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Interview with Mr. William Frank, journalist, in Wilmington, Delaware, February 8, 1974, by Steven Schoenherr.

Q O.K. you put out an edition in what...

A 1971, a centennial edition of the Every Evening. See the papers...well, what I could do is to give you stuff off the top of my head...I have a little bit there. And when you go back into the various diverse papers that came and went and came and went, that's something that you would have to get out of the history...it's all there--maybe not in the detail that you want.

Q I would be interested in mainly the people, the journalists.

A The journalists...well, those things you wouldn't find in the history books at all.

Q For instance, we can find, for example, when newspapers started, when it ended, O.K. This stuff is written down. But what we're interested in--that's the purpose of this project--is things, you know, about people, that are in your head, and...

A I see. O.K. How do you want to do it?

Q So can you tell me about your own experiences starting out with this paper...when you joined the paper...

A O.K. I don't have to give my name or anything like that.

Q You might start out and give your name...full name, and where you were born.

A My full name is William P. Frank and I was born in New York City, came here at the tender age of about six and went to the Wilmington schools and was graduated from Wilmington High School in 1923. In 1922 I got a job as office boy with the Morning News. The Morning News was then part of the News Journal Company. There was a morning paper...the afternoon paper was the Evening Journal. The merger had taken place ten or fifteen years before that. The paper was located at the southwest corner of Fourth and Shipley Streets and the business offices were down on the first floor and the Morning News was upstairs on the second floor in the rear and the Evening Journal was on the second floor in the front of the building. It used to be an old building operated by Gawthrop Brothers, and it was converted into that. The Evening Journal was a separate paper, the Morning News was a separate paper, and at the time it was merged with the Evening Journal as a corporation. Up until that time it had been owned by Alfred I. DuPont, and Alfred I. DuPont had used the Morning News as a political vehicle. The Morning News at one time was located at 511 Market Street and then they had a disastrous fire sometime soon after that--1920, and then it moved to East Sixth Street near King and then it was purchased by the Evening Journal Company and then we had
a News Journal, was the name of the company and the Morning News was the morning paper and the Evening Journal was the afternoon paper.

Q When did this merger take place...what year?

A The merger? It must have been somewhere around 1919, 1920. So I got a job as an office boy with the Morning News and that was very convenient because I got out of school around 2:00 or 2:30 and that was when the Morning News began to operate in the afternoon. And so I was an office boy and then I could do my lessons in the office.

Q How did you get your job--did you know someone, or just walk in the door...

A No, someone I knew had a job as office boy and he was quitting and asked me if I wanted a job. Up until then I'd been working in stores on King Street, and I thoroughly despised working in stores. So now I was working in a newspaper office. And it was very good because I had Saturdays off. See the Morning News didn't publish on Saturdays, so I could continue working on King Street in stores while I was an office boy. Then I was graduated in June of 1923 and fortunately for me there was some man by the name of J. Clark Samuel, who was the son of a prominent Wilmington doctor, Dr. Meridith I. Samuel. Clark Samuel got the itch to travel and he quit his job on the Morning News to go on a tramp steamer. And so I just happened to be in the right place at the right time and they asked me if I wanted a job as a reporter. And I jumped at that, and my first assignment was covering my graduation. Also another assignment I had was to review my class play, senior play, and since I had been rejected in the cast, I felt very bad about it, and I criticized the hell out of the play, see...probably the only class play ever criticized...of course that raised hell there, see. So then I got my job as a reporter. And then I went down and I remember very well, the first time I bought my first pack of cigarettes, I bought my first pipe, my first tobacco--I didn't smoke, see. And I got myself a hat and I stepped on it to make it look old, and as I had that, and then I had the New York World and my number one god was Hayward Brown of the New York World and my number one prophet was H. L. Mencken, who was then putting out the American Mercury, and I was now a journalist, see. And I went down to King Street and told my old mercantile employer I was through and he said, "Why don't you work on Saturdays?" I said, "I'm through--I'm a journalist." And I said goodbye to retail business. So that's when I started to work, in June of 1923. And right now I would say, it's kind of a dubious honor, as of this date in February of 1974, I'm actually retired from the News Journal, but two years before I retired, or a year before I retired, I organized a corporation upon the suggestion of the president of the company, who was then Charles Hackett, Chick Hackett. And he said he didn't want me to go. So I had to retire anyway, that's the rules
here. So I incorporated, called the Bill Frank Incorporation, and then I made a contract with the News Journal--my corporation made a contract with the News Journal, it's never been done anywhere before in Delaware. I made a contract with the News Journal and the contract is that my corporation is to supply news and other information to the News Journal. So my corporation turns around and hires me to do that, see. So I kept right on working. My retirement date came and went and I kept right on working.

Q Is there a mandatory retirement?

A Mandatory at 65, yes. So I kept right on working and I've been working ever since. And I come in every day and like any reporter--I'm subject to the same discipline of any reporter out there in the newsroom. I also write a column. So I have sort of a split job, I write a column five days a week for the Morning News and I do all kinds of reporting, general reporting, for the News Journal papers. And that's a contract I have with the corporation. So in a way I'm an employee and in a way I'm not--it puts me in a kind of a strange position, see. So I would think right now, as I think back over Delaware, I guess I'm the oldest in years and probably longest in service daily-working newspaperman. There is one fellow older than I am and been around longer than I am, this fellow Harry McSherry, and he's down in Dover. And McSherry is connected with the State News and occasionally writes a column for them. He used to cover news but he doesn't cover it anymore. But his role is different from mine. I'm a regular leg-working reporter. I go out on stories, I go out on fires, anything, you know, general news. But he doesn't do that. So I would say that I am the oldest in point of years and service working reporter.

Q Do you know this other fellow personally?

A Harry McSherry, yeah.

Q What kind of man is he; can you say something about him?

A Well, right now he's kind of getting along in years, he's kind of doddering. He's over at the legislative hall quite often. He also has some kind of a job in connection with the court--clerk of the court, and he does some broadcasting. But he doesn't do the work that I do at all. He's not what you call a routine, everyday reporter. And I don't know of anybody else. We had a fellow named Emerson Wilson--did you interview Wilson?

Q NO, I haven't. He's still writing, isn't he?

A Well, he writes a column. He's retired, see--he used to be City Editor of the Morning News. Well, he's retired, but he doesn't do what I do, see. See, I come in every morning, 7:00, I'm here 'til 7:00, and I'm here at nighttime, stuff like that. So I started off on the Morning News with routine reports--routine
assignments, like taking obituaries, going down to the railroad, to the Pennsylvania Railroad, to some damn thing, I forget, that we had to get a report every day—carloadings...I don't know why. And occasionally I'd go to police and then gradually I was shifted over to covering the federal court. Then from the Morning News I quit and went to the Every Evening. Now the Every Evening was a paper up at Fifth and Shipley...the Morning News and the Evening Journal was at Fourth and Shipley, and the Every Evening was at Fifth and Shipley. Shipley Street was kind of newspaper row. At Fifth and Shipley was the Every Evening, on Shipley Street between Fourth and Fifth was a weekly paper called the Labor Herald, and on Shipley Street between Third and Fourth on the west side was the Sunday Star. Those were the papers then in Wilmington. So I quit the Morning News and went to the Every Evening at Fifth and Shipley, and there I did regular police work...

Q Why did you quit?

A Well, you got restless and you got more money up there. It was an afternoon paper, see. I believe that every reporter ought to start out on a morning paper. The times are different, the camaraderie is different, the atmosphere is different. You don't have to rush, you don't have to meet the deadline as much as you do on an afternoon paper. It's a good place to start, get a well-rounded, see...we come in to work at 2:00 on the morning paper and you...and the deadline was 11:00 that night--10:00 that night, see. And also a lot of news happened in the afternoon and the nighttime that didn't happen in the morning. And so I went to the Every Evening, and there the City Editor was a man named A.O.H. Grier--his name was Albert Oliver something Grier. He was the City Editor and the Managing Editor was a man by the name of Fred Raybold. And then they had an old-timer there by the name of Merris Taylor. Now he had been an old-time political reporter and he used to sit there in the evening and he would write an occasional political story. But in his time--his time was around the 1890's up to about 1914--he was the political reporter in the state. Also on the Every Evening when I was there was a man by the name of Harris Samonisky, who is now dead, and there was a man by the name of Frank Grant, who is retired as of now, and then there was a man by the name of Smith...he is retired. They're all retired now--either retired or dead. The Every Evening had been established in 1871, September, and it was the second daily newspaper in Wilmington. The first daily newspaper was started in the 1860's, I think it was 1864, it was called the Daily Commercial, and that was at Fifth and Market. And then came the Every Evening which was established in 1871 at Fifth and Shipley. And then in a couple of years after the Every Evening started it absorbed the Daily Commercial, and for a while it said the Every Evening and Daily Commercial and then it cut out the Daily Commercial. The Every Evening was a Democratic paper; the Morning News and the Evening Journal were blatant Republican papers. But the Every Evening
was a story paper. Just about three or four years before I came on, that would be about 1926-27, they were still using ads on the front page...little ads on the front page. But it was a very stable paper and it paid some attention to the arts...it had art critics and it had book reviews and it was a more cultured paper than the Evening Journal. Its competitor was the Evening Journal. The Evening Journal was a real wild paper. The makeup didn't matter, as long as they slopped all the local news on the front page....And gradually the Evening Journal, which was started in 1880, had...was outdoing the Every Evening in circulation. And so while the Every Evening became sort of the paper of record, the more respectable paper, the Evening Journal got more of the circulation than the other papers. So I say I spent...I was there on the Every Evening covering the Prohibition Office and covering the federal courts and any other stories that came up. The Every Evening was also the pioneer in photography. They had one of these old Graflexes long before the Evening Journal had a camera. It was always there; you had to go to Mr. Grier's office and get the camera, and you had to be sure that you had film in it, because sometimes we went out on pictures and shot the camera all the time and forgot to put film in it, see.

Q Was this a 4x5 Graflex?

A Graflex, yeah, 4x5...no, 3x5. Yeah, it was roll, roll film...it wasn't plates...except you had to take the black thing out every time you shot, you see, and you put it back again. But you looked into it and you focused it...the bellows, you see.

Q Um hmm. You were taking the pictures? They didn't have a photographer?

A No, no photographer. We took the pictures. The man who always took all the pictures, the regular pictures, was a photographer in town in those days by the name of A. N. Sanborn. Now Sanborn had his studio at Fourth and Market on the east side of Market right above Fourth, and if you wanted a picture of a document being signed, or if you wanted a picture of a house, some reliable picture, you would always call Sanborn and he went out and took the picture for you--he was a commercial photographer.

Q You as a reporter would pay him for the picture?

A No, the paper would. The paper would give him assignments. Let's say there's some kind of a function up in Rodney Square, and so they'd call Sanborn in the morning and say, "Get us a picture." And he would get it to them that day or the next day--he would take the picture. But somebody had sold the Every Evening on having your own camera just in case you couldn't get a hold of Sanborn, see. None of us were professional photographers...we just learned...we just aimed and shot and hoped to God that it came out. Sometimes it did, sometimes it didn't. Then you had to take the film to Sanborn's and he'd process it for you. No, it was a catch and catch can thing. But many times we took pictures without film in the camera. You
forgot all about...to put the film in. Or the guy who took the picture, they'd take the film out to have it processed and forgot to tell you that there was film in there, see, and you grabbed the camera and went out on a story and you thought there was film in it. But it was an old-fashioned camera that you looked down upon. But it was a very arty staff. They were more arty than the Evening Journal. The Evening Journal was sort of... they had no tradition, as we saw it, they had no background, they were just old rambunctious newspapermen...just to get the story. But we were a little more arty...I think we always thought we were like the people of the Boston Transcript, that we were "gentlemen of the press" and the others....There was great competition—that was the great thing about it. As I say, the Evening Journal came out at 12:00 and the Every Evening came out around 12:00 and on the Every Evening they'd always have an office boy down at the Evening Journal to grab ten or twelve copies of the Evening Journal and rush 'em up and everybody would grab to see whether we'd beat them or they'd beat us...and the same thing down at the Journal—they did the same thing. They had an office boy up at the Every Evening and they would buy ten or twelve copies of the Every Evening and rush 'em down to the Evening Journal and the City Editor and the Managing Editor would always look and see how they were playing the story and whether we got beaten or not. Now I was in high school at the time of the Armistice—that was 1918. Now the Every Evening was using the Associated Press and the Evening Journal was using United Press. If I remember correctly, the United Press was the one that gave out the false armistice and I understand they had a terrible time. The City Editor then of the Evening Journal was a fellow by the name of Arthur Davies, and Arthur Davies was a controlled drunk. He was on the wagon, but he was basically an alcoholic, but he was a controlled alcoholic. And on that false armistice day, which might have been November the 10th or the 9th—I forget now, he was so excited and so worried about whether they had the right news or not, somebody had to stay with him all night to see that he didn't get crocked. Also in those days the newspapers had big billboards outside their offices. And on exciting days like that they would paste bulletins on those billboards. And those billboards were also used to put the scores for the World Series and election returns. In those days...let's say now in the 20's and the 30's, before radio, on election night you always went to your newspaper office...newspaper corner, either to the Every Evening or to the Journal. If you were a Republican you went to the News Journal corner, if you were a Democrat you went to the Every Evening corner. And then they would paint or draw in great big letters the returns and paste them on the bulletin boards outside. Now when I was a kid, the Morning News was then at 511 Market Street, when I was a kid I remember at one of the elections, standing out on Market Street—Market Street was closed off because of the crowd on election night, and they had sort of a...like magic lantern on a sheet...that was quite an advance...they'd write the returns on a glass, see, and put it in a stereopticon and then flash it on a screen outside...it's one of my vague memories of that.
How big was the screen?
A great big sheet strung across the...from one side of Market Street to the other side. See 511 Market was almost right across the street from the old Town Hall, and they just stretched it right across—they stopped all traffic. And they would shoot the returns...that was the only way you knew the returns. And that's the only way you knew about the baseball games, the World Series, as they developed. Of course later when radio came in, all that went down the drain. Well, let's see now, I was with the Every Evening...then the Every Evening left Fifth and Shipley Streets in 1928 and came up to the building, a new building they built on Girard Street and Orange—that's the present site of the News Journal. They moved up here and I moved with them.

That was in 1928?
'A28, yeah. Then in 1930...huh?

Now the owner of the paper in the '20's, during this early period, was a corporation.

It was a corporation, the Every Evening Corporation...

It wasn't dominated by any one individual, any one...

Well, there was also a financial interest behind it, but the man who was the president of the Every Evening in those days was William F. Metten. And I understand that behind him was some of the Bayard money and maybe some other money. But presumably the Evening Journal and the Morning News was DuPont Company, DuPont family dominated. But they were ostensibly...they kept their politics separate. One was Democrat, the other was Republican. The Every Evening was Democrat and the News Journal was Republican.

Now were you given a conscious directive...

No, I was too far down the...I was too far, I just covered news. I didn't make any...write any policy; I didn't write any propaganda stories...

Well, for example if you were covering a Prohibition story...

Yeah. No, you'd just cover the story...no.

You wouldn't take any point of view...

No. No. If you went to cover a political meeting, of course you emphasized the party. The Every Evening emphasized the Democrats more than the Republicans, and the same way down the street, reversed. But there was no directive, anything like that...

Everyone just knew that this was the policy...
You knew it from the editorial page and you knew it from the way they played up stories, you see. But I was too far down the line to even be involved in that sort of thing.

Do you remember what the circulation of the paper was at that time? At this time did the Every Evening have a bigger circulation than the Journal?

No, no the Evening Journal was the top circulation. You see they used all kind of slop stuff that we wouldn't dare use. For example, if little Mary Jones had a birthday, she was three years old, we'd carry her picture... the Evening Journal would carry her picture, and of course that meant that her whole family bought the paper, see. We used to laugh at 'em..."Mary is three," or "Joe is four." So they padded all that. And then of course a man by the name of Clarence J. Pyle was the business manager of the News Journal and he catered to all the advertising people. He would go to their birthdays and if they were Jews he went to their Bar Mitzvahs and their weddings and their circumcisions, and their advertising went way up and the Every Evening went down. And then the Evening Journal, they had no particular... weren't too careful about makeup of the paper. They just slopped everything up. They probably had maybe ten local stories on page one and then jump 'em, which is supposed to be bad style. The Every Evening was staid, it was conservative. But the Evening Journal was just wild... but it built circulation. The Morning News continued on a staid manner, too. But the Evening Journal zoomed. I would say maybe the circulation of the Morning News was maybe about 10,000, and I don't know what the Every Evening was, I don't know what the Journal was.

Now wasn't this a time when morning papers sort of were in decline... during the twenties and thirties?

Well, they more or less... I guess so... well, it was a case of circulation, it was a case of getting the news out. The morning paper was more of a politician's paper, a businessman's paper. The editorials in the Morning News were a lot more credible. The editor of the Morning News who wrote the editorials when I was there was a fellow by the name of Al Cummins. And the editor of the Evening Journal in the twenties and the thirties was a man by the name of... Yeah, the editor of the Morning News, the editorial writer of the Morning News was Albert Cummins; the managing editor was Mr. Gray, Charles Gray; the city editor was a man by the name of John Maue, and oddly enough the assistant city editor when I was there in the summer of 1923 was Charles C. Wertenbaker, who later became a big-time writer for Fortune, Time, and Life magazine, and went over to France in World War II. He covered the Spanish war—the Loyalists... Franco... and he wrote a number of books about Delaware. And he finally committed suicide in
France when he had cancer.

Q  He was a Delaware native?

A  Delaware native...his father was a doctor in Wilmington; Dr. Wertenbaker was a well-known obstetrician. And Charles Wertenbaker had come up from the University of Virginia and he was assistant city editor and he was city editor, of course, when Maue was off. And Charles Gray was the managing editor, and we had one girl, one woman reporter, and that was the society news, and then there was Albert Cummins, who wrote the editorials, and the wire news we got of course on the ticker. You didn't have the teletypes we have now. As I remember one of the earliest sounds in the newspaper was this morse code ticker and it ticked on a Prince Albert tin...an empty tin of Prince Albert tobacco...he would listen to it in code and then he did all the typing, one guy...he would take all the wire news. And then there was a fellow that would come down from Philadelphia from the Associated Press with flimsies, or what they called the "pony news." He would bring it out just to verify what had been sent out during the night. Now over on the Evening Journal the editorial writer was George Carter of Smyrna, Delaware, and the managing editor was Clement B. Hallam, and Arthur C. Davies was the city editor. And then we had the liberal reporting. Now we had one man on the Evening Journal who was a noted...really one of the prominent reporters. He was the dean of reporters, and his name was Thomas Hill. Hill was an old-time reporter that had a lot of experience, and he was a guy that I saw--but you don't see anymore--he would go to a court case and he could write the story in long-hand as he heard the testimony. He would write it "lead to come," in other words he would hold the lead back. And he'd just write...if somebody was testifying, he would write the digest of the testimony, so-an-so said, he would write it as he listened. And then there would be a copy boy standing by his side and grabbing the copy and rushing it down to the paper. And then when the court had a recess he would then write the lead. I've seen him do it at Rotary Club and Kiwanis Club meetings...as the man spoke, he would write. I had a little bit of that experience, but not as extensive as his. And I was covering Federal Court, and this was because of competition, I would be covering Federal Court let's say for the Every Evening in competition with the Evening Journal. The Federal Court then was at Ninth and Orange, where the parking lot is now, and we'd be sitting there at the press table and I'd be writing the story in longhand as the man testified. And I'd have sort of little notes on the side to remember what he said, and then we'd have an office boy there from the Every Evening grabbing my copy, taking it down, and it would be all edited out and sent up to the composing room marked "lead to come." And then when they had a recess--they were out at 11:00--I would then write the lead, and that would be the story for the first edition. And then when they went to lunch, I'd go back to the office and then re-write the story and that would
be the story for the rest of the day. Then I'd go back to court and pick up whatever happened 'til about 4:00 or 5:00—see in those days you weren't paid overtime. And then I'd stay there 'til 4:00 or 5:00 and then come in the next morning and write what I heard yesterday afternoon—it would be "Lead to come," and then I'd go back to court and then freshen it up with what I was hearing, see. This was because of the competition and we always...and then the papers, the respective city editors, wanted to know...always wanted to see, you know, what their reporters did compared with other reporters. Of course we worked six days a week and a seventh if you had to, round the clock if you had to, but there was no overtime, just that straight salary. I think my beginning salary on the Morning News as a reporter in 1923 was $18.50.

Q: A week?

A: A week. But we also had expense accounts, and we could put in an expense account. And I was chiseling...loading, like everybody else was doing...I'd get, maybe I'd get an extra dollar out of a telephone...in those days a telephone call was a nickel, see. And I would say, well I had to use a telephone and so I spent a dollar a week for telephones. And then I put in an expense account for the trolley car--sometimes I'd walk, you know, but I'd put in an expense account for the trolley car, which I was entitled to. And after a while they stopped that nonsense, and if you wanted to go from the office to someplace where you had to use a trolley car, then you asked the city editor to give you a car check. Some of my early assignments was camp meetings...revivals...or church services—you always went to church...covered churches Sunday night, particularly for the Morning News. And I always said I put in 50¢ in the collection plate...and they decided to stop that nonsense, too. This was all tricks of eeking out more money. You also were permitted in those days to be a correspondent for Philadelphia papers, which is now stopped. I mean, that was really bad, because what you would do, let's say you're on an afternoon paper, the Every Evening or the Evening Journal, and you'd get a police story. You'd call up the Bulletin, Philadelphia Bulletin, or you'd call up the Philadelphia Inquirer and give them the story before you even wrote the story for your own paper. We were known as stringers...the word stringer got because they measured—you got so much per inch, you see...you got $2.00 a column inch or something like that...and somebody back in the home office would measure that. We had stringers...I mean, all the papers had stringers, all over, you got paid by how much they used. So we'd eek out...and that was encouraged...the office encouraged you to do that, because that meant that they didn't have to give you any increase in salary. So it was $18.50 let's say from the Morning News, so you'd chisel maybe $3.00 or $4.00 more out of the expense account, plus maybe $4.00 or $5.00 more from stringing for a paper, and then on Sundays you could go and work...on Saturdays you could work if you wanted to for the Sunday Star and you'd get $5.00 the night there. So you were making some money, and of course you had status, you know, you were a reporter. You know, you
you would go places... And also if you knew how to work it you could eek out all kinds of luncheons and dinners. So it was a kind of Bohemian life.

Q Where did you live at this time?

A Well, on the Every Evening, in the beginning I lived at home, and then finally I discovered the village called Arden, which is near Wilmington... it was a single-tax colony... and this struck me as being the vida Boheme, it was Bohemian life, and so I lived in Arden, moved out to Arden, and would come in, either hitchhike in—-it was before I had an automobile—hitch-hike into Wilmington, or come in by bus or trolley car. Or sometimes—Arden is only seven miles away—sometimes I'd even get the train, the B&O train. That was a very funny thing, you'd go down to the B&O station in Wilmington, out on Delaware Avenue, and you'd get on the afternoon train and come home. That was when I was working on the afternoon paper. Now with the Every Evening, later from the Every Evening I moved on over to the Evening Journal, in the middle of the 1930's. And then came the merger of the Every Evening and the Journal—-that was in 1933. And then that became known as the Journal Every Evening, kind of a cumbersome name, and then the Evening Journal moved on up to where the Every Evening was here at 8th and Orange.

Q So from 1933 on you had one evening paper.

A One evening paper called the Journal Every Evening and the Morning News moved up here and then finally they got rid of the property at 4th and Shipley and now they're building the Delaware Community Technical College down there. Well, practically all the guys I knew are all retired now or dead. There's nobody here... the only guy who's living who—of my time, when I began, is this fellow Clark Samuel. He finally did come back for a while to the Evening Journal, then he quit and he went and got into the publicity outfit, then he went up to a place called Foxboro, Massachusetts, where he became editor of a paper, and then he retired. And now he's back on the Eastern Shore in Elkton and the Cecil County paper down there. So he's the only guy who is actually working actively in newspaper business, but he's not in Delaware now, he's in Maryland.

Q He's living now in Maryland?

A In Elkton, yeah.

Q This is Clark Samuels?

A Clark Samuel—no "s"... he was always mad if you called him Samuels because he thought that was a Jewish name, instead of Samuel, see. So he's active there, see.

Q Staying in the 1920's for a minute, can you remember your most
outstanding stories or things that really stick in your mind.

A Well, in the 1920's there were weekly whippings we went to see, cover, at the old County Workhouse. Also hangings...I've seen three hangings...two of them were in the 1920's. One was in Georgetown; the other was in Dover. We went to Georgetown by train in those days. So I saw two hangings in the 1920's and innumerable whippings. In Delaware they hanged them on Fridays and whipped them on Saturdays. So it was quite common to get on the trolley car on Saturday morning and go out to the workhouse, out here at Prices Corner, and you'd see the whippings and sometimes we played it up, sometimes we didn't. Sometimes it became quite perfunctory.

Q Did that strike you at the time as being very brutal, or you just...

A No, I just took it in my stride. I noticed that quite often Philadelphia papers would come and New York papers would come and they made a big thing out of it. But the hangings struck me as being unusual because the first hanging I ever saw was somewhere in 1928, I believe, down in Georgetown. And we went down there the night before to be there for the hanging. We stayed at a hotel, and I remember we were getting drunk because we didn't know how we were going to take it the next day. But somehow or another we got sobered up and I remember they let us go in and see the poor guy who was gonna be hanged. And just for a gag—we knew he was being groomed for death by a Methodist minister...he was a black man—and we asked if he'd do us a favor, and we said, "Look, when you go up the gallows, will you take this rosary with you." And so he took the rosary with him and I noticed that just before they put the black bag over his head he took out this rosary which he dangled, which irritated the hell out of this Methodist minister. See those days were the days of the Klan, see, and there was a great anti-Catholic feeling. And then the fellow hanged and they let us take pictures of him. I didn't take pictures—pictures were taken of him dangling. And I remember...I still see a picture on television every once in a while when they talk about capital punishment in Delaware...there's a picture on there...or looking, as a note...the poor fellow's hanging with the black noose over his head and hands tied behind his back. And the sheriff cut up the rope and gave pieces of it as souvenirs to the jury and to the newspaper people. But he wouldn't give us the noose—he said he was going to keep the noose for his son, who was a boy scout. See it was a peculiar kind of a hangman's noose...there were 13 rings, 13 steps going up and all that sort of thing. I remember trying to write a lead that time, something about somebody...Howard Bucklen, I think that was his first name, was jerked to Jesus...but they didn't think that was a good lead. What he did, he had raped an elderly woman. I think that at about that time I started to get quite upset by all the kind of prison stuff
which I've been bitten with ever since. So I was covering these hangings and covering these whippings and then I was covering revival meetings, a great deal about churches. Churches were great things in those days because it was during Prohibition and the ministers were always brimstone and fire sermons, you know. "You're all going to go to hell if you go drinking this bootleg liquor...and you're gonna gamble and play cards and dance..." right here in Wilmington. Almost every Monday morning if you worked for the Morning News or in the afternoon papers...covering a sermon by some fiery minister in town.

Q Can you remember any of the more fiery ministers?

A Yeah, the most fiery was a fellow named Carlyle Hubbard and he was the minister of St. Paul's Methodist Church which in those days was at 10th and Jackson Streets. And he was always real fiery and he always made good copy...always made good copy. The last fiery minister we had was many years later...this was now in the forties...a fellow by the name of Piguieron, George H. Piguieron. And he was the minister of Union Methodist Church at 5th and West Streets...5th and Washington, sorry...and this was now late in the forties and early fifties. And he was a fiery one, cause he went after gambling and stuff like that. He was the last of the fiery ministers. I don't remember any since then. We've had some that talk about mental health and all that, but this was real old-fashioned brimstone and fire. But Carlyle Hubbard...

Q Was he black or white?

A Oh, he was white. We never went to...see, in those days, up to the thirties, "John Jones, colored," we wrote, "John Jones, colored, was arrested for drunkenness." But "John Jones, white," we never said that, see. We distinguished by race. And then we stopped that nonsense.

Q When did you stop that?

A I believe we stopped it in the late thirties. I think we got into a libel suit...we called somebody colored when he or she wasn't colored. So we stopped that nonsense. So we paid very little attention...black news was just nothing, you know. If a black man killed another black man, that wasn't news, but if a black man killed a white man, hell, you were on the verge of a lynching. We only had one lynching in Delaware and that was in 1903...of course that was before my time. But I was at an almost lynching party. This was around 1930. But there was a Negro woman had killed a matron, a white police matron, up here in the Wilmington police station, and they took her out to the workhouse, and we heard rumors about a crowd talking about lynching. And I was sent out there and I went out there by trolley car, and there was this big crowd milling around at Prices Corner, which is right near the prison. The police,
however, had already gone out and stood on the gates and the doors of the steps of the workhouse with machine guns, and there just wasn't any lynching. But I got caught right in the middle of that. I found myself...peculiar thing, I found myself talking like they were talking, you know...lynch and so forth, "Lynch this nigger," and so forth...then I got the hell out of the crowd. It's a strange feeling you have when you get in the middle of a crowd and you begin to lose your identity. And then of course we had lots of big stories of Prohibition. That was some of the big stories...smuggling of liquor coming in by boat down in Blackbird Creek and down near Smyrna...there were a lot of little creeks there, you see, and the liquor was coming in from Nova Scotia and was being ferried in during the night. This was good liquor, see, the Canadian stuff. And so Prohibition was a big story then, and Prohibition scandals...the police...there was a scandal involving the state police that they got a lot of liquor and they stored it away in the Penny Hill police station and all of a sudden one day the damn thing disappeared. And also Klans were the big stories, and I covered Klan meetings. I never knew why they sent me, since I'm Jewish, why they sent me to Klan meetings, but by that time the Klans were mostly anti-Catholic, anti-Negro. And I'd go to these Klan meetings, and I'd always be with two Klansmen on each side so I wouldn't hear too much of the folderol. The most exciting Klan meeting I went to was in 1923 at New Castle and everything was fine and dandy, they had three crosses out there in a big field right outside New Castle and they inducted a class in the Klan--they had all their regalia on--and then the moment they lit those three crosses--you see the crosses would be wrapped in burlap, oil-soaked burlap--and the moment they would light those crosses, when that happened, there must have been a whole batch of Irish Catholics--there are many Irish Catholics in the New Castle area--they must have been in the fringe, the woods, and they came across that field like a bat out of hell attacking the Klansmen. It was a first-class riot. And then there was shooting...nobody was hurt, but they were shooting, and I looked around for refuge--this was on somebody's farm--I looked around for refuge and I climbed over to what I later discovered was a pigpen and there were the god damn pigs snorting and I was down there in the mud, but I could see everything. And then I crawled out and walked into New Castle and I remember very well going into the funeral home of a fellow named Gebhart using a telephone. And I telephoned my story there. That was the biggest Klan meeting...they had a Klan parade in Wilmington and they had Klans that were very active in Elsmere and I used to go out there to those meetings. And then they had...I attended a Klan rally at a place called the Brandywine Summit Camp Meeting and that's right across the line in Pennsylvania, near a place called Johnson's Corner right off Route 202. But most of the people who went to that annual Methodist summer camp, religious camp, were from Wilmington. So I went there--I had no car in those days so I had to hitchhike. And sometimes I'd spend the night there and hitchhike in the next morning.
But after the service they had a big Klan meeting there. And I remember coming in...after it was all over, I remember coming in with the guy who was driving me back to Wilmington, and he told me that he was a member of the Klan and he had his costume under the seat of his car. But I had no trouble with the Klan--maybe I didn't look Jewish.

Q Then they let reporters into the meetings and they didn't mind having news printed in the paper...

A Well, they wanted news. But what they wouldn't let you hear was the mumbo jumbo of the regalia. You could stand off to the side and you were usually guarded by Klansmen. You could see the ceremony and you could see the...sometimes they'd have three crosses and then they had a big circle with automobiles surrounding it with their lights on the ceremony. You could see the ceremony but they wouldn't let you hear the mumbo jumbo ritual. Oh, they wanted all the publicity, but you weren't supposed to know who they were. I didn't know who they were anyway...I mean, no names. The recent Klan activities, you can identify the people...they let you up closer to take pictures of them with their faces. But all we could take were pictures of the shadowy figures with their hoods on.

Q Did the Klan sort of decline in the late twenties?

A Yeah, the Klan was exposed by the New York World in the late twenties and that was the end of the Klan. And then it came revived maybe sometime in the late fifties...and there's maybe some roots of it right now--you hear about it every once in a while. But it never was it big as it was. Of course it was particularly big, I think, when Al Smith was running for President--that would be what, 1928. But I went to Klan meetings and the usual run of police murders. And then I became interested in covering theater...when I was on the Every Evening I would cover theater and then when I came back to the Journal they also wanted to be arty so they would start covering theater too. And then I continued with the Journal Every Evening...

Q Did you cover any political news?

A Yeah. Political news came...

Q Who were some of the politicians at that time that you came into contact with?

A Well, the first big politician I came in contact with was Coleman DuPont. And he was a big-time politician, the bossman of the Republican Party. He was the man who built the highway system in Delaware. He was the man who created the Delaware highway...the State Highway Department, which became one of the biggest political agencies in the state. And I remember--I forget the year now, it was either 1923 or 25, he had some kind of a defeat and I was sent out to his house at 9th and Broom to get a statement from him. But it must have been a gag, because he
picked me up by the back of my neck and literally kicked me out of his house...down the front steps. Then the big politicians in those days were Coleman DuPont and then there were Robert G. Houston who was a Congressman from Georgetown--that's his daughter who runs that paper, Mary Houston Robinson...and then there was Thomas F. Bayard, Jr., who belonged to the famous Bayard family...Oh, there had been so many Senators in that family. And then there was...

Q You mentioned the Bayard family having a lot of money. What business were they in?

A Well, usually law. But you see the Bayard family for a while...at a time...intermarried with the DuPont family. But they always seemed to have a lot of money...a lot of property...and basically law. Most of these politicians were either lawyers or head of corporations...like the DuPons...On the one hand, and the Bayards were the lawyers. Then there was a very noted Democratic leader named Josiah Marvel and he was a lawyer, and also John Biggs was a lawyer--John Biggs, Jr. He was head of the Democratic Party that...he was chairman of the Democratic Party when Roosevelt first ran in 1932 and he delivered Delaware to the Democratic fold, which was a big thing for him in those days. Of course in those days, in the thirties, the Republican Party had more money than the Democrats and they controlled the state.

Q In the twenties, Delaware you would say was Republican.

A No, in the twenties it would be Republican...it would seesaw, but generally Republican. The Democratic Party...see, the Democratic Party was still...in the twenties was still known as the white man's party, and the Republican Party was enticing blacks.

Q The Republican Party was?

A Oh, yes, the Republican Party was the Abe Lincoln Party. But the blacks deserted the Republican Party when Roosevelt ran...they've never gone back. Oh, there are some blacks in the Republican Party, but you tap any black now and he's usually a Democrat, see. But I know very definitely, because I remember looking at the by-laws of the Democratic Party in the 1920's and they said, "This is a white man's party." It was, too, a white man's party. The Bayards were anti-Negro up until the current Bayard, Alexis I. DuPont Bayard, who's the latest of the Bayards, the prominent Bayard, he's very...extremely liberal and color blind. But his ancestors were definitely anti-Negro...southern-minded all the way along the line. Now we had a very prominent--I didn't know him--Thomas F. Bayard, Sr. He was a Secretary of State under Cleveland. But I knew his son, Thomas F. Bayard, Jr. A very dignified man...always wore a Windsor tie and looked very handsome. And Josiah Marvel was a prominent Democrat. And then you had the rank and file skulduggery...everybody was crooks in those days and everybody was buying...
Q Everybody still is crooks...

A Well, they're a little more... see, in those days they had paper ballots. And in those days, up until the machine, had the voting machine, which would be in the fifties, you went in and voted. And what happened was you went to the political boss and he gave you a ballot. Of course the ballot was always printed. And he had the ballot marked. And you deposited your ballot in the ballot box. And before you left the voting place you picked up a blank ballot and delivered that to the payoff man and he paid you, see. That seemed to change later on with the machine. Of course they always had to change their techniques. It's not as crooked as it used to be--it's a little more sophisticated. Then there's also Frank DuPont, who was the son of Coleman DuPont. He was the big Republican politician. And then they had other numerous politicians on both sides of the fence. Statewide--of course it was Republican, but nationally sometimes it changed here and there. For years one of the prominent Senators was James M. Tunnell, Jr., Democrat, from Georgetown.

Q He was a Senator in the twenties?

A In the thirties.

Q What about any mayors of Wilmington that stand out in your mind.

A Well, the greatest mayor we had that most people have forgotten is a fellow by the name of Leroy Harvey and he was married to a DuPont. Now Leroy Harvey was the mayor of Wilmington in 1922-23 and he was an extremely polished man. He was a linguist. When visiting Italian dignitaries came here he could speak to them fluently in Italian; when French people came he could speak to them in French. And he sponsored... this fellow Leroy Harvey was the one who sponsored the Wilmington Music Commission, which developed the Wilmington Music School which is now celebrating its 50th anniversary. But he was a gentleman mayor. Graft was beyond him because he had so damn much money. But the other mayors were... oh, we had a fellow named Wilson--I forget his first name... they were just... see, they just ran every two years. And in those days the Republicans usually elected mayors because the elections were held on Saturdays. And not too many people would come out--in June, on Saturdays--and not too many people came out. The usual rule was if you had a big turnout it was a great thing for the Democrats; if you had a slim turnout it was a great thing for the Republicans. And it was every two years... now we have every four years. And now we have the mayors elected the same time we elect the Presidents and the other things. Then we had Attorney Generals and they were usual Republican. But it seesawed. When Roosevelt came in, the Republicans took a real bad licking. But I didn't get involved in writing politics... I was never really specializing in politics, I just covered it whenever the opportunities arose, particularly in the forties, late
thirties and the forties on the ... and fifties on the Evening Journal. Then at one time I became city editor of the Evening Journal. This same Harold Samonisky quit--he was editor of the Journal Every Evening. and he went to Florida--and I was made city editor in '47... '46-'47... then I quit, went to New York for about three or four months and then came back to Wilmington.

Q Why did you quit?

A I was having a fight with the managing editor whose name was Elmer Cunningham, who's now dead. And we were quarreling all month... and it's my belief that he thought I wanted his job. Well, I never wanted to be managing editor--I always wanted to be a city editor, not a managing editor. So we had these personality conflicts. So I just up and quit--no job. Went to New York and worked for a while on the World Telegram, then came back and went into radio in Wilmington, and then came back on the Morning News writing a column... and then began writing for the other papers... when we merged the staff. See, up until two or three years ago... up until about four years ago, we had two different staffs, the Morning News staff and the Evening Journal, see... now we have one staff.

END OF INTERVIEW