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INTERVIEW WITH JAMES CLARK SAMUELS
Elkton, Maryland
August 8, 1974

Interviewed by: Rebecca Button

JCS: Mr. Samuels
RB: Rebecca Button

RB: This is an interview with James Clark Samuels on August 8, 1974, in the Oral History Project Series on Early Newspapering in Wilmington. Mr. Samuels is now editor of the Cecil Democrat in Elkton.

Mr. Samuels, how long have you been editor here?

JCS: Oh, a little less than a year.

RB: And before that?

JCS: Well, I retired five years ago down here at a place we've had for over forty years down on the bay. And I was editor for 21 years of the Foxboro Reporter weekly newspaper in Foxboro, Massachusetts. And we came here, and I was supposed to come down and retire and take it easy. I was retired one week, and I went to work over in Record and I was editor over there. Then the Record was sold, and I have a lot of friends up here on the Cecil and the Democrat so I came up here.

RB: Well your career, beginning and continuing as a newspaperman who couldn't bear to be retired, began when?

JCS: It began about 1922 when I was sort of beginning to smell this printers' ink. And I used to do assignments for the old Sunday Star in Wilmington. And in 1923 when I was 18 years old, I went to work as a cub reporter on the Morning News.

RB: Was that right out of high school?
JCS: Yes, well I went to Tower Hill School; and I was very anxious to go on a paper. And so I guess I talked it over with my father—he's a doctor in Wilmington—and he said, "Well, if you want to do it, why don't you go ahead." So he got me an interview with Charlie Gray, who was the managing editor. And I went to work there at 18. Later on, I went to... I had a couple years at William & Mary. But I worked on the Morning News... I broke in when I was 18. And, at that time, Bill Frank was the office boy.

RB: Can you tell us some of the... Try to put yourself back there with Mr. Gray and Bill in 1923 and tell what it was like, what you did, and what the paper was like then, and the city in those days.

JCS: Well, I would say that the city was hardly a facsimile of what it is now by any means. It was actually a small morning paper, and it was in the old building at Fourth & Shipley Streets. The Evening Journal had one end of it, and we had a small sitting room there with a small office connected with it where we had the telegraph instruments which were used then. All the copy was typed out. All the AP copy. And there was another small office which was Charlie Gray's office out there.

RB: How was the copy received then? It was not on the teletype machine?

JCS: No, no. No, it came over in Morse code.

RB: So you had to have a staff taking that off all the time.

JCS: Yes. That was taken right off in Morse code.

RB: So a typist would have to know Morse code and then translate it so it was an additional operation at the newspaper office.

JCS: Right, yes, right there. We had a telegraph editor, Mr. Chapin (?), quite a character, very much of a New Englander. And he was an excellent wire editor.

RB: How did he operate?

JCS: Well, we had a typist that handled it and he could also send from there. And Mr. Chapin's desk sat right outside this little room that was used for that. And he would—every good wire editor then had shears about a foot and a half long. And he'd go through what we used to call flimsy, and he'd just cut off what he thought we needed. He knew exactly. The newspaper didn't change very much in pages or even in makeup and so he knew just about exactly how much wire copy was needed because he'd check with Mr. Gray and they'd get an idea what the news holes were on the paper from a dummy that's originally set up for the
JCS: (Cont'd)

advertising and allocations on the pages.

RB: Except for the new automatic electronic typesetting arrangements now that are replacing the Linotypes, that is still true, is it not? Isn't it true that the news space is still filled after the ad copy is dummied?

JCS: Oh, yes. Uh huh.

RB: And so that the copy editor still has the same job on the newspaper?

JCS: Yes. Yes. Yes, what we call filling the news holes. These are always called holes.

RB: And flimsy is what the copy editor throws away?

JCS: No, that's how it came. That's how it was typed. It was called flimsy. It was just on very thin paper.

RB: How large was your staff?

JCS: I think we had about five reporters, five or six reporters. We had the city editor, John Malley (?), who was a very famous Wilmington newspaperman.

RB: How was he famous. What did John Malley do?

JCS: John Malley was a man of the old school. He had... He came originally from Hazelton, Pennsylvania, and he worked I think on the old Philadelphia North American. He was a Philadelphia newspaperman, and he came down to Wilmington. And he was very, very strict, but probably the best teacher anybody could have. I think the first assignment I ever had there was covering a rummage sale. And I went out and toured this rummage sale, and I came back and I started to write it in longhand. And Malley said, "What the hell are you doing?" And I said, "I'm writing this article." And he said, "Well you'd better start with the typewriter right now." So I started the pick-and-hunt system. But the thing was, the way he taught you was in a rough manner, but it sunk in with a young guy. When I turned the story in, he looked at it and he said... All I had was "A rummage sale was held and so on..." and "Sponsored by so and so," and that was it. And he said, "Did you see anything unusual at this rummage sale?" He said, "What did they have to sell? Was there anything unusual?" And I said, "Yeah I remember there was a Civil War sword there." He said, "Well, you go back and find out about the Civil War sword." And then he would say,
"Always remember, there's a feature to every story if you can find it." And that was always his... He taught you the fundamentals, and he was a great guy on spelling. And I used to have a habit—I hope I'm not giving you a lot of trivia—but, when I was starting to learn to use the typewriter, I always wrote the word besides "bedsies." I'd turn the copy in, and Malley would get exasperated. He yelled at me one day, "Samuels!" And I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "What the hell is this 'bedsies' you're always writing about?" I didn't know what he was talking about, and he explained it to me. He was very hot on punctuation and that type of thing because he had been a copy reader and a very good one; and he read a lot of the copy himself. He sat next to the only windows in the place on Shipley Street. We had a succession of copy readers that sat there. One of them, just one, sat across from his desk. And Malley used to smoke Furad (27) cigarettes, and in the summer the windows would all be open and he used to just throw the cigarette out the window. He never bothered about where it went. One day, did you know about this one? One day his cigarette landed on the top of Chief Black's private automobile and it went through the top and down to the seat and started to smolder and they had a small fire down in there. And I don't remember whether he ever knew how it happened. But it was quite a story around the newsroom there. And, of course, it was old Al Cummings (?), Alfred Cummings, who was the editor of the paper, a very fine old gentleman. He was a little on another plane, and we didn't have too much to do with him, the reporters. But Mr. Cummings was a great man in a lot of ways. I mean he had, he was a kind, very kind man. And he used to chew licorice root all the time. And he had an associate, Mr. John Hill. And he was—I'm sure that was his name, I'm sure it was John Hill, not a later John Hill who was a reporter. But Mr. Hill was a very well-traveled man. He would take a sabbatical about every couple years or less. And he would take a trip somewhere abroad by steamship. And this was a nice arrangement. He was permitted... He was allowed to do that. I never knew what his financial arrangement was, but he was always going somewhere.

RE: When he came back, did he write extensive feature-type stories for the paper?

JCS: Not necessarily, no. I think any of the old-timers will tell you as far as we were concerned he wrote a column called "Finklets" like "Chiclets," "Finklets." And there were supposed to be little paragraphs of homegrown wit and philosophy. I never thought they were very good my-
JCS: (Cont'd)

self; but we, of course, in that day we were all young cynics on that paper. We all read the American Mercury and...

RB: What about New Republic Nations?

JCS: Yeah, we used to read those. But, as Bill Frank often says, "In those days you weren't anybody at all unless you had the American Mercury under your arm which was right. We were a pretty good bunch of reporters there. It was Prohibition days, of course, but that didn't make any difference, ha, ha.

RB: Did you go up to the hotel and watch the connection when men ordered their liquor?

JCS: Oh, well, we knew about it of course. They had... There was a gentleman who was called a Hotel Du Pont bootlegger, and he was always standing around up there. People gave their orders to him. We never had enough money to buy anything from him.

RB: When did they deliver those orders?

JCS: I don't know how they ever delivered them. I never saw anything in there. Whether it was sent to their homes or something like that...

RB: Was that the center for the action at the Hotel as far as you know?

JCS: What, for...

RB: For the transactions between the seller and the buyer for liquor.

JCS: Well, it was on a higher plane. But, of course, the town was full of speak-easies and that kind of thing. We always... We had one or two of them that always stayed open late.

RB: Did you go into the speak-easy procedures the way you did the rummage sale?

JCS: No, no.

RB: Did the paper try to find out about them or leave them alone?
JCS: Well, they let them alone pretty well unless there was a raid or something. If the thing was raided, it would be a news story.

RB: In other words, you weren't trying to do a good government or expose-type thing on the old Morning News?

JCS: No, no, we never thought about it like that. I mean we... It was just one, uh, part of the life of the city in those days.

RB: What about Chief Black, did you have any trouble with him at different times?

JCS: No, no. He was a very likable man. The type of thing, in my own experience, what I did was, we used to come down and report in at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. There was a big book there. It was an assignment book. And so we opened it. You'd open the assignment book. When I first started, I was on general assignment; but it was only a few months later that I got a regular beat. And what I used to do was we'd get our assignments and go uptown. I usually... I had a very dull beginning. I guess they gave me the assignment that nobody wanted. But I used to have to cover anything that was going on in town. I had to go to all the lodges. To cover the lodges, I covered the Hotel Du Pont and a couple of restaurants that had affairs there, Greek weddings and things like that. And... But later on... Well, one thing that we all had to do was--you're familiar with this probably--we had what was called late police (?) And whoever had late police, we usually worked from about, we'd go up about midnight and work until 2 o'clock in the morning maybe. Or less, depending on what was going on. But, I'll tell you, in those days things were a little more formalized than they are now. You'd go up... Of course, the thing... In those days we thought nothing of walking around the city at all hours of the night. We had no fears of being mugged or anything. I mean it was unheard of. Oh, there were a few little attacks like that once in a while. But it just never entered your head that you couldn't walk around Wilmington perfectly safe. But we used to... When you would go up to the police station they had another book. And that was a logbook, and you took anything off the log. And you hung around the police station. If something broke, a murder or something like that, you'd call the office and if the wanted to hold for it, you'd try to send them just takes or something. It was always... There weren't any what you would call rewrite men in those days. Usually you wrote the stuff--you got back to the office as fast as you could or you wrote it in hard copy, by pencil, and maybe
JCS: (Cont'd)

Bill Frank would be around or somebody would come up and get it from you while you were working on it.

RB: What were the... Can you recall maybe the most interesting thing that ever happened to you when you were on the 12-2 police beat?

JCS: Well, we were kind of all involved in a story during the Ku Klux Klan days. They had... The Ku Klux Klan staged a big rally in New Castle in an open field there. And the Irish got together in New Castle, and they had a real knockdown Brannigan in this field there. And, at that time, when that story occurred, Bill Frank--Charles Wurtenbaker (?) was sitting on the city desk then--he had been a copy reader for a time. While Charles Wurtenbaker was quite a well-known individual, he was the son of Dr. Wurtenbaker in Wilmington, who was a well-known surgeon. And they were transplanted FFV's from Virginia.

RB: You'd better explain what FFV is for people a hundred years from now.

JCS: Oh, ha, ha. First Families of Virginia. And Charles' work usually has an editor or a copy reader. I think he worked twice on the Morning News. They always seemed to need copy readers in those days. In those days newspapering was a journeyman's profession or occupation or craft, whatever you want to call it. People drifted from one city to another; they'd get bored with one place or they had to get out maybe. But Charles Wurtenbaker, he wrote several novels. He went to the University of Virginia, and he wrote a couple novels in that setting. Then he went on TIME MAGAZINE, and he was with TIME MAGAZINE for many years. He was the senior editor and then during the war, during World War II, he covered the invasion and stayed with that and he was at the liberation of Paris. Charles was quite well-known. Unfortunately, in later years he lived in France after the war with his wife and children and he got cancer. Well, he committed suicide; and his wife wrote a book practically about how it happened and so forth.

RB: Well, back then he was working with you on the police story.

JCS: Yeah, well, what we did was... This was the first time I handled a rewrite assignment as I remember it. And later on, when I worked for __________, I was a rewrite man. But, what he did was to send Bill Frank out there. He was the only one available. And Bill, I think Bill got out there on a trolley car to New Castle. And he got ahold of the
JCS: (Cont'd)

phone, and he started sending us coverage--eyewitness stories. And he was there when the thing was going on. And, in those days of course, the Ku Klux Klan's local enemies apparently were Catholics and Jews. Bill was Jewish, but it didn't bother him. He was pretty brave about it. He went around, and people were lying around, and he would ask them their names and get a story. Their own story of the thing. And so he phoned this in. And I took it in takes. When he could get a chance, he got ahold of a phone some place and kept it open or had somebody keep it open for him. And that's the first time since I'd come on the Morning News that it carried a banner across the page. And it said, it was something like "Ku Klux Klan Riots - Many Hurt," something like that. And I remember Charlie Wurtenbaker having trouble with the banner because what he wanted to get in there didn't fit. So they shaved some of the type down to get the thing in, ha, ha. I think one of the most dramatic things, though, that I worked on at the Morning News... I used to cover... I was a critic on play productions--we didn't bother with movie criticism at all. But we had a stock company in the Garrett (?), the old Garrett Theater there. And, of course, Wilmington then was as it is now, a tryout town for New York shows. And I had access to the Playhouse. I could walk in and out of there anytime. And they were rehearsing part of an elaborate musical called "A Song of the Flame." And it had a lot of very heavy scenery, a lot of changes of scenery. I covered the show the opening night, and I liked the show so much I got a couple tickets for my father and mother. They went to the show, and I kind of wandered in there in the second act, I think; all this scenery that was pulled up there, the stage house broke down. All the bridgework, the thing just buckled. And this stuff came down; and, at the time, there were a lot of people on the stage, of course, the principals, and they were getting hit in the head with these big sandbags that were holding up the scenery. It was a mess.

RB: Was that at the Garrett or the Playhouse?

JCS: No, this was the Playhouse. And my father at the time had his offices in the Du Pont Building so he was very friendly with the manager of the theater. They were quite good friends so he went himself to see what was going on. He said he was going to see what he could do. So we went around. And what they did was to, they brought quite a few patients up there--they had them on stretchers out in the hallway I remember. And when the thing... As soon as I could get to a phone, I gave the city desk a flash on the thing. And I said I'd see what I could get on it and to send somebody else up because it was a two-man job easy.
JCS: (Cont'd)

So that was a very exciting episode there.

RB: Were the leading actor and actress put out of commission? Did the show continue on the road or not?

JCS: Yes, it went; but it didn't last long in New York. It was a beautiful production, and the music was particularly good. I always enjoyed the music. But, for some reason or other, the thing didn't go well.

RB: But they weren't incapacitated from going on?

JCS: No, no. They had a chorus there, a special chorus there of all White Russians, something like the... I forget the name of that group. But, anyhow, they were White Russians that escaped from Russia when the revolution came along. Cossacks--like the Cossacks Choir. That's about what it was, I think, the beginning of it.

RB: What was your competition on the old Morning News, any other paper in Wilmington?

JCS: Well, we didn't have any. We didn't have any competition at all because...

RB: Well, didn't you compete with the Every Evening and the Journal (?) (double voices - very difficult to distinguish what was said) for stories?

JCS: Oh, yeah, for stories, yes. But, of course, in our time there was no morning opposition. And at that time the Philadelphia papers weren't too interested in Wilmington either.

RB: What about the major political events during your time? Did you become a political reporter?

JCS: No, no, I didn't... I covered the State House for a little while. We had a political reporter named Arthur Andrews who was a very nice gentleman, very pleasant man. And he lived in Arden. And he was a pretty... He knew what was going on.

RB: Is that how Bill Frank happened to move to Arden? Did Arthur Andrews introduce him to Arden?

JCS: Well, could have been, yes. That could have been, really. I never knew, but that could have happened.
RB: When did Bill move from copy boy to reporter, then, sort of at that time?

JCS: Well, I'll tell you. At that time, boys my age were going to sea for the summer. And Charlie Wurtenbaker had worked on a cow boat and gone to Europe and back. And I'd always liked the water and so a friend of mine, Johnson Morgan, one year we got jobs on an oil tanker; and I got a leave of absence from the Morning News. I made two trips down to Texas on this oil tanker out of Marcus Hook. And, of course, when I went on this leave of absence, Bill got his chance as a cub reporter. He always tells everybody that if I hadn't gone to sea he might still be an office boy just as a laugh.

RB: But you came right back.

JCS: Yeah, I came back. And, as I remember it, I think I went to work on the Every Evening because I was making $18 a week as a reporter on the Morning News. And I went to work on the Every Evening, and it was quite a jump of $22.50 a week.

RB: Was Mr. Kettin (?) the editor?

JCS: Yes.

RB: William Kettin (?)

JCS: Well, he was the owner of the paper at the time, publisher.

RB: And editor?

JCS: No, he wasn't the editor.

RB: Who was the editor?

JCS: Uh, William Robertson, who was a Virginian, I think. And later on he was editor of the Easton Express in Pennsylvania.

RB: Can you tell now the difference... Can you talk about the difference now between the morning paper coverage and the evening paper?

JCS: Yes. Well, the evening paper, one of the things... One of my main assignments in the morning was covering City Court or Municipal Court. And I covered that. And the Evening Journal at that time had a reporter. And we covered... You'd cover court there, and it was usually over by noontime or so and you'd get back and knock out your stuff for the deadline.
RB: What was your first deadline, how many editions?

JCS: Well, as I remember, there was a state edition and a city edition. I could be wrong; maybe they only had one, I can't remember. But I know that our deadline was around 1 o'clock I think.

RB: What was the circulation, around what?

JCS: Oh, it couldn't have been more than 20,000, I don't think, if it was that. I think the Morning News was 13,000 as I remember when I worked on it. And I don't think with two afternoon papers in the town, I would say... I don't know what it was; but, if it was 20,000, it was good.

RB: I guess that proves that Wilmington has always been an evening-paper town. The circulation of the two evening papers would have been triple the Morning News.

JCS: Yeah. Yeah, well you see, you had more time on the evening paper because you did overnights from... (?) What they used to do, of course—and we used to do the same thing on the Morning News—there were pick-ups that kept the type. This was on the Journal, Evening Journal, and the Morning News. The type was kept so you picked up things like obits and that kind of thing.

RB: You mean you could use the type from the competitive paper? They weren't both owned by the same ________?

JCS: Yes, the Evening Journal and the Morning News were both owned by... 

RB: Were always owned by Christiana Securities?

JCS: Not always. The Morning News was owned, just before I came, it was owned by Alfred I. du Pont. And its office then was on Market Street across from the old City Hall. That was the Morning News. And then when it was acquired... .

RB: I thought you said it was Fourth & Shipley.

JCS: Well, when the du Ponts acquired the Morning News, the other du Ponts... As I remember, Alfred I. lost his interest in the paper after... This was... He used it as a political organ.

RB: What were his politics?
JCS: Well, his politics... He supported various people and... At that time there was a little feud going on between Alfred I. and the rest of the family. So he was... They were into some pretty bitter things, and he used the paper as a vehicle more or less. But I don't know whether it was at that time or not—but pretty close to it—when his interests went to Florida. He became quite prominent in Florida in the development of the state. So the du Ponts bought the paper, and they both were in that building. Well, about the type. Well this type was what we would call standing type. And, for example, on the Morning News, we would pick up an obituary from the Morning News and what we would do, we'd just rewrite the thing. Instead of "John Jones died today," we would change the thing around to "the funeral of John Jones will be held so and so," and then pick up the rest of the type. And it would be marked "pick-up from Journal." The Journal did the same thing with Morning News stories.

RB: You worked on the Every Evening, though, you had to use all new type. You didn't have any pick-ups.

JCS: Yeah. Oh no, no.

RB: Was your circulation bigger than the Journal in those days, the Every Evening?

JCS: I don't think so. I don't think so.

RB: It was Democratic, wasn't it?

JCS: No, no, not necessarily.

RB: Was it an independent paper politically then?

JCS: Yeah, it was... Yes, it was Democratic. That's true. It did support the Democratic Party. But I never was aware of any big political hassles going on, editorial-wise.

RB: It was quiet?

JCS: It was quiet. And I remember I had... Of course, in those days, if you really had any ambitions in the newspaper business, why most of us... Well, the young reporters and people now mostly all read the Washington Post. That's the bible. In our day the New York Morning World was the paper. And we read that with just as much passion as the young people are reading the Washington Post these days.
JCS: (Cont'd)

Getting back to the Every Evening, I remember one of the little features that New York papers used to have which was new then was the "Inquiring Reporter." So I went to my editor there at the Every Evening and asked if he didn't think that would be a good feature. And he said, "Fine, you do it." So, I used to have these. I got myself into something that turned out to be kind of interesting and ran it for quite a while, "The Inquiring Reporter." We'd usually ask about five people questions every day on all kinds of subjects. But, these were Prohibition days. And I remember one of the most gruesome stories I think I've ever covered--and I've covered a lot of them--was in Wilmington in South Wilmington, you know, the great marsh there. And it used to be a gathering place for bums and drunks who would have fires there and would drink this canned heat, Sterno Heat. And they would... They had to boil this Sterno to get the impurities out of it and then they used to drink it. Well, we got a tip one morning. We rarely had pictures in those days; it was very, very rare that we had photographs of anything. But there was supposed to have been about six men who died drinking this stuff around the campfire down there. So we took a camera... I took a camera down, and we took a picture of it which was too gruesome to publish. But it was--for a young fellow who hadn't seen too much of that--it was a very gruesome sight to see these men in the various positions, the stress and pain around that fire clutching their stomachs and their faces, their mouths. They were all dead, the six of them.

RB: Was there a shantytown there in South Wilmington?

JCS: Oh, yes, yes. Different places around there that you could get to by a dike or something like that in these... It was a great hangout for the unfortunate I guess you would call them today. We called them bums then if they didn't work. It was as simple as that, ha, ha.

RB: That was the first police-story-type event that you covered as a young man?

JCS: Well, it was the most gruesome one I covered. I covered a lot of other things. I got beaten up once. You know, the city editors in those days, we all had to... If we were going anywhere any distance from the center of the city, we had to use the trolley car. And so they would hand out tokens. The city desk always had a bunch of
tokens, and they'd give you a token. Well I had to cover a church meeting of some kind that was something important, but it was way over on the east side of town. And I went to this church thing—I can't remember what it was now. I think it was the "holy rollers" to tell you the truth. Something like that. And I left this little church, and I had to walk about two blocks to the trolley car. And I remember a bunch of about four guys started to follow me and say, "Look at the dude." And I wasn't particularly well dressed, but that's what they were calling me anyhow. So they jumped me, and I did the best I could to protect myself. But, unlike they are today, they didn't attempt to rob me or anything. They just gave me a couple good claps and a kick and whatnot and then they ran. But I remember that pretty well because when I came back to see the editor, he said, "What the hell's the matter with you?" And I told him so he said, "Well next time, carry a gun."

RB: Did you have some favorite tipsters on your beat, people you liked to talk (?) with?

JCS: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, you see for a time I covered hospitals. And the only hospital was the Delaware Hospital. At the time my father was on the staff, he specialized in chests. And his name was Dr. Meredith I. Samuels for the record. And so, I knew quite a few of the people over there. And I always found that telephone operators were your best source of news. So once in a while I'd drop a box of candy off to the telephone operator. And she got so she was calling me up which I appreciated because in those days you didn't have the mobility you have. Nobody had a car. And the ideal reporter was the one that had long legs which I did and could cover ground because you couldn't always catch a streetcar when you wanted one, ha, ha. But you mentioned the coast beat (?). Now that was... I had that for a little while, too. That was a... It wasn't a particularly dangerous beat, but there was always, it seemed like something always going on. And the beat started at the railroad station. You were supposed to cover the railroad station and then go down... A section of that area in those days was called Bloodfield (?) and it was on West Street. It was all... That neighborhood was all colored, Negroes. And Bloodfield was the place where, it was a dope center there. And most of these... In those days, most of the dope wasn't heroin. It was cocaine, they used a lot of cocaine; some heroin I think. But I remember when I was working on the Every Evening, they had a, the government had planted an agent with these
people down there. And when they got ready, they raided the place and took them all...

RB: Where was Bloodfield?

JCS: It was between Third Street and Front Street on West Street, in that area, in those blocks, one or two blocks. And there were always fights there all the time, knifings and stabings and whatnot. But I remember--this impressed me a bit--they loaded all these people that were living there--taking dope most of them. They were all pretty high when they were taken to the jail. And then they began to feel the withdrawal pains and whatnot and screaming. Oh, it was a madhouse; it was bedlam in there for a while. Finally they had them all in City Court the next morning, and I forget what the disposition was but... That was about all the confrontation I ever had with drugs in the city. That's the only thing that stands out in my mind.

RB: What was prostitution like then? Was there a part of the city that was known for prostitution?

JCS: Well, there were several houses of prostitution. Actually, Wilmington in those days, French Street was the dividing line between black and white. On the east side it was all black. And the only people, as I remember it, that lived on the other side of French Street--there were doctors, colored doctors, and that kind of thing--but most of the colored people stayed in their own quarter. They had their own movie there, their own theater, their own things, schools, and they weren't interested in... Well, it took money to move out of there. Let's face it, it was a ghetto. But, as far as I can remember it or knew, there weren't any black houses of prostitution. There were plenty of prostitutes, black prostitutes. In Wilmington... Wilmington was still a small town, and the young fellows in town... Well, you couldn't be seen with a prostitute and expect to get away with it. That was one of the things. And so they had these houses of prostitution. Some were fancy; some weren't very much.

RB: Well where would they be?

JCS: Well, there was a famous one on Tatnall Street. There was one on Tatnall between Eighth and Ninth. That was a famous one there. That was there for years. There was one on French Street, Seventh and French on the white side of French there. And that was a pretty fancy one as I remember. I was never in that one. But we used to go to one on Tatnall Street, not for service particularly, but Louise the madam (?) was a character and she liked reporters.
JCS: (Cont'd)

And so we used to go up there after the paper got out, on the Morning News. Some of us would go up there and have a couple drinks and talk to her.

RB: Did you get good news tips from her ever?

JCS: Yes, she was pretty good on that. She knew what was going on.

RB: Well, since you had friendly relations with the madam and you didn't really pay attention to the speak easies, we could probably say that Wilmington papers weren't the crusading type of papers at any time?

JCS: I don't remember any kind of crusade. The only crusade that I remember was about... This thing kinda shook the paper up, the Every Evening, was these six men dying out there of that stuff. So there was a little kind of a crusade about that. I don't...

RB: When would that have been, 1925 or 1926?

JCS: Yeah, about 1925 I think, or 1926. But I don't really remember any crusades at all. These papers would be very dull reading today. The writing in them was stylized. Once in a while you could write a feature. Later on they began to get interested in features. Bill Frank started writing some features. And they liked those little boxes. We used to like to write little boxes.

RB: Bill Frank was still working on the Morning News?

JCS: Yeah, he was on the Morning News for years. And he still is, you know.

RB: Did you stay... How long did you stay with the Every Evening?

JCS: I stayed with the Every Evening, I think, for just a couple years. And from there I went with the Hercules Powder Co., working on their two magazines they published at the time.

RB: What was that change like?

JCS: Uh, well, I liked the people I worked with and I liked it to a certain extent. But I was young enough to feel that it wasn't very exciting. I forget how long I was on the Every Evening to tell you the truth. Of course, time is different.
RB: How long did you stay with Hercules?

JCS: I was with Hercules for about a year and a half. And I had a friend of mine, Leonard Daly, who worked on the Every Evening with me. His father was Tom Daly, the Philadelphia _______ and he was a columnist on the Philadelphia Bulletin. And when I graduated from the University of Delaware, which was then Delaware College, he had gone on the Every Evening. And he left the Every Evening and went up to Waterbury, Conn., on the Waterbury Republican. And he used to write to me and tell me what fun they were having up there and everything, and I finally... He wrote to me one time and said there was a job open there so I gave my notice to Hercules and went up to Connecticut.

RB: Well, what was that like? How did that contrast with the Wilmington paper experience?

JCS: Oh, entirely different. I mean they, that was a very, for those days, very mannered paper. And they went in for... Oh, they had crusades going all the time. And I remember one story I broke up there about what was called a watch city. They used to make a lot of watches up there. And I found out just by accident and by comparison that there had been quite a few deaths among people, the women particularly, who had been working in this watch factory. They were painting luminous figures on watches, and they would put the paint or whatever it was in their mouths. Their little brushes. They put them in their mouths, and quite a few of them died from that. And I remember breaking that story; I kinda liked that.

RB: You were general assignment on the Waterbury Republican?

JCS: Yeah.

RB: How long did you stay there?

JCS: I was there for about a year. And from there I went over on a Hearst paper in Albany, New York, the Albany Times Union. The Times Union was quite a... That was really a wild Hearst paper when I was there. We had... The city editor's name was Wilson Sullivan. The news editor's name was Eddie _______. And they were both a couple of real rock and roll boys. They had scooped the whole country on a murder up there that they... They got a confession out of him and they got into... 

RB: Was that the murder of Legs Diamond? (?)
JCS: No, no. No, that was later. But they got a confession from him which held up in court. And when they had a blow-up there on the Times Union, both of those boys went to New York. Eddie ______ was city editor for quite a while on the old New York Journal American. Wilson Sullivan was with the Standard News Bureau down in Hargrove. But I can remember up there, they... The Hearst papers, of course, were interested... The whole interest was circulation. And we had some competition there from the Albany Evening News. And I remember one of the things we did... It was in the summertime, and the news was flat. And they had just installed in the Albany Hospital an incubator which was new in those days. So Eddie... They had a little talk and Eddie said, "See if you... Go out and see what's going on with that incubator." So I said, "Yeah," and I went out. And there was one baby in there that was just a little thing of one or two pounds, something like that. So I came back and told him. And he said, "Okay, let's keep this kid alive." So we started in, and we had the whole town worrying about this baby--pictures and... The hospital was delighted that we were doing this because any private hospital just loves publicity like that for donations and so forth. So we kept that kid alive for about ten days, and it finally did pull through. But every edition, you know, "Little Mary lived through the night," and all this stuff, ha, ha. It was something.

RB: A little different from Wilmington.

JCS: Yeah. And the other time that I remember they had a deathwatch on a gangster, a very prominent one--not Legs Diamond--but a prominent guy in bootlegging. And he was in the Albany Hospital, and we had a deathwatch on him. They wouldn't let us in the room to talk to him because there were police all around. They were trying to extract as much information from him before he died, but he wasn't in too good a shape to talk. He had gotten a whole belly full of shot from a shotgun, one of those sawed off shotgun deals.

RB: Sounds like you were living in an exciting newspaper ______.

JCS: Oh it was. That there was really something; there was something doing all the time. And so...

RB: How did you happen to go back into public relations?

JCS: Well, I'll tell you the rest of this story. We went... This gangster died, and I got to the phone as soon as I could to call and tell them. They wouldn't let us in with
a camera in there because in those days, you know, they used flashlight powder inside. And it would go "boom" and smoke all over the place. So we... Eddie said, "Stay there and I'll call you." And he called me back, and he said, "Look, you live up on Eagle Street, don't you?" I said, "Yeah." And he said, "All right, you go up there. Get a pillow up at your room—we'll pay the landlady for the pillow. And then you meet the photographer up at the morgue." So I met him up there, and we put the guy's head on the pillow. We shot two or three pictures, and we had a big one on page 1 of the first edition the next morning—a picture of this gangster in Albany Hospital just before he died, ha, ha. We opened his eyes and everything. Ha, ha, ha. I had a lot of fun there.

But, anyhow, after I... I went to William & Mary there for a while. And then the depression came along and hit very hard. At the time I had a job in New York with the Better (?) Publishing Co. on a couple of their trade magazines. And that folded up. So that took me into all kinds of jobs. I worked in Atlantic City for the Philadelphia Ledger and then that folded. And we had... Oh, I had all kinds of things. I worked at WDEL in Wilmington; I was the first newscaster, ha, ha, up there. So that took me up to... I worked for the WPA. We put a little magazine out in Delaware there called Progress which is one of the first offset papers I ever worked on.

RB: That was a new process then?

JCS: Yeah. Then I went up to... I got a job... I finally got back into private industry and got a job at the Armstrong Cork Co. And I was with Armstrong Cork for four years and then I went to New York with an advertising agency called Anderson, Davis & Platt (?) in the Associated Press Building, Rockefeller Center. Then the war came along and I was with Public Relations, Selvage & Lee (?) in Rockefeller Center. And then I went with... They gave me a little send-off party in New York, and they had a sign up there that says, "Clark Samuels is no longer a whore." (?) Ha, ha.

RB: Ha, ha. You were getting clean going back into newspapers.

JCS: Yeah, going back in the newspaper business.

RB: So what was your paper then in Massachusetts?
JCS: Well, it was a little paper called the Foxboro Reporter. And it was owned by the Foxboro Co., which were manufacturers of industrial instrumentation. And they had bought the paper some years back when it was going to fold. So they bought it for the town, but it was a separate thing apparently. No editorial direction from the publishers or anything like that.

RB: How do you think of yourself then? When you look at your varied career, you really, really enjoyed the job of editing the weekly paper probably since you stayed in it.

JCS: Yeah. That was always... I always... See, the jobs that I had in public relations... I was always with the media. Radio in those days, radio news, and the wire services and business papers. So I was always more or less in the same work that I'd done pretty nearly all my life. And it was always a connection, you know, between the two. But most of my friends in New York were Associated Press guys that I met through...

RB: But what about your life on the Massachusetts weekly?

JCS: Oh, well, that was kind of interesting. I went up there... That was a six-page paper and when I left it was twenty-four, which part of it was the growth of the town. But they never had a really, a pro on the paper. And it was hot type (?), of course, when I first went up there. And then we switched over to offset later on. But it was a very interesting experience. The only trouble is, in a little, small town like that--which was then about less than 10,000 people--your life is not your own. Actually I moved out to the outskirts of town to get away from people who would come to see me. They'd have to see me in person. And anytime of the day or night. I wasn't getting any privacy at all. So we bought a little place out in the country which we liked very much. And we stayed there, but I enjoyed it in New England. People in New York told me, "Oh, you won't last up there. Those people are cold and they're introverted and they won't talk to you," and all that. But I found I was as reserved as they were when I first came. I'd heard enough about them, and I trod very lightly the first year I was there--no controversial editorials to amount to anything. But the second year I began to swing a bit, and then the circulation began to rise. And it go so everybody wanted to get a paper to see what was coming next which is fine.

RB: Where is Foxboro?
Foxboro is about halfway between Providence, Rhode Island, and Boston. And Route 95 goes right through it now so it's just a short drive to Boston. I enjoyed it. I joined the... For the paper we joined a New England press association, and I was president of that three times. Then we had the New England Press Association. I was the director of that several times. The atmosphere up there was conducive to good newspapering, I thought. Boston had some good... Oh, and I was a stringer for the Boston Herald up there. They had the town-meeting form of government—which they still have there—which is interesting. But this keeps you on your toes all the time. I liked it. I'll be frank with you. I didn't care for the winters at all. The winter before we left we had 52" of snow up there, ha, ha. I mean, that's the winter's accumulation. I get pretty tired of it. Well, I mean, I was... When I retired, we had quite... They had quite a thing there for me. It was all a surprise in the town hall. There were about 200 people there. And they gave me all kinds of things. One of the things they gave me which I use every day is an electric typewriter, ha, ha.

Did you find that the old intellectual history of New England was operating? You said it was a good place for newspapering?

Uh, yeah.

That it kept you on your toes.

Yeah, because we had competition from small daily papers nearby. The press associations had a lot to do with it, too, because we were always trying new things. And actually, I think, probably one of the first central offset plants was in New England. We were a little bit ahead on offset. But I came down here... My wife has sort of inherited this Red Point Beach down on the upper bay here. We've always had a summer place down there. Well, the beach is forty-eight years old this year. Well, we came down here... I think I'd been retired about a week, and I was riding around over in Havre de Grace and I saw this little paper down right on the river with a little plant, a cute little plant. So I stopped, just a busman's holiday (?) type of thing. And I walked out with a job, ha, ha. So I've been working ever since.

And when did you start on the Democrat?

This past... Let's see, it was about July. And it's, I have a lot of fun with it. You can see the Hearst influence here, ha, ha.

(END OF INTERVIEW)