

An Interview with
Malcolm Steele Dale
May 13, 1977

Interviewed by
Evelyn Benham

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
Oral History Project
Monticello and Vicinity

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Interviewee: Malcolm S. Dale

Interviewer: Evelyn Benham

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Scope Note: The Lincoln-Lawrence-Franklin Regional Library
System conducted oral history interviews with local
citizens. The interviewees included long-term residents
of the Lincoln, Lawrence and Franklin County areas.

BENHAM: This is an interview with Malcolm Steele Dale, P.O. Box 549, Monticello, Mississippi. Interviewed by Evelyn Benham. Mr. Dale, what is your full name?

DALE: Malcolm Steele Dale.

BENHAM: What is your address and phone number?

DALE: Monticello, Post Office Drawer 549. Phone number in 587-2781 at the office and 2478 at the house.

BENHAM: When were you born?

DALE: May the second, 1939.

BENHAM: Where were you born?

DALE: I was born in Hattiesburg, but I was raised in Monticello.

BENHAM: Now, is Hattiesburg in Mississippi?

DALE: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: What is your father's full name?

DALE: Joseph Malcolm Dale.

BENHAM: When was he born?

DALE: January the first, 1900.

BENHAM: And where was he born?

DALE: In Monticello.

BENHAM: What kind of work did your father do?

DALE: Well, he did a number of things. He left home at the age of seventeen (17) and joined the army in the First World War, 1917. When he returned, he primarily went into the business of working in the oil fields

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in Texas, Oklahoma, coming over to Arkansas. Then all the way up to Illinois, he worked as a trouble-shooter for the gas company, United Gas - well, the predecessor to United Gas Company - that type work. And worked for a number of years in that. Then later came back to Monticello and did several other odd and assorted jobs until the time my grandfather died when he went into the newspaper business.

BENHAM: And what year was that?

DALE: That would have been 1941.

BENHAM: What was your mother's maiden name?

DALE: Mary Olive Steele.

BENHAM: When was she born?

DALE: I am not positive. 1903, I believe, was the date of her birth. Month and day, I believe it was October 27, I think, 1903.

BENHAM: And where was she born?

DALE: I am not positive of that; I think it was Clinton. Her father was a professor at Mississippi College.

BENHAM: And this was also in Mississippi?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: Did your mother work outside of the home?

DALE: Yes, she did. She helped at the office until she was physically unable to do so. She suffered from a number of strokes in the latter years of her life which incapacitated her as far as assisting at the office. But prior to that time, she had done a number of things in the newspaper work.

BENHAM: All right. Tell me something about your education.

DALE: Well, it consisted primarily of course of what was in Monticello

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Elementary, Monticello Junior High, and Monticello High School, having graduated from there.

BENHAM: Wait just a second, we have to start at the beginning.

DALE: All right.

BENHAM: All right, like how old were you when you started school?

DALE: I was six (6) years old.

BENHAM: What was the name of the school?

DALE: Monticello Elementary.

BENHAM: And how did you get to school?

DALE: My mother carried me to school each morning by automobile. First two or three grades, I know, she carried me. Well, she must have carried me a little longer than that. There's a span I don't remember before I started riding a bicycle myself and then a motorcycle later and then an automobile.

BENHAM: Well, about how far did you live from school?

DALE: Four-fifths of a mile.

BENHAM: I remember you singing in the elementary school programs. How did the teachers know about this talent of yours?

DALE: My mother was quite interested in my participating outwardly in things. I took expression lessons and I took singing lessons and what-not from the time, I guess about five (5) years of age and so I can remember vaguely having performed at Co-Lin and at Mississippi Southern and places like that. I was what was known then as a little boy soprano and it changed somewhere along the line. Now I can hardly sing at all.

BENHAM: Well, I really enjoyed hearing you sing.

DALE: Well, thank you.

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BENHAM: And there was one in particular, one song in particular that I liked and that was about the Easter bonnet, but I don't remember any more about the words. What did you do when you finished high school?

DALE: I went to the University of Mississippi or "Ole Miss" and pursued a bachelor of arts degree with a major in Journalism and minors in Political Science and English.

BENHAM: And what year was this?

DALE: That was from 1957 through 1961.

BENHAM: Let's see, you said that your major was in Journalism?

DALE: Right.

BENHAM: All right. Was this something that you always wanted to do or did you feel that you were obligated to carry on your father's business?

DALE: No, I grew up being a number of things. In that day and age, I think young people had more heroes than they do now. So quite naturally from Saturday matinees, I at one time wanted to be a cowboy. Lash LaRue was my favorite. Others had Gene Autry and Roy Rogers, but Lash LaRue with his whip was one of my favorites. I don't ever recall having wanted to be a fireman. A train engineer - I thought riding on a train was great. I wanted to be a soldier because having grown up in the time of the second World War was a very impressionable age for me, of course. And at one point I was going to be a minister - that looked like a good calling - and several other things that I thought of. Professional football players. Several other things. But along about the middle years and high school - I'd say around the tenth or eleventh grade - it began to dawn on me that I was going to have to choose a profession. I assume I talked with my parents about this, as well as other

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teachers and what-not. I can remember very vividly my father telling me if I wanted to go into medicine or law, he would do everything in his power to put me through school. If I wanted to be in the newspaper business, it was mine. He would turn it over to me once I had acquired the education and skills to do so. And so I began to lean toward doing that. Of course, naturally, throughout the junior high and high school years, I was always elected class reporter and editor of the paper. I was just supposed to be able to do it and somewhere along the line I guess I learned a little about doing it and always accepted those, those jobs.

BENHAM: So it started from way back and some of it rubbed off.

DALE: Well, I can remember resenting, resenting having to work. I started at the age of six (6) folding papers. We used to fold them by hand. There were a couple of girls that used to come in after school on Thursday afternoons and we'd fold papers and they'd make me a little place on the floor and I could fold twenty-five (25) or thirty (30) during the time they were folding several hundred, but that was the way I began. At the age of twelve (12), I ran the hand-fed press that we printed those on.

BENHAM: How interesting.

DALE: And so I grew up learning the mechanical part of it in particular and I guess there were times other youngsters were going swimming or playing baseball and things of that type and I was having to work. And there were times when I wished I was not having to work so that I could be out doing those things too. Now a days, of course, I guess that training that I received is paying dividends as far as being able to carry on some of that work.

BENHAM: Well, that's right and you are involved now in the Little

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League, too.

DALE: Oh, yes.

BENHAM: Now you are kind of getting back, aren't you in a way?

DALE: Well, we're trying anyway.

BENHAM: Yes, yes. Well, what year was this that you finished college?
Did you tell me that?

DALE: 1961.

BENHAM: Was it at this time that you met your future wife?

DALE: Just a few weeks prior to graduating from high school was when
we met as a matter of fact.

BENHAM: All right. What is your wife's full name?

DALE: Grace Montjoy Davis.

BENHAM: And when was she born?

DALE: Now you are going to ask me a date that is going to be hard for
me to recall.

BENHAM: Well, don't feel badly.

DALE: July ninth and she is three (3) years younger than I am, must be
1942 then?

BENHAM: Don't ask me. I have asked this question to a number of hus-
bands who have been living with their wives for years and years and years and
they don't even know how to spell their wives' names. And where was she born?

DALE: She was born in Rapides Parish, Louisiana, which is Lafayette I
believe is her place of birth.

BENHAM: Did your wife work away from home?

DALE: She works in the office part-time.

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BENHAM: I mean did she work, do that before she got married? Did she have a job outside of the home?

DALE: No, no. She always said she went to college to get her M-R-S degree and she got it.

BENHAM: Well, that's good. How many children do you and your wife have?

DALE: Three (3).

BENHAM: Would you tell me their names?

DALE: The oldest is Mary Grace. "Midge" is the nickname that we use. She is named after both of her grandmothers. She is thirteen (13). Her birthday is in August.

BENHAM: I can't believe it.

DALE: Oh, yes. The middle is Maureen Allen and she is ten (10) years old. And the third is Mark Exum and he is six (6) years old.

BENHAM: Why was a newspaper ever put out in Lawrence County? Why was it?

DALE: Well, there were several here back through the years. We have never been able to ascertain exactly how many there were. It has to go back, of course I'm sure, interrelated to the economics of that day and age. Natchez of course had become a principal city in Mississippi after settlers left the coast and river traffic was of course the only means really of rapid movement. You didn't haul things over land in our climate too well. We had too much water for oxen to drag too much, I imagine, so river barge traffic was the best form of travel. And the Indians were eased out of certain territories and the settlers moved in to occupy those territories, of course one of the principal places to come along would have been Monticello. Ideal on a high bluff, next

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to a river, it just made a good place for people to settle. As the population grew, of course one of the freedoms of this country is freedom of information. People demanded to know. And there were a group of people in the publishing business that were willing to tell. Now, sometimes they didn't always tell the truth and sometimes they embellished the truth and sometimes they just reported what they could find out. And of course the time came when Lawrence County, which of course originally embraced most of Lincoln and most of Jeff Davis County, had a sizable population that would have wanted a county newspaper. This being a county seat town, effort was made then to begin a newspaper. As I said, I do not know all of those. I've never been able to trace all of that history. The Mississippi Press Association and various members interested in historical events of it have traced the beginnings back, of course, to Andrew Marchaux at Washington at Natchez in Mississippi and what all the papers that were in Lawrence County or even in Monticello are not known. But the Southern Journal is the earliest that my family had any connection with. It was apparently begun in 1841 according to the volume numbers.

BENHAM: All right. Now wait, wait, you are kind of getting a little bit ahead.

DALE: All right.

BENHAM: I am going to come back and ask you that.

DALE: Okay.

BENHAM: But I just wanted to know why you felt that there was a newspaper and you have answered that question very well. In fact, you have told me a lot of things I didn't know. What was the name of the first newspaper that was put out here in the county?

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DALE: As I said, I have not been able to ascertain that. My earliest recognitions are with...

BENHAM: Well, of your family?

DALE: Well, in 1861, we found a deed not too many years ago where my great-grandfather, S. W. Dale, Steven W. Dale, purchased the Southern Advocate here in Monticello.

BENHAM: Was he the editor?

DALE: He became the editor at that point. Why he would have purchased this in 1861, I can only surmise. Possibly there was a Union sympathizer editing the paper that fell on hard times, wanted to sell it, and he dumped it in _____ time.

BENHAM: Well, your grandfather bought, so why shouldn't he be the editor.

DALE: Right, right. Back in that day, of course, you hand-set the type, you ran the press by hand, and you almost distributed it by hand. There would have been some circulation up and down the streets but no mass circulation as we have now a days. The mail could have been used to some extent, but it wouldn't of course have been as free and widely circulated as it is now because of the service that would have been rendered at that point. But that was in 1861 and I said this newspaper apparently was begun in 1841. We have a copy of it in 18--, well, I have forgotten the date of the one that we have. We must have a copy of it in 1866, because it carries William H. Seward's proclamation by him. He was the fellow that bought Alaska, you know. Talked us into buying that. Quite interesting to see that on the front page of this paper. Incidentally, this is a rag content paper and it is in better condition

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than the newsprint that we printed last year's newspapers on.

BENHAM: Okay. Well, I am going to ask you something about that after, when this is over. But right now I won't do it. You have already said some of the topics that were discussed in the paper.

DALE: Right. Well, this same edition carries the wedding of Mrs. G. A. Tunieson, who was known as Grandma Tunieson at that time. I forget all the details and particulars of it, but people in Lawrence County have heard that Tunieson name for years and years. Her wedding account is carried in this same edition of the paper. There were professional cards by doctors and lawyers. There was a serialization of a story with a moral concept to it. It was a preachment, really. Somebody that went off and did morally wrong, like the prodigal son and how he learned his lesson. And the editorial content was limited to a column of short paragraphs and comments of that type. There was not a long editorial as we know it today in this particular editions. Now, what might have been in other editions I do not know. There would probably have been a column and a half gleaned from other newspapers, because there was no television to get the news from Jackson or from Biloxi or from Greenville or Memphis or New Orleans or Washington or Paris or anyplace else. So the weekly newspaper editor swapped papers called "The Exchange" with papers across the rest of the state. And the Jackson Clarion would have been one of those that he would have exchanged with and others. And he sat down and he read those columns faithfully and he picked up an item and condensed it to the paragraph and reprinted that for the benefit of the people here so that they might know what was going on in the rest of the world.

BENHAM: Oh, yes, now I see. Well, that is even more interesting. Now,

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what were the rates at that time?

DALE: Startlingly enough, they are not too far from what they are now. Carrying on the masthead are the words, "A dollar, fifty cents (\$1.50) for six (6) months in advance." That would have made three (3) dollars per annum. And of course today's rate is only four (4) dollars a year. So we are woefully behind and we know it. We are still one of the few papers that sells for ten (10) cents a copy at the newsstand. Most of the rest are fifteen (15) and there are even some in the South as well as especially in the North that are twenty (20) cents in the newsrack each week.

BENHAM: All right. What, where was the newspaper office located? The first one?

DALE: We are not certain where S. W. Dale would have had the Advocate. He later had a, I mean the Southern Journal. He later had another newspaper known as the Monticello Advocate. Why he ceased publication of the Journal and went to the Advocate, we do not know. We have the last copy of the Advocate ever published and it was in the forty-second week. It had been begun in 1881 on April the twenty-second, 1882 - the same date, that's a Saturday dateline, for the Advocate. The same day that the cyclone came through Monticello and blew it off the map. He was struck and killed by flying timbers at the courthouse in Monticello. And of course there was no publication here then for six (6) years until 1888. At that time, my grandfather started the Lawrence County Press and as far as we know, the original building was located on Broad Street. It was in a frame building with a porch, which I have heard a number of older residents say people always used to love to congregate there and sit on that porch and I guess pass the news back and forth. It must have

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been a favorite gathering place. It was across from what is South Central Bank today. And next door to what is now Ball's Clothing Store. And Triple A would have been located right on the same spot the Triple A Flower Shop is located today.

BENHAM: All right. Now, was this a weekly or daily newspaper long ago?

DALE: No, of course it was weekly. It has always been weekly.

BENHAM: Is it that way now?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: Was there other newspapers put out later by your family?

DALE: My grandfather attempted to put out one in Columbia around the turn of the century and then in the 1920's I believe. He contemplated first one in Hazlehurst and almost, well, I believe if the account is correct that I ran across, he had sold this one here, had gone to Hazlehurst to publish that one there, and a week later came back and repurchased the Press and never missed an issue under him, as a matter of fact. But times were good at that particular time. I think Wesson was a thriving metropolis. Hazlehurst, the railroad must have been coming through then. Things looked mighty good economically over in that area and so he apparently wanted to get over there and get another newspaper. At one time he also contemplated one for Georgetown and as far as I know, that's all that my grandfather did. My uncle, James Pendleton or Jack Dale, the baby brother in the family, edited and published in Water Valley, Mississippi, a newspaper called The North Mississippi Herald which is still in operation today. He published that from the time he graduated from the University of Mississippi until he went into the service in the second World War at which time his wife, of course, had to let it go. She couldn't

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continue to run it at that time.

BENHAM: All right. Now you said that your grandfather came over and published - you know, after he went to Columbia and he decided he would do something there, start a newspaper, and then he gave up the idea, but then he decided to come back to Lawrence County and published the paper - well, who had the paper at that time?

DALE: Well, he had the paper.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: At that time there was another paper at Columbia and apparently in that day and age a particular group of merchants maybe didn't like the way the newspaper was doing and they tried to organize them another newspaper.

BENHAM: You mean organize it here in the county?

DALE: Well, no, in Columbia, at that time.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: I'll give you one minute background on newspapers. When they began in this country, they were part of political parties. They were some person who wanted to get his ideas across. He was wealthy enough he paid for the publishing of that newspaper. Then advertising came into being when a shipload of goods came over from England and this merchant came down, he put a little classified ad in. Said, "Just arrived. New shipment of goods from London, England. The finest cloth or the finest tea or the finest flour or whatever." This became advertising. Well, he paid for that to go in and after a while publishers said, "Well, if I got enough of these folks putting these ads in, I can put this out and I don't have to depend on Mr. So and so to come down whenever he wants to put out his little newsletter telling his news or

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something." And that's where the public print actually came in in this country.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: It just grew and flourished because the country allowed it to do so. And as I say, what happened in Columbia - if I have the details straight in my mind from having heard them years ago - a group of merchants apparently were not getting the newspaper in Columbia at that time to do what they wanted done and so they attempted to organize a new newspaper and they wanted somebody to come put that newspaper out for them in Columbia.

BENHAM: I see.

DALE: And this my grandfather took a look at, but did not want to get into and of course, continued with the Press at that time.

BENHAM: And what year was this? Do you think you could remember that?

DALE: This must have been in the early 1900's. I'd say even prior to 1910, somewhere in that neighborhood. Of course, he had a solid foundation here in Monticello, but apparently he was still a young man. He began at the age of twenty (20) in 1888, so he would just have been in his early 30's even by 1910. Apparently, if this town was not booming - which it was not - in the early 1900's, maybe he had a wanderlust and he said, "Maybe I'll go someplace else to make my fortune." And so I'm sure that is why he looked at some of these other places.

BENHAM: Perfectly natural thing for him to do it.

DALE: Yes, yes, definitely.

BENHAM: Let's see, what number Dale in line are you?

DALE: With the Lawrence County Press, I'm the third. In the newspaper

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publishing, I'm the fourth generation.

BENHAM: All right.

DALE: In line of Dales, I guess if you count my uncle in there, of course that was two in the same generation, but I would be the fifth one to do newspaper publishing. So scattered out there three, four, or five, take your choice.

BENHAM: You're right. Well, I can see why you just fell into it. You just couldn't help it; you were surrounded. And you had it fed to you say, from the time you were four (4) years old. But that is very interesting. Now when did you become editor of the paper?

DALE: Well, I actually came back right after graduation in June of 1961 and went right to work. Now I have often wondered could I have gone to work for somebody else? I did have another job offer to go to work for the Commercial Appeal, but I never sought any jobs any place else. As I said, from the middle years in high school I knew I was coming back here and of course I did correspondence work while I was on the college campus for Birmingham and for Jackson, both papers in Jackson. The Birmingham News and some other miscellaneous publications along the way. But I never sought a full-time job or employment with anybody else, because I just always knew I was coming back here to do this work. (Pause)

BENHAM: Mr. Dale, what were some of the problems that you encountered when you became editor?

DALE: Well, the problems that I would have encountered would have been of course inheriting some old, used equipment. Now, my father was always interested in updating his production procedure and trying to stay abreast of

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the times, but handicapped by a lack of finances as he was, he couldn't buy new stuff, so we usually got secondhand. When somebody else at a small daily or a very large weekly was fixing to buy a piece of new equipment, we just stayed in touch with the people that dealt in these things and we would try to find a good bargain and pick up some good used equipment and in that way we gradually updated the equipment that we have and while I am mentioning that I will go on and say today we are printing by the most modern method known today in printing is off-set lithography. It's a method of printing and it's all photo composition. We shoot pictures - made-up pages of type - and these are printed very rapidly on a rotary press and this is a far cry from the day when we used to print by sheet-fed, when I started.

BENHAM: Now just a minute. You are getting ahead again.

DALE: Okay.

BENHAM: Okay. Because I am going to have to ask you a little bit about that too, you know. I don't mean to interrupt. It is so interesting, but then if you go on then I will have to back track with the questions. Well, when you became the editor, what was the paper called?

DALE: Of course, it was the Lawrence County Press. It always has been. At that particular time, we published about eight (8), sometimes ten (10) pages a week. We carried a variety of news. I always have tried to cater to all the interests of Lawrence County, not just to Monticello, but also to include all of our communities throughout the county. From New Hebron to Jayess and from Oma down to Oakvale. If we could get a community correspondent in those communities, we wanted them to send us in their news. Then of course we tried to cover as much of the governmental action as we could. Tried to cover as

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much society as we could. In other words, we tried to give a complete package. If there was probably one failing, it was in the area of crime reporting. We didn't try to go into...

(Begin Side Two of Tape)

BENHAM: Other paper by this name?

DALE: I really don't know. There would have been, of course at the time that this paper started, my grandfather borrowed the equipment from Mr. B. T. Hobbs, who was the editor of the Brookhaven Leader. One of the older newspapers, it's now the Daily Leader through a combination of the Lincoln County Advertiser and several other papers over there. But he borrowed this equipment from Mr. Hobbs. Some hand-set type and old, old beat-up press and a few other things to get started. And of course, Brookhaven was at that time a part of Lawrence County.

BENHAM: That's right. They had to take a part of Lawrence County to make Lincoln County.

DALE: Well, let me back up on that. That's 1888; Lincoln would have, may have already come out of there. I guess Lincoln County had already been founded prior to that. We still had Jeff Davis County; that was what was still part of the Lawrence. I'll back up and correct myself. Lincoln County had been formed. The newspaper envisioned, according to the words of my grandfather in that first edition, envisioned serving all of the people of Lawrence County and that included Bluntville which is now Prentiss, over in that area of Jeff Davis; all the way up to White Sand and all of that area; Carson and what-not, south of Prentiss in Jeff Davis County. It was an ambitious project, but just the same, he intended for it to be a county newspaper.

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I would say probably seventy (70) percent of the Mississippi newspapers are, even the weeklies, carry a city name, the community name. Now, I can think of, we have the Simpson County News. We have the Copiah County News. We have several others, but now the Tylertown Times carries the Tylertown name yet it serves Walthall County.

BENHAM: Oh, I see. But, I see.

DALE: So there are several. The Franklin Advocate is for the county, so it was the common thing back in that time to take your geographic, governmental subdivision, I guess, for your area service but others have chosen the community name itself, but they have never limited their service to the surrounding area.

BENHAM: I see. Well, so then it was your grandfather then who named it?

DALE: Yes.

BENHAM: What are the subscription rates for the Lawrence County Press? I think you said per year.

DALE: Currently they're four (4) dollars per year in Lawrence County, five (5) dollars in the State of Mississippi, and six (6) dollars throughout the rest of the world. Now, the reason for that variation is the post office charges in mailing second class, a second class mailing permit. They charge by zones. I can remember in my childhood, you had free distribution in Lawrence County. You paid actually nothing. And now a days we pay a quarter of a cent a pound and they're talking about raising that to more. As you go further away you get on up to, I think the highest rate that we paid is two point four (2.4) cents a pound for those that go overseas under the second class mailing permit. But that is the reason for graduating that payment.

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BENHAM: I see. All right, where is the Lawrence County Press located now?

DALE: Well, we're still on Broad Street. After we had the office on Broad Street, I guess the years would have been in the late 1930's. Denny Lambert, D. F. Lambert, wanted to build a modern merchandise store, clothing and merchandise store, on Broad Street and he had part of a lot but he wanted some more of a lot. My grandfather's frame building must have been deteriorating to some extent plus it may be I can theorize that he had too much company sitting on that front porch. He couldn't get his work done for all those people visiting. He was strictly in the newspaper business. Today we have office supplies - he did some job printing too - but we have office supplies. We want some walk-in traffic out from on the street; he probably didn't. He wanted to concentrate on doing his news and printing his job printing and so he, in a gentleman's agreement swapped out with Denny Lambert. Denny built a nice modern brick structure and gave him, I guess he had an area - I'm going to guess, because I grew up in that same area back there - twenty-five (25) feet by forty (40) feet in the back end of this building. And he swapped out a lot of about twice that size on the front street in order for this new facility on the side street in the back of the building back there.

BENHAM: I remember that now right well.

DALE: Right.

BENHAM: Yes, I had forgotten.

DALE: Right. It was on Green Street on the north side of Green Street toward what's the water tower now. I grew up playing in the ditch around there and running around on Broad Street and visiting back and forth and what-not

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while my parents worked down there. Of course I began to work some, too. We moved I guess in the late Forties or early Fifties. I was big enough to help move so it must have been in '49, '50, or '51 - that would have been about right. We moved across the street to what used to be the Selman Building. Has been torn down now for South Central Bank to be constructed. There was in the Selman building, Mr. J. C. Bourne had a general merchandise store in the very center of the building. On the east portion of the building was the old post office, on the west portion was the Lawrence County Bank as it was known then, and in the rear had been as old pool hall. And this building was about twenty (20) feet wide by one hundred (100) feet long - here or there, the portion that we had - and we moved all of our equipment in about two (2) days' time. All the heavy equipment. It took several weeks to move all the little stuff and get it all straightened out because I remember that was part of my job. We moved over there and we stayed just three (3) months short of ten (10) years. I remember it because the Rileys of New Hebron owned this building at that time and we, there were several heirs in the family and we had never gotten all of them to sign the lease. A portion of them had signed the five (5) year lease and the five (5) year option and we were getting a little nervous, because we had been there almost ten (10) years and we didn't know when the rent may go up or anything else. And the opportunity came available to once again buy a lot on the main street and build our own building. And we currently are on the south side of Broad Street directly across from the courthouse back in our own home again.

BENHAM: Right.

DALE: Building this concrete block building we constructed there.

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BENHAM: You couldn't be in a better place, really.

DALE: We think not. We think not.

BENHAM: No, I don't think so. You're right in the middle in the hub of everything.

DALE: Right, right. We're close enough to everything to get our work done. Of course, there are days when I wish that I...

BENHAM: And you don't have a front porch.

DALE: No, but there are days that I get more company than I wish that I had, but that's just part of it.

BENHAM: That's right. What type of printing press was first used by your family?

DALE: I am not certain what my grandfather would have used originally. He later purchased a Babcock Standard, a flat-bed press which would print two (2) pages at a time. Had a great big drum cylinder that came, circled round and round and round and the teeth would open up and grab a sheet of newsprint, carry it down under, and make contact with the type on the bed of that press. And this bed revolved, rotated back and forth on a runner under there, a set of gears. This was acquired from the Gulfport newspaper apparently shortly after the turn of the century.

BENHAM: Well, is this, do you still use this?

DALE: It's still sitting there. It hasn't been used in about seven (7) or eight (8) years. The last thing that was done on it was football programs and posters for football season and then we shut it down. We acquired in 19, I guess, 65, the Hope, Arkansas, daily newspaper was converting to the off-set method of printing and they had a modern rotary press which was a web-fed machine and they wanted to sell it and we went up there and moved it in the

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worst snow storm that they'd had in twenty (20) years. Johnny Clyde Ready from right here in Monticello helped us move that back and install it in this new building. To give you a little background, the old Babcock Standard that I learned to print on - as I said, you fed a sheet of paper down and it printed two (2) pages on that and delivered it out the back end of the press. When you finished with that you picked all of that stack of papers up, put them back up on the top and fed them back through to print the back side of that sheet with two (2) more pages. When we quit using this particular press for newspaper production, we were printing about twelve (12) pages most weeks and about two thousand (2,000) copies and the press would run a little over a thousand an hour; it would run about a thousand and sixty (1,060) papers an hour, so we were spending approximately twelve (12) hours just running the paper. That's not the time that we put it together, but one person was standing up there feeding pages through for twelve (12) hours out of the week. The press that we acquired from Hope, Arkansas, put a roll of newspaper on there and you could put up to eight (8) pages - four (4) on the bottom deck and four (4) on the top deck - and run through continuously. These came out on a former that folded the paper and a little cutter bar that clipped them off into individual papers. And by the time we quit using it we were printing about sixteen (16) pages a week and almost three thousand (3,000) papers each week and still ran this in about two (2) hours time. So we had cut our physical labor down from twelve (12) hours to two (2) hours. Then we expanded to go into the off-set printing production. We currently set the type, shoot pictures, make up the pages and then make a negative of these pages, but we do not print them now.

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BENHAM: Okay. Now wait, that's going ahead. Okay. I'm just going to call you back just a minute. First, I want to know what kind of ink did you use when you did printing? Is there any special kind of ink that you used?

DALE: No. It was a printer's ink. This is composed, there are ink companies in the business just for this. And I am not sure what their chemical compositions are, but it is, it's an oil base...

BENHAM: I am not interested in that. Well, how did you get it? Did you get it in a big gallon?

DALE: We got ours in five (5) gallon drums for the earlier press because, well, you just had a little water dipper and you'd dip up a dip of that and you could probably make two (2) press runs off of a two (2) cup dipper of ink. Then when they went to, when we went to the other press - this mechanized one - we had the duplex model, a duplex press, we had a fifty-five (55) gallon drum with a centrifugal pump. You'd turn that pump and it squirted ink out a tube that you ran up and down and you had to fill these troughs. And these troughs would probably hold forty-five (45) gallons each on the top deck and the bottom deck. You wouldn't have to fill them but about once a month, but it was a lot more work involved in putting the ink in for them than it was in the older days.

BENHAM: But in trying to cut down.

DALE: Saves our other time and labor.

BENHAM: That's right. Well, what about the paper, did you have to have some kind of paper, special type, kind of paper for being copied?

DALE: Not at that time. We used...

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BENHAM: Where did you get your paper from?

DALE: Well, the paper houses in Mississippi. Of course the standard one that we bought newsprint from was Jackson Paper Company in Jackson. Bought fine papers from Jackson and Central and Townsend paper companies, but most of the newsprint came from Jackson Paper Company. Some from Townsend. But it came in a great big bundle that weighed - when we had the cut sheets these bundles would carry approximately twenty-five hundred (2500) sheets. And it'd take a little bit more than four (4) of them; let's see, it'd take twenty (20), take twenty-two (22) of them to make a ton, and that was. I remember when we progressed to the point where we didn't buy four (4) bundles any more; we bought a ton because we saved a little money when we bought the ton. But the truck driver would really be, he'd really have to work hard to haul that ton of paper in there because well, he didn't have but a little hand truck most of the time. They'd pick it up on the shoulder and tote it in so to speak. Then when we went to the duplex, these came on rolls and these rolls weighed anywhere from six hundred (600) to eight hundred (800) pounds each. And they were on the back of hydraulic trucks which dropped them off on a little dolly which you rolled around on the floor. You didn't pick them up and just carry them wherever you wanted to.

BENHAM: Right. All right. Now Mr. Dale, when I talked to you the other day you mentioned some of the mechanics that you used to set up a newspaper. Would you please describe more fully each of these steps and what was the purpose of each one of these things, steps that you used? Very briefly.

DALE: Formerly, you had to set the type. You had to have a type high

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character that an ink roller would roll over and place a coat of ink on and then a sheet of paper would come in contact with that and it transferred the image onto the paper. Now we use a computer. This computer is going faster than the speed of sound; a light flashes through a stencil-type negative onto a piece of chemically treated photographic paper. All of this is in the dark and you take this out in a little cassette and run it through an activator and stabilizer processor and when it comes out, you have the printed image on this sheet of paper. This is cut out and pasted up to a page and a negative is shot of this. This is etched onto an aluminum plate which wraps around a cylinder and can travel, well, your press cruises at about fifteen thousand (15,000) copies an hour and it can run up to twenty-four (24) pages. So where a while ago we were comparing twelve (12) hours of press time and two (2) hours of press time, we now have fifteen (15) minutes of press time. And this aluminum plate, of course, it first hits a water roller and then it hits the ink roller. Wherever the water sticks, the ink won't stick and wherever the water won't stick on the image that's been burned on this chemically treated plate, the ink will stick. And that transfers to a rubber blanket and this rubber blanket transfers to that continuously moving web of paper as it comes through.

BENHAM: Well, is this aluminum plate thing, is it on a roller?

DALE: It is on a cylinder.

BENHAM: A cylinder.

DALE: It's hooked to a cylinder and of course ink rollers come in contact with that cylinder.

BENHAM: I see.

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DALE: Water roller and ink roller and then the cylinder contacts a rubber blanket cylinder. And that rubber blanket cylinder is the one that actually contacts then the paper itself.

BENHAM: I see. All right. Now, the people, did the people in general always agree with what was printed in the press?

DALE: Oh no, no, no. They have always been highly complimentary; we are thankful for that. Most of the time, for some reason, people are more hesitant to comment when they are in favor of something than when they are opposed to something. You'll always get more criticism from the negative point of view than you will from a positive point of view. But if we didn't get some criticism, we would think that we were doing everything perfectly and if we didn't get some praise, we might give up for fear that we weren't doing anything right. So it's a balance, a general mixture.

BENHAM: Well, that's a good way of looking at it. Let's see, you know looking over the old Lawrence County Presses I noticed that there was a lot more worldly news talked about than there is today. Why is this?

DALE: Well, of course again this stems from the electronic media and the instantaneous news that they brought into the home. As far back as 1940, let's say, when as a child, that was when television began to become popular. The radio had a little advantage, but while the radio could bring you spot news in a hurry - you heard that World War I had broken out or World War II had broken out or the atomic bomb had been dropped or what-not - you didn't get all the details. That radio announcer could only give you a hundred fifty (150) to three hundred (300) words in his news broadcast. That won't even make four (4) good paragraphs in the newspaper. So if somebody wanted all

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the details, they wanted to read about it. Out in the country so to speak, as we were, there were a few daily newspapers that got down here. About two (2) days late probably by the time they got here. Later when the Rebel came, maybe they got here overnight and got the next day's as the trains were able to bring them in. But still, the news was read in other newspapers and condensed and carried again. Now, at one time we got a preprint out of Memphis and in Memphis they put together two (2) pages and four (4) page sections. They carried serialized stories, they carried patent medicine ads, and they carried news about the war or they carried worldwide news of what was going on because the citizens of Lawrence County, all of them couldn't subscribe to the daily newspaper. While there was a little electricity, not everybody even had a radio. So their only contact with the outside world, so to speak, would have been what they read in the Lawrence County Press. Today, well, of course the tragic Vietnam affair is over, so have been some other bad chapters of history - assassinations, Watergate and other things - but you and I sat right there. We saw Jack Ruby pull the pistol and shoot on live television. We went to Vietnam with reporters every day and were in the war. We sat through Watergate hearings. So there's not as much demand for the community newspaper to give you that worldwide news, because there's plenty of electricity. Almost every home has if not two (2) televisions, at least one (1).

BENHAM: Right. Of course.

DALE: So we have tried to confine again, as we did probably originally, more of our coverage to local folks and local happenings, because NBC, ABC, CBS, The New York Times, they don't even know there is a Monticello, Mississ-

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