

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH GENE FOREMAN

Interviewed by Ford Risley

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Gene Foreman Interview

- Risley: OK, we're here for an oral history interview with Gene Foreman. It's Thursday, March 29, 2007, and we're doing the interview here in State College. OK, Gene you want to say a couple things?
- Foreman: I'm glad to be part of this oral history.
- Risley: Well, Gene, let's just start with some basic biographical information so we can have it on the record. Tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about your upbringing and your family.
- Foreman: I was born November 20, 1934, in Fremont, Ohio. My dad had lived all his life in Ohio except when he was in the Army during the five years immediately before, during and after World War I. My mother grew up in Arkansas but she had relatives in Ohio, and she met my father while she was visiting in their little hometown of Oak Harbor, Ohio. I was the second of six children. We moved to Arkansas in 1941 when I was six years old. My dad had become interested in farming in Arkansas on his trips there to visit my mother's family. I grew up in a little farming community in eastern Arkansas about 60 miles south of Memphis.
- Risley: What was the name of the community?
- Foreman: Wabash. It was a company town owned by the Howe Lumber Company, which went into farming after they had cut down all the hardwood. My grandfather on my mother's side was the millwright at their big sawmill there. Our farm was eight miles away, so I never really lived on a farm, but there were only about 150 people in town.
- Risley: Where did you go to school?
- Foreman: I went to first grade in Ohio in Oak Harbor [and] in the second, third and fourth in a two-room school at Wabash. Miss Faye Parker was our teacher. In fifth grade we rode the bus to Elaine, which is the larger town in the school district. I went through the fifth to the twelfth in Elaine. I graduated from Elaine High School in 1952 and then went to Arkansas State College at Jonesboro, graduating in '56.
- Risley: Well, how did you become interested in journalism?
- Foreman: I don't really know. I always have been interested in journalism. I started drawing front pages for my parents when I was nine years old. I put out a little paper for the family and later, with a friend whose mother had a typewriter, put out a community paper in Wabash for a year or two. My father's brother, Millard Foreman, was Ohio/Michigan editor of the *Toledo Blade*, and before he got married, he and his friends from the paper

would come over after work to play pinochle in our house. I don't remember this, but my dad said I'd sit under the table and listen to these newspapers guys talk, and he thinks at least subliminally that's how I became interested in journalism. But then we moved to Arkansas, and since during that time long-distance travel was not very practical, I never saw my uncle again. He died of a heart attack in '46 or '47 – maybe a little later than that, maybe it was '48. But he knew that I was interested in journalism, and he would send me stories and he would comment on what I was doing.

Risley: Did you work on the newspaper in high school or college?

Foreman: We had a little high school. In the ninth through twelfth grade there were 85 students, and there were 17 in my graduating class. But we did have a newspaper and I was editor. And at Arkansas State, I was the editor of the *Herald* my senior year.

Risley: Well how did you go to work at the *Pine Bluff Commercial*, which I believe was your first job?

Foreman: No, it wasn't.

Risley: Oh, it wasn't?

Foreman: As it happened, in 1948 I won the Phillips County Spelling Bee, and the editor of the *Phillips County Herald* interviewed me, and he found out in the course of the interview that I really wanted to be a journalist. After all this was over, he said I could be the Wabash correspondent for the *Phillips County Herald*. I was 13 years old. I would go around and gather social notes and all the "big" stories. That led to a job in Helena the following summer when I was 14 years old. I had finished the ninth grade and I started working there at the *Helena World*, the daily newspaper, and I had jobs there four summers, including the summer before I went to Arkansas State. The summer after my freshman year I got a job at the *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, the afternoon paper which doesn't exist anymore. And starting in '54, in the summers I worked at the *Arkansas Gazette*.

Risley: Is this when you were still in college?

Foreman: Yeah.

Risley: OK.

Foreman: The *Helena World* was a great opportunity to really get into the business. They generally had a new editor every year, but each one of them taught me something. So I felt after my first year in college I was really ready for the big time of Southern journalism, which was Memphis. I found the people there were not particularly welcoming of college kids. So I was

more than happy to get a chance the next year to go to the *Arkansas Gazette* which is the big paper in our state. And that's where I worked in the summer of '54 and the summer of '55. And also the summer after I graduated from college while I was waiting going into the Army with my ROTC commission. As a result, I had eight summer jobs before I started my "official" career, which I measure from April of 1957 when I got out of the Army and went back to the *Gazette*. The reason I signed up for advanced ROTC was that I was going to be in the Army for two years no matter what, and that if I didn't go in advanced ROTC, I would be drafted. My dad had been an officer and I liked that idea and I worked hard at it. During my senior year as graduation approached, the Army announced that they had a surplus of second lieutenants. We could go in for six months if we would accept a longer commitment to be in a reserve unit. Since I already had a job lined up, and since the Army was not my career and newspapers were, that was an easy decision. I was one of only about three or four out of our 40-member graduating class who, when they had that chance, said they'll take the six months. And so of the 40, which included, I might add, two future general officers and several colonels, I was the first one out of the Army. That day, April 5, 1957, I count as the beginning of my official, grown-up newspaper career.

Risley: And you went to work for the *Gazette*?

Foreman: Yes. I did various general-assignment reporting jobs. I was at the paper when [Arkansas Governor Orval] Faubus called out the National Guard in September to keep Central High School desegregated and launched the crisis that was to tie up the city for two years. While it was very troubling for all the trauma that the city and state were going through, it was the big story of my life. I am proud of what the paper did, and proud that I had a part, however small, in what it did. The paper stood up to Faubus, and Harry Ashmore, of course, won the Pulitzer Prize for his editorials opposing Faubus. We lost 20 percent of our circulation in two weeks. We felt beleaguered but we were proud to work for Harry and for the owner of the paper, John Netherland Heiskell. Mr. Heiskell risked everything to take a stand. It was so dramatic, and while we were isolated in the community, we knew we were right and history would vindicate the *Gazette*. So the greatest story in my newspaper career happened right at the beginning.

Risley: You said you played a small part. Tell me what kind of part.

Foreman: I was one of about 14 reporters on the on the city desk. Bill Shelton, the city editor, did an excellent job of directing the coverage. His approach, though, was different from what we would do today. Bill would have one person out at Central High School who would do the main story and be observing and gathering information. Then he would have a second person who would do the color sidebar. Ray Moseley, who was later a foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*, was our main-story guy,

and he remains one of the best journalists I've ever had the pleasure of working with. Jerry Dhonau was the color guy, and I think that Bill selected him not only because he was a good reporter but he had graduated five years earlier from Central High. He and I were the same age. The staff was very young as a group. I was one of the other reporters who would do sidebars and cover developments on the weekends. I would work Sundays, so for Monday's paper I would do the roundup story for the Monday paper. There were plenty of stories to write, and we all got to write some of them. In the fall of '57 I had filled in as assistant city editor working with Bill. He had one assistant, and even though I was just turning 23 years old, he said, "How about coming on the city desk as my assistant?" I didn't know what to think. I probably should have said, "Well, maybe five years from now. I want to get more experience reporting." But I also realized that my skills were more as an editor and organizer of coverage rather than a reporter. Some people can make a bigger contribution that way, while others should never be an editor because they are so good as a reporter. Editing came naturally to me and I felt good about being an editor. A couple of years later, the job of state editor directing all the coverage outside of Little Rock and its county came open, and I got that job.

Risley: So you worked as an assistant editor and then moved over to become state editor?

Foreman: Yes.

Risley: OK.

Foreman: Yes. While I was on the city desk, I helped Bill direct the coverage of the rest of the Central High crisis. If you could say that there was a beginning of the crisis, it was the segregationist campaigning against the court-ordered desegregation in the summer of '57. That campaign came to a climax when Faubus called out the Guard on Labor Day evening. Harry [Ashmore] pointed out in his editorials that the federal government is not going to let the governor of Arkansas get away with defying a federal court order – and that ultimately the federal government will enforce its court order, no matter -- and I am quoting from his editorial -- "no matter what the cost to this community." It was absolutely prophetic. [President Dwight] Eisenhower, who I think contributed to the chaos by not taking aggressive action earlier, ultimately realized that he's got to send in the troops to enforce the order. Once that was over, it was established we were going to have desegregation that year. Nearly all public expression was being driven underground by the intimidation tactics of the segregationists. Faubus, who had been a moderate, became as vitriolic as the segregationist leaders like Jim Eastland or Ross Barnett. Little Rock then was not a pleasant place. The next year, '58-'59, they closed the high schools to avoid another year of desegregation. Finally, people realized there's something more important than segregation, and that's education.

It took two years for that to happen. I think that Ashmore's editorials and our dispassionate news coverage contributed to changing the climate in Little Rock, to the point where they were willing to say, "Let's have schools." In the spring of 1959 they threw the dead-end segregationists off the school board and reelected the moderates. As soon as the courts declared Faubus' school-closing law was unconstitutional, they reopened the schools in August of '59. They reopened them early to keep Faubus from calling a special legislative session to pass another unconstitutional law. Bill Shelton was on vacation when they announced that the day after tomorrow we're going to have schools open at Central High and that the other high schools would be desegregated. So I reached Shelton while he was on vacation and I told him what was happening. Then there was a pause and I said, "Well, are you going to come back to direct the coverage?" And he said, "Do you think I should?" And I said, "I can handle it." He said, "Good." It turned out to be my greatest day in journalism. I really appreciate the fact that Bill gave me a chance to do it.

Risley: Why do you say it was your greatest day?

Foreman: That I directed the coverage of an all-encompassing event—that I had 14 reporters and I deployed all 14 of them. We were desegregating not just Central High but also a second high school, and we wanted to watch several schools that day. As opposed to having one or two people out there, as Bill had done in 1957, I had everybody out there. Technically, I didn't deploy all of them there. I felt we ought to have the police reporter stay in touch with the police radio so we'd know if there was a big fire or explosion somewhere else. That reporter was Ron Farrar, who was later the director of the journalism school at the University of Kentucky and the graduate program at University of South Carolina. Ron interpreted my assigning of him to the police beat as very literal, and since most of the police were out at Central High School, he went out there too. Ron got the best story – the best sidebar. There was a clash between the demonstrators and the police, and Ron was there with the police and wrote the story from their perspective. That gave readers a good insight of what went on. We had on the front page a spectacular horizontal picture of the police line bracing for the people with the flags coming down the street to try to do what they had done in '57, which was to overrun the police lines. Ironically, the police chief used fire hoses to wash the segregationists off the street just as Bull Connor was to do years later to civil rights demonstrators [in Birmingham, Alabama].

Risley: What was the date of that?

Foreman: That was late August 1959. And that effectively marked the end of the two years of the so-called crisis. However, it was not a "happily ever after" story. As a matter of fact, this is now 50 years later and the Little Rock School Board was only recently released from federal court supervision of its desegregation program.

Risley: How long were you at the *Gazette*?

Foreman: For five years after my release from the Army. In the summer of 1962 I decided I'd like to try to go to the *New York Times*, and I called Claude Sitton, the Southern correspondent [for the *Times*]. We had become friends, and he had commissioned me as a stringer in Little Rock for the *Times*. He said, "Well, I'll be glad to put in a word for you, but frankly the best way to get hired is being a copy editor." They were not hiring very many reporters, especially those without a lot of reporting experience. I said, "Well, you know I've never done copy editing." I had done editing for the last four-plus years at that point, but I had not written headlines and done what copy editors do. Claude said, "Well, I can get you a tryout, I think." Theodore Bernstein [a *Times* assistant managing editor] had written several books on language, and he and another editor had written one about writing headlines and that sort of thing. I studied and practiced. Then I went up there and had a week-long tryout and they said, "OK, we'll hire you." But when I reported to work three months later, people said, "Aren't you a little worried coming to work when we're about to have a strike?" And I said, "What strike are we talking about?" This shows I didn't do my reporting, but it had become evident between the time I did the tryout and by the time I came to work, that there was going to be an impasse between the unions and the publishers in New York. This was in 1962 and the contracts expired about December 1. The guild agreed to a contract but the ITU, the printers, balked. The printers were in what was kind of an end game for them, because a decade later they had to concede that the newspapers could take copy in any form, including computer-generated type and already-set type. But their position in the fall of '62 was that we're bargaining for jobs for printers yet unborn. Their contract had the bogus clause, where if Macy's sent an ad in that was already camera-ready, that would be put on the bogus hook, and if printers ever got caught up, they would set that type. The printers would make up the page, proof it, get it completely correct, and then throw it away. This was their way of ensuring that the publishers would not go around them and put them out of business. But ten years later they had to accept that; in the 1970s the publishers said we're not going to have a contract unless it allows us to use computer typesetting.

Risley: And so there was a strike at the *Times*.

Foreman: Right.

Risley: How did that affect you?

Foreman: The papers stopped publishing, all seven papers in New York. When the strike finally ended, I was long gone back to Arkansas because I couldn't survive with two young kids on strike benefits. I had a house in the

suburbs rented where we were going to move into, but fortunately I was given an escape clause if they went on strike. And we knew then it would probably be a long strike. History will show it was 114 days before they started printing again. So I went back to Arkansas trying to figure out what to do. What happened was that I met the publisher of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*, which is a 20,000-circulation paper 45 miles southeast of Little Rock, an intellectual, progressive publisher. His name is Edmond Freeman, and Ed is an interesting guy. He graduated with [President] Jimmy Carter in the 1946 class at Annapolis. He said to me one time that there were midshipmen who hated the Navy more than he did, but they did not get commissions. After he got out of the Navy, he got a master's degree in philosophy from the University of Chicago. Then he had gone back to Pine Bluff to run the family newspaper. He and his brother ran it – the third generation. Of the two brothers, Ed was the one interested in news and editorials. He was kind of a de facto publisher of the paper and kind of editor in chief. I wound up being hired as his managing editor. There were about 20 people in the newsroom. It was a good experience. I learned a lot about management, and we did some interesting things. It was the civil rights era, and the demonstrations over accommodations and voting rights were going on. We sent a reporter to Little Rock to cover the legislature, and he did some groundbreaking work. There was a huge scandal at the two state prison farms, which were in our circulation area, and we did a solid job of covering it.

Risley: So how long were you in Pine Bluff?

Foreman: Five and a half years.

Risley: OK.

Foreman: My friend Bob McCord was now the editor of the editorial page of the *Arkansas Democrat*, the afternoon paper in Little Rock facing the *Gazette*, which I had worked for before. The old man who had run the paper forever – and not put out a very good paper – had died and his two nephews took over and hired McCord. Again, the business was divided. One of the cousins was interested in the news and editorial side, and the other was interested in the business side. They were jointly running the paper. McCord is a very a good thinker and the kind of person who ought to run editorial pages because he really thought through the issues, and he wrote clearly and intelligently. He and I were good friends, and he brokered a deal that I would come up to be the managing editor. Actually I came in as news editor but kind of with managing editor's authority. A few months later the existing managing editor resigned, and so I then became the managing editor by title as well. My job was to try to turn this paper around, make it a good newspaper. The shakeout of afternoon papers was only beginning, but we optimistically expected both papers to continue to exist. Our goal would be to put out a newspaper that was competitive in every respect with the *Gazette*. That

proved to be difficult to do with the resources we had. More significant, the relationship between the two cousins was not anything at all as successful as the relationship between the two brothers had been in Pine Bluff. It soon became evident that they didn't share common goals. The editor had this vision that Bob McCord and I shared, but his cousin, the publisher, felt that we'd always be the second-class paper. He controlled who was the circulation manager and who was the advertising manager and so forth. And the circulation manager didn't sell papers. He'd come to work with his golf cleats on and soon would be out the door and on the links. In the three years I was the managing editor, even as we improved the paper, circulation plummeted. We went from 85,000 to 65,000 while I was managing editor. We also found out it was very difficult to beat the *Gazette*. They may have been complacent, but they had a tradition of excellence, and that counts for a lot in journalism. We were having to invent from scratch, and also we were dealing with a lot of mostly older people from the previous regime who resented the way the paper was being changed. It was a tense time, and we weren't succeeding financially. And I was, as newsroom the leader, 33 years old. We hired young and hungry people who did not have a track record, but who we thought would develop into good reporters. A lot of them did. We put together a solid newspaper on a shoestring budget. But we couldn't sustain it

Risley: So you were there three years?

Foreman: Three years until '71 – long enough to figure out it's not going to work. About that time, my friends at *Newsday* were convincing Dave Laventhol, who was faced with starting up a Sunday paper, [to hire me]. *Newsday* was a great success in Nassau and Suffolk counties on Long Island; they owned that high-demographic, growing area. Amazingly, they didn't have a Sunday paper, so when the Times Mirror bought them from Harry Guggenheim, they said we must start one. Laventhol was the former city editor of the *Herald Tribune* and the editor who invented the Style section of the *Washington Post* – a really creative journalist – and was now the editor of the paper. Pat Owens, whom I worked with in Pine Bluff and also earlier at the *Gazette*, was a columnist for *Newsday*. Dick Estrin, who had been the executive news editor putting out the daily paper, had been tapped to launch the Sunday paper. Dave had to have somebody be the executive news editor the rest of the week, and Owens told him I could be that person. So Laventhol made me a very good offer and we moved to Long Island. One of the conditions was that if they ever shut down, they would keep on paying me, so that was enough to satisfy me that we would not be left high and dry again. I felt I had to protect myself. If we're going to move to a new part of the country, I had to know that I was going to get paid.

Risley: Tell me about your experiences there.

Foreman: Well, Dave and I had haggled over salary. I was asking for a lot of money over my Arkansas salary, which wasn't that high, and Dave was not sure what job he wanted to put me in. One of the possibilities would be that executive news editor job – being in charge of the news and copy desk and overseeing the production of the daily paper. But there were other senior editor jobs, like being Nassau editor or Suffolk editor, that he might want to shuffle. The outcome of our negotiations was that he agreed to pay the salary I was asking for, but he got to decide unilaterally which one of these three or four jobs I would do. I moved there in the fall of '71. Each month I would do a different job, just filling in as an editor but also observing. It was an extended orientation. Dave was kind of a political-minded guy. He had everybody wondering if I would take over their department; my presence would terrorize other editors, which didn't make me comfortable, either. Finally, at the end of the year, Dave announced that I would be the executive news editor, and so now I had my assignment. I did that job throughout '72, with a great crew of editors who put out the paper every night. Around Christmas time in '72 I'd been in this job just a year. We had moved from the house we rented the first year, and had bought a house. So then I get a call from Roy Reed, my old friend from the *Gazette* who during the '60s had worked with Gene Roberts on the Southern beat, the race beat for the *New York Times*. He was influential with Roberts. I think Roberts knew eventually he would be the editor of a big paper, and so every place he went, he would gather information about people he might want to hire. And he remembered Roy Reed talking lavishly about how I was a good managing editor.

Risley: Gene Roberts had been hired as editor of the *Inquirer*.

Foreman: Right, I should note that. Roberts had been for four years the editor of the national editor of the *New York Times*, and in the fall of '72 he came to work as editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Lee Hills, the chairman and CEO and his old boss in Detroit in the early 60s, had hired him to take over the *Inquirer*, which had been bought from Walter Annenberg on January 1, 1970. And after two and a half years, in which John McMullan, previously editor of the *Miami Herald*, was the editor, [Hills] felt it was time for a change. And so Roberts came to Philadelphia. He was starting to bring in the people that he had been observing all this time. One key example was Steve Lovelady, who was on the page-one desk of the *Wall Street Journal* and who is the most brilliant story editor I've ever encountered. He called Lovelady over at the *Journal* and said, "Steve, I'm going to Philadelphia," and Steve said, "Yeah, I read that in the paper today." Then he [Roberts] said, "Want to come along?" Lovelady said, "Are you crazy? The paper is failing down there in Philadelphia. The *Wall Street Journal* is the *Wall Street Journal*. I've got a good job here." Gene said, "Well, that's true, but you need to talk to me about this." So he talked to him, and pretty soon Lovelady was one of his first hires at the *Inquirer*.

Risley: Gene Roberts is a convincing guy.

Foreman: Oh, I would say that, yeah. His reputation is if he says anything, you can book it. Over the course of my 18 years with him I never found any reason to doubt that reputation. But the paper was indeed failing. The betting in Philadelphia was that the *Bulletin* would be the ultimate survivor because it was entrenched and Knight Newspapers would dump the *Inquirer* when the going got tough. So Roberts would have to convince everybody that we had a good shot at making it work. He would say, "You have to trust me." John Carroll, who had expressed an interest in going into editing, had been a reporter for the *Baltimore Sun*, including covering the Six Day War in 1967 in the Middle East. He was covering Vietnam when he encountered Roberts. And so, of course, Roberts makes note of this bright young reporter from the *Baltimore Sun*. Dave Boldt, who had worked with Lovelady at the *Wall Street Journal*, had moved to the *Washington Post* as an editor. Carroll and Boldt both get overtures from Roberts, and so they phone each other to consult. Both work for profitable newspapers and they are being asked to take this leap of faith. And Boldt says, "Tell me what you're going to do." And Carroll said, "Well, I thought it over and if Gene Roberts told me to jump out of a ten-story building, I would jump. What do you think?" And Boldt said, "I think you're crazy." But both went to work for Roberts, so all three of them [Lovelady, Carroll, and Boldt] were there when I got there in February of '73.

Risley: I think this is a good place to stop for just a minute.

[End of tape 1, side A]

Risley: OK, we were talking about how you wound up at the *Inquirer* from *Newsday*.

Foreman: As I mentioned earlier, Roy Reed is now telling Gene Roberts that I am his person to be managing editor at the new *Inquirer*. And so Roy calls me at my home in Long Island over the Christmas holidays in '72 and said Gene has gone to the *Inquirer*. I said, "Yeah, I know, I read this." I had never met Gene Roberts. I think I had talked with him on the phone once, maybe twice, but I'd never laid eyes on him. And Roy said, "Well, he wants to talk to you about a job." And I said, "Roy, I just got here. I've been here a little over a year. I like Laventhol, I like what we're doing at *Newsday*." I had a good job. I mean, executive news editor is probably the equivalent of assistant managing editor at most papers. And I figured AME was probably what he [Roberts] had in mind. That did not interest me, although I certainly had heard good things about Roberts. Roye said, "Well, you ought to listen to what he has to say and then you decide, but tell me you'll go." I said, "OK, I will go to talk to Roberts." And so I go down to Philadelphia over the holidays and meet Gene, and he talks to me about what he's doing at the *Inquirer*.

Risley: How did he convince you to come to Philadelphia?

Foreman: He told me to meet him at the Barclay Hotel for lunch, I think at 1 o'clock. So I get up early and make the drive, which takes about three hours. I leave plenty of cushion so I'll be in the Barclay lobby at 1 o'clock. And so 1 o'clock comes, 1:30 comes, 2 o'clock comes - and no Roberts. I was wondering whether this was all a misunderstanding. Gene comes in without any referencing that he's over an hour late. And we then go to the dining room at the Barclay and talk, and he just talks in general terms about what is going on. He said, "I don't want you to come up to the newsroom; that would not be good." I agree with that, because I had a job somewhere else and didn't want to be seen. And so we catch a cab back to the *Inquirer* and he says, "Let's have dinner." I said OK; of course, we just had lunch. He gives the cab driver a \$20 bill and says, "Take him for a ride." The cab driver warmed to the assignment. We went out East River Drive, West River Drive. We circled the historical district, and finally he says the \$20 is up. And I said, "Well, I guess we've seen enough." I just walked around, visiting bookstores and stuff. At the appointed time we went down to Old Bookbinder's in Society Hill for dinner, and again Gene talked in generalities. He asked me a couple of vague questions. I've been in Philadelphia about ten or twelve hours, it seemed like, and I said, "Gene, what job are you thinking about for me? What are we talking about?" And he said, "Well, I was thinking managing editor." And I said, "Well, that's interesting." I had never imagined that he was looking for me to be the number two person. We had more meetings, and my family came down. Long Island is pretty congested place and Philadelphia, with its nice suburbs, really appealed to us. It was more like what we were used to, and so I thought the family would be more comfortable there. I certainly had a lot of trepidation about leaving a place that I really thought I was doing well at and that I liked. I had thought *Newsday* was my destination paper. I did feel that while there was some risk involved, it was certainly very inspiring what Gene thought we could do.

Risley: Well, what was his plan?

Foreman: That we were going to emphasize enterprise reporting. That we were going to also do solid daily reporting to let the readers of the paper know that we are on the case - that if something big happens in the Philadelphia area today, they could open tomorrow morning's *Inquirer* and find it. More important, that we would add a dimension which was not in the Philadelphia tradition. The *Philadelphia Bulletin* had done some investigative reporting but they didn't do much of it, and now investigative/enterprise reporting would be our hallmark. And that we would cover a broad region. He saw us as being the leading newspaper between New York and Washington -- co-equal with Baltimore, but Baltimore would have its region and we would have ours. He had

designs on Delaware, which did not have a Sunday paper then. We sold 35,000 papers every Sunday in Delaware, northern Delaware, and he said we'll go from the Jersey Shore to Harrisburg and from New York City's Jersey suburbs down through Delaware. This would be our region, and we would own it. He said that in six years or so, we would we should be one of the top-half dozen papers in the country on anybody's list. This startled me. I thought to myself, "I've read this newspaper. This is really a stretch." But I also thought that if Gene Roberts says this, then there's a chance it could happen – a good chance.

Risley: I would like to come back to Gene Roberts but tell me what the *Inquirer* was like when you arrived?

Foreman: I came to work during February of '73. Roberts had then been there three or four months. And the very first day, my desktop was clear. I come back from lunch and there is a sealed envelope on it addressed to me, Mr. Foreman, the managing editor. So I opened it up, and it's a resignation letter from a reporter whose name I did not recognize. Then Roberts came by and I showed him the letter. He took it out of the envelope, unfolded it, read it, folded it back up, put it back in the envelope, handed me the envelope and said, "Accept it immediately." This is one of the ways he wanted to build the paper: taking advantage of resignations from people who were not pulling their weight. As they left the paper we would replace them with somebody at least twice as good. That is why his initial hires at the paper were people like Lovelady or Boldt or Carroll. He could vouch for them that they would hit the ball out of the park. Roberts said we cannot afford any hiring mistakes. The *Inquirer* had been torn by dissension under John McMullan's regime. John had wanted to turn the place upside down and reinvent it overnight. I am not casting aspersions on John, but I think Lee Hills and others recognized that there's only so far that style of management is going to go. I think Hills calculated that he needed somebody who would smooth the waters and move the paper to the next stage. John had hired some really good reporters – Don Barlett, Jim Steele, Steve Seplow, Bill Marimow – but the place was chaotic. It had been badly managed under Annenberg, and then there was the strife that took place between him and the old-school people in the two and a half years he was the editor. Also, it was not a big staff – about 260 people, including the editorial board.

Risley: You had 260 reporters and editors?

Foreman: Reporters and photographers and clerks and everybody. By the '80s we would more than double the staff. I want to be very clear that there were there were some very good journalists from the Annenberg area. Bob Greenberg comes to mind, the assistant managing editor who was invaluable in Roberts' era. But most were not very good, and so what Gene said was, "If they can't bat righthanded, we're going to swing them lefthanded. We're going to keep them moving until we find something

that they can do and make a contribution.” He almost never fired anybody, whereas McMullan was firing people right and left. Still, we got beneficial attrition in our first couple of years. The people who figured Roberts’ style of newspapering was not the one that they had been doing in the old days under Annenberg regime – so as they got opportunities, they moved on. Frank Rizzo, the mayor, helped out a lot by hiring about 20 of his cronies from the staff. Gene also figured – and I don’t know if he conveyed this directly to us; sometimes he did and sometimes he didn’t – that another part of his strategy was to put the paper on the map. First of all, his walking in the door put it on the map with a lot of people because they knew of his reputation and the fact that he’s not there just to mess around; he’s going to get results. He wanted us to be the destination for the young journalists who wanted to work in a newsroom that was progressive, that encouraged creativity, where the editors would listen to them. One way to do that was to do the kind of work that would attract attention. So it was important that we win Pulitzer Prizes. And in ’76 Barlett and Steele won the first of their two Pulitzer Prizes. This was off Gene’s timetable, I am pretty sure, because all of us thought the year before they should have won for their stories debunking the gasoline shortage.

Risley: Tell me what the Pulitzer was for.

Foreman: It was on how the IRS enforcement was all aimed at ordinary and middle-level taxpayers, whereas they had case after case after case of multimillionaires getting away with not paying taxes or not paying very much. It was what was to become a hallmark of Bartlett and Steele reporting, which was impeccable research and very provocative writing. These multimillionaire tax dodgers are ripping off the IRS, while you, the poor taxpayer of ordinary means, is being scrutinized by the IRS. That’s what won the prize.

Risley: So what were some of the biggest challenges you faced when you were hired in turning the paper around?

Foreman: Gene, of course, was a reporter’s reporter. He knew reporting inside and out and certainly had established a personal reputation for reporting excellence. I had a far more modest reputation of being an inside guy who understood infrastructure and operational things. I don’t know if he ever told me that I should focus on this, but I soon deduced that it didn’t make sense for both of us to be doing the same thing. I concluded that Gene is going to be overseeing the investigative projects and would primarily be the one to make the decisions as to who is going to be doing what beat. He said, “I want you and me to sign off on people changing beats. Obviously, the editors running the departments will decide who would be doing what on a given day, but if they are going to do either a long-term project, I want to sign off on it. Or if they are going to be moved from city hall to labor, I want to sign off on it.” He is a very good

judge of talent, to say the least. He would be focusing on the reporting side and I would be focusing on trying to make sense of this chaotic production process, how we got the paper out. What I was up against was something Wendell Rawls would describe as a way of entertaining people at parties. Rawls was one of the brilliant reporters John McMullan had brought in. Rawls would hold forth on how before Roberts and I got there, he would write stories and in the paper they would end in the middle of a sentence, often on a colon. I wish I could give the whole Wendell Rawls spiel, which, of course, was quite charming and lasted about 30 minutes. When a story was cut in mid-sentence, Rawls would interview everybody who touched the story after it left his typewriter. And they would all swear to him that when they sent it on, it was intact. I knew the punch line before Rawls got to it. What was happening was the news editors would send the story to the composing room and then they would not supervise the printers who would put the pages together. In those days, before computers, news editors had to estimate the type length and that's next to impossible to do with precision. You don't want to underestimate, or you would run short with a big hole in the middle of the page. As a result, stories frequently would be too long to fit in the page. Since the printers were on their own, they just threw away the excess - and sometimes it was the kicker on Wendell Rawls' story. I was saying that we're now going to have makeup editors. I do not want any page be sent to being stereotype without an editor signing off on it and approving any story trims. There was also a problem with supervision on the copy desk; there wasn't any. There was no slot. When the copy editors finished editing stories, they would pass them down to the person sitting next to the pneumatic tube. Without looking, he would roll it up and put it in the tube and it was gone with a whoosh. With that whoosh, I had a sinking feeling that something bad was about to happen. What we had was a desk that, one, didn't supervise itself and, two, didn't supervise the printers who did the ultimate composing of the paper.

Risley: So was a lot of it just putting the systems into place.

Foreman: Oh, yes. There was a lot to plan and, of course, we're trying to recruit people as we get openings. Also we had to work with the people we had and try to guide them to here's what we want. That took a lot of time. There also was a fundamental problem: we were putting out too many editions. They had a bulldog edition which went on the street for sale at 6:30 p.m. In 1946 that paper sold 125,000 papers, a very significant part of the circulation. But in 1973, in the post-television era, we were selling only 20,000. I said, "Gene, this is a gold-plated edition. We are investing so much desk staffing in this and, of course, the reporters had to stop reporting in mid-afternoon to file and then try to catch up." One desk crew would compose and edit a first edition to get out at 6:30 and then the late crew would never look at it. I mean, the bulldog would come up and the whole thing would be thrown out by the new crew coming in to put out the midnight edition - the real newspaper. And so we had had

two understaffed desks putting out two sets of editions. The next year Gene got the bulldog killed. It enabled us to consolidate our desk staff, so that we came a little closer to the level of editing we needed to put out a good paper each night. At the same time we were establishing procedures to provide for double-checking so that mistakes could not get into the paper unless two people made the same mistake. Of course that's easier said than done, and we had embarrassing mistakes that were a result of bad desk work.

Risley: Certainly you worked on many important stories while you were there, but what would you say were some of the most significant or some of the most important stories?

Foreman: Covering things like Three Mile Island in '79. John Carroll was our editor on that. Roberts, I think, set an industry kind of template for how to cover a big story of this kind. He emptied out the building. We sent 80 reporters out to cover Three Mile Island. At the same time that John was running the daily coverage, Roberts had Lovelady and his team put together what is now called a tick-tock, a re-creation of the events that led to the crisis at Three Mile Island. We not only covered the story day by day, but on the first Sunday we had this extensive story that put you in the TMI control room minute by minute as the crisis developed and gave perspective that not many papers did at that time. So that was satisfying. More often, our Pulitzers were won for investigative and enterprise reporting, the kind of story on which Roberts would hold forth as the final editor. One of the things he'd say is, "We want to cover news that oozes rather than breaks." He would say, "You know, Johnny Cash is a good trends reporter. That is the kind of reporter that I want on my staff. Johnny Cash wrote a song about how this store out on the highway used to have a big business, but then the highway department built a bypass and now nobody shops at the store anymore. Meanwhile stores are being opened on the bypass to capture the old store's customers. Johnny knew what was happening. That story did not break in a single day; it oozed." Gene would say, "The mayor is not going to make a speech about this happening but you have to sense it. And once we see indications that something like that is happening, then you guys go out and verify, first of all, that there is a trend statistically and then find anecdotal evidence of it, and then we flesh out the story." It's what the *Wall Street Journal* was doing, but not many general-interest dailies were. So I think one of our trademarks was that we spotted these stories, news that was happening that didn't happen overnight.

Risley: Well, what was it like to work with Gene Roberts?

Foreman: Everybody has stories to tell about Gene, and the people who are telling the stories are usually admirers and friends of Roberts. It was a great privilege, I always felt, to work with Roberts. We considered him to be the ideal journalist of his age. Two other top editors served eighteen or

twenty years as he did: Abe Rosenthal at the *Times* and Ben Bradlee at the *Washington Post*. I consider Roberts the best; obviously I am prejudiced in that, but I think we could make the case.

Risley: But what made him such a good editor?

Foreman: It is hard to identify that in concrete terms. So much was intangibles. He is an intuitive genius. He can see things that we don't. He may not always be right, but he's probably 99 percent right, whereas the rest of us don't come that close at all. The other editors at the paper would often agree on something we ought to do. Then Roberts would come in and say the complete opposite. And he would explain why. We'd say, "Why didn't we think of that? It didn't make sense before he came in." Even if you weren't totally persuaded, you would have a feeling that he is probably right. Also we recognized that he's a very driven person once he sets his eyes on a goal. I knew enough about him to take him seriously when he told me, that first night that we interviewed, that we could be one of the top papers in the country. The statement coming from anybody else would have been viewed as preposterous, but coming from him, you had to concede that he may be right. Of course, we were on a lot of people's top-six list by the end of the '70s.

Risley: Was he also a frustrating guy to work for because of some of his habits and idiosyncrasies?

Foreman: His idiosyncrasies - and, some people would go as far as to say, eccentricities - were also endearing. And he was self-deprecating. This demeanor would mask a fierce feeling that "I know what I am doing and I am going to have my way."

Risley: What was one of his favorite sayings, "When others zig, you should zag"?

Foreman: Right, that was one of his sayings: that I want our reporters to zig when the others zag. We want to go get the story that everybody else is ignoring. We don't want to follow the pack. We want to ferret out the story that nobody else sees and we should, like Johnny Cash, explain everything. At the same time, Gene couldn't remember what time it is, couldn't remember what his address is, couldn't remember whether he had had lunch or not. All these things endeared him to people. You felt like you've got to protect Roberts. If we don't look out for him, he's going to fall on his face. But we also recognized there was a method in everything he did. To this day we don't know whether, during the long silences when we were trying to tell him something, was he listening or not? He looked to be completely daydreaming but then, without acknowledging our suggestion, he might do what we had suggested. At other times, again without acknowledging what we had told him, he might revise his own thinking. Another trait that endeared him to the people who worked for him was that he practiced loyalty to the utmost.

You knew that if you are one of his people, he's not going to let anything bad happen to you. That really makes a big difference.

Risley: Did you ever consider leaving the *Inquirer* to be an editor?

Foreman: Well, although I'm gratified with my time at the *Inquirer*, I would have liked to have been the editor of my own paper. But the right opportunity never panned out. I think I would have done pretty well.

Risley: The opportunities just never early presented themselves?

Foreman: Not really.

Risley: OK.

Foreman: Of course, when Gene decided to leave in 1990, the situation was completely changed. The powers at Knight Ridder wanted to take the paper in a different direction. Ultimately, I don't think they were satisfied with the direction Max [King] took [as Roberts' successor]. Max and I and Jim Naughton and others worked hard to maintain the Roberts standards after Gene left in 1990. And I think they wanted Max to do something completely different. It was very disappointing to learn in 1990 that we did not meet the approval of people in Miami – that they saw us as a self-indulgent, dull, boring newspaper. This overlooks the fact that we won an uphill battle against the *Bulletin*, that we more than doubled our [Sunday] circulation lead to 400,000 over the *Bulletin*, at the same we overcame their 175,000 circulation lead daily. And you don't do that by having a dull paper. I don't think we changed after we beat the *Bulletin* in 1982.

Risley: I am glad you brought that up because I'd forgotten that. Talk about what it was like to compete against the *Bulletin* and just how gratifying it was to come out on top.

Foreman: About the time I came to the paper, Dan Rottenberg wrote a piece in *Philadelphia* magazine sizing up Roberts and George Packer, who was the editor of the *Bulletin*. And George was saying, "I am going to win this battle." George is a very handsome guy, and at the end of the story, the kicker was that Packard resembles a handsome prince whereas Roberts, if nothing else, resembles a frog. "And in Philadelphia the smart money is riding on the frog." So Roberts became known as The Frog. And people, when they'd go on trips and they'd see ceramic frogs or embroidered frogs, would buy him frogs. So his desk is filled with frogs and on his 46th birthday Naughton and a group of conspirators brought him 46 bullfrogs. It was a battle, and we were not the favorites. Rottenberg was not expressing a majority view of the "in" people in town. He was saying, "I am the smart guy and I am betting on the frog." Rottenberg understood what a lot of people in Philadelphia didn't. We put out one terrific

Sunday paper. The *Inquirer*, going into this battle with the *Bulletin*, had a 175,000 lead on Sunday. The *Bulletin* had a 175,000 lead on daily. In 1973 I asked one of the oldtime editors why is it that the *Inquirer* has this big lead Sunday but they are just nowhere on the daily. He thought for a minute and he said, "I guess it's because the *Bulletin* is new in the Sunday market." I said, "Well, when did they get in?" He said, "1946." But that's kind of the way Philadelphia was in those days; things didn't change very fast. We really put the emphasis on the Sunday paper. Then and now, it is the cash cow that drives the company. The *Daily News* doesn't make money, and the daily *Inquirer* is kind of holding its own. Sunday is where we make the money. We had to keep our Sunday lead and build on it. We also had to wipe out the *Bulletin's* daily lead. We first of all wanted to have a very strong Sunday paper, and to do this, Ron Patel came in from *Newsday*. I had spotted him in my brief time there. Gene had someone in mind for Sunday editor, but that didn't work out, so I told Gene, "There's this brilliant young guy." Ron was 24 years old, and he came down to talk. Roberts really liked him. So Ron became the czar of the Sunday paper, and he was a genius too, in his own way. Ron understood how to put out a Sunday paper that was appealing. He had this formula. He had divided our readership into certain segments, and he wanted a Sunday story to service each one of those segments. At the top of the page, what we call the Sunday strip, what Bradlee down at the *Washington Post* would call the tube ripper. Somebody who gets the Sunday paper delivered to their mailbox, they would rip it out in their haste to read that story. And Ron did that for the *Inquirer*. The ritual quickly established itself that all the assigning editors on Thursday and Friday would come and visit Ron, almost like kneeling before a prince, offering their best stories. Ron would take all this under advisement and somebody would be the lucky winner. Of course, the reporters felt that, too. They were all vying to see who could write the best Sunday story, and it would be on some topic that was not only a good read but also something with significance. It was serious journalism in a way that paid attention to marketing. Not to say we overstated it, but we made sure that people in the newsroom understood how important this was. I think the readers got to where they knew this Sunday strip was going to be a story worth reading and, of course, then the rest of the Sunday paper. So Ron was a maestro who put together the Sunday paper under Roberts' careful oversight. Roberts would come down on Saturdays – he'd go to the Reading Terminal Market for a very late breakfast – and then he would come and look at the first edition, and he would confer with Ron and order changes. The Sunday paper flourished. It got to the point where, if we would raise the cost of our Sunday paper, the *Bulletin* would lose circulation because people would say, "Well I don't have enough money to buy both papers, but I am not going to quit buying Ron's Sunday paper." I nicknamed Ron "Crazy Ron." There was a graffiti artist in Center City about that time who signed his name "Crazy Ron," and I thought it fit my friend Ron Patel. Ron liked the name and began using "C.R." as his signature on office notes.

[End of tape 1. Start of tape 2]

Risley: OK, we were talking about the competition between the *Inquirer* and the *Bulletin* and certainly the importance of the Sunday paper to that. But what was it like once you all finally won? What did that mean?

Foreman: Well, Gene, as you would expect, had carefully laid the groundwork for this. He created a plan, which he named Alpha, calling for a huge expansion of our staff. And the way he sold it to Knight newspapers in Miami was that that we would show the people of the Philadelphia region that they would get a better paper now that the *Bulletin* was gone. Also, we needed a staff large enough to cover a complex metropolitan area. The three New Jersey suburban counties and the four Pennsylvania suburban counties all operated under a strong-township, weak-county government. And so there were something like 500 municipalities and school boards we had to cover. You cannot do this with a small staff; it takes bodies. Two-thirds of the population and two-thirds of the *Inquirer's* readers live in the suburbs. You cannot ignore it. Gene had to convince Knight Ridder that you need a large staff large enough to cover the terrain. And they bought that.

Risley: And so remind me what year the *Bulletin* closed.

Foreman: January 30, 1982.

Risley: OK.

Foreman: We added 85 people under Plan Alpha. Altogether, counting replacements, we hired 95 people in 1982. As we added suburban zoned sections over the next few years, we added more staff, both to the desk and reporters and editors in the field.

Risley: Boy that must have been a remarkably busy time.

Foreman: It was. We spent a lot of money in covering the suburbs--trying to be a paper within a paper. There would be a daily metro sections for each county. That's very, very cost-intensive and labor-intensive. The paper was not able to sustain that, and when Tony Ridder became president of the newspaper division in 1987, we started having to trim back. And, of course, that trimming only increased after Gene left in 1990. While Gene kept his counsel, it's clear that he left feeling that the paper would become a shadow of its former self. He also felt that he and Tony Ridder were personally at odds and that maybe someone else would have more luck [in dealing with Miami]. He didn't want to do that anymore. That's why, after 18 years, he decided to leave.

Risley: A lot of good journalists came through the *Inquirer* while you were there. Is that one of the things that you are proud of?

Foreman: Oh, absolutely.

Risley: Talk about that.

Foreman: I had been incredibly blessed in Arkansas to work with some good reporters, people like Charles "Buddy" Portis, who wrote *True Grit*, and Bill Whitworth, who went on to be editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* for 20 years. And Roy Reed, who went on to *The New York Times*. We had some really fine people but that was exponentially different from the *Inquirer*, where we had many, many more of them. I think all the top editors at the paper felt their main duty was to clear obstacles out of their way to let them do the kind of job that they were capable of doing.

Risley: I am sure it's hard to single out some, but could you just name a few that that you really stand out?

Foreman: Well, I certainly don't want to leave anybody out. And I am doing this without notes. Look at people like Richard Ben Cramer and David Zucchino, who could do any kind of story but who were great war correspondents. Richard Ben Cramer tried to cover one war and the Israelis would not let him up at the front, so he went all the way around and came through Lebanon to cover it from the other side. They were not going to keep him from covering the war. Steve Twomey was a fine writer. Barlett and Steele are in a class by themselves, two reporters who happened to come to work at the paper on the same day, did not know each other, then were to form a partnership that has lasted three decades and counting. And some great photographers, too. Tom Gralish won a Pulitzer Prize; April Saul won a Pulitzer Prize. Looking back at the writers, Buzz Bissinger. Of course, Bill Marimow won two Pulitzer Prizes and is a consummate reporter. John Woestendiek was another brilliant writer. The list just goes on and on. And we also had unsung heroes on the desk who were the best in the world at what they did, too. The names I'm giving here are just examples, not a comprehensive list by any means.

Risley: I know it's hard to single them out.

Foreman: Yeah, I don't want to have anybody read this and feel I overlooked them. There are a lot of things that I am proud of that we did at the *Inquirer*, but most of it was creating a workplace that stimulated and encouraged people of great talent to do their best work. And they came through.

Risley: How did the newspaper change during your career? What are some of the most significant changes?

Foreman: It became less fun to be a senior editor of a newspaper as time went on. There was more emphasis on how we can make the budget balance. If revenues go down they want to keep the same profit margin, which means you had to reduce the staff, and you can't reduce the staff overnight. Gene said news editorial quality is not something to be turned on and off like a hydrant, and that's what the money people in newspapers tended to believe from the '80s into the '90s and, of course, today. It seems obvious to me that if you if you try to make a profit or a certain financial result for a given quarter, and if you do this by cutting back on the service you give the consumers, sooner or later the consumers are going to want to consume less. Sometimes the editors get blamed, as one of our successors, Bob Rosenthal, got fired because the circulation was down. If you give people less they are going to want it less, and we were giving people a lot less quality newspaper than we had in the '80s. That takes a toll. Part of [the decline] is inevitable, I guess, given the Internet and all the changes that are occurring. We need business people who are smart enough to figure out where we might be going. I would not want to be the one to call the shots with multimillion dollar bets on how to use the Internet. But I think they are making a mistake by squeezing the life out of newspapers. The opportunity, then, for editors like Gene and myself, and Jim Naughton and the other top editors at the *Inquirer* to get satisfaction over what we're doing journalistically, was more than offset by the aggravation and mindless sort of work we had to do to try to stay within budget and deal with people outside the newsroom. Under the operating model that most newspaper companies have now, the publisher is in charge of everything and all the different department chiefs who are vice presidents report to him or her. And they have their weekly operating meetings that go on and on about things that are not about news. Sometimes, of course, you are going to be talking about strategy in which the editors ought to have a voice. Still, I prefer the old model, where the publisher owned everything and told the editor, "You put out a great newspaper and I'll figure out how to make the money." But now the editor is just one of the several princes or princesses, and the publisher is the king or queen. And the other department chiefs do not share the values that we do. The circulation department ought to share those values, but they come at it in a different way. We want to gain circulation by covering the news and being a reliable source of information. They want to give away cars; let new subscribers put their name in a hat and we'll give away a few cars, which the *Inquirer* did for awhile. It got us nowhere, and the money should have been spent in improving the news coverage. The operating committee also leads to the editor getting being overrun and made to look as if he or she is not a team player. An example of that is, say, the Eagles get into the playoffs, you go to an operating committee meeting and the circulation manager, with the publisher nodding agreement, says, "You put a story about the Eagles on the top of the front page every day for the next week leading up to that playoff game, and I can guarantee you we can sell 10,000 more papers a day." The editor knows that there

are not seven good stories worth going up there in the prime display position. Now that I am out of the business and just a subscriber, I go out to the end of my driveway to pick up my paper and I see this Eagle story taking up a third of the front page. That's one-third of the front page I don't read – and I am somebody who will watch the Eagles; a lot of readers have no interest in football. I know there's not anything there that's really going to inform me. That corrupts news judgment. What I think the model ought to be is that the publisher keeps those people off our back. We say we are not going to put a story on the front page about the Eagles unless something happens that makes it worthwhile. The top editor always has had to manage several constituencies. The most important one ought to be the readers – every decision ought to be calculated how we can best serve the readers. Then you also have a legitimate constituency in the newsroom staff that's looking to you for leadership and wants to be treated fairly. Now there is a third constituency that takes entirely too much time and energy: dealing with the rest of the company. The publisher and the other vice presidents have been allowed in the current generation to wield excessive clout in their dealings with the editor.

Risley: Well, tell me what it was like to retire and embark on a new career: teaching.

Foreman: Well, Max and I had worked hard to try to keep things going at the paper. I think that we kept the standards in the early '90s at a pretty high level. But the newsroom was coming under increasing pressure, because we had successive buyouts and hiring freezes. That takes a toll. I had been in the same job for 25 years, and I'd always felt that I wanted to spend some time teaching the new generation. If I'd been the editor of the paper, I would not have quit at 65. But I quit at 63 because I wanted to have time for several years as a teacher. The opportunity at Penn State was there, and I was very pleased to accept it. I thought it would be something brief that I would do and then I would retire.

Risley: You didn't expect to teach so long?

Foreman: As a matter of fact, in talking with Terri Brooks, the dean who made the deal with me, is that five years is what I wanted. And she went along. But then we just kept rolling [the contract] over, and so I wound up doing eight and a half years.

Risley: What did you enjoy about teaching?

Foreman: I like to have the luxury, which I didn't have in the newsroom because of all the deadlines and everything, to really think things through. As Bob Greenberg, my friend that I worked with for 25 years at the *Inquirer*, said, "You've always been a teacher. At the *Inquirer* you were teaching people here's how we want to do this and that." We were not able to spend

enough time doing in-service training at the *Inquirer* because we all had other jobs to do. Any time we took away for training and education was taken away from covering the news. So what I liked best [in the academy] is I had time to do a lot of studying and gathering of information, and then to create a class presentation. I understand from talking to my colleagues at Penn State that this is a natural process. That particularly in the first three semesters, you are constantly revising your courses. That you are learning from experience what works and what doesn't. That was also what I had done as an editor managing staff. If something doesn't work, why doesn't it work? What can we do that would be better? I try to be sensitive to what succeeds and what doesn't. One thing I learned in the newsroom was to figure out what people can't do very well and then set up a job description where they would never do that. And what they can do exceptionally well, create a job in which they are always doing those things. I would do the same thing to myself in the academy. What works for me? What are my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher? How can I exploit my strengths and minimize my weaknesses? That was a good experience, a learning experience. You can't be the managing editor of a newspaper, the same paper for 25 years, without learning as you go along and being open to new ideas. And I've tried to do that as a teacher as well.

Risley: And what was personally gratifying about teaching?

Foreman: The most gratifying thing was helping students who asked for my help. I would gladly give it. I want to provide the best possible classroom experience for all the students, but the people who make teaching truly worthwhile are the best students. Not by coincidence, they are also the ones who ask you for help and appreciate that help. I've helped these students get established in their careers. I've been a sounding board as they confront problems in the newsroom, and I take a vicarious pride in their accomplishments.

Risley: OK, well, I am sure there are things that we are going to need to probably cover maybe at another interview. But while we're here right now is there anything you'd like to add that we haven't discussed?

Foreman: I want to mention the camaraderie we had at the *Inquirer* newsroom. In the '80s I would try to figure out how to be a better manager. I would read books by Tom Peters, and what Peters was saying is you need to have something a "skunk works" where people could speak out and every idea would get a fair hearing. And, of course, Roberts would never read any of those books about how to be a better editor or better manager, because he already knew all this. He would intuitively do the sort of things I would be reading about. The hallmark of our newsroom was that it was laid back; it was all a skunk works as Peters would describe it. John Carroll said in a lecture he gave at the University of Oregon a few years ago that the laid-back nature of a good newsroom

obscures the utter seriousness with which we take our work and how strongly the people feel about their responsibility to the readers of the paper. We took our work seriously but not ourselves. Nobody said that is what we were going to do. Gene would do it by example, demonstrating that we're going to have a newsroom where people can speak out, can debate things, but then we would be friends again. A newsroom where anybody can come up with an idea, no matter how crazy, and people would pay attention to it instead of dismissing it out of hand because we had never done it that way. We were always open to new ideas. And we were always open to everybody talking. That is something we worked to inculcate at the copy desk. Editors of many papers want the copy editors to be seen but not heard, tolerated only because they are essential from a production standpoint. Gene, who had never worked on the copy desk, looked to me to give particular attention to leading that group. I was not the managing editor of the copy desk and the news desk; it was something I should pay special attention to, just as he paid more attention to the writing and reporting. And what we tried to tell the desk staff – and I think we were pretty successful – is that we want to hear from you. You guys know more about what works and what doesn't, and we want your insights. That's just one example, but the idea was to have a newsroom that practiced participatory management. Roberts ran the place, but he was willing to listen to what people had to say, and he wanted us to do the same.

Risley: OK, Gene. Thank you.

[End of interview]