ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH HARRY DEITZ JR.

Interviewed by Ford Risley

Conducted under the auspices of the
Pennsylvania Newspaper Journalists Oral History Program
Department of Journalism
Penn State University
2022

Risley: Okay, we'll get started here. So, it's March 25, 2022, and I'm here near Reading to interview Harry Deitz for the Pennsylvania Newspaper Journalist Oral History Program. Thanks for doing this. Tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about your family.

Deitz: Well, I was born in 1952 in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, a coal region town. My grandfather on my father's side was a coal miner who was hurt in a mining accident and disabled for a good bit of his life. They lived in poverty in that area for the rest of their life and my dad's early life. My grandfather, on the other side, was a carpenter. So, I came from a grassroots type of family. But they were good families and in a good area to be to be raised. The coal mines were a big part of Shamokin. My family's history comes from a lot over in Germany and England. My mother's side, my great, great, great, great grandfather, his name was John Staily. And he was one of the founders of Liverpool, Pennsylvania, because he came over here from Liverpool. We always take a lot of pride in that. And so that's where I started. That's where life began for me.

My father, Harry J. Deitz Sr. is a longtime newspaperman. He's still on the go and active and taking pictures and working as a freelancer. He's quite as a story in himself. My mother was a homemaker and took care of us kids. We were very close to her, my brother and sister and I. They were both natives of Shamokin. And she was the one that took care of the home. And my father was out working all the time. So we didn't know him as well as we did my mother. But eventually, as we grew older and I decided to put a book together, we learned a lot about my father, who he was and why he became what he did.

Risley: Is it fair to say your father was a big influence on you getting into the newspaper business?

Deitz: There's no doubt about it. He got me my first job. And he was the one who inspired me to become a writer and photographer.

Risley: Where did you go to school?

Deitz: We lived in Shamokin till around 1964. I was born in '52. And we lived there for the first twelve years of my life. So, I went to school for seven years in Shamokin, and then my parents built a house outside of town. It was in another school district—Southern Columbia. So, in eighth grade, I transferred to Southern Columbia. That's where I graduated and where I met my first wife. From there, I went to Bloomsburg State College to study English and get a degree as an English teacher. So that was pretty much the education.

Risley: But you didn't go into teaching. You went into the newspaper business. Talk about that.

Deitz: Well, I student taught, and I found out that it wasn't a good fit for me. Meanwhile, I had started to get some experience in newspapers. So, the summer before my senior year of college, I was preparing to spend a summer job trimming Christmas trees, which I had done the previous year too. And my dad came home in the spring one day, and he said, "Our photographer at the paper"—they only had one photographer—"is going out for surgery, and he'll be out the whole summer. We need somebody to fill in for him for the summer." My father didn't want me to do that. And I didn't want to do it because we didn't think it was a good thing for he and I to be working together. But we both knew that they had a problem and this was a far better opportunity than trimming Christmas trees.

Risley: Where did your father work? What newspaper?

Deitz: He worked at the *Shamokin News-Item* at that time. It had been the *Shamokin News Dispatch*. He was like the city editor at the time. And I didn't know anything about being a newspaper photographer. I mean, I had done some photography and a little bit of writing in college. But he gave me a crash course on—I mean, I could take pictures—but all the darkroom work. It was the old-style dark room with the developer and fixer pans and the enlarger. He gave me a crash course: How to load film into cassettes and take it out and put it into developing tanks and, and all those things. So, he taught me all that. It turned out to be a good experience.

By the end of the summer, some people at the newspaper went together and bought a weekly newspaper down in Schuylkill County, the *Valley Citizen*. And there was another paper that was connected to it—the *Herndon Standard*. And they combined the papers into the *Citizen Standard*. They bought them from a local guy who was just a one-person, small-town newspaper editor. And they wanted people to run this newspaper. So, they hired an editor. And they asked me, if I would like to be the sports editor and the photo editor. Now, this was the end of the summer. I had a year of school to go yet. So, in the fall, they say, "Well, you can do the job part-time. And when you graduate, you have a full-time job." So that's what we did.

I worked that whole school year, in addition to finishing school and student teaching. I found out that newspaper work was what I'd really like to do. It was a much better fit for me. I really didn't like being confined in the classroom. I liked being out and talking to people and doing that kind of creative work. So, that's what I did.

Risley: What year was that?

Deitz: That was in 1973. So, when I graduated from college, I started full-time there. And I worked there for several years. About a year after I started there, the editor at the weekly paper left to go to another place. I believe Williamsport to work at the *Grit,* maybe? I don't remember. They offered me the editor's job at the weekly paper. So, a year out of school, and I was the editor of a weekly

paper. It still wasn't what I wanted to do. What I really wanted to do was be a sportswriter and a sports editor. I kept asking them if anything opens up at the Shamokin paper, I would like to make that move. And in 1975, that happened. They needed a sports editor. So, I went to work in Shamokin and stayed there until 1978 when I interviewed for a sportswriter's job at the *Reading Eagle* and was hired.

Risley: Tell me the name of the Shamokin paper again.

Deitz: *The News-Item*.

Risley: Was it a daily?

Deitz: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was a decent-sized daily for a town like that. Probably back in those days, it was a circulation maybe 15,000, which today would be phenomenal. Yeah, about 15,000. It served the Shamokin and Mount Carmel areas basically.

Risley: All right. So, in 1978, you joined the *Reading Eagle* as a sportswriter. What sort of things did you cover?

Deitz: Ironically, they had a really strong edition on Sunday that went up into the coal region, the whole coal region. And it was called the Anthracite Pages and they circulated 18,000 to 20,000 newspapers on a Sunday up into Northumberland, Schuylkill, and even up into the Hazleton area. So, it was really well-known and well-respected in that area. That was a primary part of what I was doing. I was their anthracite sports reporter. Covered local football, a lot of wrestling, basketball, track, and baseball.

Risley: High school sports?

Deitz: High school sports. Plus, they had an amateur world-class men's fastpitch softball team called the Reading Sunners. And I covered them for about three or four years also.

Risley: What did you enjoy about sportswriting?

Deitz: I liked getting out and seeing the games and being able to tell the stories of the people that were playing the games, Especially the people themselves, and why they were able to do well in the sports. It was fun. But after a while I did grow tired of it. And I was ready to move on.

Risley: And so, what did you do next?

Deitz: In 1985, there was an editor there named Al Nerino who had hired me actually in Reading as a sportswriter. And they wanted to do some improvements with the paper and more work with design work. So, I had, by this time, been working in sports. I was doing more desk work instead of just out covering

now as an assistant sports editor and then the daily sports editor. And so, I had learned a lot and done a lot with design work. So, they decided to appoint me as their design editor. And that was the next step of what I learned to do: design work.

Risley: What did you enjoy about that?

Deitz: You can be so creative. It's fun to put together. Old-style newspapers, they just sort of galleyed everything in different areas. And, it didn't have the organization that a lot of newspapers were moving to. So, we were able to get creative. We were able to do some artwork, and we were able to present pages that were not only interesting but also were attractive. I worked on that for a while and that was a good experience too. But then I wanted to get into a little bit more with the overall operation of the newspaper. So, I eventually was named assistant managing editor and then managing editor.

Risley: What time period are we talking about here?

Deitz: We're talking in the '80s and '90s. In the '90s, I was working directly under Chuck Gallagher, who was the managing editor, and eventually he became editor, and I became managing editor. We worked together for close to fifteen years there, until he retired in beginning of 2008. We had a good relationship. We were two very different people, but we had a good working relationship and a good friendship.

Risley: What would you say were the strengths of the *Eagle* during this time?

Deitz: Community news coverage was especially important, and we were really good at it. We focused on local news, especially during that time when Chuck and I got involved. I mean, not that they didn't do local news before. But some of the older newspapers, you'd pick up the pages of the paper and going back into the '30s, '40s, and '50s, a lot of times they were getting into wire coverage, a lot more national things. We were focusing a lot more at that time on local news. So, that that was a big part of it. That was a big strength of the paper.

Risley: How big was the newsroom?

Deitz: Now, we're going back to the early part of when Chuck and I started to work together. We had anywhere from 110 to 120 people in the newsroom. It was a good-sized newsroom. It wasn't on par with Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, but we always considered ourselves like the minor leagues. You had the major leagues, like the big newspapers. And we sort of the minor leagues that people could work at for a couple years and move on to something bigger. And a number of people did too. But we still did some really good work.

Risley: What do you recall are some of the most important or interesting stories that you all covered?

Deitz: So, I became editor in 2008 when Chuck retired. And we did a lot of really neat things. At that time there was a lot of crime in Reading; there still is. But we covered a lot of the crime. We did a series on cold cases and murders that had gone cold. We did a lot of coverage of the heroin crisis. And this is in the 2008 to 2018, about a decade in there. And then we did an extensive package on lead contamination in the soil. We did a series on nursing home care. We did an extensive one-year coverage of a hospice patient. We did a full-season coverage of the ins and outs of a high school football team in the Reading school district. We did a series on civility, which I was very proud of. We did a lot of coverage on suicide and the prevention of it.

And of course, we covered 9/11. Chuck was still there at the time when 9/11 occurred. But the irony of that for me was that they used to have a retreat that they'd take the top people from all the departments up to a cabin in the Poconos. It was a lodge with a big lake and they would take them up for a couple days to this lodge. And they went up on the night before 9/11. All the top executives of the paper were at this lodge and 9/11 hit that morning. I was the senior member of the newsroom when that happened. So, I got the opportunity to initiate and lead the early coverage of that.

Risley: What a story. So, you all took some really sort of deep dives into subjects?

Deitz: We did. Yeah.

Risley: Why did you think that was important?

Deitz: I think it's important that we continued to do things to improve the community and make better quality of life for people, make people aware of things that were going on in the community and in the region around them. People needed to know those things.

Risley: What was Reading like during that time, as a city and as a community?

Deitz: During what time?

Risley: Well, throughout your career, but especially when you were editor.

Deitz: The neat thing about Reading when I first moved here was, it was a pretty big city, but there's a lot of neat rural areas around Berks County. Berks County is a beautiful place. There's a lot around here. It was a great place to live and raise a family. Reading, the city of Reading, has had its problems. There's a lot of poverty there. There's been a lot of crime there, and that continued to get worse. So, it's struggling like a lot of cities are. A lot of people were moving to the suburbs. There were people that were moving in from New York and places like that and a lot of absentee landlords. So, there wasn't always the pride in the properties that there had been for many, many years. And they're working very hard to change that. It's become a very diverse community, and there are some real benefits to that. But there also has been a struggle because a lot of the

longtime people that were there aren't as tolerant of diversity as the new people that have come in. So, there's a couple of different factions, and they're still working on it.

Risley: But there were certainly plenty of stories to cover.

Deitz: Oh, yeah.

Risley: What did you enjoy about the job as editor?

Deitz: I got to build an excellent staff and newsroom that was able to make a difference in the community. We did have an excellent staff. It wasn't as big as it had been years earlier, probably in the eighty-five to ninety range in the newsroom. But it was still a good-size newspaper. And we were able to put together some really good coverage. It was rewarding to be able to pick up the newspaper in the morning and read the work of some of what I consider the best reporters, writers, and photographers in the state. What I really enjoyed was I got the opportunity to write a weekly column and connect with readers.

Risley: I want to talk about that in a minute. What did it mean for the newspapers to be locally owned?

Deitz: It was so important at the time. The owners lived in the community. They were part of it, they were invested in it. And they went out into the community and interacted with people. They took pride in the community. So that was really important, and it had a long history too, of local ownership. It was founded in 1868 by Jesse Hawley, and his descendants continued to run and operate the paper and be involved with it. Hawley Quier was the publisher before I got there. But when I was there, Bill Flippin was the publisher. He lived in the area and he still does. He was involved and in there every day and being part of the community. And it wasn't like they just came in and gave you some orders and didn't pay attention. After I became editor, I spent a good bit of my time in an office in the executive suite. And his office was next to mine. We talked every day.

Risley: Why was it important for you to write a weekly column, and what was the goal of the column?

Deitz: I think the importance of it was, it was a personal connection to our readers. I got to share my thoughts. They got to know me. Not that I was looking for them to know me, but they didn't feel this newspaper editor was somebody that was sitting off in an office locked up somewhere. They got to know a little bit about me and what I believed in, and how I viewed things. It started shortly after I became editor.

The newspaper had started a press project. They bought a new press in 2009. And they built a new production facility. A massive investment for a company that had never gone into debt. Turned out not to be a good decision in the long

run. There were a lot of things that came out of that that hurt the eventual state of the paper financially. But at the time, it looked like to some people that it made a lot of sense to do that. So, one of the things we wanted to do was to share with the readers what was going on and why we were doing things and how their newspaper was changing, and the new design and everything. So, I wrote some columns to explain what was happening with the content and the presentation of the newspaper.

It got to the point where I thought that was pretty good. I was getting some response to it, and I thought I should continue to connect with our readers. So, I did. Every Sunday it ran at the top of page two. And I eventually I had three goals for it. One was to tell readers how the newspaper works, and how and why we make decisions. So, if there was a controversial thing going on, I would explain what went into our decision of how we covered it, and where we played it in the newspaper. Why it was important to cover. So, that was the one goal. Another goal was, I thought it was important for readers to understand what the editor of the newspaper thought about issues in the community. So, I would comment on things often like poverty, crime, some feel-good stories about people who just did some good things in the community and the positives. And the third thing that I did was more personal. I shared my personal views about life, my family, which was not what I intended to do originally.

I always thought I was a private person, but I started to open up about things about my kids, especially my grandkids, my parents, my grandparents, family issues. And then just some personal views on how I looked at life in general. Those were the ones that received the most attention. They got the greatest feedback because people could relate to what I was saying. I got so many people that would come up to me or call me or write notes to me and say, "I felt exactly what you said, what you wrote. And I wish I could have written that." And I was fortunate. I had the opportunity and the forum to do it. It was a real privilege to be able to be in that position and do that.

Risley: It sounds like it was a real labor of love.

Deitz: It was. Eventually, I wrote a story about my role as a caretaker for my wife, who for six years was suffering from some life-threatening, and eventually life-ending diseases: Parkinson's, breast cancer, diabetes. There were a lot of issues with dementia. So, for six years, I was the primary caregiver for her. And I wrote a story called "The Story of a Caregiver," and published it on page one, about a month or two after she died. It got hundreds of responses to it. So, this whole idea of opening up and telling people about yourself and what you experience, people related to that. So that was all an opportunity that came out of what started as a column to be able to write stories like that.

But I know that through all of this, one of the things that I kept coming back to was that this job as editor was not something that I ever had on my list of things, to be the editor of the *Reading Eagle* someday. I never dreamed that it

was going to ever come be something that I would accomplish. I wanted to be an editor of some type, but I never thought I'd be at the top. So, in a way that was good, because one of the things that I've I found was, I came to believe, and I wrote this at one point, that an editor should never feel he is someone who's too special because of his or her high-profile position, and the influence he or she can have. You're only as good as your readers see you every day. It helped to keep me grounded and to know the readers were watching what I was doing. If I was out-of-line, they were going to let me know. And sometimes they did.

Risley: How would you describe your style of management?

Deitz: This one is real simple. I hired talented people, and I let them do their jobs. When I asked them to do certain things, or certain jobs, I tried to stay out of their way. So, when I was editor, I let the managing editor manage the newsroom. And I let the people who did other things, do their jobs, and not have to feel that I needed to micromanage everything that they did.

Risley: What about when you had to step in for something?

Deitz: We met. We had a lot of meetings, and we had a lot of conversations. We had two news meetings a day. So, we were communicating all the time. I had a lot of connection with the staff because I was coordinating all the evaluations for all the members of the newsroom. I was meeting with everybody on it for their annual review. I kept in touch with all the members of staff that way. But eventually I passed that off to the managing editor because I felt, as I was getting closer to retirement, that was the job he needed. So yeah, I turned it over there. But, when there were issues, we would get together, and we'd talk about it. In the old-style of newsrooms it used to be that if you did something wrong, an editor would stand up in the middle of the newsroom and scream across the newsroom at you. Nobody did that. Once or twice when it did happen, it was addressed immediately. So, we weren't doing that. We respected people and expected that they were professionals and could do their jobs. And they did.

Risley: What would you say were your strengths and your weaknesses as an editor?

Deitz: I learned to be a good line editor early on. I took a lot of pride in that. I don't think I was when I first became an editor, but I became one. I believe one of my strengths was coming up with good ideas for things. And then making sure that they were carried through. So, a lot of times these projects that we were doing, I'd come in with something, and I'd get together with all the senior editors, and we'd be throwing things around. We had planning meetings just for those kinds of things and I'd get together with them. Sometimes I'd throw something out. And they would close their eyes or roll their eyes and shake their heads and say, "Oh, no. What's he doing now." But, eventually, they turned out to be some pretty darn good packages and projects. I think I set goals for the staff and expected the editors to meet them. I think one of the strengths was I never believed that I was somebody special because I was the

editor of the paper. I always said, I just believe God put me in that position for a reason. And I tried to be responsible for that.

We all have weaknesses and in the beginning, I didn't feel comfortable being out in the public, and the public part of the job. Being out interacting with community leaders, and executives from companies and all. It just wasn't something that I was comfortable doing. But I did that and I even came to enjoy some of it. I used to go out and speak to a lot of groups. And they wanted to know more about the newspaper. So, they'd invite me out to talk about different things that we were doing, projects that we were working on, or just the newspaper in general, and it's important to the community. I got to the point where I just went out and talked and didn't even need notes. It got to a comfort level where I felt very confident in doing that. So, the job helped me to overcome what I think was a weakness of mine.

Risley: What would you say was the role of the *Eagle* in the area?

Deitz: Well, I think it was critical in making the community better and safer. And we did a lot of work in those areas to do that. I think it was important to report community news. Of course, the big thing was holding officials accountable and we were doing that all the time. We were covering meetings; we were covering events that were going on. If something was going on, if something happened that was questionable, we dug into it. Part of the investigative team that we had was there for that reason.

Risley: Tell me about that investigative team and how that came about and how they operated.

Deitz: It was one of the things that I was most proud of during my time there. We wanted to make a difference in the community. And it came about because we we were doing a lot of what we called metro coverage—community news coverage. We would assign reporters to cover so many school districts and so many communities within those school districts. There were eighteen school districts in Berks County. And I think at that time, we had nine metro reporters. So, they'd each get two school districts and all the communities and municipalities within those school districts. And at one point, I thought we should be looking into something more than just doing community coverage. We should be looking at the issues that impact the community.

So, we took a look at the way the metro department was structured and decided that if we took one or two people out of these different areas, and just gave some of the metro reporters, three school districts to cover instead of two, and fill in with some correspondence freelancers to do the rest of the work, we could create this investigative team. And that's what we did. It started with two people. One was a guy named Jason Brudereck, who was one of our better reporters. He was excellent. And another one was Ford Turner. He had come to work for us as a writer for a new business publication that we had started called *Business Weekly*. He had taken a buyout at the Harrisburg *Patriot*, and

then wound-up freelancing down in Florida. He wanted to get back into full-time newspaper work and once he took the buyout at Harrisburg, he couldn't go back to Harrisburg to work. That was part of the agreement. So, I get this resume from Ford Turner, and I knew who Ford Turner was. And, I thought, "Oh, my word. I have the opportunity to hire one of the best writers in the state. How can I not?" So, I did. And he did that business role for a year or two. He was such a great writer, that I thought, if we're going to do these investigative pieces, we need some really strong writing.

So, I asked him to move over on this investigative team. And he was reluctant to do it because he liked what he was doing. And I said, "There's going to be a lot more to your role in in this job than there is where you're at now." So, he and Jason started out and started doing some things. And the first one that kicked off was project on the cold cases—murder cases—in the county over the course of a couple of decades that had gotten cold. They looked into them, and in a couple of the cases, people started to look into them again. I don't know that there were a lot of them that were solved, but there was at least one that there was some progress made on. So, it made a difference in that way.

We continued to do that kind of work. Then Jason left to go work for a community foundation, and we were trying to decide how we wanted to fill that position. There was another fellow on staff we thought was a good fit. His name was Mike Urban. But what I thought we needed was somebody that could be a numbers cruncher. So, I was looking for somebody that could get into spreadsheets and databases and put together those kinds of things to help support some of these projects that we were doing. So, we put an ad out and had a couple of good candidates. We wound up hiring a woman from Texas, actually, which was really rare for us to bring somebody in from out of the area, but she had a lot of skills that we were looking for. Her name was Nicole Brambila. And she came up and we moved Mike over and moved her over into this role.

So, we had a three-person investigation team, which was really a luxury at this time, and they took off. Ford was the leader of this team and the three of them worked together very well. Sometimes they worked two on a project, sometimes solo. But they continued to do great work for us. And I think it was a real positive in the community. So that was probably one of the biggest things that I was proud of while we were there. We won six straight Sweepstakes Awards in the last years before I retired.

Risley: That's from the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association?

Deitz: News Media Association. We won three straight Inland Press Association, National Community Leadership Awards. The first one was in 2013, for our push for officials to address the serious crime issues in the city. And that included a front-page editorial that led to a crime summit and sparked the pretty steady decline in violent crime in the city. I didn't write a lot of

editorials, but that was one of the few I wrote. We ran it on the top of the front-page of the paper, and it really had some impact.

We produced two great new products *Business Weekly* in 2011, and another product called *Berk's Country*, which was aimed at the rural community. They were tabloids and that came out in 2012. Those tabloids were aimed at specific audiences. So, they were pretty successful, at least in the beginning. Another thing that we're pretty proud of, was being awarded the Pennsylvania News Media Association's Public Service Award in 2013. That was for our work addressing crime in Reading. We did a lot of other special projects and things that I was proud. We started an annual newsmakers feature in 2015, that recognized people who made a difference in the community that year in eight different categories. So, that was that was a neat project.

And I also was personally involved in a number of state organizations that I took a lot of pride in: PSNE and Pennsylvania Associated Press Managing Editors. I was on the board of those for many years and served as president of both those organizations. So, I got to interact with people that I respected and I learned a lot from. When I needed information or needed to communicate, or a sounding board, I could call those people and talk to them. Ernie Schreiber down in Lancaster and I were very close, also Cate Barron at Harrisburg, Jim McClure at York. We shared a lot of things and in some cases, even were able to find jobs for people at other newspapers that we were skilled and wanted to keep them in the state.

Risley: What about regrets? What were you unable to do or didn't work out like you would have hoped?

Deitz: One problem that I was always battling in Reading was the lack of diversity on the staff. It was a challenge. We brought minority candidates in, but it was a very white newsroom. I don't know that they felt comfortable there. It's not anything we did. We wanted to be more diverse. I even went to diversity news hiring conferences to try to find people, and did find a couple of them and brought them in. We needed more Spanish language speaking people, Latinos, that would be on staff. And we got a couple of really good people, because of the growing Latino community in the city of Reading.

But we were never able to reach the level that I thought we should have in the makeup of the staff. So that that was disappointing even though we tried very hard. But I always wanted to hire the best person that was available. Sometimes there weren't the candidates that we were looking for who wanted to come to Reading. I mean, if they were really good, they could go to Philadelphia or Pittsburgh or Harrisburg. Why would they come to Reading? So, that was disappointing, because I thought we had a lot to offer, and the community was a great place to live, and a great place to cover. I guess the other thing that I was disappointed in was that less than two years after I retired from the paper, the paper filed for bankruptcy and was sold.

Risley: I want to come back to that. How would you describe the state of newspapers in Pennsylvania during your career? What was it like, in general?

Deitz: People respected what we did. And the work that we did didn't really change a lot. It's not like we did anything worse than we were doing before. It's sad to see the decline. But I think most newspapers are still trying to do the right thing. And they're trying to find the right model to be able to serve their community and still succeed. And that's a challenge. Because the mistakes that were made early on with the internet, trying to balance giving news away for free and being able to generate enough revenue to support the staff to do the coverage that needed to be done. That was a challenge.

Risley: Did that take up a lot of your time in trying to kind of just figure out the economic model and how to go forward?

Deitz: I don't know that any of us had a really good answer to it. A lot of people believed at the time, that we couldn't give our news away. And there's a lot to be said for that. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and the really big papers could say to people, you've got to pay for it if you want it online. But there were a lot of people in smaller papers that were looking at it and saying, if you don't give it to people online, allow them to read it, they'll get their news somewhere else. And it was a real challenge to convince people that well, you can get it somewhere else, but is it news you trust? I mean, is it? Is the source dependable? Is it accurate? And so there was a real struggle to try to balance that. I don't know that a lot of places have really found a solution to that because the smaller papers weren't able to generate, at least the ones that I know of, weren't able to generate enough revenue from online ads to be able to support the model. And so, they needed the printed edition to be able to generate revenue.

For most of the time, including while I was still there, we were still generating almost all of our revenue from the print edition. That's continued to struggle. What was a 120,000 circulation newspaper was reduced to a 20,000 circulation newspaper. That makes a big difference. It's not just the circulation revenue that goes down. It's the ad rates that go down with them. And so, the overall revenue, is reduced. It's hard to support a staff like that, which is why most of these places have taken staffs that were in the eighties, like we were, and they're now lucky to have twenty.

Risley: What year did you retire?

Deitz: I retired in 2018.

Risley: And what was that decision like?

Deitz: It was a relief at the time because things had changed at the paper. Family leadership at the paper had changed, and it was no longer the place that I had worked for most of my career. It was a lot more difficult. A lot of people were

coming in to run newspapers throughout the state that had no experience at running newspapers. And it was becoming more of a business model than the combination of business and journalism. So a lot of times there were the issues with advertising in the newsroom. The wall, as we called it, was breaking down. And there was a lot of pressure in those areas. I grew tired of fighting that battle. At one point, I thought I would work until I was 70, but that was no longer an option. So it was time. It was the right thing for me and it gave a couple other people at the paper an opportunity to step into leadership and have their time.

Risley: Has it been difficult to see what's happened to the *Eagle*?

Deitz: Heartbreaking. There are still good people there, good reporters and editors. I actually had contact with the new publisher of the paper, who was brought in by the group that bought them. His name is Ed Condra, and I have a positive take on him. He really is trying to do a good job with that newspaper. Just the little bit of interaction that I've had with him, mostly through some emails, I've been impressed. But they're all struggling to be able to keep going. They had a couple of rounds of layoffs that really devastated that staff.

People look at the hedge fund that owns the company and say, "That's what they do. They cut staff." And they do. I mean, that's a fact. There's no denying that. But here's the thing that I remind people. I have a lot of people that will say to me, "Boy, what's happened to the newspaper?" My answer to them is, "Yeah, it's not what it was. But we still have a local newspaper. And don't lose sight of that, how important that is." They're still producing a newspaper. And in Reading every day they're still printing. So, we have a newspaper. We have people who are keeping an eye in the community, not to the extent that we did years ago, but we still have a newspaper and that's something that's important.

Risley: Is there anything you'd like to add that you know, we didn't discuss?

Deitz: I think we covered most of what we had planned to. I guess one of the things that, again, this is just on what I talked about a little while ago: one of the things that I think it's important for the community to know is that there's a lot of people who get their news and information from a lot of untrusted and unreliable sources. And they complain that the newspapers cost too much and they aren't worth investing in. But I still believe in newspapers. I believe in them in print and online. I think they're critical to our communities and our democracy. And I'm happy that we still have one, and I think people would be very sorry if we no longer did. I don't think that's going to happen. And hopefully, we'll continue to do have this coverage and continue to tell the stories of the community and keep the community leaders accountable.

Risley: Thank you.