INTERVIEW WITH MRS. JOHN B. FRANCE
1307 Woodlawn Avenue, Wilmington, Delaware
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INTERVIEWED BY: Rebecca Button

(Side I of tape)

MF: Mrs. France
RB: Rebecca Button

RB: This is an interview with Mrs. John B. France, the daughter of Joseph Martin, publisher of The Sunday Star in Wilmington, part of the oral history project of the University of Delaware. Mrs. France, when was the first issue of The Sunday Star, and how long did The Sunday Star live?

MF: Well, the first issue was March 6, 1881; and the original owner and editor was my mother's uncle, Jerome Bonaparte Bell. He came from North Carolina and came to Wilmington, worked on the daily papers here and on other businesses and then conceived the idea of starting a Sunday paper. It was a four-sheeted paper. It cost 3¢, and it came out one day a week, on Sunday morning. In his first editorial he spoke of the need for a Sunday paper. He thought it could succeed.

RB: Were there other Sunday papers that you knew of?

MF: Oh, well there had been many of them. He spoke in his first editorial which I read last night of the lack of success of many predecessors, but he felt that in this time there was space for a Sunday paper.

RB: At that time were the Wilmington papers, the Morning News and the Every Evening and the Journal, were there three dailies?

MF: I'm not sure about the Journal, but I noticed that the Morning News carried an ad in that first issue and so did the Every Evening. Now I'm not awfully sure about the Journal; I don't remember about that.

RB: Where was the Sunday Star plant in Wilmington?
MF: It was printed at Fifth and Market.

RB: And it always was there until it was finally sold in '54?

MF: No, no. Well, I don't know exactly about this early part of it because of course it was long before my time, but I do know that it was first printed at Fifth and Market on the southwest corner which is now what used to be Bayard's Building and now the McCready's Flower Shop. But the Star moved to Shipley Street which was then the newspaper row you know between Fourth and Fifth on Shipley, and they had a house, an Eighteenth Century house as a matter of fact, in which they printed the paper. Now, they being a Sunday paper, they used printers and compositors from other papers. But they kept most of their printing business, uh, people busy by having a printing shop during the week; and there's a very interesting story about the third story of that house. Mr. Dockstader started the Garrett Theater there, and he used to have, he'd throw pennies out the front window and attract little boys, and they'd get their parents to bring them up to the third story of that building at 305, no 30, well 3, 5, and 7 were later buildings and I think it was the 5 building. Anyway for years on the third story of that building in the composing room there was writing on the walls that said, "Please don't feed the monkeys."

RB: Well, were the compositors the monkeys then?

MF: No, no, no. These were acts in Mr. Dockstader's Garrett Theater skits, you see, in the early, what do you call it, variety shows that were there. And then he later built the Garrett Theater on Market Street next to the [Garrett Theater] I think.

RB: Oh, then the Star was the inheritor of the Garrett Theater building. They didn't inhabit it together?

MF: Oh yes they did. The Star was printed in the same building but on the third story of it with Mr. Dockstader's theater.

RB: Oh, I see.

MF: And then later, as the Star got larger, it moved up and moved its machines up when they got the heavier I believe it must have been a flat-bed press in the beginning. I really don't know, but that was the kind that they used at that time.

RB: What is a flat-bed press?
Oh, the material, ads and so forth, are set up on flat, well, the word for it, it's a dummy sort of thing, and then it is run through on a flat-bed press. There's a... I visited a flat-bed press like that in San Francisco about five or six years ago. A Chinese daily paper is printed with that same kind of press, and it was a fascinating experience to get to see that. It's an early, early type of press.

The Star was founded then by your mother's uncle?

My mother's uncle, yes.

And when did your father begin as editor and publisher?

Well, I don't really know, but he was always editor and publisher. My Uncle Jerome—we called him "Uncle," but he was my great uncle—retired in 1918. My father bought it then, and he ran it until he sold it in 1946. And then it went out of existence in 1954.

What was your father's early newspaper career before he worked on the Sunday Star?

Well, he worked on the daily papers as a reporter, and he had many fascinating stories. He used to tell us about going walking to New Castle to get a story and then coming back in a hurry, trying to get back so their stories... As you know, the Sunday papers didn't go to press early. They went to press about 3 o'clock in the morning so that they, on Saturday night, that is Sunday morning, so that they caught the latest news or whatever. And they had press coverage from the New York papers. I noticed on the original first... I have a down copy of the first year or so of the copies, and they had stories from all over the world, press stories from all over the world that they used. And I noticed very little local coverage, but they did have some... They had one, it was a very interesting listing of all of the churches in the city and the times of their meetings and perhaps what the minister was going to talk about which I thought was rather interesting because of course they were all on the East side, or nearly all of them.

Was your father very interested in all aspects of the life of Wilmington? Did he have special interests, for example politics? Was he very interested in politics?
MF: Well, of course. Yes, to a certain extent. You know the Star. It was a nonpolitical paper. That is, it was nonpartisan; and it was started, Uncle Jerome started it so and it always held those tenets. Of course, each had friends in both parties; and so they had probably many adventures with various groups.

RB: Did you hear your father talk about holding stories, about his special sources, hoping that he could print it first?

MF: Oh yes, oh yes.

RB: That could be a problem for a Sunday paper.

MF: Oh yes, and quite often they had quite fabulous skirmishes with the daily papers in all aspects, both the later times when they had more coverage for all sorts of aspects of the city. I can remember one time myself. I went to work on the Star after my daughter started college and after my father sold it. He wouldn't let me work on it when he owned it, but he still wrote a column in it; and he wrote a column in the daily papers, too.

RB: That was in 1946 when he sold it?

MF: Yes, and then about 1949 I worked on it; and I worked awfully hard on a story and had it all set. I was working with it because I wrote the feature story. And the principal in the story, another reporter on the dailies, gave the story to the dailies instead before I could get it printed. I was furious.

RB: Did that happen quite often?

MF: Oh yes.

RB: That would be so hard.

MF: It was awfully hard; and, of course, in the later times it was hard to get the merchants to advertise just one day a week. Both Uncle Jerome and Father and the various people on the papers, the editors or the advertising people would try to promote Monday sales, you see because they would advertise in the Star on Sunday. And they tried to have sales on Mondays rather on Saturdays.

RB: The circulation of the Star, do you know about what it would be at its peak, perhaps?
MF: No, frankly I don't; I've forgotten.

RB: Did it have a good downstate circulation?

MF: Yes it had a good downstate circulation. It had a very good circulation here. As you know, there has not been a successful Sunday paper except the Daily News, the Dover paper has had a Sunday paper; but I don't know.

RB: The Delaware State News.

MF: Delaware State News.

RB: Did that start as a Sunday paper after the Star stopped publishing?

MF: Oh yes, yes. They'd only been recently that they'd started that. And there have been others that have tried it, but they were not successful. It takes a great deal of money to run a Sunday paper and particularly now with everything, all of the newsprint, all of the salaries, and everything else like that.

RB: What was your father's usual staff complement for the week and then what was the increase on the weekend?

MF: Well, of course, there were the printers and compositors and many of the editors of various areas were with the Star all the time. Some of the reporters were on the dailies, and some of them, uh, I was trying to think. I don't really know how many. He probably had 40 or 50 people all the time. Of course they had a full office staff; Mary Devlin was the bookkeeper, and she could write books about bookkeeping. She knew all the answers to all the payrolls. I have some of the early payrolls which were all rather astonishing because they were, you know, the early times, the salaries were not very hefty. As a matter of fact, when my father was married, his salary was $15 a week. And they got along very well. He worked on the dailies here; then he worked on the Star. Then he went to Norfolk and worked on the Pilot in Norfolk. Then he came back here, and he worked sometimes on the dailies and sometimes on the Star. And then he became business manager and manager, and then as I say in 1918 he bought the paper.

RB: 1918 was a big year for a newspaper.
MF: Yes, well it was a very quiet time in our family. We didn't think anything about it.

RB: I was thinking of the first war.

MF: Oh yes, the first world war coming then. Of course we had gone in in 1917 and it was finished in 1919. I can remember that day, ha, ha. It seems to me we rode all over town in trucks. I was still in school.

RB: Oh did you?

MF: Yes, it was quite exciting. The armistice, that first armistice.

RB: Right. When you were, uh, well the Sunday paper had to concentrate on features because the feature would hold up, wouldn't it?

MF: Well, yes they concentrated, but they concentrated on late news, the very latest, and they would hold up anything that was breaking. And occasionally exciting things broke on the weekends.

RB: Can you remember a particular event that was really very important to the Star? A particular Sunday issue that was memorable?

MF: Not really, no. Because it was so usual to us that I don't really remember.

RB: What about pictures. Did you have a photographer, your own special one that you remember?

MF: Well, not that I remember. There were many, many of them; and many of them were freelancing too. And we had a fabulous, what they used to call morgue, that is a library, of pictures that went way, way back. Of course I don't think any of them are in existence except a few that I own.

RB: And you gave some of your materials to the Historical Society?

MF: Well, I gave all of the original down copies of the Star. When it went out of existence in 1954, I made an arrangement and got them for the Historical Society; and they are in the Historical Society now. And I paid for the truckage and the getting them and sent them to the Historical Society. And they are in their hands now.
RB: The Star was certainly appreciated by Wilmington people. Wilmington people bought the Sunday Star.

MF: Oh yes, they did; and people still remember about it. The few who know me as a person or know about the Star or about Father still say, "Oh, they did wish the Star was still in existence." It had many facets and many interesting people that were working on it. One of the women who worked on it very early was Mary R. A. Rossell (?). And she was the women's editor for many, many years. Emma Kime (?) was another women's editor, and she wrote women's features.

RB: Are they still living?

MF: No, no. They died years and years ago. One of the features for the Star was the social pages. They printed—all of the papers really—they printed the receptions and parties and weddings and everything. Now you couldn't do that because times have changed so.

RB: Well, of course, weddings were very important for a Sunday paper.

MF: Yes.

RB: That's when a bride's story would be printed.

MF: Yes, brides' stories; and we featured them and had beautiful pictures. One of the odd things was one never printed the bridegroom's picture. On a women's page, it was women; and one didn't print the bridegroom's picture. I don't know why; he was very important.

RB: Do you remember the Roosevelt-Du Pont wedding and how the Star covered that?

MF: Uh, not really, because I don't remember the date of that. I don't remember it at all.

RB: That was during, I think it was about 1938. It was in the second term, Roosevelt's second term.

MF: I don't have a copy. We probably did very good coverage. I didn't have anything to do with it. You see, I still had very small children then. I had been married in 1929 and I had small children. I was doing... I had then started doing Red Cross volunteer work. I still was not doing anything on the Star. Now I don't remember exactly. You see I didn't live at home after
1929, and I remember in my childhood when my father used to come home on Saturday nights. He came home about 7:00 for supper; and on winter nights we always had baked beans, pork chops, and cranberry sauce because they could be kept for whenever Father came home. And then he would rest a little bit and go back to work, and then he didn't get home until maybe 4:00 or 5:00 in the morning after the paper was put to bed, as they call it.

RB: Did he have his special men who stayed with him the whole time, like somebody on the copy desk for instance who would stay with him until early in the morning?

MF: Oh, yes. It was Wickersham and Dil Connor. So many people that I've forgotten. See, '54 was a long time ago. Even after '46 was a long time ago. I remember many, many of the... We had a business manager, Horace Warrington. We had advertising people, Joe Huey. I guess I spoke of Mary Devlin, the bookkeeper; and many girls, Frances Grimes was in the office much later and she's a very young person now whose husband is on the police force as a matter of fact, and they have an antique shop. And I don't know how many children.

RB: When you said newspaper row, I didn't realize that on Shipley then between Fourth and Fifth, were the other papers there too?

MF: Oh, yes. The Journal was on the corner of Fourth and Shipley, on the southwest corner; and the next was the Star. In between there was a plumbing store. On... The Every Evening was at Fifth and Shipley on the corner, the southeast corner. Mr. Saylor's paper, I can't, Labor Herald, I think it was, was on Shipley Street about between Fifth and Sixth. And, did I say the Morning News? The Morning News was on Market Street between Fifth and Sixth where the Artisans Bank is now.

RB: They must have fallen all over each other getting the news, getting back and forth to the office.

MF: Ha, ha. Well, I guess they did, but many of the... There were many, many funny stories about the news coverage.
HB: Could you remember one or two of those? Do you think?

MF: I don't know. At the moment I can't think I guess, I'm sorry.

RB: Could you tell us a little more about your father's early career and his progression in terms of the newspaper business?

MF: Well, he was a weekly newspaperman and he spanned some 54 years. He, as I say, worked in Norfolk, Va. He worked first on the old Wilmington Evening Journal in 1890, and he went to Virginia; and then he came back about 1895 and became city editor of the Star, the Sunday Star it was then called. And he became the second owner in 1918. He'd been managing editor and general manager. And then he sold the paper in 1946 to Evan Carter of Summit, New Jersey, and remained as editor until 1949, when Stanley Ross of Long Island bought the paper, replacing Carter. And as president, and Martin as editor. And he wrote the column, "Rambling Around," and then in April of '54 when it went out of existence he wrote the column later in the Wilmington Morning News. He was. . . It was a combination of reminiscences and history and all sorts of ideas that he thought would be of interest. He was a man that felt that there were many things that needed to be done, and he worked very hard to better the city, to better the state, to get people to work together and work with each other. His interest was people. He liked to talk to people. He liked to go. I remember, I used to drive. He never drove a car. He had a license. He always bought the cars, but he never drove them. I drove them, or my brother drove them occasionally; but usually it was I. And even after I was married, if he wanted to go to Seaford, I'd bundle the children in a wash basket and take off. Mother would go along sometimes, sometimes not. And we would, you know, in the early days when you wanted to find anybody in Dover, you went to the ballgame in the afternoons. There were afternoon games, not evening. If you wanted to find someone in the legislature, well, ladies couldn't find them because they were always in the men's room. And that still pertains. You know the laws of Delaware sometimes are made in the men's room at the legislature. Ha, ha. But, he had many, many friends all over the State.

RB: Did he go to the Harrington Fair?

MF: Well, usually. I didn't always go to those, but I do remember when the nylon plant was being built in Seaford. We went down practically every day to talk to people and to see how things were going and see what was going on.
RB: Did your father come from downstate?

MF: No, no, he was born right here in Wilmington. He was born on East Eighth Street. His family had lived in Christiana Hundred on a farm; but his father was a contractor, and he used to build houses. We'd live in them for a while and then the house would be sold and we would go someplace else.

RB: Well, what was his name, Joe Martin's father?

MF: My father's name was Joseph Henry Martin. My grandfather's name was Peter Francis Martin, and his wife, my grandmother, was Margaret Bridgman; and she was of an Irish family and was born in Nova Scotia on the way over from Ireland. I went one time to the little village where they came from, Asketon (?), in Ireland, and found some cousins of her mother's family and my grandmother's mother's family. It is a very lovely little village near Limerick in Ireland. But my father's family had been here very early. I have never traced it very much.

RB: What school did he go to in Wilmington?

MF: He went to old No. 1 School, I believe. My mother went there one time after she had come to Wilmington. And then he went to the high school which was later No. 28 School before Wilmington High. And I would say he was a self-taught person because he read vociferously. He read everything. He read all, eight and nine magazines a day, a week all kinds of newspapers. We had all kinds of literature; and one of the things, if we asked him to define a word, he would say, "There's the dictionary," ha, ha, and make us work. Sometimes he would discuss the affairs of the day. Most often, though, fathers didn't in those days very much. They rather expected you to know what was going on, at least my father did. Now he was a stickler for names, and correct names and correct initials and correct spelling.

RB: And this was what he had to be as a newspaperman?

MF: Yes, he had to be; and the construction of his sentences was beautiful. It was perfect. He had no college training in those days. He was... He had been apprenticed as a carpenter in his very young youth, but that didn't interest him and so he turned toward newspaper work and as I say worked on the dailies here. In 1890—he was born in 1875—so he would be, 1875 to 1885, to 1890, 15 years. That's not very... He must have started fairly early on the newspaper, probably as an office boy. I don't
MF: (Cont'd)

know. He never, uh, not really discussed it. We don't really know. He used to tell fabulous stories about people, but he never printed anything that would hurt anybody. And he used to say, "Oh, I know some beautiful stories, but I cannot tell you because parts of the family are still living and it would make a very uncomfortable time." Which of course is quite a departure from what goes on nowadays.

RB: Did he have particular friends that were not necessarily in the newspaper business, but lifelong friends that he had that you remember?

MF: Well, yes he did. John Price Hyatt was one of them. He was a very interesting man. Dan Hastings, Judge Hastings. Charlie Gray, who was the editor of one of the daily papers, I've forgotten which one.

RB: The Morning News.

MF: The Morning News. And, they were great friends. As a matter of fact, they were in each other's...

RB: Did he ever work on the Star?

MF: He may have, but I don't remember. I just know that they were very good friends. I'm trying to think. Peter Ford was one of them. Hmmm. It's awfully hard to remember. I can remember... I can see people, but I can't think of... Bill, I mean Ward. Herbert Ward, Herbert Ward Jr.'s father and mother were great friends of my father and mother. I remember going to their house which was then on Fifth and Rodney. It was a lovely, very big old house; and Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. Ward's mother, then lived, it seems to me the third story, but Herb Jr. tells me it wasn't, that it was the second story. She was lovely. She was one of those nice round, cozy women that was very pleasant as a grandmother.

RB: Everybody used to have that in the house. Where was your house, growing up? Where was your house?

MF: Well, I lived as I say in various places. We lived on Clayton Street when my... My grandfather's house is still there at 38 S. Clayton Street. The house we had was at 32. Then we lived at 202 Broom. And then we lived at 907 Broom. And we lived there, let's see, I think we moved there about 1920, 1919 or 1920, I've forgotten now just how long we lived there. That house had belonged to Mayor and Mrs. Harvey who had a very lovely house there at 907 Broom. And when I was in school, we had met there a number of girls, friends
at school, and we had a junior section of the Auxiliary of the Home of Merciful Rest. We used to make trays and favors and things like that there. And then when I lived, that, that room where we worked was Mrs. Harvey's sitting room. It was later my sitting room. I had two bedrooms, a bath, and a sitting room. The house was in suites. And it was a lovely, big house. Padua Academy is there now. Ran back through Rodney Street. When I was married in 1929, the reception was in that house; it was in April. The dogwood was in bloom and the garden was beautiful. Everybody drifted out to the garden. It was a lovely day. We had a beautiful garden.

RB: Did the Star cover it?

MF: Oh, yes. The Star covered it, and the dailies covered it and very nice pictures of the wedding, ha, ha. And we had a very interesting time.

RB: Did your father belong to any service clubs like Rotary or Kiwanis?

MF: No, he didn't belong to those. He was a charter member of the Wilmington Elks Club. He also belonged to the Fraternal Order of Eagles. When he... Earlier, he, he. People, you know, in the service clubs, it's a representative of a paper or , so he let his people in the business be members of these clubs. He didn't let them, I mean he didn't do it himself, and he was represented by other people. So that he was not a member, but he was...

RB: I was wondering, you know, how a newspaper editor finds himself, whether he wants to be or not, involved, in the whole life of the community. Did he particularly have a place where he liked to go to meet other men? Did he cover, for example, did he himself go during the week to Board of Education meetings?

MF: Well, he went to all sorts of meetings. Yes, he did. He, he, and oftentimes he didn't join things although he was invited to belong to many of the clubs of the city. He did not because he felt that, being an independent paper, he would be maybe too much drawn into cliques or coteries that he felt was not the thing. So he did not belong to many of the clubs and whatnot.

RB: He had a very special function there because of being an independent publisher.
MF: Yes, he had to work with both groups, both the political groups, and all kinds of things. One of his ideas was, years and years ago, was you know where Rodney Square is now, was the courthouse before that, and before that was a reservoir. When he was a boy, he remembered they were cleaning out that reservoir, and the boys of his age would run down King Street. The water would run down. They'd open it on the King Street side, and the water would run down; and they would catch carp by hand that had been in this reservoir. And when they made it into Rodney Square, they tore down the old courthouse. By the way, I have some of that green serpentine stone that that courthouse was made of.

RB: Was that the limestone that is up around West Chester?

MF: No, not limestone really. I don't know. It's called serpentine. It's green, and it has streaks of, uh, I don't know whether it's limestone or not.

RB: Isn't that marvelous. We don't have another building in Wilmington like that.

MF: Yes we do, Grace Church.

RB: Oh, yes.

MF: Grace Church is the same stone, and there are one or two other places. There are a number of places up on 202. But anyway, Father suggested that they make a, . . . You see, the automobile was just coming into usage; and he suggested that they make a huge, underground garage under Rodney Square.

RB: He was way ahead of the times!

MF: He was way ahead of the times. But they didn't feel that was feasible, and so it was never done. Now they're thinking of doing it; of course, underneath Rodney Square right now are all the sewage and all the electric wires and all the everything else is under there. It would be terrifically expensive, I suppose.

RB: Where was Caesar Rodney when we had the reservoir? Ha, ha.
MF: Oh, he wasn't there. Oh, he's a very late addition. Oh, and you know, everybody from Boston comes out and says, "What's Paul Revere doing there?" Ha, ha. But, no, he's very late. He was late, after the Rodney Square was built.

RB: Was that... (double voices)

MF: I remember the courthouse in my childhood.

RB: Uh, huh. Was Rodney Square then built in the late '20's? Or the early '30's?

MF: I would say the '20's. Maybe even earlier than that because.

RB: I think the hotel was built around 1913.

MF: 1912-13 was the first part of it, and before that they had been private houses along there. And where the post office is was the Winchester house, and where the First and Central Church.

RB: And the Byrd (?) house?

MF: Oh, well the Byrd house was on the site of the hotel, wasn't it one of the houses that was the hotel? Where the First and Central Church is presently was the Draper house. And of course most of the early houses in Wilmington, much to my sorrow, have been destroyed. There are very few of them in existence, and lots of the very old ones are in very bad shape and should be taken care of.

RB: Was your father interested in landmarks then?

MF: Very much. As a matter of fact, he, his last talk when he had a heart attack on the day before he died, he was talking to a landmarks group of the A.A.U.W. and telling them about early Wilmington.

RB: When did he die?

MF: He died in 1959, in April of 1959. And my mother had died the year before in 1958; and the last year of his life, he was blind, or almost blind. And so he couldn't see television.

RB: Was it cataracts? Would he have been operated on today?
MF: No, it was just, it was not cataracts; it was not glaucoma. It was not... It was just deterioration. He was 85 years old, and he had used his eyes of course to great extent. He still wrote his column, and he would take a long sheet of yellow paper, as newspaper, and he always wrote longhand, very hard to decipher. And he would run his hand down the side of it, and he would write from there. And I would type it so it could go to the newspaper.

RB: He always wrote for the paper in longhand?

MF: Yes, he wrote in longhand. He never typed. He never learned to type.

RB: So he needed typists at the Sunday Star?

MF: Ha, ha.

RB: Or did they set the type from his longhand?

MF: Well, some of the typesetters could his writing; and they could take it from that. But I don't know. Tony Higgins edited his past on his columns. He did very little editing because, maybe once in a while there'd be some bit that he might consult Father about. He did very little changing of the columns. And of course he and I have been very great friends for years. He was a very interesting person anyway. I think he has a marvelous idea of work on the paper; and, as you know, he's a good columnist and a good writer.

RB: And always interested in Delaware?

MF: Very much interested in Delaware. Father's collection of Delaware and Delaware histories was fabulous, and some of his remarks on some of the histories are rather interesting. He'd make little notes on the side that... That isn't quite true. That isn't the way he said it.

RB: Well, did he have great friends among Delaware historians? For example, Henry Clay Reed?

MF: Oh, yes, he and Henry Clay Reed knew each other very well.

RB: And John Monroe?

MF: John Monroe, Mr. Westlager (2), ummm, he knew some of the earlier editors, uh, Vallandingham, Powell, two or three. There's another one, and I can't think of it.

RB: The old, early editor the very stout man who was editor of the Morning News?
MF: Journal. Don't you mean George Carter? Or do you mean Mr. Cummings?

RB: Mr. Cummings.

MF: Oh, Conrad. Judge Conrad. They were great friends. I remember Judge Conrad very well. I used to go down to his nest.

RB: What was his full name? Joseph Conrad?

MF: No, no. Henry C. Conrad. Henry, hmmm, I don't remember what the "C" was for. But he wrote a history of Delaware, a very good history of Delaware. But he was the State Archivist for years and years and years, and he had a little nest in the bottom of the old State House in the basement where he had all kinds of papers, records of the State of Delaware. He had a glass case in which the silver which had been given to the United States Navy of Delaware was returned to the State and so he had it down there. His office was just like a hodgepodge, but he knew where everything was. He was a fabulous person to talk to, Mr., uh, Judge Conrad. My father's office, also, was uh, ummm, he had two roll-top desks in his office on Shipley Street, 309 Shipley. And he went to Europe one time, and they cleaned his office; and he didn't speak to them for weeks afterwards because he couldn't find anything. He had a dreadful time finding things. Those Eighteenth Century houses, the three houses that belonged to the Star office were very interesting houses. One of them, just before he bought it, had a perfectly beautiful doorway, Eighteenth Century doorway, and I wanted him to... I knew he was going to buy that house, and I wanted him to buy it now. He didn't, and Phil Laird came along and bought the doorway for $25, and the replacement was a modern doorway; and he took it to New Castle. And on one of the New Castle Days, he offered it for sale for $900 and had no takers. So in later years, he owned the two houses across the street from the Laird house on The Strand in which the Coopers now live. He put those two houses together and put that doorway in that house. So that doorway from Third and Shipley is over in New Castle being preserved I'm glad to say; now on The Strand.

RB: Were there three Seventeenth Century houses then that belonged to the Star?

MF: Three Eighteenth Century houses.
RB: Eighteenth Century.

MF: Eighteenth Century houses, yes, 305, 307, and 309.

RB: Well, did that work pretty well for the newspaper office, the way it was organized with three houses?

MF: Well, yes, because they had doors cut through, you see. The heavy press was in 307 on the ground floor, not the basement floor, the ground floor. Then the second floor was the editorial area. Father's office was way off in 305. And then the composing room was on the third floor. And from the first to the second floor was a circular stairs which is still in the building where it was moved to Justin (?) Street. I think it's still there, although I saw an ad for a circular stairway; and I've always wondered whether that was the one.

RB: Well now, what is in that building now?

MF: Nothing. It's destroyed.

RB: Oh.

MF: The whole block has been taken over by the Delaware Technical School of Wilmington or something like that.

RB: Oh, DelTech.

MF: DelTech, yes. That whole block is. I don't know whether they ever did an archeological dig in that area. I would have loved to have done it. I would think there would be some very interesting artifacts. I don't know whether they did anything about that or not.

RB: Like old slugs, ha, ha. Or type. (?)

MF: Well, when, Father also sold some of the mantels from those houses. And Mrs. Snader, one of the Bush girls, had some in her house. I think it was up near Chadds Ford somewhere. And he brought me home one time... His... He hated saltcellars. He said that they always clogged, and he was furious. He brought me home one time a milk glass saltcellar about 3 inches tall, no top. And he had found it in one of these fireplaces, and he said he was sure some early owner of that house had found it clogged up and had thrown it in the fireplace. And it didn't break of course, ha, ha. He gave it to me.
RB: He was probably right.

MF: Yes, he probably.

RB: That was before air conditioning and when humidity and heat. (two voices simultaneously)

MF: Yes, before air conditioning. And you know, he used to get so mad at that. And you know, we had a funny thing in our lifetime when I was home at school. On one Sunday we would have chicken and waffles because that was the day the maid was there. On the next Sunday we had steaks, and that was when Mother did the cooking. And we had broiled steaks that were about 2 inches thick and about as big as, as big as the sides of a good size charger or train now. And, oh, I can remember those steaks. My children even remember them.

RB: You were glad when it was the maid's day off.

MF: Ha, ha. We didn't care, ha, ha.

RB: What was.

MF: Elizabeth used to do marvelous things, and that house was, that house on Broom Street, 907, it had a back stairs. In fact, it had two back stairs, but it had 20 rooms. It had three fireplaces, yes three fireplaces. It had four or five baths. I've forgotten how many baths. It had a kitchen and another kitchen and a breakfast room and the laundry we had in the back. But, the odd part about it was that, when I was sleeping in one of the rooms alongside of this back stairs, it would creak in the night and sound exactly like the maid going up to the third floor, ha, ha. It sounded, you know how you can hear people's footsteps.

RB: What about some of the people who might have been regular visitors to the house, who might come for dinner to talk over affairs of the city of Wilmington?

MF: Well, Father and Mother belonged to many groups of people, early groups, with Uncle Jerome and Aunt Emma. You know my mother was born in North Carolina as Uncle Jerome was, and she was the daughter of a first wife. Her father had been in the Civil War on the Confederate side, and he married her mother, who was Uncle Jerome's younger sister.
and then after Mother was born and another child was born, she died. Then there was a stepmother. Then there was another stepmother. So there were three separate families. And then Mother, when she was about 18, came to Wilmington and lived with Uncle Jerome, who lived at 815 W. 9th and had six children and ran the Star.

RB: How did he originally... Did he originally start the Sunday Star? He didn't buy another newspaper?

MF: No, he started it. He started it. He had been working on the daily papers here. He worked... He did other things, too; and I can't remember what. He was a poet, by the way, and a very well thought of person. He had a rather strong temper. He was, as I remember him, he had very decided ideas, very, very strong ideas for doing things. He was a great friend of the painter, T. V. Brown, the man who lived up at Claymont and had a lovely old house up there. All sorts of... (two voices)

RB: Are any of his poems in the early copies of the Star? Did he print his poems?

MF: Well, a few of them, I believe. But he did publish some. He published three books, one called **Holly and Cypress**, and one called... I forget the name.

RB: **Holly and Cypress**, That's a wonderful title.

MF: Yes. They were... You were talking about...

RB: I see that he has written three books of poetry.

MF: Three books, yes, **Harvest of Years & Poems**, **Springs of Holly and Cypress**, and **Moods & Other Poems**. He had many, many friends as I said. Dr. Hanker, who used to be the head of the Delaware State Hospital—-it was then called Farnhurst—was one of his great friends. And they used to have concerts on Sundays in the summertime for the patients and guests there played by the band for Du Pont. And the major was the bandmaster at Fort Du Pont. And he'd bring the band over and they would play on the lawn of Farnhurst. And we used to go out on Sundays. Uncle Jerome also was one of the early owners of an automobile, and he used to take us to Atlantic City for the day.
RB: What was his car, what kind?
MF: I haven't the slightest idea.
RB: A touring car?
MF: Oh, a touring car. Of course, most of his children had grown up. I didn't know... I knew them, but I didn't know them as contemporaries.

RB: They were another generation.
MF: Oh, yes, two generation, you see. There was Jerome Bell, Jr., who was later head of the Du Pont Company in Canada, and Harry Bell. They had all worked on the Star at various times; but then, after their father sold it, you see, they branched out and did other things. Harry Bell was a publisher in Philadelphia. And Alice married James Farabee (?), and she went to Wisconsin. He was the... Milwaukee, yes. He was the city sanitary person. I can't think what he did. He had a very high position in Milwaukee. Florrie Bell married Robert Weir, and then she had three children; and she died early.
Florence was my mother's name, and Uncle Jerome's oldest daughter's name. It was a family name that had come down through the family, and that's why I was named Florence. And that is why my mother had four names. And so I don't have any middle name, and my daughter's name is Beverly because my husband wanted her named so, ha, ha. So it stopped within that generation.

RB: Well, did your father look up to Uncle Jerome? Was he a model for him do you think?
MF: Well, I think in many ways, yes; but I think they had many, many differences. They used to take, I think literally, take sides on things to work things out in their minds. They were both men of strong ideas, and they oftentimes didn't agree; but they oftentimes agreed because it was expedient sometimes. You know when you're a newspaper, and particularly if you're the managing editor or the publisher, you have strong ideas about things. I don't think that the actual policy of the Star changed greatly; it just perhaps was refined in different ways when each was running it.

RB: When did Uncle Jerome die? Do you remember?
MF: No, not really. About, I would say maybe, maybe as late as 19__, oh dear, I don't remember. He went to live with my Aunt Alice in Milwaukee, and I don't really remember. I could look it up, but I don't remember.

RB: I was just wondering if he died soon after he retired from the Star.

MF: No, no, no, not really. He and Aunt Emma did a lot of traveling. They went to the West Coast and things like that. I don't know if they ever went to Europe.

RB: What would you say. Your father was the editor of the Star at a very important time in Wilmington's growth—the growth of the Du Pont Company, the building of the Hotel even for instance, the changing of the city between, uh, from being a very, well changing with the whole society of the country after the first war. That was a big change. What would be his special interest? Your mentioning, for instance, Farnhurst, Uncle Jerome, and Dr. Hanker, I'm wondering when he looked at the whole problem, the city of Wilmington, he was interested in landmarks and history itself. Did he have a special community interest, like for example, mental health, or the court system.

MF: He had all, interests in all sorts of things. He was very much interested in anything that was for the betterment of the city and its people. He tried his very hardest to help everybody. He didn't always succeed; and, as you know, it was a time of great stress, too. And shortly after, after, uh, it was a struggle. It had always been a struggle with the Star, you know, because they had such competition.

RB: Actually, he was the editor of the Star in the most climatic kind of history because it was between the two World Wars.

MF: Right, uh huh.

RB: From 1918 until 1946.

MF: That's right. And so, at the time of the actual depression, he kept every one of his men on. He had to cut down their salaries, but he kept every one of them on and kept them busy. And they scrambled awfully hard to get printing jobs. Much of the laws of Delaware, much of the convocations, lots of printing jobs like that he worked very hard to get.

RB: And legal advertising.
MF: And legal advertising, all kinds. But I meant, this, uh, legal advertising in the paper of course, and all kinds of mercantile advertising. But, also, any kind of a printing job. They did all sorts of things. They did...

(two voices simultaneously)

RB: Was the Star Printing one of the largest printers in Wilmington?

MF: Yes, mmmmm.

RB: And engravers.

MF: Yes.

RB: And it was your own engraving?

MF: It was union, yes. We did engraving. And they did, they had a bindery. And they did all kinds of programs for things. They did special inserts. As a matter of fact, the Flower Market rotogravure section started with Anada Faraday Stockwell working it out with Phthon. And they started with the Star. Then later, of course, it was taken over by the Journal. But...

RB: The rotogravure section. That was very big.

MF: The rotogravure section. When I was married, we had the rotogravure section was going on then. Our picture was in it.

RB: Did you have that every Sunday in the Star or was it just for the Market?

MF: No, it was every Sunday. It was a...

RB: The society section really.

MF: Not really. It was everything because they had world coverage in it. It had all sorts of things in it. I didn't have anything to do with that except that I knew about it. And it was going on at the time of, well, say from 1925 to maybe, it got too expensive after a while. I don't know just when it went out of existence or when it was. I guess when color printing came in.

RB: But the print was probably in the building where the press was. Was the print shop where the press was?
MF: Yes, the printing. Now the rotogravure section, I'm not sure where that was printed, whether we printed it or whether it was printed by some business. I know that the engraving, a lot of the engraving and a lot of the engraving for cuts and such things was done by Globe Engraving, but...

RB: But you did engraving too?

MF: Oh, yes. We did, well, Globe Engraving is a different kind of engraving. I'm talking about the engraving of plates for pictures and things like that. Globe Engraving did that and for ads, cuts, this sort of thing. You see, this is done, this presently is done by a different kind of setup entirely. Toward the end we had that kind of machine.

RB: How much, you said your father wrote in longhand. About how much of the paper would you say he would fill. I know...

MF: Nine-tenths of it. Ha, ha.

RB: I know that UPI and AP...

MF: He did an awful lot...

RB: His volume must have been terrific.

MF: No, not really, because they did have very excellent reporters. But he did a great deal of the writing of all sorts of things. He did, of course, he did all the editorials. Of course, Uncle Jerome...

RB: Did he cover meetings during the week, say like he'd go to a luncheon meeting and write the story on it for the Sunday paper?

MF: Quite often, if it was of that caliber then he would. Maybe he would send somebody to represent him I don't know. He did... If it was of sufficient importance...

RB: And then what would be set? He would have his type set as much as possible ahead of time...

MF: That's right.

RB: And take care of the late news on Saturday.

MF: That's right, mmmmm. And of course he had all kinds of... For instance, the sports editor, Alex Abrahams, would have all the stuff set up and he would have like fingers out, people calling him and telling him the schedules.
RB: The late scores, too.

MF: The late scores. That was one. The sporting section. The whole section was very.

RB: Did you know John Brady? He covered sports for the Morning News under Charlie Gray.

MF: No, I don't really know. I may have. There were so many that I don't always, as I said. You talk to practically anyone in Wilmington and they have worked at one time on the Star. So, it was. Even from copy boys to all kinds of sports writers and all kinds of young men and women who had various kinds of schooling.

RB: The Star didn't have any real problem then the depression? Your father was able to keep it going.

MF: Oh yes, they had many, many problems, but.

RB: I meant in terms of being solvent. It stayed solvent.

MF: It stayed solvent, but it was like everything else. I expect they had to borrow a lot of money to keep going. I don't know. They finally came out of it very well. But they did keep, they kept all of their people on the payroll and kept them going. It was astounding because even my husband worked on it. He lost his job right after our second child was born, our son; and he did all kinds of things. He was a civil engineer. He was graduated from Delaware. And finally he went as circulation manager on the Star, and stayed on that for some little time, and then he went back on the City Engineering Section until he went into the War. But at one time, in 1922, my brother was editor of his school paper at Bordentown Military, and I was editor of the Triangle at the Hebbs' School, and Father was editor. We had three editors in the family.

RB: Didn't your mother write? (two voices)

MF: My mother used to write, too, but she never did get anything published. If she had written her reminiscences instead of her fanciful stories, I think she would have. Because she used to tell fabulous stories about her life. Her life was very interesting.
RP: It must have been coming up to live with her Uncle Jerome when she was 18.

MF: Yes, she went to No. 1 School which was then the high school, and she.

RP: Where was No. 1 School?

MF: It was on French Street between Second and Third, I think. You ask Bill Frank, he went there too later. One time she was in class and she said, "I ought have done something," which is the North Carolina Old English way of saying "might" and everybody laughed at her, and she walked out of the school and she never went back. And so she went to Mr. Goldey's school, the commercial school.

RP: Goldey Beacon.

MF: And she took four years of business curriculum there, she was a bookkeeper, and then she went to work on the Star as Uncle Jerome's bookkeeper for $3 a week. And she kept herself, and paid board, and dressed herself.

RP: But the Star only cost $3 a year.

MF: Yeah. So if you can think about that, that's terrific. And she of course had all sorts of adventures. She had. One of her contemporaries at Goldey's, that was former Governor McMullin. I believe Governor Robinson was also one. Mrs. McMullin, the Governor's wife, was, I think, was in that class. There were all sorts of people that were contemporaries in that early class of Mr. Goldey. And it was only, it was on the second floor of the Wilmington Institute Free Library, which was then at Right and Market. And that had been built in 1864 on the site of John Dickinson's house. John Dickinson, the penman of the Revolution, who owned three houses you know. He owned the one in Dover, his father's house, and the one in Wilmington, and he had a house in Philadelphia. Wilmington has many things to offer. And if you look at the second floors of the houses of the buildings on Market Street, it would be a revelation to you. Many of those old buildings and stores that are there are the nucleus of the old houses. You know Market Street and French Street and King Street were the center of the city. Many old buildings, of course, many of them are still standing.

RP: But many of them are endangered?
MF: Oh, yes, yes. I'm hoping that something will be done about these houses on Sixth Street and Seventh Street. I'm glad to see that Mr. Kraft (?) has secured the saving of the old Customs House. And, if they would leave the houses where they are on Sixth and Seventh Streets and work around them; and, with the old Town Hall as a nucleus, and the church at the far end of the thing, we could have a historical area in Wilmington that is well worth it. Most of our Eighteenth Century houses of course have been destroyed. Many of our Nineteenth Century houses, .. I've often given talks to various groups, landmark groups and so forth about early Wilmington as much I could remember or looked up; and nowadays I have to say, "Well, that's the site," of something or other, the houses that have gone, the buildings that have gone. You know Wesley College in Dover started here in Wilmington. It was a female college on French St.

RB: The houses there above the Friends Meeting at Fourth and West Street are very handsome brick...

MF: They are Nineteenth Century houses. They're not Eighteenth Century houses, but they are Nineteenth and should be preserved. The early Nineteenth Century houses were well built then and very handsome houses. I'd like to see the house, the Shipley house on the southwest corner opposite Friends Meeting preserved. Now, at West Street, Fourth and West, southwest corner. That is a nice, sturdy building. It has been lately a laundry, but it could be used even if it was only used for a meeting place. It should be preserved. It's an early, early house. The interior paneling of that house is in Middletown in the Jeffcott house. Remember, that house...

RB: They bought that then and removed it?

MF: And removed it years and years ago, at least twenty, maybe thirty, I don't know. I don't know how long ago the Jeffcotts built their house, but it was...

RB: Mrs. Jeffcott has been a collector.

MF: Oh, she's collected for years. I've seen the house; it is a lovely one. And, luckily, many of the small towns in our state have been able to preserve things; but Wilmington has been very neglectful and, I think, shortsighted of the people because they say, "Well, why preserve that; they ought to do something for the people." Well, they try to
(Cont'd)

do something for the people. The people don't respond, and yet this heritage is there; and it seems to me that it should be preserved.

RB: Doesn't there seem to be a large public support coming now for this?

MF: Talk, but not monetary. And yet I think people should be encouraged to contribute. Even if they only contributed $.50 to $1.00. If everybody in town contributed a little bit of money, you'd have a good fund for a lot of things.

RB: What about direct mail or newspaper advertising to try to bring this in?

MF: Well, newspapers are not interested in free advertising. It's very hard to get anything, any kind of meeting in the newspapers, and direct mail is costly.

RB: Maybe we need a Sunday Star.

MF: Ha, ha. Well, I'd like to see it, but I have not seen the present one that seems to be working. I've only seen it occasionally, that is the Delaware State News. I only see it once in a while. But I read the downstate papers, and they do a very good job in local coverage and a good bit of state coverage. I don't see them as often as I used to, but I always looked at newspapers everywhere to see what was going on.

RB: What about when you were a feature and society editor on the Star, what did you particularly enjoy doing? Did you write features that you remember?

MF: Well, no, I didn't write that. I wrote the, for instance, fashion features like (inaudible) Somebody was talking about, recently, about having to go to New York for the fashion showings. I enjoyed it. I had a marvelous time. But then everybody was kind to me. I had... It was maybe not so pushy at that time. There was a man, Larry Northridge, who did beautiful hats. I've always loved hats, and of course nobody wears them anymore.

RB: They're coming back.
MF: Uh, I know. I'm like the Balsam lady, I have my hats. And I'm never sure whether she meant she wore them or she just had them, ha, ha. I did an interview with Pierre Balmain when he was here. I then could speak a little French, and he had his mother with him. And she was showing the wardrobe for an older woman done with Du Pont materials.

RB: And who was he again?

MF: Pierre Balmain, the French couturier. And, I, uh, they had a party at the old Wilmington Country Club and had publicity people. That was a very pleasant time. I did all kinds of stories about things that were going on, or people that were going, lovely stories about weddings. You didn't quite go into what they ate, but you know all the Southern papers used to, when they covered a wedding story, they had everything from what they had for the reception and what people wore, flowers, oh, all sorts of things. We didn't quite go into that, but we did describe the gowns and we did describe who the people were. I quite see that.

RB: I think it's too bad this is gone and has to because of numbers.

MF: Numbers and space; you just don't have it. But I do think sometimes it's cut too short. It's not. I think a bride should have one day that she has a fair story, and not all of them care about it. But some of them do, and I think it's too bad. But I can understand, but.

RB: I think it's coming back again, like hats.

MF: Yes, it seems to, ha, ha. Well, it seems to be coming back. I do notice that now and then the idea of the local papers of emulating the metropolitan papers in which they just give a notice of a meeting or not as they choose, quite often the notice of a meeting is paramount. People should go to it; they should see, if it's open to the public. And of course, one of the criterion they use now that they don't get any publicity unless it is open to the public.

RB: Is that true?

MF: Oh, yes. Everything has to be open to the public. That is, in our dailies here. I don't know about other places. Not downstate for instance. But that's the criteria they use now for club meetings and so forth. I think it's too bad because sometimes club meetings or a strawberry festival is useful because it's going to a scholarship, or it's going to back something or other. And they need the publicity. I think that's too bad.
RR: And, also, it's a picture of the times.

MF: Oh, yes, a picture. But I think too often that papers are prone to put stuff... Even the early papers had stuffed little scrips of stories about things going on in the world, granted. But why did we care about what was going on in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, ha, ha, when we needed what was going on right here on Market Street. And I think that was... I'd like to see a more local coverage and not so much verbiage sometimes.

RR: Who were some of your father's favorite politicians in Delaware, during his publishing career?

MF: Oh, he had all kinds of friends. I don't think he had any special, uh...

RR: Favorite.

MF: Favorite. He had all kinds of friends--on both sides. And oftentimes I'm afraid that they played him off and he played them off, ha, ha. But...

RR: Was your father a formal man? Did he dress conservatively? Did he smoke at all?

MF: Very conservatively. Oh, yes, he smoked cigars and cigarettes until, I don't know. He said one time that--I don't know the date--but he said that he'd smoked for fifty years and he thought he'd stop. He thought that was enough, and he stopped, just like that. He never smoked again.

RR: He was a very disciplined man then?

MF: What?

RR: He was a self-disciplined...

MF: Oh, disciplined, disciplined. Yes, he was. He was very neat and very precise in his clothing. He had certain ideas about things; and you know, he had beautiful white hair, absolutely beautiful white hair. And he took great care of it. And I think one of the things that made him stop smoking was that in later life so much smoking turned his hair a little yellow. And I think he was a little vain of that white hair. He really had a beautiful wave in it, and he really was very careful of it. He had very handsome, very beautiful hands, beautiful nails.
RB: And he didn't bang them up on the typewriter.

MF: No, he didn't.

RB: Was he a churchman?

MF: What?

RB: Was he a churchman? Was he active in church affairs?

MF: No. He was raised as a Catholic, that is, he was born a Catholic. He was not raised, really, as a Catholic. But in his extreme youth, in those days pews were bought. And in his extreme youth, he went to church one Sunday with his mother and someone, neighbors, were in their pew. So he, they moved back to the next pew. And the people who owned that pew raised holy ned. And the priest stood by them, and he never went back in the Catholic church. He was furious because he said that was not neighborly. And he was only a child, a kid. But he had many, many Catholic friends; and whenever his friends died or there were masses to be said to the soul, he never sent money to the church. He sent it to the Little Sisters of the Poor. He said they needed it, and they could use it. As I say, he had many friends. No, he was married... He and Mother were married by a Presbyterian. He went to church occasionally with us, but, you see he slept on Sundays until about Noon.

RB: Ha, ha, he could never go to church then.

MF: On the days of, uh, uh.

RB: Christmas or...?

MF: He gave me away in the wedding. I was married in the Presbyterian Church. And he was buried with a Presbyterian minister. I asked him, and he said that was what he wanted. But he had many, many friends. And his own family were raised as Catholics.

RB: I hadn't thought about that, but he really couldn't get to church if he wanted to.

MF: No. No. Well, sometimes he made a special effort. When it was something, no matter what church it was. If there was something he felt was worth it, worth it, ha, ha. He was very interested in most churches. He knew a great deal about the churches in Wilmington. He was very much inter-
MF: (Cont'd) ested in the preservation of Old Sweden. And the little church, uh, the First Presbyterian Church on Market Street.

RB: Was he a friend of Dr. Christie?

MF: Oh, yes. They were quite interested in one another. Not really friends—I can't say that. They were acquaintances; they knew each other, and they talked quite well, quite closely together. He was interested in all sorts of groups of people.

RB: What about other newspapermen, like Mr. Metten, for example? Was he a friend of his?

MF: They were good friends. They were quite often rivals, but they were... George Carter was one of the early, early newspaper people. He was with the Journal. Albert Cummings was another one. He was an early...

RB: Morning News.

MF: Morning News. I was trying to think. There were so many, and, of course, in his columns he spoke about these early men whom he knew in his youth and in his later time. And he had a photographic memory. He could remember...

RB: Was Rambling Around—was that what it was called, Rambling Around?

MF: Rambling Around.

RB: Was that a weekly column from the time he sold the Star, from 1946 on?

MF: No, he wrote it before. He wrote it when he still had the Star, but it was not a weekly setup. He wrote it when he had something that he wanted to talk about or something.

RB: Oh.

MF: But after he sold the Star, he wrote on the Ford Star a column called Rambling Around. And it was just, it was not, it was just about anything. Anything that he happened to think of.

RB: But was it every Sunday then?
MR: Yes, it was every Sunday then. And I have copies of it. And then he wrote, after the Star went out of existence, he wrote for the Morning News until his death, from 1954 to 1959.

RP: And was that a weekly then?

MR: Saturday morning. Just like Emerson Wilson does "This Morning," you see.

RP: Right, uh huh.

MR: He does it for the Morning News. And it was very... As a matter of fact, I can often see in Bill Frank's column or Emerson's columns, or other writers, a little bit of picking up. Having typed much of this stuff in later years--they're picking up and using it as a reference, you see. Sometimes they speak of it, and sometimes they don't. But they go... They each have their own style. I get kind of tickled with Bill. He has a... And Pete gets so mad at him. And I said, "Well, my goodness, he's selling his column; he's selling his newspaper." And Emerson, of course, he's...

RP: I don't understand why people get so angry either because I think he always has something to say, Bill Frank. It's entertaining...

MR: Oh, yes. I think he's fascinating. I love to hear it. I'm dying to hear what he's going to say about the market, the moving of the market. Because I met him in the market the other day, he and Winnie, his wife. And he was talking to the various farmers and other customers.

RP: Then he's going to be writing about it?

MR: I think he is, and I'd like to see it. I like to see newspaper people working. I like to... I don't do very much writing myself. I belong to the Penwomen. I've been a charter member. I used to write some, but I haven't done any in years, not really, except publicity for women's groups and that sort of thing. I am still a member, but I don't... 

RP: But there isn't, there's nothing like it for adventuring and knowing the community. To know a community, being on the newspaper is the best.
MF: I think if I... It wasn't the thing to do, and well, there was no reason for me to do it in my early life. I enjoyed my life. I had a lovely time. I don't miss anything. I don't even miss not having been a college graduate. I think it kind of upset Father and Mother, but... I don't think...

RB: You went to Miss Hebb's School?

MF: I went to Miss Hebb's School. I don't ever remember worrying about it, and I don't consider that my education ever stopped. It's still going on.

RB: Where was Miss Hebb's School?

MF: Hmm?

RB: Where was it?

MF: It is the building that is presently at Pennsylvania Avenue and Franklin, and it is now a church; I don't know what kind of church. But it was a three-story building. It was built by Miss Hebb. They came here, you know, or Miss Ruth Hebb did, to teach Dr. Kane, Florence Bayard Kane, and Mrs. Folk, Jean Kent Kane Folk, Mrs. Paul Du Pont's mother, and there were several of those Kane girls. And Miss Hebb came to teach them, to further their... In those days they didn't, girls did not necessarily go to school. And it grew into a school because all the cousins and all of the friends wanted to go to school.

RB: Just like Mrs. Tatnall's school that she started for her grandchildren?

MF: Yes, yes. Well, of course, Mrs. Tatnall taught in Miss Hebb's. As a matter of fact, they consider me an alumna of the Tatnall School. I still get all the material from the Tatnall. Of course, my daughter went to Tatnall, too.

RB: I remember Mrs. Tatnall teaching our Sunday School at Trinity Church, and she sang in the choir besides.

MF: That's right. Have you read the book that Francie wrote about her?

RB: No.
VF: Mrs. Tatnall and her school?

RB: What is the name of the book?

MF: *Mrs. Tatnall and Her School.* And the Miss Hebb, they met then on Market Street about where the Kane house, it was about where the dime store is, about Ninth and Market, part of that property. And it was later Miss Edith's... It was later D. B. Jones, Confectioner; and that was Miss Edith McConnell's place where she had a restaurant.

RB: By the way, wasn't that the best restaurant there was?

MF: Oh, yes. And then when Miss Edith moved from Market Street and the dime store bought the area, she took the fireplace mantels from that house and put them in her shop on Ninth Street. Then when she went out of business, she gave those to Mrs. Paul Du Pont's boys. You know, she had six sons. And so, in their houses they have the mantels from the original Kane house on Market Street. And that was Dr. John Kent Kane, I think was his folks' father. The Arctic explorer was his brother. I forget which one. But, oh, Market Street has many, many things to offer.

RB: Are you glad about the new pedestrian Market Street possibilities?

MF: I would like to see it, but I don't know whether it would pay. I think we've got to do a massive help with the policing of the place. Women will not go downtown. And when the story comes out—it came out in the dailies—about the holdup in the Du Pont, uh, the Hotel Du Pont parking lot. Well, a lot of my friends are just horrified. They just won't go there. I go downtown. I go scrounging. I do all kinds of things. It doesn't bother me.

RB: It's always been true. We've always had highwaymen.

MF: That's right. We've always had highwaymen. And, of course, that, in the early years, that made marvelous stories for the newspapers. Then they could delve into that. We used to have a man, Mr. Conner, William H. Conner, who would dig up these stories and write them for the *Star*.

RB: Okay, uh huh.

MF: I'd like to see people taking advantage of the opportunity of being downtown again. I see no reason... When you're there at noontime, it's tremendous because there are all
MF: (Cont'd)

the people coming from the various businesses, but later it's just too bad. And we used not to have any fear, and we'd go downtown with no problems. I do think, unfortunately, that the malls and the areas with their free parking have made a great deal of difference.

RB: I wonder what your father would think about the new kinds of things happening today in Wilmington?

MF: Are you talking about the proposed malls and this sort of thing in downtown Wilmington?

RB: Yes, change in general.

MF: Well, I think he'd be appalled at some of the early construction of the buildings, but I do think he'd be most interested in the proposed malls and the present ones that are in the town. I think that he'd be interested in trying to promote a lot of. I don't know how to say it, a lot of. . . I think he'd be most interested in the, in whatever improvements could be made. I think he'd be fascinated and would be very much interested in proposing all kinds of interesting gadgets for helping the inner city. I do think we've lost out on that part, and I do hope it will return. I think our merchants could well use the later-in-the-day time of people shopping. I would like to see improvement downtown. I do think that, another thing too, I think the town could do with a good housecleaning. Everybody be as responsible as they used to be for cleaning their own premises so that one didn't have to walk over messes in the streets and things like that. I think Father was very much interested in people. He was very much interested in the city. He wanted to see all sorts of improvements; and, as a newspaperman, of course, he was, he was newsy and nosy. He wanted to know what was going on and why. And the old story is that he liked to print things that were fit to print. He didn't really like unfortunate gossip or . . . And he also didn't feel that one should try to judge someone or judge cases in the newspapers. He felt that that was the courts business rather than the newspapers'. Sure bring the news to the fore and delve into any question that needed it, but work hard to improve the city as it is now.

RB: Thank you so much, Mrs. France. This interview with the daughter of Joseph Martin, the editor and publisher of the Sunday Star, for the years between 1913 and 1946 has been recorded at her home, 1307 Woodlawn Avenue, on June 28, 1974.

( END OF INTERVIEW)