

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH WILLIS SHENK

Interviewed by Russ Eshleman

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Willis Shenk Interview

Eshleman: I'm at 8 West King Street in the offices of Willis Shenk, who is the retired chairman of Lancaster Newspapers, Inc. He has kindly agreed to conduct one of our oral history interviews. Okay, Mr. Shenk, tell me about your tennis game.

Shenk: Well, my tennis game is not very good with snow on the ground, but come spring I hope to be back into it.

Eshleman: Okay, Mr. Shenk, let's start with some basic information about your childhood. I know you grew up on a farm in Manheim. Tell me about your life as a child.

Shenk: My life as a child. Yes, I grew up on a farm about two miles east of Manheim right along the Reading Railroad. I was born in 1915 so I'm now talking about 1925. We did not have a tractor and we had horses. And I went to a one-room country school about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away. And I walked [to school] even though the snow was 20 inches deep. And I was in that one room country school for eight years. I had some history of glandular problems. I think I might have missed about a half a year. And had the same teacher all eight years. And then I went to Manheim Central High School, and all of a sudden I'm into 17 different classes, or at least six or eight, and it's a whole new world. I'm the only one of my family that got to go to high school. I didn't go to college. I took the commercial course in high school. I learned to type and I learned to do shorthand. And I learned bookkeeping and had a yearning for accounting. And after high school, I got a job as a bookkeeper for three years and then later went into public accounting for about three years before I applied and was fortunate enough to get onto the payroll of the Lancaster Newspapers in 1939.

Eshleman: What was the job situation like in those days prior to you joining Lancaster Newspapers? I mean you had gone through the Depression. Were you concerned as a high school student about getting a job?

Shenk: I don't remember. I was in my first job as a bookkeeper in Manheim at the Manheim Mill and Elevator Company. And a Mr. Jewell and Mr. Hadley from New York had just opened this mill where they would store wheat and and it was intended to be a flour mill. And it closed down after about three years. It wasn't working all that well and then I got into public accounting only because the accountant we had had there had gotten to know me and my work, and I was able to go to work for him. I was in public accounting then for three years. Together with a correspondence course I had been taking, that kind of qualified me to take the CPA exam, which I did in 1940 after I had started with the newspapers. And I passed

the accounting and auditing section and went back in '41 and passed the law section. And I'm a CPA.

Eshleman: Wow.

Shenk: So as I look back on it, in all areas of my life I have been the most fortunate guy you'll ever know.

Eshleman: That's terrific. Going back to your childhood, you mentioned you were the only one to go to high school. Your parents farmed?

Shenk: Oh, yeah.

Eshleman: And brothers and sisters as well.

Shenk: I had one sister and three brothers. One brother married and he took over the farm. And my parents moved to town, moved to Manheim. Another brother had been with the Reading Railroad Company. And another brother wasn't doing too much of anything; he had a few problems. But everybody got through life. I'm the only survivor today.

Eshleman: Was your home a newspaper-reading household? I mean was there any indication early in life that you picked up a newspaper and thought, "You know, someday maybe I want to get involved with something like this."

Shenk: No, I don't think so. No, I don't expect that is true at all. I had three years of public accounting. I answered an ad in the Lancaster Newspapers. Oh yes, for whatever reason, I commuted to New York weekly and went to New York University for one summer. I was studying partnership law and that probably helped me in my application to the newspaper.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: But I simply filed out an application, got a couple of interviews and finally got the job. And it has worked out very well for me and hopefully they didn't suffer unduly.

Eshleman: I'm sure they didn't. What was your first job at the newspaper?

Shenk: Well, I was hired as an accountant. I might have had a title; it might have been administrative assistant. Essentially, it was to do the taxes.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: Between the newspapers and radio, some coal and a printing company, there were about 15 different companies and I did the tax returns.

Eshleman: So you started as an accountant. Tell me about your career path at Lancaster Newspapers from there.

Shenk: Then I became controller and maybe secretary. They kept moving me around, trying to find something I could do. And then finally about 1983, they said, "Chairman of the board. He can't do too much harm up there."

Eshleman: That's funny. Now you mentioned a moment ago when you first started, that Lancaster Newspapers wasn't just the newspapers, of course. There were coal mining interests. There was radio. Tell me about that diverse company back then.

Shenk: Are you going to ask how the assignments get into the newspaper at all?

Eshleman: Sure, let's do that.

Shenk: It would start in my mind with 1836 when Andrew Jackson Steinman was born. And he was maybe smart, a bit shy, and maybe a bit eccentric. I don't know. But he was smart because he graduated from Yale at age 19 or 20. Then he went to law school, and became a lawyer, and now it's 1856 or something, and he practices law. But he's a very avid Democrat. And there may have been four or five different newspapers [in the Lancaster area]. Only one was a Democratic voice and it was about to die in 1866. And he didn't want to lose the Democratic voice. He didn't think the county should lose a Democratic voice, and he bought half the newspaper. And he's only 30 years of age. He didn't particularly want a newspaper. He didn't want to see that one die. Now this Andrew Jackson Steinman is a grandfather of today's primary owners. I forget who owned the other half of the newspaper. This newspaper was called the *Intelligencer Journal* and has roots back to 1794. It got started then. I don't know how many owners were in between there, but that's how the Steinman family got started in the newspaper business in 1866.

Eshleman: The Steinmans were from Lancaster County or they moved to Lancaster County?

Shenk: No. They might never have been a Steinman family in Lancaster if Christian and Regina Steinman had not migrated here from Dresden, Germany in 1749. And they were Moravian missionaries and they almost immediately settled in to the Moravian community in Bethlehem. And then in about 1756 they were assigned to the Lititz Moravian community, and there they were much involved in the early building of the Moravian Church and also the Linden Hall School for girls. And both of those properties are thriving to this day. But then Christian died around 1760 maybe. And in time, he had a son named John Frederick Jr., who in time had a son, Andrew Jackson. One of them, I guess, founded the Steinman Hardware Company, which still has a building on East King Street or West King Street. And I think one of them might have been mayor of

Lancaster. Anyway, they were they were leaders in the community, but it's Andrew Jackson Steinman who started the Steinman ownership into the newspaper world. How much of this do you want?

Eshleman: Oh, this is fascinating. Keep going.

Shenk: So, Andrew Jackson Steinman had bought into the newspaper. For some reason, he had gotten involved with Penn Iron Company; he's kind of minerally oriented. And he gradually stops practicing law and he's riding horseback with somebody through the hills of western Virginia buying up coal land. And unfortunately, I guess, these mountaineers might sell the same coal mine to you or to me the next day. So nobody knew what he owned until Colonel Steinman went down and sorted it all out. So at age 45, Andrew Jackson Steinman marries. He marries Caroline Morgan Hale, a lady from Connecticut. They proceed to have a family. And the first one is Elizabeth Steinman and then it's John Frederick and then James Hale. Elizabeth never married. Caroline married Evan Schroeder. They had a child but she died at a very early age. And so it's really the two sons that carry the ball for the father and the two sons went to Yale. John is an engineer and he goes to work in the Penn Iron Company to help his father run it. James Hale went to law school. He goes and spends six months in Virginia, trying to figure out who owned what. And the end result is that the Steinmans owned about 8,000 acres with coal in it, and in about a dozen different tracts. The smallest one being maybe 100 acres and the biggest one being 4,000 acres, I think. And they own them to this day. A lot of the coal has been mined, of course. The colonel didn't spend too much time practicing law; he was attracted to the newspapers. This is 1912, '13, or '14 and somewhere along the line, John Frederick came over from Penn Iron because it was failing. He moved over to the newspapers, and now it's about 1915 and Mr. Andrew Jackson gave his half of the newspapers to the two sons. And they are on their way. Andrew Jackson died and left the coal lands wherever they were to the four children. And that's pretty much where they are to this day. In 1877 they are publishing a morning paper, the *Intelligencer Journal*. The *New Era* got started as a Republican mouthpiece and it's the dominant paper because the county is Republican. It got started, I think in 1877. In 1920 it was sold to Sam Sleightmaker, and in 1923 he sold it to Paul Block of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, and he owns a couple other good size newspapers and has mega bucks. And I suspect he had every reason to think he was going to buy the Steinmans out. And they competed very severely for five years. In the meantime, the Steinman brothers started the *Sunday News* in 1925. And by 1928, Paul Block in effect said, "Either you buy me or I buy you." They bought him, bought the *New Era* for \$925,000. They didn't have any money, but they were able to float a bond issue and raise \$600,000. I guess that was based upon the newspaper operation they already had going. They got a \$250,000 mortgage on the real estate of the *New Era* company on North Wayne Street, and they got another \$75,000 from some place. But here it is about February or March of 1928, and all

of a sudden they own the morning, the evening, and the Sunday newspapers in Lancaster. And the ball is beginning to roll. Barely had it begun to roll when radio was in its prime, and in the first five years of the 1930s, they either bought or built a radio station in Wilmington. They also built WGAL in Lancaster, WORK in York, and WEST in Easton. Meantime, they had appointed I. Z. Buckwalter as the manager of the newspaper operation and Clare McCullough to run the broadcasting operation. They did that for another 30 or 40 years until they retired. By late 1949 they had built and put on the air WGAL television, Channel 8. I think it was only the thirty-first station in the whole country to go on the air. And about in 1949, they built and put on the air, WDEL in Wilmington. They sold WDEL in about 1955. I guess they were smart enough to realize that all three networks were already in Philadelphia, and there's never going to be one in Wilmington, only 20 miles away. They sold it to Paul Harren and in about three years he sold it to Stohr Broadcasting. And then within two years, Stohr took it off the air and gave the license back to the FCC. And it that license today is the public station in Wilmington. How much of this do you want?

Eshleman: Fine. I want to get into your career and how you got involved with managing these various interests.

Shenk: So they now have the three newspapers and you're up to 1950. What is unique when they had the three newspapers was that each newspaper was separate and to this day this is true. And this bodes well for the community of Lancaster in that at least there are two voices to be heard. The one a Democrat, the *Intelligencer Journal* and the *New Era* being the Republican voice, and the *Sunday News* being largely non-political, but very much community oriented. That's the stance to this day. I think it is fair to say that the Steinman brothers established that pretty much in 1928.

Eshleman: Let me ask you about that. You're the businessman. When you have three separate newspapers under the same roof, you are duplicating sometimes. You are sending a reporter from the *Intelligencer* to the city council meeting, as well as a reporter from the *New Era*, and perhaps even from the *Sunday News*. From a business standpoint, you're paying three salaries to do the same job.

Shenk: There's a less costly way of doing it.

Eshleman: Why continue it then or why did they continue it?

Shenk: Well, that's a good question. I think the ownership today would be loath to entertain the thought of changing it. It worked; it is working. Yes, there's a more economical way of doing it. But maybe it is offset by the mere fact that the community is totally supportive of it.

Eshleman: It does give Lancaster competition, which many communities now longer have.

Shenk: Oh, sure. Yeah.

Eshleman: So that's good for the public. Tell me about again your career. Did you have much interaction with the two brothers, John F. and James Hale?

Shenk: Very much.

Eshleman: Tell me about those interactions.

Shenk: Well, I say very much because I was really the young kid on the block. But I worked for Doug Armstrong, who was the controller and hired me. And we worked together very well. But I had some accounting and, particularly, tax knowledge. I've often said if I were living my life over, maybe I'd have been a lawyer. But I got to be working with the Steinman brothers on a lot of their things. In 1951 they created a family foundation. I was the go-between, the carrier between them and the lawyers and back and forth.

Eshleman: Carrying it out.

Shenk: Yeah and that was true of a lot of their things. But it was all only because I was the only guy in the company that had this tax background.

Eshleman: How about in terms of the editorial product? You were on the business side obviously throughout your career. But you must have had some interaction with the editors. Perhaps people weren't happy with this story and they would call you, and they would say, "Mr. Shenk I don't like that story. What are you going to do about it?"

Shenk: There was very little of that, and I think still is very little of that. Because I often said that each of the editors is 99 percent in control. Obviously, nothing beats ownership.

Eshleman: Correct.

Shenk: But and I remember when I first was here, I think some, may be all the editorials, went went to I. Z. Buckwalter or the Steinmans. When Doug Armstrong got involved, I remember that I suggested to him that we don't do that.

Shenk: I remember I said to Doug, "If we don't like what the editor is writing, we get a new editor." So we essentially stopped reading editorials, and so the editor was 99 percent in control of his paper. And I say 99, because every third week the management would have a luncheon meeting with the editors and talk about whatever they want to talk about. But as far as I

know there's there's no reason for the editor to be consulting with anybody about what the paper is going to say the next morning.

Eshleman: Well, that's a good policy, a policy of independence for the editor.

Shenk: Yes.

Eshleman: Let's go in another direction. Back in the 60s the newspaper had to make a decision: Do we want to remain in downtown Lancaster or do we want to go to the suburbs. You chose to stay downtown. Why is that?

Shenk: Doug Armstrong retired in '77 and so sometime before '77 we had acquired acreage just north of the stockyards across the road with the intention of moving the production facility out there. In the long run, the production facility would have been out there and the business and the editorial and so forth would have been downtown. It was doable then because they could get the editorial byproduct from downtown to out there so that they could make the plates and print it. That was doable. But whether or not it would have implied that the end result would have been that the whole business would have moved out there, who knows. At any rate, Doug retired in '77 and we just decided we weren't going to do that. And so we expanded this office building here, added to it, and built a new press facility over there. And I think it was the right decision.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: There may come a time when you do move out. Most newspapers have done that.

Eshleman: Right, right.

Shenk: At least move their manufacturing facility.

Eshleman: Wasn't there a sense of civic and community involvement on the part of the Steinman family? They wanted to preserve downtown and not abandon it.

Shenk: It would have left a great void in one of the center blocks of the city.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: So, I think it was the right decision. But who knows what's tomorrow.

Eshleman: Because the business is changing so much.

Shenk: Right.

Eshleman: Let's talk about some of those industry changes. When you walked in the door of Lancaster newspapers in the late 1930s for the first time, and when you retired a couple of years ago in 2004, how did that business change? I know there are many changes but highlight some of them.

Shenk: Well, I'm not a production guy at all, but I do remember the linotypes and the monotypes. Not quite sure what the monotypes did, but with the linotypes, a man sits there and set type at the rate of ten lines a minute.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: And then and somewhere along the line, the next piece of technology was the tape. A man would take the editorial story and punch it into a tape. The tape would be fed into the linotype machine and without any human hands the linotype would set the product, and as I remember instead of eight linotype operators, there would be no more than one or two who had to see that the tapes were running. That and then what the computer came into being. I think we might have been the second newspaper to bring a computer into into the shop and then that grew in time in the editorial department. I remember Dan Cherry was not very keen about getting computers in the editorial room. But eventually it came and today the whole product is created in the editorial room. I'm so far away from it, but I guess every page is totally in view on the computer and you press a button which sends it out to the plate maker It's a whole new world. We don't proofread anymore [in the back shop]. Everything is printed exactly as it was sent to them by the computer.

Eshleman: You mentioned all the proofreading now is done in the editorial department. Back when you first started there were proofreaders as well in the back shop that would look over the pages.

Shenk: Oh yeah, everything. When the story was put into type by the linotype machines it would have been read by somebody. I remember each paper had four or five proofreaders, I think.

Eshleman: How about changes in terms of readers. Do you think readers of newspapers have changed?

Shenk: Very much so.

Eshleman: How so?

Shenk: Because so many of them don't have time. Both husbands and wives are working and need to because they can't live on \$35,000. They need \$70,000 to live. And our Sunday circulation has been holding around 100,000; I think it's close to 100,000. But there's more time on a weekend and the coupons in the Sunday paper are probably worth \$25. They can easily find a coupon or two or three that is worth the price of the

newspaper. The dailies, I can remember when circulation was, between the two, a total of 100,000. We're now, I guess, around 80,000. And so the readership is down, obviously. But the number of papers being delivered has been sliding downhill for the last 20 years.

Eshleman: That brings up a good point. Many companies have abandoned afternoon newspaper because of the problems with delivery. But here in Lancaster the *New Era* remains, I guess, as large, if not larger, than the *Intelligencer Journal*.

Shenk: It had been. It is narrowing; I don't really know what it is today. I think they are pretty close to even today.

Eshleman: Why is that? Why do you think the afternoon paper here survives?

Shenk: Because the ownership wants it to survive. The second reason is if you had a morning newspaper with 80,000 circulation, and an afternoon paper with 20,000 circulation, it's easier to do.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: But when you have two voices in the community, it is much more difficult to do. I think the ownership would like to see it continue for as long as it is reasonable to do so. All I'm saying it's not the easiest thing to do and keep your total readership reasonably happy.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: And particularly so when you've got 50/50 readership.

Eshleman: Sure, sure. One of the other changes in business over the years is that big corporations would come in and say, "We'd like to buy you." Did that ever happen while you were at the helm of the companies?

Shenk: I'm sure, yes. It was never my recollection that we'd totally ignore them. You never say, "Never." But at least in the last 50 years, and even currently, that is that farthest thing from anyone's thought, as far as I know.

Eshleman: I understand you weren't involved in the editorial product, but with this dwindling circulation what would you suggest that newspapers, not necessarily Lancaster newspapers, but newspapers in general do to win back readers. What do we have to do to win back readers?

Shenk: I'm not sure you will win them back. Well, yeah, maybe I shouldn't have said that. I'm not really close enough to it anymore. But the only thing that's going to win them back is the quality of the product. And nobody else is doing it. Sure you can get snippets of information 24/7 but those

are only the headlines. You can't the stories in detail except in the local newspaper.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: The other question, of course, is if they subscribe how much can you increase your rates. The most amazing thing to me is that you have an organization of reporters going out and writing all this news, putting it in print form, delivering it every day to my door for 50 cents. You can't even buy a chocolate bar for 50 cents anymore. And that's an incredible opportunity for the community to know what's going on.

Eshleman: How do you think the Internet is going to change things? I subscribe to the *New Era* at home and the *Sunday News* and so forth. But I could go onto my computer and read it for free. So how do you persuade those people, younger people especially, who say, "Well, rather than subscribe to the paper I'm just going to read it for free."

Shenk: I'm computer illiterate. I remember Jack Gearhart; for years he and I worked close together. He can't understand why I didn't get into the computer and I'm still not into computers. And I probably will die without being into computers. They are getting it for free because the newspaper is putting it out there. I'm not sure what we're doing here in Lancaster. Yes, we are out there. But it's not for free. It's only accessible if you're already a subscriber.

Eshleman: Part of it, right. You can get a portion of it for free and then there's a portion of it you only get if you're a subscriber.

Shenk: Okay, I'm not I'm not really familiar with that program. Well, if you are already a subscriber there's no reason why you shouldn't be able to get it for free.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: But if you're not a subscriber, why would any newspaper want to give their product away? Yet across the country there are a lot of newspapers doing that.

Eshleman: Sure, that's what's happening.

Shenk: I don't understand that at all.

Eshleman: I guess what they're struggling to do now in terms of the Internet is find a way to sell people advertisements on the Internet. In other words, rather than just advertising the printed product also advertise on the Internet. And, of course, that would provide revenue.

Shenk: If you're getting paid for it.

Eshleman: Okay, one of the things that's a current topic now in the newspaper industry is that we're losing readers and there's been a lot of fear that the industry is not going to survive. And I'm wondering, during your 65 years, perhaps it was the advent of television, were there similar concerns that, uh oh, newspapers are in trouble? That they're never going to last.

Shenk: Let's face it, television and even radio was a new competitor of the newspaper. But between the population growth and the economic growth, that supported advertising growth and everybody was able to live.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: But they still need they need print to get to the community that is not all Internet literate. So in the whole 50 or 75 years of media competing with newspapers, newspapers are still working. But there's a greater threat than there was 25 years ago.

Eshleman: Yeah, the technology has just made it so different I guess. But perhaps they said that back at the advent of radio and television as well.

Shenk: I don't really remember but there obviously would have been concerns about the inroads that these vehicles are going to make on the advertising dollar. Fortunately, the community, the population growth, and the retailing growth enabled everybody to live happily ever after.

Eshleman: Do you see the newspaper as a different kind of business from retail or a manufacturer? Those of us on the editorial side often talk about we have a sort of calling or public trust. Is that how you see it as well because we're providing something that is a little bit different in terms of the product?

Shenk: Well, it is totally different. Gosh, I'm amazed. Okay, the staff of the *New Era* came in to work, some of them as early as 5:30 this morning. They got the paper all done, so it could go to press at 12 or 12:30, and you do it every day. And tomorrow morning it's a whole new product. There isn't any other industry like that anywhere in the world.

Eshleman: Manufacturing a brand new product every day.

Shenk: Every day. I read all three papers every day. I don't read every story. I read the headline and if it catches my attention I read it.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: But, no, I don't think everybody reads every story every day, but you read what attracts your attention. I read the obits every day. I just want to be sure mine isn't there.

Eshleman: It's a good day if it's not, right. Yeah, I do the same thing. Tell me about, in terms of your job over the years, especially in the later years when you became chairman of the board. You were involved in civic activities, community activities, giving speeches, and so forth. Tell me about that.

Shenk: I was again very, very fortunate. I worked for Doug Armstrong and he was not inclined to be out and doing that sort of thing. I don't think he, by temperament, was attracted to it so much, maybe as I was. There was an accounting organization. I got to be president of it in 1949. That was the National Association of Accountants, local chapter. I became vice president of the national organization, maybe in 1956. And that was a part of my development, in terms of just being out there and being able to talk on your feet. And then I, let's see, in '59 I was chairman of the United Campaign and then and I was, for a time, I was on the F&M [Franklin & Marshall College] board. I was president of country day school board earlier. I was on the Linden Hall School board and then the United Way and maybe half a dozen other organizations. So it worked pretty well. but all of that was a part of my growth and development.

Eshleman: When you were out speaking to community groups, did people approach you about the newspapers and say, "I like this story or I didn't like this story."

Shenk: I can't say that I got very much of that. But that wouldn't infer that they were in love with every story in the paper.

Eshleman: That's right. You worked here full time for 65 years.

Shenk: Correction: I got paid for 65 years.

Eshleman: Well, I'm sure people would say you worked full time. But longevity is sort of a hallmark of Lancaster Newspapers. I know many of the editorial employees have been here for 30, 25 years. Why is that? Why do people stay here?

Shank: My recollection is you came here in the 70s.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: In the early days we didn't pay well enough, particularly the editorial department. You would graduate from Penn State and you'd get a job in a newspaper in Clearfield, and then you'd go to Lancaster, and then you'd go to Philadelphia, and then you go to the *New York Times*. And that was kind of the pattern.

Eshleman: Right.

Shenk: But we have lots and lots of long-term employees. I think that our pay and personnel policies are good. I think that our benefit policies are very good. I think that we have about 750 employees in all these companies, maybe 800, and I think they are pretty happy. And I guess we have 300 or more retirees. I don't hear much bitching from any of them.

Eshleman: Well, that's good.

Shenk: And the family obviously is profit oriented, but they treat their employees well.

Eshleman: Had you ever thought about going elsewhere over the years? I mean you grew up in Lancaster County and you stayed. But had you ever thought maybe I'd like to try Philadelphia or New York.

Shenk: Never, no. I stayed until I did retire.

Eshleman: 2004.

Shenk: But it's been great. I've had a great ride.

Eshleman: That's terrific, that's terrific. How about your family? I never asked about your family. You are married and have children?

Shank: Married 66 years, going on 67.

Eshleman: It might last.

Shenk: Beg you pardon.

Eshleman: I said maybe it will last.

Shenk: My wife has been in the Glen at Little Valley for the last two years. We go out to dinner every Saturday night and we're going out this Saturday night again. She's halfway into Alzheimer's, I guess. But she's savvy and she knows what's going on. I am with her every night through her dinner. I don't always eat with her, but I'm give her whatever help she might need. And it's been a good ride. And yes, we have a son. He married and we have two grandchildren. Unfortunately, the marriage ended in divorce about a year ago. And that doesn't help any, but our granddaughter is in her third year at Michigan State. And the grandson graduated from Syracuse about three years ago and is working in New York.

Eshleman: Did your son follow in your footsteps in either journalism or business?

Shenk: No, he was into landscaping and had his own landscaping business for a time. And they moved to Connecticut about six or seven years ago. And he was kind of into real estate, getting property. He had a talent for fixing, painting, whatever. He did a little of that.

Eshleman: One thing I thought of is that we talked about John F. Steinman and James Hale Steinman, but then we stopped talking about the family after that. Who came after that?

Shenk: Let me say that John F. Steinman and James Hale Steinman were the brothers and their combination worked very well. And I would claim that James Hale was the more adventurous one and John F. was the more conservative.

Eshleman: Was he the engineer, John F?

Shenk: Yes. I think it was Ralph Barley who said to me one time, "Whether it's a board, it's a company or community organization, every place needs to have one person who will say, 'Why?'" You know everything's going down the track and somebody says, "Why are you going to do that?" John F. Steinman would have been the "Why" guy. But when a decision was made, neither of them ever looked back. And there were never any recriminations. It was a great combination.

Eshleman: After the brothers, what was the next generation?

Shenk: The next generation, well, okay. The brothers are the second generation of Steinman. And the third generation is Kerry Noonan, Peggy Steinman, and Louise Ansbury. The businesses, be they newspapers, radio or printing, were all owned exactly 50 percent by each family, which in itself is unique. I think if there's a name for it, it's negative control: I can't do what I want. You've got to get me to go along to do what you want. Negative control. And John F. Steinman had one daughter, Shirley Steinman Katsmanbaugh. She had lived the last 50 years or more in New York City. And they initiated the conversations that maybe their family's long-range interest might best be served if they were to sell their half to the Lancaster family. And so for the first time, we had newspapers, printing, and radio, with 100 percent ownership in the Lancaster family.

Eshleman: Are their children in Lancaster as well?

Shenk: Only one. Kerry has two daughters and her family are living in New England. And Louise Ansbury has two daughters. Palen is an attorney and lives in Washington, and her sister lives in Dallas. No Steinman, no member of the family, is an employee of any company, which in itself is unique.

Eshleman: Yeah.

Shenk: And maybe good. But they are in control at the board level. And so they are much involved in quarterly meetings on the board.

Eshleman: And as we discussed earlier they don't get involved in day-to-day editorial decisions obviously?

Shenk: No, no. They read the editorials in the morning paper, the same as you or I do.

Eshleman: Do you still come into the office on occasion?

Shenk: I continue to be involved with the Steinman Foundations, which as I said got started in 1951 and there is one for each family. And they were modestly funded by the brothers, really modestly. But the businesses have fed them for 50 years. They do a respectable amount of good. The foundation still spends its money in Lancaster County.

Eshleman: Let's talk about some of those projects. What do the foundations get involved with?

Shenk: Well, over the years they were involved with education. They have been benefactors of Franklin and Marshall, Elizabethtown, Millersville, Thaddeus Stevens, Linden Hall. The Pennsylvania Academy of Music is in a building program here on South Prince Street and they are supporting it rather well. Kerry is involved in some of these things. And Peggy Steinman is currently the president of the Boys and Girls Club. Colonel Steinman was a founder of the Boys and Girls Clubs, as I remember. And we have supported it rather well and the SACA.

Eshleman: Spanish American Civic Association.

Shenk: You got it. They have been involved in a program that's fixing up houses, and currently they are into a program of building new houses. We also give, even if it's only \$1,000 or \$2,500 a year, to a whole myriad of organizations in the county.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: Virtually all of the money that the foundations are able to pay out is for organizations in Lancaster County or closely adjacent. We have helped, on a much lesser scale, Messiah College because they have kids from here.

Eshleman: I think that about wraps it up unless there's anything else you can think of you'd like to talk about in your career or the businesses. Anything that we skipped that we should have discussed.

Shenk: I think the Steinman Enterprise businesses had been well managed, and that's in part because the owners wouldn't hold still for it any other way. At the same time, they don't go breathing down anybody's neck. But I think it's a pretty unique and remarkable situation that managements have substantial freedom. That doesn't mean that if they're thinking to make some major change that they don't run it by the board.

Eshleman: Sure.

Shenk: But the managements are substantially free to run the business. And the yardstick is the bottom line.

Eshleman: Yeah.

Shenk: It isn't the necessarily the most hard-nosed way of getting to the bottom line. And if that were not true we wouldn't have so many happy employees.

Eshleman: That must be very satisfying for you to have so many employees who stay so long. I mean, that's a tribute to the management.

Shenk: Yes, and I don't think there's much carping out there be, it employees or retirees.

Eshleman: That's a good management style.

Shenk: Well, I've been here for 65 years. Would I have known how to get a newspaper out on the street? No, I couldn't do it. It's the people, it's the organization. That's true of any company in the world. The guy at the head of it gets credit, but the people get it done.

Eshleman: Well, I think that's a great way to end. Thank you very much.

[End of Interview]