionally assist him in writing an editorial when one needed to be, in support of the hospital or something like that. But my grandfather was an editorial writer and other than probably the news that I said he gleaned from other publications and his own columns or editorials and maybe a big story or two, if there was a shooting or a still was captured or court was going on or something like that, he covered those things, but other than that, Mrs. Brinson for a period of better than forty (40) years, between forty (40) and forty-five (45) years, I feel sure that she reported ninety percent of the

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news that went into the newspaper. The other correspondents would, of course, turn in things from the various communities out through the county.

BENHAM: And you know the surprising thing about Miss Hazel was that it was all done on foot.

DALE: Oh, yes. She didn't drive. Somebody had to come get her to carry her there.

BENHAM: I can see her now. All I need to do is close my eyes and I can see her walking, can't you?

DALE: Oh, yes, yes, definitely.

BENHAM: Now, how is the news gotten together now?

DALE: Very much in the same manner. We still depend a great deal on people giving us information. We, when I first came back out of school, of course I was energetic, was not married the first year, looking for a lot of things to do and I consequently would join everything that came along. And if I were there, I could report on it. I am proud of a few accomplishments back through the years. It's very bad business to have to make notes while you are talking to somebody, interviewing them, but then too you better get things down accurately. But there have been a few times that I have been able to attend something and go back and write about it without ever having made the notes and come out with, I felt, a fairly decent story on it. Still in all, if we are involved in it, if we are there, it's real easy to report something. I have noticed in the last four (4) or five (5) years - whether it was because we have gotten bigger as a community and there is a whole lot more going on or it's because I have gotten older and dropped out of some of the things that I used to be in - I feel like I am not covering the news to the

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extent that I once did. And yet the paper has more pages in it every week than it used to. And we're not filling it with filler material. We do depend on a number of people to bring us an article. If the Farmer's Home Administration has a story about the farm family of the year, we'll go make a picture for them, but they'll usually write up the story that they want to go in there. This is not good journalism, but out here in the country we have an awful lot to do and so we do use the help of others that we can get. Well, I have this coming week, there is an announcement South Central Bank has a new employee. They had a professional photographer to make his picture and they typed up the story that they wanted to go. Now, that's real good and we appreciate that. Now, if there is a shooting out there on Main Street this afternoon, I'm going to have to get out there and get it. I'll have to get it by either by talking to the sheriff and getting the names of those involved and I'll have to check all the sources that I possibly can, but the main way that we cover the news for the newspaper is to try to be in attendance or either have somebody in attendance that will give us the information. Frequently, we cannot attend the meeting, but if the secretary jots down some notes or somebody interested in doing it will just give us the notes, we'll write it up from that. Football games I cover; basketball games, I don't. I depend on them, there's too many of them in four (4) high schools in the county. With two teams or B teams even playing twice a week, that's twenty-four (24) games a week to keep up with and I can't personally get to all of them.

BENHAM: Well, what about the different little communities?

DALE: We have thirteen (13) correspondents. Not all of them are regular. There are about ten (10) that are what we call regular; they're there every

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week. And two (2) of them are almost filing a book every week. They're sending in better than five (5) pages of typewritten copies for us to set up. And it almost fills up a page when it gets in. They are good in the sense that the folks like to read them. We've had letters. One gentleman, I remember, wrote in and commented on Miss Gussie Sartin of Jayess who writes for us in Tylertown and McComb. Excellent writer. She does it merely just by being involved in her community. She goes and visits people. She calls people and she is a lovely lady that is just very active and it comes through. It just bubbles over in her column. And one fellow from New Orleans wrote us and said, "I don't know a soul in the world in Jayess, Mississippi, but I certainly do like to read the news." What better testimonial can you have for a columnist than to know that they are being read.

BENHAM: What a marvelous correspondent. How have the printing processes changed from the days of the early Chinese printers? You know they used clay molds.

DALE: Well, of course your first printing was done by hand. Its characters were carved or printed with pen and ink or whatever method they used, quill, to put that on parchment or on any writing material. The next would have been the characters that were called "cuneiform" characters that they carved out and made wood blocks. Now, the first pictures that we used in this country in our newspapers prior to the Civil War - a paper like The New York Times - would have probably had ten (10) or twelve (12) excellent engravers there and they would have taken a wood block and they would have taken an artist's sketch and they would have etched out that wood block to make a picture like the artist's sketch and these. You can get any turn of

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the century newspapers and you can still see some of those in them. And that was the way that they got the pictures. Now, type was cast in a mold. Mr. Guttenberg got the privilege of inventing a movable type. This meant that you could set each character independently. When you got through with it you could put it back up and reuse it again until you wore it out to the point that it couldn't be used. Well, we came up with the technology to make a mold of a letter "A."

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: And a hot metal was poured into that mold to form that character. It had to be also on a base that was type high where all of them were uniform, where they would print evenly. That's why, if you look back at some of your oldest manuscripts, you'll see broken characters and what-not.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: That's because they were not printed correctly; they were not type high characters or else it was old type that had been used. Maybe one letter had been printed on ten thousand (10,000) impressions and the other one was brand new and so you got the difference in the height of the characters and gave you the broken print.

BENHAM: Well, now that is interesting to know about. I wondered about that.

DALE: That's the way they came up with the characters then as they improved them. And of course now it is to a strike on composition where the photo composition type thing where pictures are made of it. Then the height of the letters, you get a uniform character every time because it's a brand new character every time. It's never worn out. The only thing that can happen



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now to mess it up is to get some dirt on this negative type stencil. Then it will cover up the character and you won't be able to see it plainly.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: And that is about the worst thing that can happen on an impression wise or getting a good reproduction of the character now is to have a dirty lens or something at the time that you are reproducing this character because it is not the printing itself now. It is very seldom that it will go bad. It's somewhere else in the reproduction line in getting ready to print.

BENHAM: How have the printing presses improved over the years?

DALE: Well.

BENHAM: Have you already answered that question for me?

DALE: To some extent.

BENHAM: You probably have.

DALE: They have given us more speed, they have given us greater flexibility in that there is more true reproduction of likeness now. I can remember pictures that we used to run some years ago. Sometimes they were pretty horrible pictures and it was no fault of the subject. We just couldn't reproduce it very well, because the machinery just all didn't function together to the very best of it's ability to give us a good reproduction. Now a days, with the off-set printing method, only rarely will we come up with a bad picture reproduction. If we have a good picture to start with, we can make it equally as good and I have seen some reproduced better than the original picture when they came out in the newspaper reproduction to start with. So we have gotten some flexibility there. At the beginning of the printing age, type had to be set in a straight line. There was no multi-columned headlines,

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because it had to be locked up and if you ran type over two columns instead of just in one column, it wouldn't lock up evenly and letters would fall out and that sort of thing.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: Now a days we are shooting a picture of a whole page that has been pasted up out of paper so we can turn type sideways, we can turn it upside down, we can do anything in the world we want to do with it. We can even stack it on top of each other and run it. We can run it across pictures if we want to with no difficulty whatsoever and get good reproductions. Another flexible thing that we have now is color. The modern press units make it easier to add color. It's still expensive, but it's easier to put color in, especially spot color. Now four (4) color is extremely expensive. This is a true life reproduction color like your first class news magazines would have. This is a terribly expensive process, because you have to take that original picture, break it down into four (4) basic pictures to get you four (4) basic colors, and then put those back together by overlapping the reproduction cycle of each one of them to coincide where you get the register just right. Now you have seen comic strips sometimes when the lipstick missed the lips or something?

BENHAM: Yes, I have.

DALE: The register is not right.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: The press is not running in true time and so that is why you get that. So now you can appreciate when you Newsweek or Time and they have a beautiful four (4) color photograph there.

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BENHAM: Yes, yes.

DALE: There was a good bit of work, craftsmanship that went into that work.

BENHAM: Well, you said something about that you could go across and that sort of thing and it doesn't pick up the things from the underneath. It's just still...

DALE: No, remember we shot that page already. And all that the camera sees when it makes a negative is the white and the black.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: Or the gray. Whatever is there. And it makes one image of all it sees down there. The fact that you have got a piece of paper running over another piece of paper, it will not pick up that underside unless, if you put a wax or glue on it that seeps through, now, you might get some dirt from the underside of it coming through, but it won't do it otherwise.

BENHAM: I see. You know, that's, I would like to see that whole thing in operation. I mean that's the only way that you can, I mean...

DALE: Fully appreciate it.

BENHAM: Right. I am trying to see it. I am trying to picture it in my mind.

DALE: That's one of the things that we hate about not having a press now a days.

BENHAM: I am going to ask you about that later on.

DALE: All right.

BENHAM: Right. I am not going to ask you too much, unless you want to tell it to me. Do you believe that newspapers in general can be influential

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in getting the right ideas across to the public?

DALE: We always think so. We, I say that they can. Now, whether the public accepts the ideas is something else. As to the influence of the newspapers, that is a debatable subject. We can point up the past two governor's races in the state of Mississippi. Neither candidate had five (5) percent of the newspapers in Mississippi supporting them and yet they got in. So possibly it's \_\_\_\_\_ to have the newspapers on your side. And so, but I would think, well, let's go back again to the energy and the ecology situation that we have now. I think every bit of the mass media - from billboards and skywriting to television, newspapers, magazines - everything is going to have to educate the public to what needs to be done. Now, you get a cross-play in there, because the energy companies don't want to go out of business. But they realize, and I think you have seen in a number of their ads recently on television as well as newspapers, they are playing up what they are doing to protect the economy while they are producing their oil or what-not. Another thing on nuclear energy, the ecologists are greatly concerned that the plutonium that comes out of the nuclear reactors is going to be alive for what? Fourteen hundred (1400) years? Is it still? I think the waste material is still, could destroy us, you know, for that length of time.

BENHAM: Right. The only thing I am really involved in is this new ice age that is coming and the UFO's that were mentioned in the paper. No, I haven't gotten into what you did, but I am in something else, you know.

DALE: Well, all of these things, the newspapers, community and state newspapers, can all play a vital roll in not only in informing the public, influencing the public.

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BENHAM: Very much so, yes. Let's see, you mentioned to me at one time that you now have the printing. You used to have it done here, but now you have it done somewhere else out of Lawrence County. Now, why have you done this and where is this thing being done?

DALE: All right. We currently go to the McComb Enterprise Journal daily newspaper in McComb, Mississippi, about thirty-five (35) miles away. We leave about six thirty Wednesday morning with the pages that we have already shot and go down there.

BENHAM: Now, do you shoot this in your place?

DALE: Yes, I shoot all but the last two (2) or three (3) pages. I shoot most of it in our dark room for economical reasons. We save a little money in doing our own.

BENHAM: I see. You don't do it all together, do you?

DALE: No, we go down there and we print on their press. They burn the plates, put them on, hook them up, run it, what-not. Then we load it up in the station wagon, bring it back and usually we leave there about ten thirty in the morning. When we first get there, they are doing the Summit Sun, then they do ours, then they do theirs, which they have twelve thousand (12,000) press run, almost thirteen thousand (13,000) at this time. Ours is thirty-two hundred (3200). After they do theirs then they do Tylertown Times. All this is on Wednesday.

BENHAM: Oh, my goodness.

DALE: Off of one press. This much work can be done on that one press.

BENHAM: Everything?

DALE: All right, but our reasons for not having one. To have just the

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bare minimum of what we would need would be what would be called a two (2) unit press. Each unit would print four (4) pages, so that would be eight (8) pages total. And this is the bare minimum. We considered ourselves about sixteen (16) page paper each week. So that would be two (2) press runs of eight (8) pages each and stuff those two (2) together.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: The last five (5) weeks we've had eighteen (18) pages, so that would have been three (3) press runs we would have had to make and stuff two (2) sections together.

BENHAM: I see. Oh, really you can have more paper now?

DALE: We would have had extra work to have to do even though we'd have the press. But to have that basic two unit press, a good used one, let's say we're going to get one from a daily the size of McComb. They're going to buy a brand new one, a bigger press, and we're going to get their second-hand one. This would cost us about forty thousand (40,000) dollars. Between forty and forty-five. This isn't brand new. If it was brand new, it would be around sixty-five to seventy thousand (65-70,000) for the two units. And that's not even enough to do all the work that we need to do. All right, but we are going to run that press for about fifteen (15) minutes, because it's going to cruise at fifteen thousand (15,000) an hour. All right, if we got the two units and printed our eight pages, that's fifteen (15) minutes on one press run. Then the second section is going to be another fifteen (15) minutes. Thirty (30) minutes a week. We've got a forty thousand (40,000) dollar investment over there to use thirty (30) minutes a week, so it's not practical. It's easier to spend an hour driving back and forth. And the second reason we're doing

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that, they have four (4) people that work on their press every day. If it breaks down they know what to do because they have to do it; they have to get a paper out that day. If they cannot repair it, there are enough others around in the neighborhood that they can all go to them and use them. But they keep their press up. If I had this one here and used it only thirty (30) minutes a week, I would be hard-pressed to keep it operating as it should and doing a good job.

BENHAM: Yes, yes.

DALE: Unless I took in another newspaper. We talked about this with Prentiss at one time, about two of us printing together. We both wanted to print at the same time. Well, an hour's difference one way or another wouldn't have made any difference to either one of us. The main hassle we got into was where we were going to put the press, whether we were going to pay rent or have it for free. I was willing to put it in my shop for free. The other fellow wanted us to pay rent if we were going to put it over there. All right, now that still wouldn't have been a real practical thing for just two of us. That would have only been an hour's worth of press time between the two of us. So we needed to go get a third paper. Well, if we went and got a third paper to try and make a little profit, the same crew couldn't have done it. So we would have needed to hire another man to help in the workload. Because if all of them were coming off the press in the same half day, you'd just work somebody to death trying to get that much work out.

BENHAM: Right.

DALE: All right. Well, then we ate up our profit because we were going to pay that labor to the other man. So we had to go get a fourth paper to make

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it pay for itself. First thing you know, we just snowballed to the point that I just couldn't see us having to put one in. Now the current trend, there are a few small towns in Mississippi with a good-sized weekly paper that have their own shop. Crystal Springs has their own plant; they are printing both Crystal Springs and Hazlehurst. Magee has a plant; they are currently, I don't think they are printing anybody else but their own. Prentiss is owned by the Natchez paper; that's an eighty (80) mile one-way trip for them each week. Columbia has, is fixing to swap over from letter press to off-set and they are going to go in to Hattiesburg and to the Hattiesburg American daily newspaper. So most of us in smaller communities are going to go to a nearby daily, because they have the staff and they have the equipment to do us in a hurry without us tying up a major investment to get the job done.

BENHAM: And also save a lot of wear and tear on the people who run it.

DALE: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: Who are involved with the newspaper, right?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: Now let's see. Do you hope that your son will follow in your footsteps as editor of the Lawrence County Press someday?

DALE: Secretly, I guess so. There are days when my wife will ask me, she says, "Do you want to treat your son to that kind of torment?" I currently have a stomach ulcer. Now whether all of it came from what goes on in a newspaper or not or all the associated other things that I do, I don't know. As I told you earlier, I have one of the job presses is acting up today. It is giving me trouble. It's things like this, days like that you hate to say, "Well, I don't want my son to have to do this." That's always every generation



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is always wanting the next one to have it better than they had it. One thing my father pointed out to me and I'll probably point out to him, that I was never forced or even urged to go into the newspaper business. I was told that it was there if I wanted it and I could expect help in it if I wanted to do it, but they weren't going to force me to go into it. I just grew to like it a little later on. I will do the same thing with my son in that I wouldn't want to force him to go to work in it. Now, I want him to do some things down there so that he will at least know, become familiar with it. He has played down there during these first six (6) years of his life. He's been in there and at this age he takes an interest in something new. When he sees something that he hasn't seen before, he'll drag up a chair even and sit right there and watch it and he'll ask several questions about it. But once he's seen it, the next time you say, "Well, do you want to come in the dark room and develop negatives with me?" No, he doesn't care anything about it. He has already seen the new part; the new part has worn off and now whether that will take on a new glory and a new shine later on, I don't know.

BENHAM: I think it will. You know, a child's interest span is not very long. So I think it will. And I think that was marvelous advice that your father gave to you. And I hope that you will, as you say, you are going to do that to your own son.

DALE: Well, of course one of the things there that he mentioned also that I would pass on. There are some people that get rich, the Hearst family in California have gotten rich enough to bail their daughter out of an awful lot of trouble and pay off a lot of other debts, too. Some people have gotten rich. We have not gotten rich.

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BENHAM: You know, I don't even want to get rich. I don't want to get rich that way.

DALE: There are some problems involved with it. As he pointed out, it is a good living in a country newspaper. It's a comfortable living. You don't have all of your wants; you do have just about every one of your needs. You can earn it in running a country newspaper. You can lose it if you try, respect this is. Coming with the job of editor, people do respect you. And if you abuse it, you can lose it just like a preacher could or a banker could or anybody else. But the fact that you are editor, people do try to be nice to you and do try to get your opinion on things and do expect things out of you being in that position. So those are just some sidelights that I would tell my son. Now, you can do worse than being a newspaper editor. I truthfully, I would like to show him all of it. And if he says, "I don't want that," then I'm going to say, you know, "Okay." It may break my heart at that time, but I have known one of my very good friends in the newspaper business. I won't call his name; he's in the state of Mississippi.

BENHAM: I think I might know him, but I won't say it either.

DALE: His father wanted him to go into the newspaper business. He didn't really want to; he wanted to go into another profession in education. And he pursued it for about five (5) years, until his father got sick and needed him to come back and assist. And he did during the summer after school and got to like it. And he is now fulltime in the newspaper business and loves it.

BENHAM: Well, sometimes that happens.

DALE: Sometimes you've got to get all of the kinks out before you can

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desire maybe to try something else new and exciting. And then you can come back to something you know or be a little more familiar with.

BENHAM: Right. Well, I just want to say this much; I said I wasn't going to say anything. But no matter how well off you are, or whenever or how old you get, you never, never get everything you want.

DALE: True.

BENHAM: So you know, if you just get a few little things that will bring you some happiness, that's -- you are well off.

DALE: Right.

BENHAM: What is the status of a newspaper? Is it a business, a profession, or a trade?

DALE: It's all of those. In a few little talks I've made around I've always said a newspaper is a queen-size public institution.

BENHAM: Now, what do you mean by that?

DALE: The newspaper and of course, since becoming a little more active in my church work and being a little bit more involved in, maybe a little better versed in scriptures and understanding, I have developed a little bit different philosophy. I have been tempted a time or two, you know, to see if there is some other job I ought to do rather than do this. And then I come to the realization that apparently the good Lord put me here for a reason. He gave me too much background and too much training and too many other things fit together. So He must have a reason for me to be here. Now then, I have expressed from the pulpit and from the speaker's podium and several other places, that newspaper if not mine. Now I own it legally. If you go over and check the documents at the courthouse, it shows that I'm paying the taxes on it and

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I have inherited it from my family. But that newspaper belongs to the people of Lawrence County. And as a good steward, you remember Jesus spoke of those stewards who were entrusted with the talents to do what they could with them. That is the way I have come to view my having the newspaper. I have been loaned the use of it for a specified number of years on this earth. And if I don't do something with it to make it worthwhile to the people in this county, then I haven't done what I am supposed to do.

BENHAM: That has always been one of my very favorite feelings too about the talents. You must do something with your talents.

DALE: Certainly, certainly you should.

BENHAM: And you are doing it.

DALE: Well, thank you. One of the things we say as a rule of thumb, people always want to know, well, they want an ad. "I want to put an ad in," and it turns out that their club is going to put on some promotion to raise funds and we say, "Well, that's not an ad; that's a news item." And they say, "It doesn't cost anything?" "No, it doesn't cost anything." The rule of thumb that we use, if a merchant in business - grocery store, clothing store, hardware store, gas station, whatever - if he wants to make a profit on his business and he comes down and he asks us, "Will you contact ten thousand (10,000) residents of Lawrence County and tell them I have some special merchandise on sale and I am going to put that money in my pocket when they come down there," then we tell him, "Okay. We will be glad to use our services to tell those people that they can save money at your place. To do this, if you buy a whole page, currently, we're going to charge you a little over a hundred dollars to put your message all on that page and catch everybody's

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eye." And he says, "Well, that's a fair price. I've got five thousand (5,000) dollars worth of merchandise that I'm going to sell, so to pay a hundred dollars is a pretty small price to get that merchandise sold." All right. The Lions Club or the Exchange, Civitan, whatever comes down, says, "We are going to have a pancake day and we want to get four or five hundred (4-500) people to come eat pancakes with us at a dollar a plate or two dollars a plate. Will you tell everybody in Lawrence County?" We say, "We surely will." "How much does it cost?" "No charge." Because the Lions Club is going to take the funds that they raise and they're going to give it to the band program, they're going to give it to Eunice Chapman Memorial Center, they're going to give it to the baseball program. They are going to plow it right back into the community for community good. So we say, "There's no charge. We'll help carry your message for nothing." And so that's the fine line distinction that we make. If somebody is going to pocket the money personally, then we feel like we deserve to try and make a profit off of what they are doing.

BENHAM: That's right.

DALE: If they are going to serve the public good, then we don't do it. Now, the contradiction to that, two (2) weeks ago the library ran an ad and paid for it. The library frequently runs news.

(Begin Side Four of Tape)

BENHAM: All right.

DALE: We referred to their advertisement. In fact, they paid for one rather than having the free space at this time. The rule of thumb there again is if somebody tells us how they want that message done, then we charge for the use of our space. If they let us put it in smaller type wherever we want to,

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there's no charge. But sometimes people have a message of utter importance that they want to be sure people get so they don't mind paying a little extra for the space to be sure that it's seen. So you have rules for everything and you also have exceptions to the rules, too.

BENHAM: That's right, that's right. Right. All right, now have you done much traveling in your lifetime?

DALE: No, ma'am, very little compared to others. This is a traveling day and age. But frequently, no point of contention between my wife and myself, but she will mention the fact that so and so is going off on a trip and we've never been anywhere. That type thing. I know a number of our friends do take extensive vacations. I was fortunate at the age of six (6) to go with my mother to Miami to visit a sister and went with an adopted grandmother, Mrs. Bonnie Gibson. All my grandparents were dead when I was growing up, so Mrs. Bonnie said, "Every little boy needs a grandmother and I am going to take you to be my grandson." And she carried me with her when I was twelve (12) out to California to visit a daughter of hers. When I was in college, we had a journalism, press association meeting in Chicago. I have also made a couple trips to Washington and one to Blue Ridge and to St. Louis. Other than that I've never been outside with the exception of that train trip to California. I think we ducked down right through Mexico just a little bit. Other than that, I've never been outside the continental United States and have been through a very little bit of it. I would love to travel, but unfortunately there is a Thursday in every week and a newspaper to get out.

BENHAM: Well, was part of this traveling in connection with your editor-

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ial job?

DALE: No. Of course the one, the college newspaper trip to Chicago was related to college newspaper work. Both trips to Washington were extremely profitable in that one was made - Glenn Hughes, president of the South Central Bank, and I were in the Jaycees back when he was here the first time with South Central and the Jaycees had a governmental affair seminar in Washington. There were about thirty-six (36) or thirty-eight (38) of us from Mississippi on a chartered flight. And we spent four (4) days up there and we got to go to the House and to the Senate and visit our own Congressmen and Senators.

BENHAM: Wonderful.

DALE: We went through the Smithsonian Institute. It was a marvelous tour for a country boy that had never been anywhere before. And I would love someday to carry my family back and show them these things because it was an education in itself just to go up there.

BENHAM: Yes, that's right.

DALE: And then one other time, I was invited by Adjutant General E. A. Turnage to go up and cover, get General Wilson, King Commandant of the Marine Corps, Mississippi's own general invited me to go up and cover that news person and I thoroughly enjoyed that. These other trips that I made were limited. My wife says she's tired of going to New Orleans. That seems like about the only place we ever go. I love to go down there and eat the good food. That's our real reason for going down there.

BENHAM: Well, I don't know. Jackson's coming along pretty well with all their good food too, I think. What are some of your hobbies?

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DALE: Well, they have changed over the years and gone from one thing to another. Currently, I coach the Little League baseball team, Dixie Youth boy's baseball team, ages ten (10) to twelve (12). That takes about three (3) months out of the summer. I play a little tennis, very, very little, precious little. Not enough to be good at it. Everything that I've ever tried to do, I am not very good at. I can do anything; I can't do anything well. I am not afraid to try anything. I guess if I went offshore someplace scuba diving, I'd attempt to go scuba diving and don't know one thing in the world about it. But I'd try it to see what it was like. Or snow skiing, I've never done that. My daughter has been to Colorado and done that, but I've never been. But I'd try it, you know. I like to read, but I'm a slow reader. And I attribute that to growing up in the newspaper business in the days of letter press. Then the type was set upside down and backwards and if you wanted to make a correction in a line of type, you read it upside down and backwards. And you learn to read one word at a time. I used to entertain groups making tours through the office. I'd pick up several lines of type and I'd read it off just like they'd read a book, you know. Fourth, fifth, and sixth graders. I could read it faster than they could read a book. And they'd say, "Oh, how do you do that?" You know. Well, it just came from experience. But that experience cost me because now when I read and I do like fictional novels. I like what you call it, historic fiction today. I like to read those, but I read one word at a time. I've never taken a speed reading course. I've tried to teach myself some of it, but I do have a little ability if I read something at my pace, I can retain part of it. And if I try to get too fast, nothing sticks.



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BENHAM: I see. Well, you know just going back just a little bit you said that you did play tennis, but it seems to me that I have seen your picture in the paper and that you have won. You said that you have never won. But I am going to retract that and make you do it, because you have won.

DALE: I just had good partners.

BENHAM: But you did win. I know that you did. Let me see. Can you tell me a funny story that happened to you while you have been editor of the Press?

DALE: Well, there have been several incidents. To think of one, you know, that might be humorous to other people would be something else again.

BENHAM: I could come back later after one other question if you would like?

DALE: All right. I'll try to run that through my mind.

BENHAM: All right then, I'll just ask you this one. What is your philosophy of newspaper reporting?

DALE: Oh, well.

BENHAM: Something like, you know, like as a service to the community and along that line.

DALE: Well, it should be. I will run back and tell you that just as I was concluding my college career, there was a new concept brought out. I think probably the electronic media caused part of this, but it was also taught to beginning journalism students. I finished under the premise that you are supposed to objectively report the facts. All right, now you can't be one hundred (100) percent objective. We are all prejudiced to some degree by all of our past background in history, And if you and I both went out

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there and saw a wreck, we'd both see the same wreck; we might stand side by side, but we'd both see different things happen.

BENHAM: That's right.

DALE: So we're going to report it just a little bit differently, but we can keep our facts correct. By shading the word meaning of different things, one of us could give a different report from the other, but we ought to stay within the facts and give a straight story and let the reader make up his mind. Now then, as I said, about the time I concluded my education and others coming along, they were taught to not be objective reporters. They had to be interpretive reporters. The theory was that you and I are too busy to sit down and read a lengthy column of news. We have watched the afternoon television news programs; some people do. Daylight saving time, I don't imagine too many people do. They are still outdoors doing other things. But the theory is that we have watched the afternoon news, so if we sit down with our daily newspaper, we don't want to see the same thing, read the same thing that we saw on T. V.; we want something different. So the reporter was taught to interpret that news, the idea being, "I was at the scene of that wreck; you weren't. Now, I'm going to tell you what happened and what it's going to mean to you because it did happen." And instead of just reporting to you this event happening at Main and Broad Street today at Twelve o'clock, you are going to say, "Do you realize the consequences to your insurance policy because there was an accident that occurred in downtown Monticello today?" Now what did that have to do with somebody having a wreck? But they colored it up a little bit and they started moving into other areas rather than just giving you a straight narrative report.

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BENHAM: I see.

DALE: Again, I think a part of this comes down to that fact of time. We just said people didn't have enough time, so we're going to save them time and began to color the reports. I, myself, do not like to do that. There is a place for it. The editorial page is strictly opinion. It's never been called anything else and I think, you know, the electronic media is entitled to have an editorial. We have no cornered market on editorials just in the print media. But it ought to be labeled as such. And in any column, usually has the columnist's picture or his by-line, we know that person is responsible for what was said. But when you pick up a news article with a news headline and it's supposed to be straight facts, it shouldn't carry influenceing information in there to try to point you to do something else. It ought to just give you the facts and let you make up your own mind. And of course that is my theory and philosophy of what it ought to be like, you know.

BENHAM: Well, that's good. You stay with that.

DALE: I try.

BENHAM: Well, from now on out. And I am glad to know that our editor feels that way about it. I think you will have a great deal of influence with people if you do. All right, let's get back to the funny story and then we'll bring this tape to an end.

DALE: I still have had some difficulty in coming up with a story that would be, you know, humorous. There have been some things that we go back and laugh at ourselves after it is over with. That to me is one of the rarest gifts, I guess, God gave us, is the sense of humor to be able to laugh at ourselves. Now, sometimes it's not funny when it is happening.

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BENHAM: Right.

DALE: After it is over with, if you sit back and laugh, that takes a lot of the pressures off.

BENHAM: Yes, it does. And if you can keep on laughing too, you won't crack up either.

DALE: True.

BENHAM: All right, is there anything else you would like to bring up?

DALE: No, I can't think of anything off hand. I will express appreciation to the library and to you.

BENHAM: Thank you.

DALE: For the opportunity to do this and I hope it will be helpful and beneficial to somebody, someday along the way.

BENHAM: I think it will, too. I think it will.

DALE: I am always interested in seeing our public services being used and enjoyed by the people, and if this can be a part of it, then we feel that we have contributed something.

BENHAM: Right. Well, I thank you very much, Mr. Dale, for this very interesting and informative talk. Thank you.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Evelyn Benham)