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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics. We're happy to have as our guest, Jim Minter, well known author and former executive editor and editor of the Atlanta newspapers. Welcome, Jim.

JIM MINTER: Well, Bob, I'm glad to be here. I remember when you were a great journalist. As a matter of fact, I take responsibility for you being in politics because I'd been in two colleges, North Georgia College, the University of Georgia, School of Journalism with Sam Caldwell. And then I was in one army with him, it was the American Army, the same regiment at Camp Rucker, Alabama. And Sam and I were well known to each other. As a matter of fact, when we were at North Georgia College that newspaper was *The Cadet Bugler* and we both ran for office. And I beat Sam by one vote. Sam had not perfected his political skills at that time. Anyway, Sam called me one day and says, "I'm getting another job," and he was in the state wildlife commission or whatever it was called, Game and Fish Commission. And he said, "Wouldn't you like to have my job?" And I said, "What does it pay?" And it was about a \$5 raise, maybe about \$65 a week, and I said, "Sam, let me think about it." I thought about it and then I told my friend, Bob Short, I said, "You might be interested in this," and is that a correct story?

SHORT: That's true. As far as I know, yeah.

MINTER: And you've had this distinguished political career and I'm proud of you.

SHORT: Well, thank you, Jim. I'm proud of you also. You've not only been a great journalist but you have been a great author, and I have read your books with great interest and with a smile on my face.

MINTER: Well, my book didn't exactly make the New York Time bestseller list, but a few of my friends read it. Like my friend, Lewis Grizzard said, it's sort of a book of columns and so forth. Said they make nice gifts because you don't have to read them.

SHORT: Inman, Georgia.

MINTER: Inman, Georgia's in Fayette County. The tag number used to be 112 and before that it was less than that. Remember when they numbered the tags by the size of the county?

SHORT: Mmhmm.

MINTER: But Inman, Georgia was a farming community. It had a railroad until 1938 when they took the railroad out because the business was not that good. I remember my dad telling a story that they got a group of people from Fayette County to drive to Atlanta before court. The judge, it was a hearing, some sort of a hearing, I don't remember that he knew exactly what it

was. But anyway, he said there were two car loads that went up there for the hearing about not doing away the railroad.

And the presiding judge or whatever listened to them to say that we just can't do this because we'd have no way to get to Atlanta to the doctor, would have no way to go to shop and so forth, that this is our way to Atlanta. And daddy said at that point the judge went down the list. "Mr. Minter, how did you get here today?" "Well, I drove." That was short, and he said that he knew that their protest was over. But Inman was a farming community. It had gin, a gin house, and of course there was a railroad station, which incidentally I restored and have a little office there, and two or three stores. It was getting smaller by the time I grew up, but the main thing I remember about it was it was sort of, the roads, the way they ran it really made sort of a square circle, do you know what I mean, a rectangle.

Well, we lived here. Had an aunt who lived here, my grandmother was here, another aunt lived here. And I loved to eat. They were great cooks so I would sort of go around and sniff and if I smelled fried chicken, I'd stop here and eat. If I smelled something that was down the road -- but we ate well, but of course I grew up in the Depression. There was no money. My dad had planned to come to the University of Georgia to be a county agent. He had made one trip over here to scout the place out and so forth, but then his dad died. That was about 1929 and so he had to stay home and run the farm at 17-years-old, and then the Depression and so forth, and so he wound up losing our land to taxes and so forth. He was very proud that he didn't go bankrupt as a lot of people did.

But Bob, after he died I was going through his desk and I would see what he would do. He'd go

to the bank in Fayetteville and borrow \$50 for a plough. A plough was one crop, you know, and I think he had about 13 families living with him. So he had borrowed \$50 for each family to raise their crop -- sharecroppers. And then when the bad times really hit, that little note he borrowed for \$50 from the bank in Fayette would be sold to somebody in Atlanta, and then pretty soon it'd be sold to somebody in New York, sort of like the crisis we're going through with the banks now in 2008. But there was no money, I mean there was no money at all. And I remember, I think it was about 1936 that my dad kept a ledger, and I was an only child. My mother was a schoolteacher but she was not getting paid, and that year our total cash expenditures not counting fertilizer, and clothes, and all that stuff, the total was \$60, most of that being for Prince Albert tobacco, my dad smoked. He smoked Prince Albert during the week and rolled his own, and smoked Camels on Sunday.

But it was a great place to grow up. I mean, you knew everybody. The black family next door, my great treat on Sunday morning was to go out and eat Sunday breakfast with them. They had smoked link sausage and I used to do that, and I remember that when I was growing up, we took the *Atlanta Georgian*. My grandmother Minter took the *Atlanta Journal*. My grandmother Harrell took the *Atlanta Constitution*. Well, I read all three to the finish and the *Georgian* had great funnies but they went out of business, and -- but this tenant family that lived across the road from us had papered the house with the colored Georgia comics, and for several years I guess I would go out there and see my old comic friends on the wall out there from the *Georgian* that was extinct.

SHORT: Tell us about your mother's family, the Harps.

MINTER: Well, the Harps came around in here behind the Indians, and as a matter of fact we had traced it back and one of our Harp ancestors probably was an Indian agent, very likely might have been married to an Indian woman. But, because that went back before the Treaty of Warm Springs. But my mother's family, the Harps have been in Fayette County since about 1820. My great grandfather Harp, his name is on the cornerstone of the Fayette County Courthouse, which for many years was the oldest operating courthouse in Georgia. It's now a chamber of commerce building. But anyway, they've been there a long time and they were saw millers, farmers, and so forth. And my uncle Harry Harp was quite a character. He had a lot to do with, he was the one who went around the county signing up people for the OEA when the electric lights came through here. And he was Senator Russell's Fayette County campaign manager when Senator Russell ran for governor.

And after -- this is a story my daddy told me -- and after Russell was elected in the governor, youngest in the state and so forth, was that 1932?

SHORT: '32.

MINTER: Yes, but anyway daddy said Uncle Harry was invited to go to Winder to sit on the rostrum, the podium or whatever at Russell's speech, the celebration of the victory. So Uncle Harry was a terrible driver, so he asked my dad who was not related to him but married to my

mother to drive him to Wynder. So dad said he'd drove him over there and on the way they stopped to get a Coca-Cola, and remember in those days at little country stores, you sat on nail kegs. And Uncle Harry started drinking his Coca-Cola sitting on a nail keg which had a little nail in it, and when he got up he tore his pants right in the seat of his pants. And daddy said, "Well, Harry," he said, "Now when you're up there on the podium with Senator Russell," he said, "just keep your feet on the floor and nobody will see."

And according to my dad, Russell was introducing his guests and he said, "Now, my great friend from Fayette County, Harry Harp," and he said Uncle Harry was smoking a [indiscernible] cigar, put the cigar in his mouth, crossed his leg and said everybody giggled, he showing his underwear. Uncle Harry got to be mayor of Fayetteville and he was always into something, but I've always said if he hadn't tore his pants that time he might have been elected to statewide office. But anyway, when I had graduated from Fayette County high school, and of course I went through Fayette County high school during World War II. At the time, we had seven and a half miles of paved road in Fayette County. It was Highway 52, went from Jonesboro to Mr. Charlie Redwine's [ph] place of business. You know who Mr. Charlie was.

SHORT: Mr. Charlie, yes. Well, let's tell folks who he was.

MINTER: He was for many years president of the Senate and when the -- and I think it was the year when Gene Talmadge ran against Senator George that year, Mr. Charlie Redwine ran for governor. He got beaten pretty badly, but anyway, he was very powerful in state politics. So the

paved road came to his house and it stopped, and there were no other paved roads in the county.

But anyway, I was saying that the Fayette County high school, because there were no paved roads and the train had been taken out, and I guess we had maybe you could ride the mail bus to Atlanta, but during World War II we couldn't get any teachers because they didn't have any gas to come to Fayetteville and there was no way to get there. So we had housewives.

So my education was pretty skimpy, increased by the fact that when I got old enough to go to school, we lived about a mile from the bus stop and my dad thought I was too scrawny to start school. I was only five years old, you know how it works in those days. So my mother taught me at home my first year. So I only had ten years of schooling when I graduated from high school. What I'm getting around to, my Uncle Harry who said he was a great friend of Senator Russell drove down to our house right after I graduated from high school and said, "I saw in the paper where they're making appointments to the naval academy." And said, "I called Senator Russell," and he said, "I can get you an appointment at the naval academy if you would like it." And I said, "Well I appreciate it but I don't think I'd last very long up there." So I don't know whether I could have gotten -- whether Senator Russell would have given me an appointment to the Naval Academy or not, but I know one thing, if he had I would not have lasted long.

So I went to North Georgia College, which was a great place.

SHORT: And then transferred to the University.

MINTER: Transferred here after two years and one quarter at North Georgia College.

SHORT: When did you decide to become a journalist?

MINTER: Well, we had a great teacher in high school, Ms. Francis Carter who's been deceased about two years from Union Point. And she was -- she came to Fayetteville I guess when I was in about the -- right after the war, and she started the school paper called *The Fayette High Times*, done on an old mimeograph machine, which was a mess cutting those stencils and so forth. And she made me editor of that paper and she told me that I ought to go to journalism school, so I said, well, I guess, you know, I had no idea what to do, you know. So I said I'll go to journalism school. And my mother and daddy judged that the University of Georgia was both too large and too expensive, and I think the enrollment was approaching 6,000 with a big boost from the veterans coming home.

So for some reason, I went to North Georgia College. For one reason, you got free uniforms and you didn't have to buy clothes, and I remember my mother wrote the dean of admission, Dean Will D. Young, a great man, North Georgia, and said, "My son wants to study journalism. Can he learn journalism at North Georgia College?" And Dean Young wrote back and said, "We are starting a department of journalism next year," which was an outright lie. So I went to North Georgia to study journalism and of course there was no journalism there. But after I beat Sam Caldwell for the editorship of the *Cadet Bugler* and served in that capacity for one quarter, I decided to transfer over here. And my mother and my daddy said, "No, we can't afford it. We just -- you just stay where you are." So I transferred myself and went home that Christmas and

told them I had transferred, which incidentally was the time that Dean Drewry got shot and I had to wait for a while to be in his course.

But anyway, you know, North Georgia was a school of about 600 and over here it was about 6,000. And I never had -- I was pretty naive and got a room in Joe Brown Hall, and my two roommates were from New York State, and they were veterans of the 101st Airborne at Bastogne, and they brought liquor to the room, and women to the room and everything, and I was terrified. And so as soon as I could, I managed to get transferred out to a room with my friend Ray Jenkins from Camilla. And Ray was a journalism student, and he went on to be an assistant to Jody Powell in the White House. He was on the staff of the *Columbus Ledger* when they won the Pulitzer with the Phenix City investigation, and of all, I've never believed it, but he wound up in H.L. Mencken's chair at the *Baltimore Sun*. As editor there, Reg Murphy hired him, and so anyway I've had a checkered career.

SHORT: You were on the *Red and Black* here?

MINTER: Oh, yeah. My one great experience, I transferred from the *Monitor* over the Christmas holidays and I was assigned, really my ambition was to be a political writer, but at the *Red and Black* they assigned me on the sports staff. And it came time for spring practice, football, which I was to cover. And of course I had never seen a college football -- well, I had, but, you know, I'd never been anywhere I didn't know anybody. So I introduced myself to Coach Butts and then saw him a couple of times. And then Frank Leahy from Notre Dame was coming

down to observe the Georgia practice and study Coach Butts' famous passing game. And Leahy was, well I guess, Touchdown Jesus -- know that he was next to God at least at that time. And so I was assigned to go down and talk to Frank Leahy and get a story about him, and I was terrified. So I went down in the stadium and I'm sort of backed up in the hedge because I was really nervous, you know. Anyway, Coach Butts who barely knew me, walked over to me and says, "Frank and I are going to watch this from the stands. Would you like to go up and sit with us?" And I did, but that was a great thing about Coach Butts, he could be so nice and, you know, not many coaches would have done that to a little, old scared kid, you know. But he was helping me out.

SHORT: Who were some of your contemporaries on the *Red and Black* at that time?

MINTER: Well, let's say, of course there was John Pennington, you know, who discovered -- played a big role in Jimmy Carter's getting in the legislation, getting elected and so forth. John was our star. He had been on the *Stars and Stripes* and the *Pacific*, I believe. And then there was Mike Edwards who went onto the *National Geographic*, and of course there was my roommate Ray Jenkins was not on the *Red and Black*. He was the editor of the *Pandora*, which we thought was a pretty lowly job compared to being on the *Red and Black*. And then my great friend, Glen Vaughn who became the editor and publisher of the *Columbus Legend-Enquirer*, and also with Claude Williams started the *Athens Daily News* here in Athens. But Glen has had a distinguished career.

Then there was a guy named Dick Brooks who was a correspondent for *Stars and Stripes* in Korea and made quite a name for himself over there. And of course, one of our stars was a guy named Dewey Benefield who really never got into the newspaper business after he went through law school and wound up a key player at Sea Island with the Jones Family. And gosh, before me there were other people like William Atierson [ph] and they were just running up. It was a good bunch of people that came along. They did well.

SHORT: And you caught the eye of the *Atlanta Journal*.

MINTER: I caught the eye of Dan McGill who was the PR person for the Georgia Athletic Association. He worked through Guy Tiller who was the assistant to Ed Danforth, and arranged for me to be hired, and this was in the -- after I graduated from here in 1951, I was waiting to be called in the army. And the deal was, I'd go work there for the summer because I was going to be called in about September, and because of the rule you had to get your job back if you were called in service. So I knew I'd have a job when I came back. So anyway, Dan got me that job and pretty soon after I got that, Danforth called me in and says, "Son, you know what's the matter with you?" And I said, "No, sir, Mr. Danforth. What is it?" He said, "You're suffering from acute youth." He was right, but I've been cured.

SHORT: You worked with some mighty good people, Ed Pope.

MINTER: Ed Pope was my boss for a time, the greatest boss I've ever had. Bob Christian who, we didn't get along too well while we were working together, but became great friends after when he became a vice president for Eastern Airlines. Your friend, Eddie Barker, well he was on the other paper though, wasn't he?

SHORT: Eddie was on the *Journal*.

MINTER: Oh yeah, that's right. Yeah, but now, Eddie was writing a column for a while too, after he got out of sports.

SHORT: Syndicated column, syndicated.

MINTER: And of course, Ed Miles, that was the great golf writer, and of course Guy Tiller was the -- was probably the finest reporter I ever knew, and Guy liked to drink a little, and he -- I remember when he died, I think there were more women that showed up in black since Major John Pelham from the Confederate Army, and I think Tiller held the record until Lewis Grizzard died, which you know I hired Lewis four times.

SHORT: Had a good relationship with Lewis.

MINTER: Oh, yeah. He was a wonderful person.

SHORT: Great writer.

MINTER: Great writer.

SHORT: Big Georgia fan.

MINTER: Great Georgia fan, but the thing about Louis was, he probably had the best newspaper mind that I've ever known. I wouldn't say he was the best newspaper man I've ever known, but he had the best mind on how to get it started, what people wanted to read and so forth. And he was -- he was offered the job as editor of paper in, I think, North Carolina, maybe Greensboro or somewhere. He was offered the job as editor of the Cox paper in Austin, Texas, which is a good sized newspaper in the capital city in Texas, good job. And then in one of his sabbaticals from the *Atlanta Journal- Constitution*, he went to Chicago, and he was about to be made managing editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, which he felt like he had to commit to being there a while, so he called and said that he didn't really want to be in Chicago, and so he came home to write the column, which he had never really done before.

But I thought when we brought him -- when I brought him back to Atlanta to write the column that I had no idea that I knew he would be okay. I didn't know he would be great, but I thought we were really bringing him back for an editor's job, and I told him, I said, when he started writing the column and it got sort of successful, I said, "Lewis, you know, you can't do this

forever. You can do it ten years at the most. You'll have to do something else or you'll just burn out." So in his last days when I was visiting Lewis at Emory Hospital every day, he was in his hospital bed and had his typewriter beside the bed, because every day he was going to feel like resuming his column and be able to write one tomorrow.

So I went by one day and he had his typewriter, and he said, "Well, I think I'm going to be able to write one in the next couple of days." "You know," he said, "You told me when I started this column that I could only do it about ten years and I'd burn out and have to do something else, and I just wanted to remind you it's been over ten years and I'm still at it." And I said, "Lewis, that's amazing, how do you do it?" And he said, "I got a secret." "What's that, Lewis?" He said, "I remember a lot of things that never happened." He was the best.

SHORT: Tell us about now ascending up the ladder into a big management position with the, at the time, both newspapers.

MINTER: Well, I never really thought that I would go into management. I thought that I might be sports editor when Furman Bisher retired. Good thing I didn't count on that because he still has it, but I thought I would have about ten years writing the sports column after Furman had retired, but that didn't work out. But anyway, I don't know exactly why that they decided to move me from sports to the *Constitution*, except really I do know. We had a union movement at the *Journal* and it was pretty tight, and of course the management was not in favor of a union. Well, the *Journal's* sports department was unanimous against the union, and so they said, well

this guy must be pretty good, take him to the *Constitution* where they had a little in-house union that they wanted to get rid of.

I imagine that, just between us, I was probably sent to the *Constitution* probably to bust the union, which was no trouble to do because there was not much of a union anyway. Just had to treat people a little better because the union, when they negotiated for a contract, because the *Constitution* had a union, they made sure that the *Journal* people got paid more than the union people. So all you had to do was just start paying them the same thing the non-union people were making and the union's gone. But anyway, it was a great experience.

One thing sort of bad about it was that the editorial page where they carry who's who, you know, well, it said Reg Murphy, editor. Well, and the way it worked, Reg Murphy was not really the editor. He was editor of the editorial page. Had no control over the newsroom and so he answered to the publisher. I, the managing editor of the newspaper, answered to the executive editor, who was Bill Fields, and by the way, the most underestimated, underappreciated journalist in the state of Georgia ever. And so I answered to him, and I had -- the managing editor had nothing to do with the editorial page. The editor had nothing to do with the rest of the newspaper, but the public didn't know that. So, you know, the people were always calling Murphy wanting him to do this and do that, and Murphy didn't want to -- couldn't say, "Well I had nothing to do with that." So anyway, Murphy and I, well at the time, bitter enemies and didn't get along at all. And it was too bad because, you know, Reg went on to a great career, and if Reg and I had had the gumption and had the help from other people there to have formed an alliance, Reg brought a lot to the table. He knows how to deal with people and he's a good

salesman, which I'm not, and I think if Reg had stayed there that maybe the Dayton takeover could have been fended off and the history of the newspapers, and even the history of the state of Georgia might be a lot different. But it didn't happen that way.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about the newspapers. They finally merged, but the newspapers were owned by the Cox Family, Governor Cox of Ohio, who ran for president.

MINTER: Ran for president with Franklin D. Roosevelt as his running mate, right.

SHORT: And his heirs have continued to run the newspaper.

MINTER: Right.

SHORT: What sort of political influence do they have with the management of that newspaper now?

MINTER: I don't really know. I know this, while I was there, see when I was first there, Jim Cox Jr., who was a good newspaper man, ran the -- Jack Tarver answered to him. And I only met him once. Anne Cox Chambers, who lives in Atlanta, who is listed as, I think she's officially the president of the Atlanta newspapers or something, that's all legal, corporate stuff. I never got a telephone call from her the whole 40 years, the 10 years, the 20 years I was in

management, I never got a call from her. She didn't recognize me if she met me somewhere, you know.

So I got nothing from the family. And then Jim Cox. Jr. died and the funeral was in Dayton. I remember Tarver coming home from the funeral, stopped by my office and he said, "Well, this is probably the end of it". And I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Well, you know, the two sisters who -- " Governor Cox had left it so that the two sisters would have no say so in the management of the company, only Jim. And then with Anne Cox's neighbor, the great lawyer, Buster Kilpatrick, they -- and some of the family, they decided to break the trust and will or whatever it is.

But anyway, they wanted to take the newspapers over from their brother, who was -- did have a drink now and then, and fooled around with women and so forth, lived in Miami, and they wanted to declare him incompetent, and take over. Gene Patterson, who was then the executive editor of the *Journal-Constitution*, they tried to enlist him. Well, when they did, he instead went to Tarver and told him about the palace revolution. Tarver went to Jim Cox, and they had a big meeting, and Tarver said he was there and Jim, and his sisters, and so forth, and Tarver said, "I said to the sisters, 'I said, girls, your brother knows more about newspapers drunk than you all do sober.' "

And now the brother's gone, and so Tarver says, "Well, I think I'm in trouble." And sure enough, then Barbara Anthony lived in Hawaii, and her husband came in and was made the -- took Jim Jr.'s place. And pretty soon Tarver was gone. I mean, he officially retired, but he didn't, and then things changed. Now, the Dayton people who had been subservient to the people in

Atlanta, Tarver had been their boss, they were always jealous of Atlanta. Dayton's really sort of a hayseed town, but I remember we had a meeting at the Commerce Club. The editors and the Dayton people were down. The guy who was publisher of the Dayton paper at the time was with us. We had a big room and Tarver was the host. Waiter comes around for you to order drinks and so stopped somebody over here, [indiscernible] said, "What will you have?" Said, "I'll have a scotch on the rocks," and gets to the Dayton publishers, and he says, "I'd like a scotch too, but make mine Chivas Regal. I don't want the bar scotch," and the waiter said, "Sir, Chivas Regal is a bar scotch at the Commerce Club." There was a lot of that, you know.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about Tarver. As I recall, Tarver was a pretty heavy hitter in the Atlanta business --

MINTER: Big time, big time.

SHORT: -- and political community.

MINTER: Yeah, Tarver was, he sat at the table with, I don't guess mules sit at a table, but he shared the story what they call the big mules, you know, Mills Lane, and Richard Rich, and bank people, and so forth. Yeah, Tarver was really locked into state politics and he was in a meeting, I remember. He told me, when the bankers and some of the money people invited Carl Sanders over to talk about running for lieutenant governor, and they met with him an hour or so, talked

with him, and after he left, they said, "Well, you know, this guy probably ought to be governor." So they called Carl and said, "No you're not running for lieutenant governor, you're running for governor." So that's kind of -- that's the way they played, and of course Mr. Woodruff, you know I never met Mr. Woodruff. He's the one person in my era that somehow I just never -- didn't know him. Ivan Allen was a great one. He and Tarver were the, I guess they were the closest of anybody.

SHORT: What happened when Tarver left?

MINTER: When Tarver left, they made Tom Wood, incidentally he and Dick Nick Smith had gone into the community newspaper business and probably the greatest newspaper story of the last decade, and they were just tremendously successful, brought Tom in, but they didn't make him publisher, they made him president. And then they moved Cox Headquarters from Dayton to Atlanta with Chuck Glover as head of Cox Enterprises. Well, they immediately wanted to start running the Atlanta papers, which they couldn't do when Tarver was there. I mean, they couldn't even touch them. As a matter of fact, Tarver rode them pretty hard. So it was a little bit of get even here, you know.

And, but what they could not understand about the Atlanta newspapers was that we had all these people over at the capitol, and that we sent reporters and photographers out in the state, and that nobody was interested in politics. It was dull. Of course, they weren't interested in it. They didn't know anything about Georgia politics, and of course they had grown up in Dayton, which

Dayton is not a capital city, and there's a difference in a capital city newspaper and one that's not. So anyway, that's when they began to fiddle with the Atlanta newspapers, and when you would - I did not ever get a call from Jim Cox Jr., I did get one, but I can't tell about it. [Laughter] Has to do with some -- might come out a little racist.

But anyway, well at my level there was never any contact with the Cox family. There got to be a great deal of contact with the family through Garner Anthony, nobody else but him. And because he had his ideas about what a newspaper ought to be and so forth, and didn't really understand that, for example, a Cox news release, he would say you want to run it exactly as it's delivered to you. That would never happen in the old days, but anyway. So they began to, first thing, they considered us all to be terribly racist. I mean, we were just Southern racists, and then they considered the readers wanting to read about Hollywood stars, and music, and entertainment, and not politics.

So that's when the papers began to change. But at the end of the Tarber-Woods regime when I was there, the *Journal-Constitution* grew to the largest newspaper in the South, exceeding the *Miami Herald*. And our after tax, our pre-tax revenues were tremendous, around \$20 billion a year, and now I think they're about zero. Of course, a lot of that has to do with internet, but it's like one of my newspaper friends in Nashville told me, said recently a newspaper can survive the internet and it can survive bad management, but it can't survive both at the same time, and I think that's what's got it finally. Terrible management, which is surprising to me because Jim Kennedy, the grandson, is a great fellow and I don't know why this has happened, but Jim is a -- he's in the tradition of his grandfather and his uncle. But Cox Enterprises is making tons of

money, at least it was until the current crisis. But I think it's obvious to everybody that the newspapers have changed a great deal, and it's not all due to the internet.

SHORT: There's been a public perception over the years that the *Constitution* is a very liberal newspaper and the *Journal* is a very conservative newspaper. Was that by design?

MINTER: By design, yes, and of course in many ways if you look back to the *Constitution*, it's never been as liberal as it was said to be, and the *Journal* has never been as conservative as it was thought to be. But yeah, you had to have a liberal editor for the *Constitution*. We didn't necessarily have to have one as liberal as Tom Teepen, whoever they've got now, which I guess we're talking about Cynthia Tucker who is editor of the editorial page, and of course has no influence over the news guiding operation. But yeah, it's picked that way, and of course McAllister who was the *Journal* editor was picked to be, of course he was not especially a liberal, but he certainly was not conservative. But it's sort of a phony house arrangement.

SHORT: When did the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* change from the days when Marvin Griffith called them "those lying Atlanta newspapers"?

MINTER: I don't know. It's not been too long because when I was there, there was still a lot of - you still heard that from time to time, and I remember, Bob, when we were going to South Georgia to cover sports, you know, used to have those staff cards with the name *Journal-*

Constitution on there. You know, I didn't care too much about going to [indiscernible] with one of those cards. Did you?

SHORT: No, I really didn't. I really didn't.

MINTER: But the strange thing is, my son who works there now said that he was covering something, the road race in Atlanta last week and he said, one of his colleagues is a photographer. Not necessarily from around here, was -- said he was surprised to hear the photographer complain that, "Gee, you know, it's getting as hard to interview people because people don't like us because the paper's so liberal." Well, you know, that's not new.

SHORT: Let's talk for a minute about covering the capitol. Did you have an overall plan of how you would cover politics and the state capitol?

MINTER: Oh, yes. Of course, you know, first we had a political editor who was really about the, in-house, about the third ranking person on the paper. You know, Bill Shipp was a political editor, and my friend Tyler Raines who is another story. Charlie Pew, remember him?

SHORT: Charlie Pew.

MINTER: And they were the chief political writers and wrote a column. And then you had

people assigned to the House, several of them, people assigned to the Senate, the Governor's office. And I guess even when we had a very small staff back in the '70s and early '80s, we probably had, maybe the two papers had maybe as many as 15 people every day over there, plus covering the state courts and so forth, and everything. And maybe we did over-cover a little, but to be a successful paper that makes money and has circulation. There's also this thing called power. I mean it's got to have a stick. The Dayton people didn't understand that, that you've got to have a stick. And for example, when I was editor of the *Constitution*, of the *Journal-Constitution*, you know, I wasn't in great shakes, but I had that job. And if I wanted to call the Governor, I mean he'd pick up the phone.

They tell me that doesn't happen now and, you know, they pay attention. I remember when George Busby and Tom Morland made the deal with the Feds to get a lot of extra money that was laying around for the highway program, I mean he comes over, wants a meeting with the editorial boards. He comes over and he wants to, before he does that, he wants to explain what he's doing and get you on his side. They don't do that anymore, but gosh, it was -- the newspaper was a powerful influence at one time. You know, I've always said the governors come and go but the newspaper stays. Well, it's probably not staying anymore, but it was a -- the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* was almost a third branch of government, and another thing, the other papers pretty much followed their lead on a lot. I mean, not totally, but particularly on news coverage and so forth, they dominated.

And had great statewide circulation. Remember the *Journal Predate*? The *Journal Predate* was like today's *Journal* -- it came out and then we would go into composing and change a little and

chip off the datelines and send it to the people in South Georgia. It was a morning paper and it had a circulation of 40,000 and then our accountants who didn't understand what they were doing said, "You know, look, let's get rid of this paper. And we will resell those 40,000 in the Atlanta paper. It would be cheaper, would be more attractive to our advertisers and we'll have more circulation, and have more money." And so in one day we lopped of 40,000 newspapers, the *Journal Predate*. Know what that was, Bob? That was the third largest newspaper in Georgia.

SHORT: Gee, whiz.

MINTER: And our geniuses in the circulation department, in the business department had no success in getting those papers resold in the Atlanta area. So it's -- but when we began pulling out of the state, I think the papers just lost a lot of their clout and changed a lot of things.

SHORT: Let me ask you this question speaking of this big stick and power, how did you decide which political candidates you would endorse?

MINTER: Well, I really never played much a part in that. The editorial board, of course the *Journal* had one and the *Constitution* had another, presided over the editorial pages, and at that time I think it included a cartoonist and two or three other writers. Well, they pretty well decided that by themselves. I'm sure they might talk to Tarver a lot and see how they were leaning, but only one time did Jim Cox ever mandate that somebody would be endorsed. He ordered his

newspapers to endorse Richard Nixon over McGovern and that's when our friend Greg Favre resigned in protest in West Palm Beach. But the *Journal* and *Constitution* both endorsed Nixon. But that's the only time to my knowledge that the ownership ever played any role in endorsement other than, you know who the ownership is and why you're working here and so forth. And I guess that has some influence, but actually the Cox operation was a great one, I thought, and very open, and let people do their job.

SHORT: Do you think those endorsements are effective?

MINTER: Not anymore. I think they might be -- I think they might be effective to endorse the school of superintendent of Raybun County or something like, I mean of your county, but not that that's wrong. But I'd say one of the minor offices in Fulton County, the Dekalb County where people don't know, they might just pick it up and read it. But as far persuading anybody, they may even hurt.

SHORT: What was the role of the Atlanta newspapers in the Civil Rights Movement?

MINTER: I'd say it was a large role and not particularly in the Civil Rights Movement, but it was a large role in making Atlanta sort of an oasis and keeping the violence out of Atlanta. That's what it did. I think the main [indiscernible] truthfully was protecting Atlanta, because I'm not sure that, you know, those like Tarver and Ivan Allen at that time, and Mr. Woodruff, and all

those people, I don't think they were great liberals. I don't think they were on the cutting edge of change. But I think they were -- I think it was pretty much a protective thing. They wanted to keep business in Atlanta, safe, and moving ahead, and they did. But Ralph McGill and Gene Patterson, they were -- and that relationship with Dr. King, they played quite a role.

Got a lot of criticism, Tarver did for not covering the Selma march, and of course that led to a lot of trouble in the future and Gene Patterson particularly was very critical of it. He was -- because Tarver did not -- told him whether to not go, well they just should have gone. One thing about Tarver, I was at home at Inman one day putting up a pasture fence and Tarver liked for you to work seven days a week, and I might have had Saturday night off, after working Friday night, but about eight o'clock got a call from Tarver Saturday morning. He says, be at the paper at ten. He says, Jimmy Carter's coming by, and of course Carter was running for governor. So we all go up there ten o'clock and meet Carter who's all by himself.

Go down and sit down in the library and Bill Shipp is there, and Shipp's got his tape recorder, and Murphy is there. Murphy won't speak to Carter. And of course, Tarver didn't like Carter either. So we go in and sit down, and Carter essentially says this. Says, "Look, you know", says, "I'm running for president, as you know. Got a lot of things going for me." Says, "I can win this election." Says, "There's one thing that I desperately need and he says, I need somebody from my hometown newspaper covering my campaign." He says, "If the *Journal-Constitution* would put somebody on the road with me, I could wrap this thing up. I could be president and so forth." And of course, he was a next door neighbor of Anne Cox Chambers, you know, had been when he was governor. And she was his principal financial backer, and so, but that didn't phase

Tarver.

So Tarver turned around and says, "Well, governor," he says, "I'll tell you something." He says, "I don't think you've got a chance to win," he said, "but if that changes and if I see where I think you are a real candidate," he said, "I'll put somebody on the road." He said, "Meanwhile, we're just not going to do it." And you know Carter, you know that look he gets. I knew then we were about to be up the creek. So anyway, also at that meeting Carter was talking about some issues and Shipp turns and faces Carter and says, "Well, governor, you said this then, then you said this then. How do you explain the difference?" It was an awful, awful meeting. I mean, it was embarrassing and so at the time we had a rule that you had to get Mr. Fields' permission to send a reporter out of state. But Carter, next week he was going to Chattanooga to talk to Jody Powell and so I was feeling sorry for the little son of a gun.

But, you know, I called in Rex Granum and I said, "Rex, go up to Chattanooga just across the border, and cover Carter's speech up there. So he went to Chattanooga and covered the speech, came back and wrote the story, and I was waiting for Tarver to come down on me. It never happened. Rex Granum stayed on him for the rest of the campaign and Tarver never said a word. That's the way he was. If he knew he was wrong, he would -- he would not admit it but he just wouldn't say anything about it. But so that's how we got a -- how Carter got somebody from the *Journal-Constitution* to cover his campaign.

SHORT: Jim, if you will, let's talk for a minute about some of your prize pupils. You mentioned Hal Raines.

MINTER: Well, that's an interesting story at least to me. We had a TV editor named Paul Jones and a movie editor. Paul was a character, but in those days, we didn't have a TV guidebook, and the TV editor, who was also the movie editor, had to call the station every day and find out what was going to be on every night and so forth and everything. Well, Paul was not very good at details, complicated by the fact that Jack Tarver was a great TV addict. So every morning, Tarver would come in just raising hell about the TV clock that Paul had gotten wrong.

So we had a guy named Dick Greene who was -- who had been working in Alabama, an old friend of mine. He walked in one day and Dick was [indiscernible] and he said, "I know how you can get that TV clock fixed and get Tarver off your back." And I said, "For God's sakes, tell me how". He said, "There's a TVmovie that's in Birmingham that I worked with in Tuscaloosa named Harold Raines. He's a smart boy. He'll fix it for you." So I called Hal Raines, asked him to come over to be interviewed and he came on the fourth of July which, the newspaper is closed down. So I picked Harold up at the airport, drove into the office, we had a long talk and as soon as I found out that he was not going to be a union organizer, we started talking about a job. And I said, "Harold, the standard question, what's your big ambition in this business?" He says, "I want to be the nation's premier gossip writer." He said, "I want to do Hollywood stuff and so forth." I said, "Well that's fine, and in the meantime, would you be the political editor."

So I was still, you know, I hadn't entirely made up my mind. And he asked a question that really wrapped it up for me. He says, "If I come to Atlanta, do you know where I can keep my bird

dog?" And I said, "Well, my, you're one of us." So we had a great relationship and when my, our friend Harold Gulliver was leaving the paper, I took Hal to lunch at the Ritz Carlton downtown, and that's so many years ago. And I offered him -- at the time, Harold was, I think he was a bureau chief of the *New York Times* in Atlanta, and I was trying to persuade him to be the editorial page editor of the *Constitution*. And he said, "Well, you know, I appreciate it," but he said, "I've got a good crack of being editor of the *New York Times*." And I said, "Harold, you know, " I said, "I'm sure you do. To burn that bush is a pretty good ways off." And he said, "I really think I've got a crack at it." He says, "I'm going to go for it."

So anyways, some years later when he got the job I sent him a note and I said, "You know, Babe Ruth called his shot and you called yours." But he was -- Harold Raines, my second best hire. I put Lewis first, Harold second. He was quite good and it's too bad what happened to him at the *New York Times*.

SHORT: You mentioned Reg Murphy.

MINTER: Yeah, Reg, you know, it's turned out Reg was fortunate to get kidnapped because --

SHORT: I was going to ask you about that. That's a great, great, great story. Tell us that story.

MALE SPEAKER: Can we pause before we tell the story?

SHORT: Yeah, you okay? You having fun?

MINTER: Am I doing all right?

SHORT: You're doing great.

MALE SPEAKER: Here's a some water right there.

MINTER: Yeah, I need a little shot.

SHORT: -- this stuff is to people. Yeah, I do that class up at Young Harris College. Sill, this is where this started and I used to have people come up. Poor old Matt Mattingly drove all the way from St. Simon's to Young Harris just to do a little program and drove all the way back, and I said, well hell, that's just too much. We're going to put him on -- record him. And so I use these at the class up there now and these people go crazy over this.

MINTER: I was talking to Earl Leonard this morning. He was talking about going up to be interviewed by you.

SHORT: Yeah, Leonard did a Russell thing.

MINTER: He's a good talker, isn't he?

SHORT: Oh, yeah.

MINTER: He's great.

SHORT: Yeah, Leonard. He's something.

MALE SPEAKER: We're ready when you are.

SHORT: Let me take another sip. Where are we? Do I need to ask the question again?

MALE SPEAKER: Yeah, go ahead and ask the question again. Be careful when you raise your left hand because when you raise it too much it goes in the frame.

SHORT: Okay, show my ears. That's what somebody said to me. He said -- of course, I love George Busby. Somebody says to me, he says, "How'd you get along with George Busby?" I said, "You know, George Busby to me has been one of our most effective governors." But you know, I like him for another reason and that is when George Busby walks by, people look at me and say, look at that guy with those small ears.

[Laughter]

MINTER: I got big ears. Somebody told me that that's because I probably -- come from the south of London. Says, people from the south of London have big ears. That's what one of my friends told me.

SHORT: Okay, where are we?

MINTER: They grow though as you get older.

SHORT: I have said, you know, you mentioned Reg Murphy. Can we pick it up there and let you go about the story?

MINTER: Well, the Reg Murphy kidnapping, which you know a little about, Bob. But anyway, it was during when Patty Hearst was kidnapped. One afternoon a special agent in charge of FBI from Atlanta came by the office and wanted to meet confidentially with Murphy and me. And he says that we have arranged to recover Patty Hearst, that she's going to be picked up, we can pick her up at the Atlanta airport tomorrow night. But first we've got to have a classified ad in the paper to notify the people we're dealing with and it's got to say, "Pat is okay" in capital letters, and it can't be anything else but that. And so, he says you can't tell anybody about it. So of course he left and we told Tarver, and it was agreed that we'd put the ad in the classifieds

section, and it was agreed that I would stay throughout the evening to see that nothing was changed and it came out, "PAT IS OKAY", exactly like the FBI agent had it. So the ad ran and we expected the FBI to recover Patty Hearst. It never happened. We never heard any more from them. So that was out there, you know. And then about a week later we had a nine o'clock news conference in my office. I'm then managing editor of the *Constitution*. Reg is the editorial page editor. I get a call from Murphy. He says, "I've been kidnapped." I said, "Well Reg, you're in a hell of a fix because nobody would pay no ransom for you," and he screamed. He says, "But I'm in the trunk of somebody's car." And then this voice comes on and says, "We'll be in touch." So people at the conference said, "Well, what was that about." I said, "I think Murphy and Gulliver are out drinking again," and so then they left. And George Tysinger was our copy desk chief. Baldy was our cartoonist. Well, Baldy was a great cartoonist but he couldn't spell and he always had something wrong with his cartoons. So I said, walked down there and said, "George, call Murphy's house and just be sure he's there," and I said, "if Virginia answers, just don't alarm her, just tell her that you were trying to get in touch with him about the nightly correction to the Baldy cartoon."

So George calls and Virginia, Reg's wife, said, "I'm concerned, he left with a man about some heating oil who had got some heating oil for the Atlanta school system," which there was a shorting of heating oil. And said, "he's been gone about two hours and I haven't heard from him." And then about that time we got a call from the television station that the man had called there. The colonel in the American Revolutionary Army, and so anyway, at that time, I called Tarver. Tarver says, call the FBI.

I did and the FBI swarmed down to the newspaper and put a recorder on my phone and everything, and they had guns on and so forth. And we had a news editor named Glenn McCutchen, and so one of the FBI agents walked over to the newspaper and said, "We need a picture of Mr. Murphy to send out on our -- ", you know, wherever they send them. He said, "Where can I get a picture of Mr. Murphy?" Well, we've probably got a file of them down in the reference room, but our news editor says, "Well there's a lot of them on his wall in there in his office. Go in there and get one of those." So anyway, the special agent goes in there and there's a picture, a framed glass picture with Murphy and Lyndon Johnson, and Lyndon has got his arm draped around Murphy and says to Reg, to my good friend, Reg Murphy, Lyndon Johnson. So the special agent takes his shoe, cracks that glass with his heel, takes his pocket knife and cuts Reg's face out of the picture. Reg blamed it on me, never forgave me, and that was Reg's great picture with Lyndon Johnson.

But anyway, so there are a lot of telephone calls back and forth, and the guy rode Reg around for about two or three days, and also the calls to discuss ransom and so forth, and everything. And finally it comes down to a call relayed through a little girl, a high school girl who was working part time in a lawyer's office, that the instructions that were to -- how the ransom was to be delivered -- the \$700,000, which also insulted Murphy. He thought he was at least worth \$1 million, but anyway, in the meantime the instructions were to deliver it up here on 400 and 400 was desolate countryside then, to drive an open jeep, and to wear tennis shoes and a short sleeve shirt. I don't know that why was necessary, but he did. And to have no bugs and no surveillance. If that happened, then Murphy and I both would be eliminated.

And so of course I was elected, I had to drive the jeep, which was disappointing to me because I had been going over to this FBI building. They had an automobile over there that I was to drive and I was to drive that car, and they would have an FBI agent with a machine gun in the back. And we practiced that. He had a compartment back there, and so -- but instead, I had to go it alone and it was sort of a cold, rainy day. But anyway, drove it up there and saw the man. Got to the place where we were going. Dropped the money out and had two suitcases. One had a \$500,000 in twenties. The other one had \$200,000. They got wedged in there and I couldn't get the damn thing out, and so I thought, this is going to be embarrassing.

In the meantime, Reg and the kidnapers are waiting for me down the road to get it out. And I tried to get that thing tugged out from under the seat, and I finally got it out, and anyway, just as I was about to get it out, this airplane comes down the middle of the median, you know, flying down the road obviously, looking over the situation. The guy threatened to kill us, and I looked over to across the road and there's a guy out there, old farmer, trying to catch a horse, had the bridle chasing around. And of course, the next day they was no farmer and no bridle and there was a cab that was broken down there. We found out later we were covered by high powered rifles. They were everywhere, you know. So, but the FBI had already found out who the kidnapper was from a source in Miami and they just followed the guy home and got all the money back except \$20 that his wife had spent for groceries. And Terry Adamson who became one of Griffin Bell's lieutenants in the justice department was a law student at Emory who had worked some with the *Constitution*. He picked Murphy up and took Murphy home and it all came out, we all lived happily ever after. We only had a few problems.

I remember Tarver walked in and told Tom Wood who was then our business manager, said, "Tom, call down to Murphy's house and tell his wife that if there's anything we can possibly do, we'll do it. And just let us know." So he called out there and came back in the room, and Tarver said, "Does she need anything?" He said, "Yes, said there was a lot of family and there was a lot of extra people there. They were running out of toilet paper. Could we bring over some toilet paper." So we took care of that.

And then I'd been up forever and gotten no sleep and so forth, but then they had a press conference after I got back from my jeep ride and Murphy had been recovered in the lobby of the *Journal-Constitution* building. And I had no idea and -- what was going on really down there.

But Bill Fields comes to me and says, "You got to go down to be interviewed at this press conference." So I went down there and people were, you know, just full of folks, you know. I had no idea, scared me. But anyway, Aubrey Morris comes up with his microphone and he says, "How did you feel heading out of town in an open jeep, in a short sleeved shirt and \$700,000 in the car." And I said, "Well Aubrey, I felt sort of like Furman Bisher headed for spring training." Because, you know, he always got a convertible from somebody else, and the expense account, and left. But the happy ending to that story was that because of Patty Hearst being in captivity, Reg having been captivity even for a short time, Patty's father and mother got in touch with Reg. You know, Randy Hearst worked here when Hearst owned the *Georgian* and then Patty's mother is from Atlanta.

So they got to know Reg talking about the kidnapping thing, you know, what she was going through and so forth. And since Reg didn't like me very well and had a great offer in San

Francisco, he went to the *San Francisco Examiner* to be editor of Hearst's paper, and did a good job, and then got to be publisher. And then Hearst made him publisher of the Baltimore papers. That's in the newspapers worth a lot and Hearst sold the Baltimore paper to the Los Angeles Times Company. And the Wall Street Journal had a story that said that Murphy said that stock was \$14.5 million. So I sent him a wire. I said, "Next time you get your behind kidnapped, don't call me, write a check." But Murphy and I have patched that all up and I say I admire him very much. He's had a great career and I just wish that we had -- I wish that he had stayed in Atlanta.

SHORT: So you retired from the newspapers, but you're still very active in journalism.

MINTER: No.

SHORT: You've stopped writing?

MINTER: I don't write anything except checks. I am wrote out.

SHORT: You're wrote out. I remember you telling me one time about, I think it was you, that when you became a journalist working for the newspapers that you told your mother that since you turned pro you didn't write home free.

MINTER: No, you know, I've never -- writing has never been real easy for me. I'm happy

enough not to write. I've never considered myself a writer. I just was, I don't know, I really enjoyed the editing part of newspaper more than I did writing.

SHORT: But you established a lot of friends. You were good friends with Senator Talmadge, for example.

MINTER: Yes, he was -- Herman may be the smartest man I've ever known. But it's amazing he didn't hold grudges -- a great line of his, he told me that he never really got angry with anyone at the *Journal-Constitution* except Bill Shipp and Hal Gulliver -- and he had reason to. He said, "If all I knew about myself is what I read in the *Atlanta Constitution*, I'd have voted against myself." I don't know whether -- I guess you all can cut these things if you want to, but have you heard that story about our reporter who asked Herman what he really thought of Zell Miller? You know they had that nasty campaign against. Said, "Well, Senator, well what do you really think of Zell Miller?" "Well, I knew his daddy. He too was a son of a bitch."

But like I say, I used to go and eat breakfast with Herman when we were both out of office and he cooked breakfast. I went over there one morning. He was sitting there in his coveralls with his spittoon over there and chewing tobacco, and reading the Carl Sanders book that Carl had written. I had read the book and so I said, "What do you think of Carl's book?" He said, "In his book, Carl comes up well ahead of Thomas Jefferson," but Herman was quite a character. He was -- but he would talk nice about Zell and what the great things Zell had done with the Hope Scholarship. He'd talk nice about, I forgot who he was going to talk nice about, but -- Carter.

Carter with these homes he's building and so forth and everything.

And I asked him one day, I said, "Senator, of all the people you've served in the United States Senate," I said, "who were the ones you really admire and respect?" He thought and he said, "I would have to pick Ted Kennedy near the top of that list." He said, "He did his homework, he was a good senator. I'd have to put him near the top of that list. I told Rogers Wade about that. Rogers said, "I don't believe he said that." But Herman was different. I said, "Well what do you consider your greatest accomplishment?" He said, "I'd have to say that one of my greatest accomplishments was the establishment of the Georgia Forest Commission." And he ticked off, when he started it and how much it had grown and so forth, and everything, and of course he had his own forest.

And we'd go out and we'd eat breakfast, and we'd go out and feed his bird dogs, and we'd get in his old, beat up pickup truck and we would go out there and cruise his timber. He'd say, "when I planted these pines back in 1948 I thought they might be useful at some time." He said, "now they are," but he sold a bunch of timber. We'd go out and he knew how we would look at the top of the tree and take so many steps out, and look, and then we'd measure how tall the tree was by where we were standing and we would count the trees in circle and he would figure out how much money he had -- he had a lot. But he was a very, very -- I just liked him a lot.

SHORT: He also had served on the board of trustees at Young Harris College with Zell Miller.

MINTER: Yeah. Well, Zell and Lewis and Lee Walburn and I used to go to the country music

thing in Nashville. And I remember coming back after I guess he ran against Herman, we were driving back and Zell said he was going home and getting out of politics. He was fed up and he was going to get out and go teach at Young Harris and he was not going to be in politics anymore. That didn't work out, but one time we went up there and Zell had had a speech in Kentucky or somewhere. So he came through there and was going to ride back to Atlanta, and got back to the building in Atlanta. He had his bag in my car and we pulled up alongside of the building. Took his bag out. I did. Put it on the sidewalk. Zell hopped out and got in his driveway and left for the capitol.

About 30 minutes later I was in my office cleaning up my desk, my secretary says, "They want you downstairs in the lobby." Said, "There's a bomb in the lobby." And I said, "There's a bomb in the lobby?" Well, then of course, Colonel Ortega from Nicaragua had been visiting with Andy Young had come by. So they thought that it was the reason the bomb got down there. And I got down there in the lobby and there was this suitcase sitting in the middle of the lobby and they had everybody backed up, and our chief of security had a stethoscope that he got out of medical gear. And he was listening to the bag, and [indiscernible]. And the bomb squad was on the way, and the bomb squad got there and they were about to open the suitcase and I said, "You know, don't do that, it's the lieutenant governor's suitcase, we'll see his dirty underwear." And they didn't take my word for it, but about that time Zell's driver drove back up and got his suitcase, but it caused a big commotion.

We had great trips on that, and -- but one time I was in my -- sitting in my office which was sort of down at the end of the hall and there got to be a loud noise out in the -- shouting out in the

newsroom. My secretary comes in. She said, "Something's going on out in the newsroom. You'd better go out there." And Bill Shipp had a little glass office off to the side. Zell was lieutenant governor. And I got out there and Shipp was sitting in his office not saying a word, and Zell was out there, had his fist up, red in the face. You know, and when Zell gets made he reverts to his mountain twang. And Zell was shouting, "Come on out, come on out, I'll whoop your ass, I'll whoop your ass." And I got so tickled, I was doubled over laughing. And anyway, they got him quieted down and I guess they probably went off and had a drink together. But they fought one day and were friends the next.

SHORT: Love hate relationship.

MINTER: Yeah, uh-huh.

SHORT: Jim, looking back over, what do you think is your greatest accomplishment?

MINTER: I'd say my greatest accomplishment, what I'm most proud of, I thought I brought -- I really thought with some help from Bill Fields and a lot of good folks, I was lucky to have a great, great staff at the *Constitution*, I thought that I had a big hand in making the *Constitution* a lot better newspaper than it had been. And the one thing I guess I'm really proud of -- when I got to the *Constitution*, Bob, I found out that those folks wasn't making any money at all because they had that little in-house union. As the executive sports editor of the *Journal* I was making

considerably more than the news editors and the key people on the *Constitution*. And so I just went down and asked for more money and I got it, and I often wondered why McGill and Patterson, with their prestige, didn't do the same because the newsroom payroll is not the big expense of a newspaper. It's newsprint and a lot of other things.

But I was pretty successful in raising the payroll of the *Atlanta Constitution*, and therefore raising the quality of the newspaper, and I guess that's what privately I'm most proud of.

SHORT: You have a son in the newspaper business.

MINTER: Sort of. They've cut back, you know. They -- he was covering NASCAR, so now they have not -- they're not covering NASCAR anymore. They do cover the Atlanta race, but for example, this past weekend they think it's better to cover the Road Atlanta than Talladega. Now, you a little about readership. You know a little about people, you know, who you think's going to read the most. Does Road Atlanta have the most readers or Talladega?

SHORT: Oh, Talladega by a big margin.

MINTER: Yeah.

SHORT: Yeah.

MINTER: So he is -- he actually is a contract writer now. They're not covering really anything like that out of state except maybe the Falcons and pro football team.

SHORT: Well, he must have the Minter genes. He's a very good writer.

MINTER: Well, thank you. I'll pass that onto him. He'll be pleased to hear that.

SHORT: Please do.

MINTER: Yeah.

SHORT: Jim Minter, thank you very much for being our guest. We could sit here and talk forever, but we've enjoyed it and thank you very much.

MINTER: Well, thank you. I'd like to interview you. You've had a great career and somewhat varied, I must say.

SHORT: Snaky, I'd call it.

[END]

University of Georgia
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