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Interview by Steven Schoenherr with Anthony Higgins at his home in Newark, Delaware, September 21, 1973, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Q You were in New York about what time?

A 1929 to 1931 I was in New York, where I wound up not with a job at Time Magazine that I tried to get but with United Electric Light and Power Company, where I was a timekeeper at night for a while, and travelled around the Bronx and Harlem at any hour of the night with no fear at all because there were no muggings that I knew of at that time.

Q Even in Harlem?

A Even in Harlem. I remember going around and come up with a foreman of a gang who was splicing cable. And I'd go to him and ask him for the time on his men, and we'd have a little chat, and move on. But that had no relation to writing, to journalism, so after...

Q Did you know anyone in New York? Why did you originally go there?

A Well, I went to New York because a friend of the family thought that I might have abilities that would get results in New York. And he subsidized my stay there for a couple of months, during which time I looked around, ineffectually. It was still the... it was still a prosperous time, because this was in '29. But I just didn't strike anything or find anybody who wanted my services, and then the Depression struck. But I was also drawn to New York because I had cousins and a great uncle there. I spent a lot of time with them on Washington Square...do you know that little part of town? You don't know New York so well?

Q No, I don't.

A And I stayed there until 1931, when things were mighty bad everywhere. And then I went back to Sussex County, Delaware and was married in '33--with my first wife--and went down to an old abandoned farm in Indian River Hundred, part of the county--in Delaware hundreds make up counties, as you know. They used to have political significance, but no more. Indian River Hundred was probably the most rural of all the areas of Delaware. Now it is being submerged in vacation housing and that kind of thing--marinas...and I'm afraid it's going out of existence as a beautiful part of the country, which it was then. But that's where I survived the Depression for a couple of years until 1935...with a sailboat and an oyster bed and an ice pond for hunting ducks, all of which I liked to do. I lived in this old house, which is mentioned in here, built in 1722...and I'm interested in old houses, too, and always have been.

Q Is that house still standing today?

A Yes. Yes...it's called the Wilsey Burton house. It's a small Virginia-style house of that time...about like the house that

George Washington was born in. In fact, it was built ten years before he was born. He wasn't born anywhere near there, but not so terribly far away, in Virginia. But this was the kind of a house that was built on the eastern shore of Virginia about 50 miles...60 miles south. But anyway, that brings us up to '35. In the meantime I was getting into journalism, somewhat. I don't know how much of this is of any interest to you or not... it's just a personal history of somebody who survived the Depression and went on to bigger and better things. I'm certainly not going to repeat, if I can remember, much of the material that Blackman got. But let me just think a minute. Between '31 and '35, what did I do? Well, I ran across a very intriguing man by the name of Joseph McSweeney who had run across an engineer in Ohio who had a theory about how the Great Pyramids of Cheops was built. And he had the notion that a book ought to be written about that. A book did get written, not by me, which never saw print because of mistakes, I think, in judgment that were made. But anyway, Joe McSweeney employed me in '32 to write synopses of this thing that had been written by the engineer...that's right, the engineer, named...I'll think of it...Kunkel, first name I forget...K-u-n-k-e-l wrote this. You might be interested sometime...but I think it's an idea whose day has not yet come. A series of misadventures I think has held this thing up. But anyhow, I worked on that and wrote a condensation of this theory, which was that...in about 50 words, or less, I can explain as hydraulics. According to Kunkel...the gospel according to Kunkel... was that the big blocks had not been dragged by human strength, under the whip, to build the pyramid, but had been floated in from the Nile on barges and that the pyramid itself was a hydraulic ram--r-a-m--a hydraulic ram of a kind known to science for a long time, whereby as this thing rose layer by layer water was drawn up from the canal that came up to the pyramid by vacuum created by fire made to burn on the top of a passageway--a shaft--in the middle of it. As the fire burned, it drew air from the bottom and the water came up, because the air pressure was less, and water comes up, and flooded--flowed, rather--into a temporary canal. And according to this man's drawings and ideas, this canal encircled, spiralled up, the pyramid and floated the barges and stone all up there. And he said that that's how it worked. Well, anyway, it so fascinated me, and I've still got some of what I wrote about it, that I wrote that and didn't get paid anything for it, because I was gambling, you see, on this thing, and I thought at the time there might be some arrangement with....I told him the Smithsonian would be a good place to go to, or the New York Times for publicizing it, but he didn't do any of those things. He thought he was going to get rich on this idea--not Kunkel; he was a pure scientist, you might say, and money really never entered much into his thinking about this theory. But McSweeney was a promoter always...a good friend of mine, and I don't know whether he's alive or not, now...but I've always been fond of him, but I've never thought that he showed judgment in the way that he went at this thing, which may or may not ever amount to anything. Well, that's what I did for a year or so, or half a year...and whatever else there was to do to keep body

and soul together and to enjoy yourself. I don't remember that I was ever miserable or unhappy. I just didn't have any money to spend on anything. Then in 1935 I was tapped for a supervisory job on the Writers Project...the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration...and became one of the two editors of the Delaware state guide in that series, which may have been one of the things that influenced John Monroe in having you come to see me, I don't know.

Q Yes, he mentioned it.

A That's hardly journalism, is it?

Q Well, it's...in a sense it may be.

A It's writing.

Q Part of writing...people who did writing in Delaware.

A Yes, I see.

Q Could you say anything about the other two editors...the other two people who...

A One other...I say I was one of...actually there were three, yes. Jeannette Eckman was a lady of middle age who had been a secretary to the DuPont who built the highway through the state in the teens... that was T. C. DuPont, T. Coleman DuPont. And Jeannette Eckman was appointed the administrator of the Federal cultural projects in Delaware, which included the Writers Project, the Art Project and the Drama Project. And a couple of other things came into it, the Historic American Building Survey, which employed architects, and the survey of local boat construction around the country. People had their different styles of construction of work boats--fishermen did, lobstermen did, oystermen did. So that survey was done in Delaware, too. But I had no part in that. Well, Miss Eckman and I, Anthony Higgins, and William Conner worked on that. I turned out...wrote the tour section of that book...and had a really, an opportunity, that couldn't have come otherwise to learn the state, as I did by driving around clocking the distances and examining the history I could find, or anything...talking to people, trying to get informal as well as formal history...anecdotes, stories, folklore. Trying to get the essence, the flavor, was what I hoped to do, and I think maybe I did in some parts of that. That lasted from '35 to '38, when the book was published. Well, previous to that I should say that between the Great Pyramids and the WPA Writers Project I did quite a number of articles for the Baltimore Sunday Sun Magazine, which was a tabloid magazine, very well edited, I thought, and got into my real bent, which was writing about local Delaware or Maryland subjects.

Q Did you know anyone connected with the magazine?

A I got to know the editor of the magazine. His name...maybe I'll remember later. That's the only one. I never met Mr. Mencken, I wish I had, who was part of the Baltimore Sun in those days. I wasn't much for pushing myself at that time, because from boyhood, clear up until the '30's, I had been a very bad stammerer. I stammered to beat the band. And got over it somehow, just about completely, but it rather dampened my enthusiasm to go out and declare myself.

Q How did they conduct the business of working with a writer such as you on the magazine?

A Oh, I just did it from my own home and my own typewriter. And if I got interested in a subject such as Big Cyprus Swamp, I just went over there and wrote it. I didn't query the editor about it at all. I just thought that I could sell it either to him or to somebody else. And I always sold it to him...he was better equipped to do that sort of thing than the Delaware papers at the time. At least he paid a little better, which wasn't very much--he paid \$25.00 a story, I remember. And I worked pretty hard on it, to put it in shape. I'll say this, that while I was in New York, in...about 1930...I took a course in journalistic writing...it was a correspondence course. I didn't go to any classes, but I took it from my room on Madison Avenue. So, I disciplined myself I thought, more than is the case sometimes with people who worked on a copy desk at a newspaper. So I had never worked on a newspaper at all all this time. But I was being published...anything I thought was fit to write about, I found publishable. And I still have a good deal of that around. That was a form of journalism right in Delaware being printed in Maryland. Occasionally I would write things to be put into the Wilmington paper. And in college I had been on the college paper--one of the editors of the college paper--so you see I was infected with this thing.

Q Where did you go to college? At the University of Delaware?

A No, no. I went to Virginia, class of '27. There were some Delaware friends of mine going there. There always have been good contingent of Delaware people going there, so I....I guess to go way back you have to go back to my first typewriter, which I got as a reward for having my tonsils out, and I think I was about 10 years old. It was a funny little old-fashioned typewriter, but I had to have that when I was ten. And so one way or another, I guess I couldn't escape from printer's ink. There I was in the Depression, then, and I was very happy to have been part of the Writers Project, and I like to think I made a contribution to Delaware, because the tours in that book are part of the standard work on Delaware, and if Professor John Monroe says so, I'm not going to deny it.

Q What was William Conner like?

A William Conner was a man in his 50's or 60's who had been a newspaper man in Wilmington who I'm sure helped Miss Eckman, but he never helped me, and I really was never able to see just what he

did. And I certainly don't want to disparage Bill Conner, now, so maybe I'd better not say anything more about that. He's dead; so is Miss Eckman. I suppose you have to...it's all right just to chat along as one thing leads to another. I'm surprised I'm doing this much talking, really. But Jeannette Eckman...the name Jeannette Eckman reminds me that I've just finished editing a standard book on New Castle. Did John mention that to you?

Q Has that been published?

A Yeah. It's new, um hmm. And in that I have to say this....

Q Now, this isn't in the library. I looked in the library under your name to see what you had written, and it's not in there yet.

A Um hmm. Well, in the last paragraph of my introduction--there's no page number in there--it says--you can see that, very personal note--"I must salute my old friend Jeannette Eckman, editor of the previous editions in which I had a part..." and so forth. "I like to think she would give at least a passing mark to the new material and other changes of my doing in this 1973 edition of New Castle on the Delaware."

Q What did she do after the WPA?

A She or I? She? She went on to edit a second edition of the Delaware Guide about 1951. She was a great lady. She had no patience with anything that was less than a person's best efforts. And she insisted on good, honest writing. I don't know that she...how much she liked the tastes that some of us had in writing, but she never objected to what I wrote, in the folkways, for instance, that I can remember. I do remember, though, that I had quite a little intramural struggle with her on one topic, Steve, and that topic was in the history of the town of Lewes, which originally under the Dutch had been called the Whorekill, in other words Whore Creek. The early Dutchmen, who had been whalers, in 1631 had landed there and been very well treated by the Indian women. So they called it the Whorekill, and I don't know whether it was a mercenary matter or not, but over the years there have been some people--historians--in Delaware, who sought to make it history that it was not Whorekill but Hoornkill, named for the town in Holland that was the home of Captain Devries, who led the expedition. But some of us--I think I was perhaps the main leader in this--were able to convince her that Hoornkill was a prudish amendment to the original name, the Whorekill. So it stated, I think...the book speaks of the Whorekill; it doesn't go into it any more than that. But Miss Eckman I have the greatest admiration for, and the character of this book was really a memorial to her. I went through it all. The last edition....

Q These are previous editions?

A Yes. The two books I just gave you are the same edition, one with a board cover and one with a paperback cover. That was 1936. Then along came the New Castle tercentenary of 1951 and Miss Eckman edited, or at least took care of, a second printing of that

and nothing more was done about the book until I was invited to edit it again, and I did so. Found that there had been a good many physical changes in New Castle in these twenty years. I tried to take care of them and made a few editorial changes as I went along. I did considerable rewriting of some major buildings in the town, chief among which is the old court house, which had...which underwent a restoration in the 50's and 60's; and is one of the two most important old buildings in the state--public buildings, that is. The most important, in my view, being the State House at Dover of 1791. Well, this old court house was built in 1732, or thereabouts, so it's the oldest...it's the most historic building in Delaware, I'd say. We got off on Miss Eckman and something I'd just done.

Q She was involved with this, then?

A Yes, she edited that book. Let's see...

Q It just said the Federal Writers Project.

A Well, her name was not...she was so modest that her name never appeared on that. Neither did mine; I had a part in that, too. Well, that in itself sums up Jeannette Eckman and her selfless high quality that she...and her interest in Delaware, her...must have been her early fascination with the state. And she was well educated. I think she belonged to...I think she went to one of the seven sisters colleges. You know what the seven sisters colleges are? Whether she went to Bryn Mawr or Smith, I don't know, really, but I'm pretty sure she went to one of them. She was a great lady, as I said. And I owe a lot to her. My association with Jeannette Eckman is something that has always been very valuable to me. Occasionally when I've been tempted to fudge something, maybe, or not to do...or just to guess at something, I've thought better of it because Jeannette Eckman would never tolerate anything that you couldn't prove, you see, or set down. I think that to have somebody like that influence you when you're developing whatever talents you have as a writer very fortunate.

Q While you were doing the research for the Delaware Guide, going around to the various towns in Delaware, did you form a contact with any newspapers or newspaper reporters, or newspaper editors?

A No, hardly any. There was an editor of a paper in Rehoboth called the Delaware Coast Press. His name was Ingram--can't think of his first name. He was a special person, a good friend of mine--a great humorist, I thought. His paper was an expression of his personality, and people took it because they enjoyed reading it. I remember there was a very peculiar kind of murder that happened at Rehoboth Beach back in the 30's, and the man accused of murdering his wife said that he had not killed her at all but that when the gun went off the trigger had been pulled by a raccoon that got in the house. He left his gun loaded all the time, so the coon got around the gun and pulled the trigger

and it happened to be pointed at his wife. Ingram the editor had a lot of fun with that, I'll tell you. And it went into the courts and somebody who was interested in Delaware journalism might get a good...resurrect a good story out of that. I wish I could tell you the date of that. Ingram's dead. But there would...

Q Is the paper still in existence?

A The paper is. I don't know whether any of those copies have been saved or not. It's called...well the successor of the paper goes on now. That was so funny. I don't know what happened to the man who produced that story. But Ingram was the kind of a man who understood people who could come up with a story like that. And when he wrote about him, he treated him as if that was just a perfectly plausible kind of a story. But he did it a little bit tongue in cheek so that everybody who got it would laugh about it, too. He had an instinct for his local setting did Ingram. Now that was because you asked me if I knew any journalists at that time. In Milford there is a family that has run the Milford Chronicle for a long time. Now offhand I don't remember... Grier or Derickson, or perhaps...

Q The Griers are bankers, I think...or the Townsends?

A Well, they've been in different things down there. Do you know any Griers in Milford?

Q We did several interviews in Milford. We didn't interview any Griers, but their name was mentioned. They're a prominent family in Delaware, and somehow I remembered they were bankers, but I may be wrong.

A Perhaps so. The L. D. Caulk Company--did you run across that name--that dental materials...is that still going in Milford?

Q Yes. They were bought out by a larger company, but they're still producing dental materials.

A Are they? Dr. Grier, a dentist, I think, Dr. Grier, was the one who founded that.

Q But you didn't know any of the people connected with...

A Yes, I did. I knew quite well the owner and publisher of the Georgetown Republican, I think it was called then. And the name of that paper is the Sussex Countian, a weekly run by his daughter, Mary Houston Robinson (Houston it's pronounced, H-o-u-s-t-o-n, not Hu-sten, but Hous-ton, Robinson) whose father was the publisher, Robert G. Houston. I think it was Robert G., who ran the newspaper as sort of a hobby or a sideline, or an adjunct, maybe an important part, for all I know, of his life and livelihood, which was that of a lawyer. He practiced law and ran a newspaper which is pretty much common around the country, you know, around this country, up until maybe fairly recently. Maybe

it is in some parts, say the South, now. A lawyer, especially a lawyer, who was interested in politics, and maybe for office, Mr. Houston was, has a newspaper. And this little paper was back of the courthouse, and it was housed in very small quarters, and he had a couple of printers there who were at least able to run a Mergenthaler machine. All he did was to write the editorials. Somehow or other the paper got printed and published. There was somebody to take care of the advertising and somebody to make up the different pages, I guess. But it was a very respectable little paper. And it was the kind of a paper run by a leading citizen, a thoughtful, high-minded man, that was operated largely because that kind of a man wanted to have more influence in his community, and wanted to help his community and the state. And Mr. Houston ran for Lt. Governor of Delaware in 1896 on a slate that had John C. Higgins, my grandfather, for Governor. And they both--he was a young man, quite a young man, at the time, and my grandfather was...let's see, he was born in '38, so in ninety--what's the difference between 38 and 96--58 years old. Well, my grandfather was 58 and Bob Houston was...well, I can easily determine how old he was in '96....But Grandfather writes in his memoirs, which I have edited, that he enjoyed especially campaigning in Sussex County with his young friend, Bob Houston. They both lost because...well for a--John Monroe's familiar with all that, too--Delaware ran through some pretty hectic days at that time. A man named Atticks had come in with a lot of money to buy himself a seat in the United States Senate. And he never got it but--largely due to the opposition of people like John C. Higgins and ~~Carl~~ Henry DuPont, and Harry B. Thompson, people who just battled him down to the last gasp. But Atticks almost made it. In those days, as you know, senators were elected not by the people but by the legislatures. It wasn't until--what amendment was it to the Constitution that required United States Senators to be elected by popular vote?

Q It would be 1913, I believe, under Wilson's administration.

A So...anyway, in '96 the Republican Party was still split--badly split--that state ticket, Higgins and Houston, were called the... I'd have to look it up...one Republican Party, and then there were two other men heading another so-called Republican ticket. And splitting the party as they did, the Democrats had no trouble winning. The Democrats were elected, but my grandfather used to tell me--and I knew my grandfather quite well because he lived 'til I was 18 years old--used to show me the figures (he had it jotted down) in his memoirs that if it hadn't been for the part that he and Houston played in splitting the ticket that certainly ~~Atticks~~ would have won somehow. Well, if they hadn't split the ticket, then the other Republican candidates would have won, and they were Atticks people; so he was very proud that he had something to do with defeat of the Atticks branch of the Republican Party in 1896. So newspapers and office-holders, members of Congress, were often tied pretty closely in Delaware. Mr. Houston served two or three terms in the U. S. House of Representatives, and he kept running his paper at the same time, leaving it mostly by that time to his daughter Mary Houston Robinson, whom you ought to talk to.

Q She's still living today?

A She's living in Georgetown. Be sure to drop in on Mary. She will--oh, I think she is the best one, really, in Sussex County, rural Delaware, to talk to. She's...she is, I think, in good health, and she must be pushing eighty now, I would say, and she still runs that paper. I don't know--maybe her son Robert Robinson, Bob Robinson, runs the paper, I guess. Now his wife is a lawyer...Bob Robinson's wife's a lawyer, so maybe here we have again sort of a resurgence--if she takes any part in the paper, which I rather doubt. But at least there's a lawyer in that family again. She's a beauty, too. If you ever get down there you can get ready to admire that girl. They call her "Battle" because her maiden name was Battle, her last name, but to give that name as a first name to a pretty girl I think's kind of a shame...Battle Robinson. But you give Mary my best regards. Now she can tell you an awful lot more about journalism in lower Delaware over a big stretch of time than I could ever try to do.

Q Well, let's get to your editorship here in Wilmington.

A All right. I don't know how much time you've got. I got plenty of time, but I don't want to--you tell me how much time.

Q No, I have time this afternoon.

A I suppose--I seem to be having no difficulty chatting along about journalism in Delaware. As I said before, I'm surprised that some of this seems worth reporting again to you.

Q Well, it's history that otherwise would be lost.

A Perhaps so. Well, I understand that because I've been interested in current history myself...and, well, getting history that otherwise would be lost, let's say in the form of folklore.

Q That's the same thing...true.

A A lot of it you'll have to put quotes around, unless you check everything I've said, you know. And usually...if I was writing this I'd have to look it over again and see what I did wrong.

Q No, this is not going to be published.

A No, it won't be published.

Q This is what is regarded as an historical document. It's for whoever wants to...whoever is interested in the kind of things that you're talking about, some historian or some student at Delaware, will come and read your interview and it'll be his responsibility then to check out your information. Not your's.

A No, I'm glad of that, because some of it is what happened a good while ago.

Q Sure. And we realize this--this is all part of the problems of oral history.

A Well, I'm much complimented, Steve, that you've come to talk to me, and I'm glad that something is coming of it. So I'll go on now into the News Journal Company. Well, I'd better lead up to that briefly by giving more chronology here. After the Delaware Guide was published, then I was employed to do some research preparatory to a book. I was employed by A. Felix DuPont of Wilmington and Rehoboth who was interested in collecting materials having to do with his...hold it a minute.

Q O.K. My goodness, who is this a picture of here?

A Dagworthy Derrickson Burton...and there he is. That's when I was doing the Delaware Guide and I made sure to take a photographer to see Mr. Burton. In fact, when I found him there he was lying on top of the counter sound asleep. These little boys were playing in the sandbox. The sandbox there was the box that the wood stove sat in--that was their sand...that was the original Sussex County sandbox. See that little thing--they were playing. And people would spit their tobacco juice in there...and little boys would--not in it, but they were fooling around it. I put that in the Delaware Guide and I can refer you to that. But anyway, back to Alexis Felix DuPont and...he employed me to look over a mass of DuPont family papers that he'd collected for a life of I think his grandfather. Now, wait a minute. Yes, his grandfather, Alexis Irenee DuPont.

Q May I ask what book are you looking at there? What is the title of that? Just to read it into the record there....The Life of Alexis Irenee Dupont, 1945.

A And here I see my name in there someplace--there it is.

Q "The letters and other papers were carefully collected and placed in the hands of Anthony Higgins...."

A Well, that was...that was in 1940 or 41, and I worked on those letters and well, did some arranging and some labeling, but I didn't get to do any of the writing because the war came along and I got a commission in the Navy.

Q Do you know this Allen Henry who did the...

A Yes, I knew Mr. Henry. So Mr. DuPont turned it over to Allen Henry, who carried out the task of completing that work in two volumes. You'll see the other volume right there. That I'm sure is down at the library. In the meantime, though, after the Delaware Writers Project ended, I thought...at least I...the Delaware Guidebook, which was the major work, and my major work on it, came out in the spring of '38 and then what to do. Miss Eckman didn't know what to put me on then, I guess. But suddenly I got word from her that the Maryland Writers Project needed an editor to really work up the Eastern Shore tours, that they'd had lots of trouble. So I went to Baltimore and talked with them and found myself back in the Delaware guide work. I did most of the Eastern Shore tours in the Maryland guide, which is their tour. And that was published in 1940. And I was really

greatly irritated by their not putting my name in the thing at all after I did all the tours.

Q Did you receive any money for these?

A Just the salary. As I remember it was \$150 a month...For somebody who was not in the rank and file but in a supervisory capacity. I needed a job just as much as anybody did. But there were two classifications--the worker, or whatever that was called, and the management people, or editors or whatever it was. So anyway, that gets me to what I was doing up to the World War II, then I was in that. And after that, in Rehoboth, I started writing editorials for the News Journal paper at the invitation of Charles Lee Reese, Jr., my old friend. You wouldn't know who he is...

Q No. How do you spell Reese?

A R-double e-s-e. He is now honorary chairman of the board of the News Journal Company. He has been chairman of the board, before that, president and editor-in-Chief. But he was president and editor-in-chief for a good many years before...

Q Before the war?

A No, before he became chairman of the board. His name is on the masthead of both papers--Charles L. Reese, Jr. He's said...well, he offered me a place on the editorial board in 1946 but I declined, thinking I wanted to stay in Sussex County...for various reasons. But by ...oh! and he said, well, then write editorials from down there, so I did. And I don't know of any other case of editorial writers writing editorials on state or local subjects, which I confined myself to--didn't have to confine myself to 'em, but that was what I chose--so far away from the newspaper itself. And I wrote one and then two a day from Rehoboth, where I was living, in '46, '47, and into '48, and mailed them up. And he printed them. I then got into my stride, let's say. I was able to write about topics of some Sussex flavor, Sussex County flavor. I developed techniques. I would write in the present tense; it would be description. Often it wouldn't be an editorial in the sense of the editorials, but it would be let's say entertainment or instruction for the reader, I hope. And I was pretty wide-ranging in that kind of thing, and Lee always said that he liked to see these come into the office because it was something different from what newspapers usually printed in their editorial columns. At that time, not being on the scene, in the office of the newspaper, I felt that I couldn't write on political or argumentative subjects, or I didn't want to because I couldn't hear the other side of the thing, maybe, or I couldn't be sure that what I wrote would be printed. Maybe that was it. So that had to wait until I got up to the paper, which I did in May of 1948 to be on the editorial board. He finally said, well, come on up and by that time I was ready to do it, and so that's where I was. In that capacity, really, member of the editorial board, was my title and I was very glad to have that title. I recognized, I

guess that I was not the executive type but the staff type. And executives needed people to help them make policy and I found plenty of satisfaction in helping to develop and lead policy on many a matter on that paper. So maybe that shows that depending on your tastes and your abilities and talents you can enjoy staff work as much as management work, maybe, you see. I happened to like it and was given more responsibility in various ways as I went along. But my title and my work was that of editorial writer and editorial board member. Now the editorial writing is one thing and on our papers the editorial board was something a little bigger, because for one thing there were duties such as taking care of columns coming in and taking care of letters coming in, and being part of the board that accepted and approved policy. It's one thing for one man to write an editorial advocating reform in slaughter house management, let's say, and another thing for his colleagues and chief to approve that and say let's go ahead and launch a campaign against bad slaughter houses in Delaware, which I happened to pick up as a minor thing. Ralph Nader had run across a report that had been dead for a long time--dusty--some years ago and he blew off the dust and he found that Delaware had been determined to be one of the worst offenders in slaughter houses in the country. So that...where I found out about that, I don't know. But when I did, I suggested that there was something that we ought to get into and clean up the slaughter houses. And so they said go ahead, so that's what I did for a while. I wrote maybe half a dozen editorials about slaughter houses which involved a little bit of investigation of my own. I didn't go to any slaughter houses, but I certainly was able to find people who knew about 'em that I trusted. And as any editor will tell you, I think, developing a range of people that you regard as competent sources for information is about the most important thing you can do and enables you to sit in your ivory tower perhaps a little more than you should. But anyhow, being a part in policy making as I was for those years, overcame the anonymity of editorial writing for me. When I found that my writing was really the voice of the paper, not just me, I somehow identified myself with the paper, and my ego was identified with the paper, a little larger than me, a good deal larger than me, a lot larger than I was, so that's where my satisfaction came. And I found that's been true of colleagues around the country where I've been to the National Conference of Editorial Writers. I asked them, "Why do you stay in this game, when your name isn't mentioned...maybe on the masthead and that's all." Maybe it's not even mentioned there--mine was. But sometime their names never even get printed. They work hard; they write sometimes very outstanding, sometimes sloppy, but they know what they ought to do. But they write and write and write and their name never appears. Well, they say...I think they would say the same thing...I've got this out of some of them, anyway, that their satisfaction comes in speaking with a voice larger than their own...that therefore...through which they think they can influence...have more influence...get things done, maybe...stop things from getting done. So that's what...that was the secret of my success on the editorial

board of the News Journal. My staying that long, at least, was because I got plenty of satisfaction for...out of it, because I could see things happen. You could write an editorial sometimes that you didn't care if anybody but the Governor read, but you knew damn well he'd read it because it was about something that he was going to do a couple of days from then. And you felt that if you were at all persuasive and that your thinking was sound that maybe it would help him do something perhaps that he wanted to do anyhow but that he needed a helping hand, you see. I'm not one to say that I think an editorial can force a Governor, let's say, into doing something--it wouldn't be believed if you did say that. But I'm sure that the people like Governors are often very glad to have some support just when they need it so they can say, well, the papers think I ought to do this. The paper thinks we ought to have this road bypassing Dover even if a lot of the farmers there don't think so, you see. Thereby he can stand in with the farmers, maybe, as well as the other voters, perhaps.

Q Can you think of any specific stories that...

A I can think of a lot of them. But I don't know how much you want to go into the campaigns and things of that...but I guess that's what you're here for, isn't it?

Q Well, just a couple of examples.

A Well, I won't keep it long. Seems that I had some point that I wanted to make about editorial writing in general first. Well, that was it, that it takes the curse off anonymity to find that you're having some influence in your community and your state. And I did find that editorial writing was a profession--probably one of the smallest professions in the country, if you add up the good papers and their writers, I guess. We might as well ignore the papers that are just where the editor has to cow-tow to everybody, or whether the editorials are canned editorials that come in, you know. A lot of small papers just print editorials that come from somewhere else, from lobbies, all kind of lobbies are feeding them in. That sort of editorial, or editorial writer you just have to exclude. But I would think that the general membership--the men and maybe a few women, but it's largely a male organization--that make up the National Conference of Editorial Writers, about 150 only, is one of the most responsible groups of leaders we have in the country, really. The owners of newspapers, you know, if they're wise, leave it to their editors to make the policies. Sometimes an owner, of course, will let it be known what he is for and what he's against, but generally speaking, now, the bigger newspapers are not the tools of one man as they used to be in the old days--they're public institutions, they feel. And so it was no surprise really to us in the NCEW in New York in 1966--we were sitting around one afternoon up there near the United Nations Building--I think it was...or were we then...we were over...well, is there a foreign relations society, I don't know what it is. But it was something with a bigger name than that. And that's where we were holding our

meetings. And one afternoon the messenger came in, went up to the man in the chair, and he looked up and he said, "Well, what's this?" He said, "Well, gentlemen, we have the President of the United States wanting to come up tomorrow and speak to us." That was Lyndon Johnson, and he had a standing invitation, of course, for several years--we always invited him to come, and then we forgot him. We didn't think he was going to do it. But all of a sudden here comes this message the day before, the day when we'd scheduled Mr. Rusk, Secretary of State. We'd had him on the program. So we knew what would happen, the President come off and he knew that there was a spot there anyway on the program, and he just pushed Mr. Rusk off. But it turned out he brought Mr. Rusk along and Mr. Rusk had a few words to say and then the President made what he thought was a major address on the subject of trade with Eastern Europe. That was his subject. And he came to lunch, and I remember in this long, narrow room his table was about halfway down the room, and it was for instance if a room went way down to my left and down to my right and there he was in the middle, faced by cameras and stuff across this narrow room. And he got up and he said, turned this way and turned that and he said, "You've heard of politicians talking out of both sides of their mouths, and now you're going to know it." You see, he had to turn back and forth. That was the kind of an outfit it was. I just say that not to brag about any...not to put undue importance on this, but I think it's an important profession, even though it's small, and it should keep up, and I think it will try to keep up, its standards, and it has a code of ethics and so on. And I've just been glad to be associated with men of that caliber for so many years. Well, then on the paper, I found that my interests lay in Delaware primarily. There were four or five other members of the editorial board, and they could write if they wanted to on foreign affairs and big national events, but I wasn't particularly interested in that. I was a born and bred Delawarean and felt that I could--that my interest and knowledge of the state just put me in a good place to think and write about state affairs, local affairs. So I did. And I found two or three subjects I tended to specialize in. In the first place, editorial writers are generalists; they're not specialists. But they have to--and they want to--become knowledgeable in some fields, at least. They tend to do that. So I got interested in state government and education very early--and I always was interested in what we now call environmental subjects. Then we called it conservation. But one terrific campaign we got into, that I know I got the paper into, and I know the kind of thing that brought this on from Lee Reese one time. He said, "Tony, is this another time you're going to lead us by the nose?" I said, "I don't know, Lee." But anyway, it was long overdue--reorganization of school districts in Delaware. Now, there were over 200 school districts in the state, and I needn't say any more to you about how outdated that was. It just meant that a small district had to have its own high school, and couldn't staff that high school properly, and that was the main crunch on the thing in the high school grades. I think every small area could have a good elementary school if it wanted to, with state aid, but

it couldn't, even with state aid, have a good high school--simply too small. I went to high school in Delaware City for two years and there were about...well, I was in a Latin class, and when they had Latin there were about four kids in that Latin class. And in another class like history, maybe, in the tenth grade in Delaware City the whole grade wasn't more than about 20 or 25 kids, I think. That's a town of 1200 people. And there was a time, even, when only a small minority of the teenage population went to high school, only a small minority. Back in the late teens and early '20's, most children...their parents never even thought about sending them to high school, you know. They had to go to work. What was the purpose of all that learning, you know? So, after grade school they became carpenters and did lots of things like that. But anyhow...that was a horrible example of the inadequacies of small school districts, so I had no problems in working up a good campaign with people in Dover. There was a young Ph.D. who'd just come in and he was the one who started this. He'd given out a news story--he had told a reporter what he thought the state needed and it interested me. And from that we went on to this campaign. We had maps...we did everything...and he failed--we failed completely that round.

Q When did you start this campaign?

A That campaign was started about 1948 or '49 or '50, along in there. And he nearly broke his health over that thing. He was saturated with it, and he knew what he was talking about, but he couldn't get to first base. The time had not come. But the paper worked on that thing so repeatedly through editorials, and some news stories, of course there came out of it too, because this thing was building up. And we used to marshall the arguments time and time again trying to write so that people would read. And I guess they did, because finally about 19... well, the final reorganization of school districts, or what we have now, was not achieved until about 1970. It took about 20 years to do the whole thing, and editorials all over that long period, too. That's the longest campaign I can think of, was the reorganization of school districts in Delaware. And maybe it could be said, well, if you're such a good editorial writer and your newspaper was so influential, why did it take that long? That's a perfectly good question to ask. But we were up against something and we just had to do it our way and as fast as we thought it could be done; and it involved a good many things, of course--costs and how you redistrict a state, how you try to provide the...a standard of support per child, per capita child, whether he lives in a poor district or a rich district. And people got into it. There were public...well, school boards got into it, and the state school board did. Certainly the editorial people weren't more than catalysts. The work was done by people in the profession and educators and by school boards at a state level and local level. But I feel that without the newspaper doing it, taking a lead, I just don't know that it would have been done. They might have caught the fever from all the other states that were doing the same thing, generally, I suspect being led by the newspapers. So you can see why I'm proud of

being a newspaper man, because I share the view of Creed Black, who was an executive editor of the paper for a good while. He said, "I think a good newspaper is the most important institution in a state." And he wasn't ignoring the University either, when he said that. What'd Thomas Jefferson say--if it was a question of government or the press, he'd take the press. Well, you can argue about that. So that was one big case...big campaign. I like to think about it as a success. Another one that might be a success--now you could call it that--was pure obstructionism that we got into...just pure obstructionism. And a good many newspaper campaigns are simply obstructive, trying to stop something that they consider bad or wrong. And this was Shell Oil Company's plan to put a big refinery on 5,000 acres of land and marsh along Delaware Bay in lower New Castle County, starting in 1961. Well, the newspapers, and well, here I am again putting myself into it only because I was the one member of the editorial board that took this thing seriously, as I recall. I don't think Lee Reese would agree with that statement, maybe, because I think he didn't want to have the oil company any more than I did. But... at that time, remember, there was no organized environmental efforts around the state at all. This was just a newspaper going at it, maybe a few others. But anyway...it seemed an abuse of that 5,000 acres to put an oil refinery there, and we fought it. And a pretty delicate matter, you might suspect, because the Chamber of Commerce was for it. We were against it. We were owned by Christiana Securities, which some people...which you know about that...that's DuPont run. So it shows what kind of editorial leadership we had under Lee Reese. The owners--and every paper has to have an owner...

Q He wasn't an owner, was he?

A No, no. But he was employed as the editor-in-chief, and then he became president. But Christiana Securities had the sense to find a man, the best man they could find in their view, and let him make the editorial decisions...the basic editorial decisions, you see. So that's why the News Journal as often as not has opposed what the Chamber of Commerce has done. So, anyway, Lee Reese as chief of the editorial board, and whose decisions were always there, even though he wasn't even in the conferences, often. He held conferences, most of the time he was with us in the conferences. But very, very few times would he come around and say, well, let's have an editorial on this point, or I believe in this, or let's do it. The executive editor, holding the conference, would just do it, you know. And in the absence of criticism or... that didn't mean that Reese...and I bring his name in because he was the leading citizen of Delaware, I felt, for a long time, the number one citizen, while he was running the News Journal. He always got galley proofs of every editorial and sometimes he'd come in and set down and push his chair back and say, "Well, this verges too closely on something for me, for my taste. We cannot seem to have any sympathy for state support of parochial schools." That's one of his points he was very strict on. He believed that that was...that just went against his grain...mine too, for that matter. But he never seemed to...well, he delegated authority

for editorial decisions just as apparently the owners, Christiana Securities gave him carte blanche, you see, and that's the way a newspaper should be run. They're not always as happy as that to get along with, but...

Q Can you think of any time when the owners did interfere with the editorial policy, or did overrule Reese.

A Yes they did once...very overtly, too. That was done in '64--1964--when Creed Black was executive editor. Now we're getting into some more of this modern data. Creed Black, who is the editor of the Philadelphia Inquirer, now. He was a young man who Reese had employed, and he was small and active....dedicated--got under people's skins sometimes. He'd been there about not more than three years, I think, when he so irritated two or three people in the establishment, including Christiana Securities, that Lee Reese suddenly found, to his horror, that Black...that he had been ordered to fire Black, his own...Christiana Securities employers had completely gone over his head and had told him he had to get rid of Creed Black. So, Lee called three or four of us into his office one day, and told us about it. And went on to say that he had considered resigning, but that he did not want to do that. He felt that that would be letting some of the rest of us down, letting the paper down. And felt that maybe...and he had decided, anyway, by the time he had this little meeting, he'd decided that he would not resign but would work with the new man, the substitute that had been put in over his head, and see how that worked out. And he said he felt that he could work with this man and could keep his own integrity and authority. I don't think...that was the worst shock that ever came to him, I know. And I know there was one...well, the chairman of the board at Christiana Securities, Henry Belin DuPont, was acting...who approved this whole thing...I think was more or less taking the judgement, accepting the judgement of another man or two, member or two, of that board who wanted to get rid of Black. Anyway, the man put in Black's place came in in '64 and stayed there 'til he died about two years ago, and his name...very recent...excuse me, I'll be back with his name...Charles M. Hackett, executive editor that was brought in and he stayed there until he died. Well, I had some run-ins with him, but I needn't go into that. I will say in his favor, though, that he came to me one day, Hackett did, and he said, "Tony, I noticed something in Editor & Publisher that might interest you. There's a contest on for editorial writing on environmental matters. Maybe you ought to enter it." So, I did, and I won second prize in the thing, which pleased me very much--especially the \$500 that came with it. That was done by our cartoonist, when I retired. They gave me a dinner, wrote about me in a cantankerous fashion...Jack Jerden, the cartoonist--you see his work in the Evening Journal, do you...do you study newspapers at all?

Q I don't know the name. How long has he been there?

A A good many years, now...did that. Well, perhaps that's enough on editorial campaigns. Oh, but anyway, the Shell Oil Company

thing started in '61. They...the thing that riled us the most, me in particular, was that they got the zoning changed. And I am pretty sure that money talked when it came to the old county government, which was then under a levy court (l-e-v-y) --levy court was the old county government here. And there were three members of it, and I know that one of them was against Shell absolutely, maybe another one...but I'm pretty sure that one of them accepted a bribe and voted their way. And so the zoning, which had been agricultural, was turned to heavy industry, just like that. So that antedates the present problem about oil refineries a whole lot doesn't it? 1961. Anyhow, Delaware Wildland, something else I'm into, got in on it. And other people did, and the result was that Shell Oil Company was kept in the knowledge that they would not be welcome here by a great many people. About three months ago they announced that they had decided not to build a refinery on their land down there--they were going to put it opposite Chester, in New Jersey. They were going to have an East Coast refinery that they'd wanted a long time. Since then, there's been a great deal of environmental work up and down the state, as you know, especially the Coastal Zoning Act--do you know about that? And Governor Peterson appointed me to a...what do you call it...Maybe I missed a few words--maybe you didn't pick up that. I don't know whether you wanted that or not.

Q What was the name of that committee again?

A The Governor's Task Force on Marine and Coastal Affairs, working from April, 1970 to October, '71, published by the College of Marine Studies, University of Delaware. On that board, as you'll see there...went to Dover with people that you know...don't know whether you know any of those, but....Well, Bill Gaither was coordinating the thing. So you see how my professional interest turned out to be my personal interest and vice versa, and that's about the best thing I can say about editorial writing, that often they coincide, your personal interest and your professional interest. You can't tell the difference. You can't make any distinction between them. They're one and the same thing.

Q Can you remember any people that stick out in your mind during the time that you were on the paper...that you worked with, any reporters...

A Oh, yes. I've talked about Lee Reese. Yes, I'll just rattle off some names for you, rather indiscriminately. Martin A. ~~Claber~~ ^{Klaver}, who was my colleague for a while, and then my boss when I was with him on the Evening Journal editorial board. Cy Lieberman... people that are...I'll try to think of people who haven't been on the paper for a good while. Frederick K. Rybold was a former executive editor of the paper then called...it was then called the Journal-Every Evening...strange name, but that was what it was...Cousin Fred, my revered old cousin, who died. But there have been a good many people...copy desk and newspaper reporters... John S. Spruance wrote a great deal about history, and he died rather early. Bill Frank, by all means, William B. Frank, who's still going there--he's just my age; he's 68 and he overcame the

rule against working after age 65 by incorporating himself and selling himself as a corporation to the paper. What do you think of that? That was done through Charles Hackett, the executive editor who has died.

Q Bill Frank's still working on the paper?

A Yes, yes. Bill Frank Inc., I guess you'd have to call it, but he never uses the incorporation. The paper rents him an office, I think, and he pays for the telephone or something, and he's paid for his time, I suppose. I'll try to think of other people. I think perhaps I'd have to make a list and send them to you, if you're interested in that.

Q Can you think of anyone offhand that would be interesting to interview on the history of the paper itself. Probably Reese...

A I would say Reese, certainly. Yes, I certainly would. And I do indeed.

Q Is he living in Wilmington?

A He goes to the office there every day at the News Journal, Charles Lee Reese, Jr. I don't think he does any more newspaper work, but he enjoys having an office there, and he is busy in various civic enterprises. He managed the joining up of all the hospitals in Wilmington. They're now called Wilmington Medical Center--I think, is that the name?--composed of three or four hospitals that had been independent, and he found himself chairman of the committee to look into the advisability of having one hospital management. And so that's what happened, and he's still working on that, I think, and he's very much interested in a plan that has resulted in the legislature providing money for medical scholarships to Jefferson Medical, in Philadelphia, because Delaware has no medical school. Lee was very much interested in that. In my mind...to my mind, and I've said this to a good many people, and I have said it to you, Mr. Reese is not...I want to say this carefully...Charles L. Reese, Jr. for years was the leading citizen of Delaware, in my opinion, mostly because of the influence he had as editor-in-chief and president of the News Journal Company. You might say editor-in-chief of the News Journal papers and president of the News Journal Company, as well as his many civic programs that he was interested in. For instance, he set up and was editor for a long time of the magazine Delaware History, which is the scholarly journal of the Historical Society of Delaware. So you see a person like you, who's interested in history--John Monroe knows him very well, too--you could talk to John about going to see Lee Reese, because anybody who writes about journalism in Delaware should certainly talk to Lee Reese. But my own view of him is that his judgment, his vision, and often his courage, was what helped keep Delaware on whatever track was better than something else, at least. He...back in '48 when I came on the editorial board, one of the things he asked me to do...write often--it wasn't editorial writing...he said, "Tony, what the judiciary needs in this state is a separate and independent Supreme Court." He said, "Delaware

is the only state left in the country that doesn't have an independent Supreme Court. It has a Supreme Court," he said, "as we know, but that's composed of members of the Court of General Sessions (Court of General Sessions as it was called then) and when there's need for a Supreme Court, they...members of that compose the Supreme Court." And he said, "Would you undertake this?" And by that time, since he'd invited me up there and I knew him and I knew what kind of judgment he had, of course I said I'd be happy to. He was my boss--who wouldn't? So I did a series of articles after talking with some judges about it--especially with one judge--you might note this name, Caleb R. Layton--who had been talking with Reese about it. I know that's how Lee got it first--Cale Layton was the one who....You see, that's how editors get to know what to...they ought to do. Somebody comes up from the public...an important public office...and says this is what the papers ought to do now. Well, it was Cale Layton who did that to Reese, I'm sure Lee would say so. And Reese went to me about it. Anyway, Cale called it "the court of leftover judges," which is exactly that, because a judge on the Delaware Supreme Court had to be a judge who had not sat on the case before. So Layton said, "let's call it the court of leftover judges." And I think maybe some of the chief justice at the time who had that title wasn't very happy about that, but....So, that was one of my early experiences with Lee Reese after I got to Wilmington and that turned out very well, because after a couple of years when both parties got into it and finally some genius worked out a scheme by which there would never be any more than one judge that ...there would never be more than a majority of one judge of any party in the judiciary. You'd add them all up and work it out so that when a judge died or resigned, the one who was appointed would have to be of that party or somebody else from another party was leaving the bench then it would be worked out so that the ratio would be maintained. And so both parties were happy about that. It took a long time. I don't know how many editorials it took, and I'm sure that there again it was mostly catalyst work that we did. But Lee...that's the kind of thing that he did. And as I say, now he could retire and not do anything if he wanted to, he's very well off...he's just dedicated to public service, and there he goes, working on hospitals....Now, who else would you talk to besides Lee Reese? Well, the president of the News Journal, Dick Sanger, Richard P. Sanger, and the executive editor, I think would be a very good one to talk to. Why not start at the top now, huh?

Q How long have they been in that office?

A Well, Sanger has been with the News Journal for a long time. He's been president for about three years now. He's about 40. And then there's John G. Craig, Jr., who's about 39, he's 39 I think, and he's executive editor and vice president, and a good friend of mine--he was my boss. And John sent a letter around among some of us not long ago saying if we had anything to add to the history of the News Journal Company he'd be happy to have it. And I wrote him that I was glad he was doing this, so you see he's got an interest in this thing already. That's John G. Craig, Jr., executive editor and vice president.

Q Well, the paper doesn't have a history published, does it?

A No, no. There've been various articles published on the newspaper history. Bill Frank's the best one if you're interested in the history of the newspapers there, Bill Frank, William P. Frank, is the best one to go to. And he's written a lot of it. Oh, there have been issues of the paper when there's been a new addition to the plant, and then there's been, as you can understand, some spurt of history writing about the paper.

Q Well, listen, I don't want to keep you any longer.

A Well, it's been very pleasant for me.

End of interview.