

**Millard Grimes interviewed by Bob Short**  
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**Reflections on Georgia Politics**  
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**Millard Grimes**

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BOB SHORT: I'm Bob Short, and this is Reflections on Georgia Politics, sponsored by the Richard Russell Library at the University of Georgia. Our guest is Millard Grimes, who is a well-known newspaper man and author. Millard, welcome to our program.

MILLARD GRIMES: Thank you.

SHORT: You are a newspaper man. You literally grew up in the newspaper business, working as a copy boy, a proofreader and a sports reporter for the *Columbus Ledger* while you were still in high school.

GRIMES: That's right. I've never made a dollar since then in any business except publishing, newspapers or magazines. So, I guess, yeah, I'm a newspaper man.

SHORT: You were born in Newnan.

GRIMES: Yes, I was born in Newnan in 1930, just a few months after the Wall Street crash that ushered in the Great Depression. My father lost his job during that time, and so I only lived in Newnan a few weeks as a baby. Although that was the county, Coweta County, was where the families of both my parents had lived for

generations. And a lot of them are still buried there around the Welcome Church, if you know where that is. Well, Elim Church in the Welcome community. But we moved to LaGrange when I was still a baby, as I said.

And so I grew up in LaGrange, which actually was a great place to grow up in the 1930s. It was a small, small town, about 18,000, 20,000. But it was a cotton mill town, I guess. But we lived only about a block from what you might call downtown. So you could walk everywhere. You could walk to the theater or the stores on Main Street to the church. So, actually, I had access to a lot of that stuff. And back in those days, of course, a kid could walk all over town by himself if he wanted to. And I mean, we were poor, I guess you'd have to say. I don't think my father ever made much more than 20 dollars a week, 25, maybe some – he was a traveling salesman for the Culpepper Company there. I've often said we were so poor, we could hardly afford a maid, because maids then were two dollars a week. So we did afford a maid, which was fortunate, because my mother was sickly and stayed in the bed most of the time. And then, my father, he traveled a lot. He didn't get home a lot, sometimes on purpose and sometimes because he had to work. And I think he sort of took to drinking during this period and some nights didn't come home at all.

But my grandmother came to live with us, so I guess my grandmother sort of raised me. But we lived right there on Broom Street. I don't know whether you know where that is or not in LaGrange, but it's just, like I say, right off the square. But I loved

growing up in LaGrange, because it was such a big difference in those days, in the 1930s. If you lived in a relatively urban area, I guess you would call it, and about two to three miles away, outside the city limits, people didn't have running water, they didn't have electricity, they didn't have a lot of comforts we now have. And the difference is just maybe a couple of miles. And it wasn't how rich or poor you were. It was actually if you lived in a town or if you lived out in the country, no matter how rich you were, you usually had to have a well, and it was a long time before you got electricity.

So growing up in a small town, also, you had access to stores much easier, and theaters. I keep saying the movie theater, because in the 30s, going to the movie for a dime was the big entertainment for children. And I started buying Big Little books. You remember those? Comic books and things like that. And I was always a reader and always wanted to be a writer. And I really started out wanting to be a fiction writer. And wrote a lot of stories. Wrote stories for comic books and science fiction, the pulp magazines, as I got into my teenage years. But I soon realized it was going to be hard to make a living at a penny at a word. I just couldn't write that many words.

So in the summer of my junior year at Columbus High, I went down and applied for a job at the *Ledger-Enquirer*, the daily newspaper there. And they had a job for a proofreader during the vacations of the other proofreader. I was only 16 years old, which I thought was a little young for that job. And then I was a copy boy on Saturdays. They don't have copy boys anymore, and sometimes I'm not sure they have proofreaders

anymore. Everybody has to kind of proofread their own stuff. But the copy boy was very important in those days. He not only had to go get coffee for all the people in the newsroom, which was very important, but he had to strip the wires and, later, wind up the paper tape that was sent by the wire services that you put through the linotype machines. Well, if the copy boy didn't come in in the morning around 5:00 or 6:00, the editors didn't have any wire copy, which back in those days was extremely important, because we didn't have as much local as they do today. But in any case, that was my introduction. And I worked at the Columbus paper during my years here at the university in the summers.

My father died when I was a senior in high school, and my mother used the money to sort of send me through school. It was insurance money, and that's how I happened to get through Georgia.

SHORT: So you came to the University of Georgia to study journalism.

GRIMES: Yeah.

SHORT: And I'm sure you must have worked on the *Red and Black*.

GRIMES: Absolutely. I went down to *Red and Black* the first week or so I was

here and worked on it 'til my senior year when I worked on the Pandora, the yearbook.

SHORT: What was the university like in those days?

GRIMES: Well, it was, I think, great. But I'd never been anywhere much. I'd been to Athens once. I came up here to cover a track meet. When I was a senior in high school I started writing sports for the local Columbus paper. And I'd been to Florida a couple of times. But like I say, we didn't travel much during the war, didn't go anywhere. So Athens, of course, today people say it's a lot different, and, I guess, sure it is. But when I was walking over here today, I realized I could still find my way, because it was similar to the way it was when I was a student and used to walk on north campus a lot.

And it was right after World World II, so a lot of the men students – I'd say probably more than half of the men students were veterans coming on the GI bill. And of course, men outnumbered women about five to one on the campus in those days. And I was a fuzzy-faced 17-year-old who came up in 1947 as a freshman at 17. I'd been about 15 when the war ended, so I missed the war, or at least as a serviceperson. So it was certainly really hard to get a date for a guy who didn't have much money and who was younger than most of the other men. And we lived out in the prefabs on Ag Hill. The prefabs there, they stayed there, I think, 'til the 60s. And then I moved over on

Milledge Avenue for my last three years.

But I worked at the *Red and Black* and would have to say it was the best training ground for newspaper people that you could have had. And the people who were on the *Red and Black* during the period I was there just went on to have very successful careers in journalism. When I was editor, John Pennington was the managing editor who Jimmy Carter gives a lot of credit for saving his political career when he investigated a voting fraud that kept Carter from winning his first race. Jim Mintor was the sports editor. He went on to become the editor of the Atlanta papers. Dewey Benefield, who didn't stay in newspapers, but who became a very prominent developer down in Sea Island, was there. Mike Edwards, who went on to become a writer on *National Geographic* and is still writing for *National Graphic*. Glenn Vaughn, who went on to be the publisher of the Columbus newspapers. It was an unusual group of people there. And some of them were veterans, and some of them weren't, like Jim and I weren't, and Dewey.

So the *Red and Black*, as I've often told folks, was the most exacting newspaper at that time that I have ever worked on. Every line had to fit. Every headline had to fit just right, and we rewrote them time and time again. And of course, we printed here in Athens in an old print shop. But it was an experience that, if you went through all the rungs on the ladder, when you got out, you could put out a newspaper, a real newspaper, I think. And I think a lot of those people did.

SHORT: You were there during the Sinkwich-Trippi years.

GRIMES: Well, no, I missed those.

SHORT: You missed it?

GRIMES: I was there right after that. However, I saw Trippi play several times, because they played the Georgia-Auburn game in Columbus every year at that time. And so we got to usher the Georgia-Auburn games when I was in high school. In fact, one of my great scoops when I was sports editor for the high school paper is I got an interview with Charley Trippi in the lobby of the Ralston Hotel. I called up his room. I'm not usually that brash, and Charley Trippi answered, and I asked him to meet me down in the lobby. And so I interviewed him a little bit about his – it was one of the Georgia-Auburn games. But, no, they had left. Roush and that group were here. Zippy Morocco, who's still here in Athens, I was talking to Zippy the other day.

But I think it was a great time to be at the university. We had big bands come in for all the big dances, like homecoming and the commencement. And the city wasn't as big. Certainly it didn't have any bars. In fact, I don't think you could serve drinks in Athens at that time, although a lot of people managed to get some. But it was a great time be here.

BOB SHORT: So after graduation, you wound up back in Columbus.

GRIMES: Yes.

SHORT: Let's talk about in 1955 when your newspaper won the Pulitzer Prize for documenting evidence that there was corruption in Phenix City, which is across the river.

GRIMES: That's right.

SHORT: Tell us about that.

GRIMES: Well, it was an interesting year, needless to say. And I would like to say that, as it was on the *Red and Black* when I was here at Georgia, we had an unusual group of people on the *Columbus Ledger* during that time who went on to – Bob Brown was the editor, and I think he was the person most responsible for us getting the Pulitzer. Bob had worked with Harding Carter in Mississippi on that Delta paper, and then he went through NBC and came to the *Ledger-Enquirer*. He was fairly young, I guess his middle 30s. And he died fairly young. But he did help us get that Pulitzer. He was a very

good political journalist, in the sense that he knew all the people in the business. Well, we won – I mean, we overplayed the story, quite frankly. I mean, the key to cleaning up Phenix City was that Albert Patterson, an attorney in Phenix City who pledged to clean it up, was elected Attorney-General of Alabama. And one night, in a dark alley downtown, he was shot to death, on June 18, 1954. I'll always remember that night. But when he was shot and killed, that naturally created a lot of attention on Phenix City, which had been corrupt for years and years. I mean, going back to the riverfront days when riverboats came in, it was a gambling center. Of course, Fort Benning being across the bridge there helped create the need – not the need – but a lot of nightclubs and so forth. And we used to go over there a lot, my wife and I, my fiancée at that time, and the people from the *Ledger-Enquirer*. And frankly, I never saw all that much corruption. I mean, they could serve drinks, and they had dancing. And I guess they had gambling and things like that in the back rooms, but I never saw any, and other things. But, in any case, when Patterson was killed, the Governor of Alabama declared martial law in Phenix City and sent the National Guard in. And the National Guard took over the entire government of Russell County and Phenix City. You had a National Guardsman who was the sheriff and another one who was the police chief, and all the people who were there were ousted. Then they brought in a special grand jury from all over the state, and a judge. And in the next nine months, they charged and convicted a lot of the gamblers, which they felt would never have happened with the old regime in place. So then they

arrested the Solicitor General of Russell County, the Deputy Sheriff and the Attorney General of Alabama, whichever was attorney general at the time, and charged them with Patterson's murder. It was a very interesting trial.

The district attorney was probably the most powerful politician in the county, a fellow named Arch Ferrell. And at the trial, the witnesses testified, several of them, that they saw Ferrell and the deputy sheriff, Fuller, shoot Patterson in this alley right there. I'll tell you a little interesting story about that alley there. It was right on the main street of Phenix City at 9:00 on a Friday night. So a lot of people walking up and down the street. But it was a little off the sidewalk. But despite eyewitnesses – and the main eyewitness, by the way, was killed in a knife fight before the trial. Just a coincidence, according to the books and all. And I recently read about a book about this. It's why I remember it well, because I just read a very good new book about the assassination. In any case, Fuller was convicted, the deputy sheriff. Ferrell was acquitted. The Attorney General went to a sanitarium, as they called it back then, in Texas, and was declared mentally-unfit to stand trial. And, of course, he wasn't in Phenix City that night. In fact, Ferrell's defense was he was talking to him on the phone. Now, I won't get into all those details. But in any case, he was supposed to have helped plot it, though.

John Patterson, Albert Patterson's son, of course, was elected in his place to be attorney general and later was elected governor, defeating in 1958 George C. Wallace. The only time Wallace ever lost an election in his career is when Patterson beat him.

But despite Patterson being the attorney general, they did acquit the guy he really felt was the person who was responsible for the assassination. And Ferrell died in prison – not Ferrell, but Fuller died in prison about seven years later.

But in any case, getting back to this, we played up all this stuff, of course, and ran many stories on it. I'm trying to remember exactly what we did that revealed things. I think we kept the story alive because we bannered it every day and we had lots of news sources. But the key was the Governor declaring martial law and sending in the troops to find out why Patterson had been murdered. And they cleaned out all the gambling establishments. They threw out slot machines. They destroyed the places and, of course, arrested the gamblers. So, yeah, we won the Pulitzer Prize and were real proud. But as Ray Jenkins, who's still a real good friend of mine and was the main reporter at that time in Phenix City, said, we kind of overplayed the story.

But the sequel to that is, on the day we won the Pulitzer Prize, it was announced, I had already resigned and had decided to go over to Phenix City and start a weekly newspaper. They had a small weekly, but it was not very good. So I got this guy who ran a radio station over there, put up two-thousand dollars. I'd always wanted to be an entrepreneur. So I got an office in the same building that Patterson had had his office and had walked down the steps from the night he was murdered. And so we had an office there for about two years, and I tried my hand at weekly newspapers then.

SHORT: Well, actually you must have liked it, because even today you own several weekly newspapers.

GRIMES: Well, I don't know that I liked it that much. And, of course, I didn't have any money much, and we didn't have a print shop. And the pace was so different from a daily. Still is. I mean, you have to really make yourself on a weekly go on and do things. Whereas a daily, sort of, the deadline forces you to. Actually, that experience convinced me at that time that I wanted to just be involved with dailies, if I could. And so the Columbus paper took me back, which was fortunate. I've been very lucky through the years to have a job somewhere. And I went back to the Columbus paper. And I left one other time for a few months to work on a paper in the Valley, which had just gone cold-type. And it was owned by a guy named Carmage Walls, whom you may be familiar with. Carmage had been publisher of the *Macon Telegraph*. And he also had a hand in more weekly news dailies and weeklies, I think, than anybody in the country, because he helped young people starting. And his stepson was the publisher, I think, in the Valley at that time. But I went up there briefly. But I had a family situation. Both of our mothers lived with us, my wife's mother and grandmother and my mother. And we almost had to stay in Columbus. But we tried it for a while.

What I was going to say about the people on the *Ledger-Enquirer*, when I worked there as a young copy boy, Jim Bane was a news editor who later went on to Atlanta and

became the managing editor there, and then went on to be a big official in Cox newspapers. Jim Bellows was the city editor, and Jim became editor of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. And Tom Sellers and Ray Jenkins and various other people who went on to pretty good careers. Joe Hall, I think he also went to Atlanta. So we had an unusual staff. Carlton Johnson. Later, when I was editor, I brought in Charlie Black, and we sent him to Vietnam seven times. And Charlie, I think, became sort of a legend covering Vietnam during the 1960s.

SHORT: That was a good decision you made.

GRIMES: Yeah. Did you know Charlie?

SHORT: Yes. And you got firsthand coverage from Vietnam that other newspapers in the state really didn't get.

GRIMES: Well, Charlie wanted to go. He had been in World War II and in the Korean War. And he interviewed the soldiers and the people more than the officials. So he didn't depend on news from official sources. And we got letters from all over the country from people wanting Charlie's items because they included names of their sons, fathers and husbands who were in Vietnam. And Charlie died fairly young, too. And it

was at the memorial service, the guy who won the Pulitzer Prize for Vietnam service was there and called Charlie the “greatest reporter of the Vietnam era,” because he did report on the people. The people, that is the soldiers who were actually fighting. And I think it did give us a boost. Because during that period, the *Enquirer* became the largest circulated paper in Columbus. The *Ledger* had always been the top paper, and, of course, they used some of his articles, too. But back in those days, the newspapers had separate staffs. The *Ledger* was the afternoon paper. The *Enquirer* the morning paper. Of course, as we know, morning papers were then gaining traction to become more circulated than the afternoon papers.

And there was a period, of course, I was editor, too. I became editor when I was just 32, in 1962, and had come back to the *Ledger-Enquirer* from my little excursion to the Valley. And I was working on the desk again, the same job I had when I got out of college, making about 100 dollars a week. And we had two children, and that was probably the low point of our career and in our lives, in a way. But then, by a series of coincidences, I became editor in a couple of years. The editor of the *Enquirer* died one night of a heart attack. And I was already writing a column and a lot of the editorials. I just used to do it on the side when I was really the [indiscernible]. And so I got to be the associate editor because I was writing the editorials. Well, back in those days, the editor overlooked the whole operation, not just the editorial page. But somebody had to write that. So then they reorganized, and somehow I ended up as editor of the morning paper.

Well, I'd never worked on it. I always worked on the afternoon paper. And that was a period when Carl Sanders was running for governor and was elected. So my years as editor of the *Enquirer* coincided with his first term. And that was a great period in Georgia history, I feel.

SHORT: Did you ever know Bill Burson, who was a correspondent in Korea?

GRIMES: Yeah. Mm-hm. I knew him. He was in college when I was.

SHORT: He was here when you were here?

GRIMES: Yeah. Mm-hm. Yeah.

SHORT: Bill and I worked together as press agents for governors, as you well know. In your book, *The Last Linotype: The Story of Georgia and its Newspapers since World War II*, you described the years between 1950 and the 80s as the "Golden Age of Newspapers." What was so special about that era?

GRIMES: Well, first, I think newspapers' values went up. The value of the papers, that is. It was years when newspapers began to go on the stock market, so you

could judge their value, the big papers. Small papers, if you were fairly successful, these big groups were always calling you wanting to buy you, if you were in an area they liked. So it was certainly golden from that standpoint. Also, we had changed from hot-type by then, most newspapers, to cold-type and offset, which allowed us to run many more pictures and local pictures. Before offset, you had to have a plate made of every picture you ran, and it was costly, among other things. Well, after offset, you could just run picture pages pretty easily, and eventually you could run color much more easily. So it gave newspapers a chance to run more pictures. Frankly, most of the – I don't know whether this is good or bad, but for whatever it was worth, most of the editors and reporters by then were college graduates because they'd gone to college on the GI bill. Whereas, before World War II, it was people who weren't. I don't know whether that improved it. Some of them were good and some of them weren't. Plus, there was very little competition for the advertising as there is now and later.

Newspapers were the medium in town, I'd guess you'd have to say. The publishers and editors were fairly prominent people. After the chains bought up most of the small dailies and many weeklies, of course the publisher just became another person that the chain happened to send in for a few years, rather than somebody that lived in the community for many years. And they certainly improved a lot of papers, but they also de-proved some.

But my experience during that period, of course – in 1969, I left the *Ledger*

*Enquirer* and got some lawyers in Opelika, Alabama, to help to put some money up to buy the paper in Opelika, the *Opelika Daily News*. And so we did. I became publisher and editor in March, 1969. And that was a great experience. I'd never had a business course in my life. And I mainly continued to do what I'd always done: I put the paper out every day, and got somebody else to sell the ads and do the business. And we had about 6,000 circulation. It didn't circulate much in Auburn, which is a sister city of Opelika and was the key. For six months after we bought that little daily, which was really considered, I think, the worst paper in Alabama at that time, I mean, they ran nothing on the front page except wire news. Back in those days, you could take the wire news off the machine and fill up your paper, which some papers kept doing and still do today. Well, we ran a lot of local. We started covering Auburn. And six months later, we changed the name to the *Opelika-Auburn News* so that we could have that extension into Auburn, and also added a Sunday edition, which they'd never had. And those were the two keys, I think, to expanding and succeeding in Opelika. Auburn, I should say. The plant was in Opelika.

And we did a lot of photos. We covered sports very heavily, Auburn sports. And nine years later, we had gone from 6,000 circulation to 9,000. So one reason I call that the "Golden Age of Newspapers" is, back in those days, you could gain circulation, which is very hard to do now. But, of course, we didn't charge much. I mean, it was like a dime during the week and a quarter on Sunday. And I've forgotten what the

monthly price was. And the Opelika-Auburn area was extremely competitive in those days from outside newspapers. And there was a strong weekly in Auburn that was actually stronger when we bought the *Daily News* than it was. But you had Columbus, Montgomery, Birmingham and Atlanta all sent, both afternoon and morning papers, into Lee County, Alabama. And two of them had bureaus there, Columbus and Birmingham. Birmingham had a real strong circulation there when we first went there.

But in any case, as I saying, we went from 6,000 to 20,000 in nine years and quadruple the income, which was lucky, in a way. But we had this plan, as I said. And the reason it was the golden age, we bought it for about a million dollars and sold it for about seven million eight years later to Thompson newspapers. Thompson didn't do as good a job as I was hoping they would. But at that time, they were the largest owner of small papers in the country. And they owned newspapers all over the world, including the *London Times*. I told the guy when we were selling, I said, "Boy, I'm real proud to be associated with the group that owns the *London Times*. And he said, "Well, that's one of the newspapers we've got that doesn't make money."

SHORT: Let talk for a minute about some of the real newspaper men during that era. Who do you recall that were outstanding journalists during that period?

GRIMES: Well, as I mentioned, people that worked on the *Red and Black* when

I was there went on to be pretty outstanding. One who probably doesn't get enough recognition is Ray Jenkins, who was at Georgia at that time and worked on the Phenix City story during the Pulitzer year, and then went on to be editor of the Montgomery papers. And I think one of the really great writers of that period was Grover Hall, Jr., who was the editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser*. Grover got mixed up one time when they sold it to somebody and he left Montgomery, which was really – he never became as good a writer after that, because Montgomery was his heart. It's where his father had lived and been editor of the Montgomery paper. But Grover was a unique writer. He made editorials interesting, which is hard to do. I mean, most newspapers sort of throw the editorial page in, without the kind of thought and writing that Hall put in it. So, of course, he was in Alabama, but he was one person I feel was very important in influencing me. And he and Bob Brown were good friends, who was editor of the *Ledger*.

When you were in Columbus – back in those days, I worked on the Columbus paper for 20 years and then on the *Opelika-Auburn News* for another ten. And even though I was very involved in Georgia, it was just across the line, for those 30 years, I was much more involved with the people right there. And although I knew some of the others – I mentioned Jim Bane and Jim Bellows came from Columbus. I was actually on the board of the Georgia Press Association, as well as the Alabama Press Association. So I knew a lot of those people, but I don't know if their names would be that familiar to

anybody. Bob Fowler was one who started the *Gwinnett Daily News*, and he sold it to the *New York Times* for umpteen-million dollars. And then they closed it down.

SHORT: Before I forget, I'd like to ask you your opinion of what makes a good daily newspaper.

GRIMES: Well, that's a good question. I have thought about it a lot through the years. When we bought the Opelika paper, as I said, it was not real good, I'd have to say. I would say, both then and now, even more so, you had to cover the local news. Television had already been a factor for nearly 20 years when we took over the Opelika paper, but, obviously, it was not the factor it is today. You didn't have cable, and you didn't have quite as close a coverage. And I think covering the local news is number one. And everybody says that, but there a lot of ways you do that. And then you've got a lot of audiences out there. You've got an audience that wants a lot of sports news, and probably some papers overemphasize sports. And I'm a big sports fan. And just to compare what we did in Opelika and Auburn, we started really covering Auburn's sports. And we covered high school sports. I don't know how many high schools we must have covered. They had so many then, because all these counties were getting private schools in addition to the public schools. And Alabama has a lot of public schools. In Lee County there was Beulah and Beauregard and Notasulga and Loachapoka, as well as

Opelika and Auburn. They all had Indian names. And so we covered high schools real closely. We ran a lot of pictures. We were probably – and I think that’s a key for papers today. We do that in our weeklies, is run a lot of pictures of people. That’s one thing that is still difficult for any of the other media to do.

Plus, we ran obituaries, deaths and funerals, which very few of the media doesn’t do well, except newspapers. So I think, today – I notice the *Journal Constitution* has emphasized deaths and funerals a little bit more, spotlighting somebody. And I think their Vent column has become very popular, and many newspapers are doing that now to try to give the audience a chance to participate. But I would say that our success in Opelika and Auburn, which I think is reflected in a lot of dailies, was increasing the amount of local news and running more pictures. We also, of course, ran a lot of columns.

I’d like to mention another trend that we got into. After we sold the *Opelika-Auburn News*, we really didn’t have that much money. I didn’t have but about 15 percent of that paper. And I didn’t have any money, of course, when it started. I’d been in the newspaper business all my life. And I had to borrow what I had in it. But then we got into suburban papers. Because suburban papers in the late 70s and early 80s were about the only thing a small group with not much resources could buy. But you could get real good bargains in suburban papers, because the dailies, the large groups, had not discovered the suburban papers. Of course, in the next 20 years, those suburban

papers became real hot commodities. Our first one was – well, Phenix City was sort of a suburban paper. Our first one, though, was the *Rockdale Citizen* in Conyers, which I got right after we sold the *Opelika-Auburn News*. And we had it for 17 years. And it was a weekly when we bought it, and we converted it into a five-day daily, and ran an all-local front page. But we did have wire news inside, and we had comics, and we had other things. But somehow we managed to get all local on the front page. It was pretty tough some days. In Rockdale County, you wouldn't think that much happened. And I'm not sure it did, but it must have. Something happens all the time. You just have to be creative, I think.

But at one time we had the paper in Rockdale, Clayton County – which was a real good county back in those days for news, where Newt Gingrich was headquartered, so to speak. Henry County, which I never guessed was going to grow like it has. And Fayette county, which obviously was a hot county. But at the time we had the paper there, it didn't even have a motel. You had to go to either Newnan or Clayton County to spend the night. And all those counties, of course, became very strong.

SHORT: You mentioned editorials. Do you think that newspaper editorials help to form public opinion?

GRIMES: Well, I don't know for sure. That's what I have mainly done through

the years is write editorials and columns. I never was a reporter too long. I started being an editor, that is. So back when I was editor of the *Enquirer*, we had to write about two or three editorials a day and a column, and oversee the paper. I mean, back in those days, the editors really worked. I think today they just write maybe an editorial once in a while. I never got a lot of feedback from editorials. I think letters to the editor get more feedback almost. And I say that as somebody who wrote editorials and thought they were pretty good, and still do write. I still write a column pretty much every week. But I think the news has more impact on people, not just for selling the paper to them, but even influencing them. I think they look on editorials as somebody else's opinion. So I'm not sure.

SHORT: Now, with your permission, I'd like to get your thoughts on some of Georgia's most well-known political writers and editorialists. And, of course, the first one that comes to mind is Ralph McGill.

GRIMES: Yeah. Well, I thought he was real good. I mean, I used to read his column regularly. I'm sure he must have had some influence on the situation that evolved in Georgia. But I think the person who had the most influence was Carl Sanders, who was the governor during the 60s, at a time when, if you remember the 60s, cities all over the South were exploding. States – of course, living on the Alabama

border, I was quite familiar with what was going on in Birmingham, Montgomery, various places. Somehow, if you look at the difference in Georgia and Alabama during the 1960s, when Wallace was governor in Alabama and Sanders was governor in Georgia, you can see that Georgia fared much better and became the commercial capital of the South, particularly Atlanta. Now, I don't know if you can give Sanders or McGill, either one, credit for all that. But they were – Sanders, particularly, was in a position to sort of keep things calm. And, as I've said, Sanders, while he was governor, all three major league sports brought teams to Atlanta. Baseball was the Braves, and Atlanta built that great stadium, which I still think was great, because you saw it when you came into the city real vividly and dramatically. Brought the Falcons, the NFL football team, and then the Hawks, the basketball team. And I think that put Atlanta on every sports page in the county, a little line every morning in the major league sports. And then you had that stadium, which many people came to.

And I think also it probably gave Atlanta that boost that Birmingham – and even some of the others, Charlotte for a long time and Jacksonville – didn't have, because they had the major league teams. And you have to give Sanders a lot of credit for that, because he personally brought a couple of those teams in. And he and Ivan Allen working together got that stadium built in something like a year, didn't they? You were there, I'm sure.

SHORT: Yeah.

GRIMES: And that was really one of the miracles of Georgia. It also was the period when the major hotels all came to Atlanta: the Hyatt-Regency, the Marriott, later the Peachtree Plaza, or whatever it was, Westin. And I think Sanders cleared the way for a lot of that by convincing people outside of Georgia that we were calm. I don't know that we were all that calm or not. But in any case, that all came about. McGill died in, what, 1969 or '70. But I think his influence and Patterson's influence helped keep Atlanta – gave it an image, in any case. And that's very important, of course. And I think we had an image, Atlanta and Georgia did, that was much better than the other states, and has still created the atmosphere that enabled us to finally get the Olympics and so forth.

SHORT: Let's talk about that period for a moment. Preceding Sanders as governor was Ernest Vandiver, who most people believe was one of the most courageous governors we ever had because of the circumstances he faced during his administration. What did you think about that period?

GRIMES: Well, I think he felt like he had to do what he did, which was allow integration here at the university and integration in general. When we did this article on

Sanders for *Georgia Trend* years later, Vandiver wrote me a letter and was upset, that he felt like he should have gotten more credit, because he allowed the integration and so forth. But I think it was reluctant. And in his campaign for governor, he vowed never to allow any kind of integration, which I think he carried every county but three. So apparently the right way. But I felt like Sanders did more than Vandiver overall, because he came in and sort of – I can't remember all the things he did. Of course, he was a great education governor. I haven't brushed up on some of that, but I know he did a lot of things. And Vandiver did, he had a tough time and allowed the integration of the university, two or three people. He was a good governor.

Most of our really great governors never were elected to anything else. I thought Ellis Arnall was a very progressive governor. Never was elected again. Sanders never was elected to anything again. And Vandiver was never elected to anything again. So we don't reward our real progressive officials too well.

SHORT: Do you remember that race in 1966 when Governor Arnall ran against a group of people which included Lester Maddox? And even Bo Callaway from down in your way was the Republican.

GRIMES: Yeah.

SHORT: What do you remember about that race?

GRIMES: Well, quite a bit. I wrote a little book about it. I was editor of the *Inquirer* then and was a pretty good acquaintance of Bo Callaway. He had become the first Republican congressman two years earlier. And that was the district that Columbus was in. And, of course, Pine Mountain was very near Columbus, and we would go over there a lot. And Callaway today will admit that he ran a very bad campaign that he should have won. What happened was, though, there were four major candidates running for the Democratic nomination. Maybe five, I guess you could say. And Maddox only got something like 19 percent of the vote, but that was enough to get him into a runoff with Arnall, who got about 28 percent. And Garland Byrd was in that race, and Jimmy Carter, who came in third, and James Gray, who was sort of the establishment candidate. So there were five major candidates, yeah. And then Arnall beat Maddox in the runoff. Of course, there were a lot of rumors that the Republicans voted for Maddox because they thought he'd be easier to beat. But I don't think that was true. If you analyze the vote in the primary and the general election, the candidates that went heavily for Arnall in the runoff were the same ones that went heavily for Callaway in the general election. So I don't think there was quite as much so-called crossover voting as people thought.

As you recall, Callaway finished slightly ahead of Maddox in the general election,

about 3,000 votes, but he didn't get a majority. And at that time, the General Assembly selected the governor from the top two. And, of course, the General Assembly was heavily Democratic still and selected Maddox over Callaway. And I think that delayed the Republican domination of Georgia politics for several years, because Callaway was the last Republican to get more votes in the general election than the Democrat until Perdue in 2002.

SHORT: Mm-hm. The demise of the county unit system in Georgia, which a lot of people nowadays don't understand, don't you think opened the door to better government in the state?

GRIMES: Oh, absolutely. I was a strong opponent of the county unit system when I was at Georgia. Some of my editorials as editor of the *Red and Black* were against the county unit system, because it just seemed to me it wasn't fair. And, of course, we had a lot of cases where – well, it wasn't so much that we had a lot of cases where the person who got the fewest votes won, although that did happen in 1946 when Gene Talmadge got fewer votes than the guy he was running against.

SHORT: Jimmy Carmichael.

GRIMES: Jimmy Carmichael. But most of the time it was because the county unit system gave people who only got 35, 40 percent of the vote, they were the winners. I think that was the case with Marvin Griffin when he ran. Because that only applied to Democratic primaries, the county unit system did. Talmadge twice tried to get that put into the constitution to apply to the general election, and it was defeated, actually, in Georgia. And, of course, while it cleared the way for Sanders to win, actually, he would have won anyway. He carried the county unit system. Maddox would have won heavily had it been on the county unit basis in 1966. But anyway, he went on to become a fairly acceptable governor, I guess. And Bo Callaway finally moved to Colorado, and then came back. And I see him quite often now at Callaway Gardens. He lives there now.

SHORT: In Chipley.

GRIMES: Well, Pine Mountain they call it now.

SHORT: Chipley.

GRIMES: Yeah.

SHORT: Still Chipley to me.

GRIMES: Yeah. I wish they hadn't changed the name, because it's confusing with Pine Mountain Valley, not to mention the mountain. And some places around there are still called Chipley.

SHORT: I'd like to ask you this question.

GRIMES: All right.

SHORT: Do you think there's more or less interest in today's newspapers in investigative reporting?

GRIMES: Well, I haven't noticed that there is. Atlanta still does a lot. Columbus does some. The paper up here in Jefferson does quite a bit. I think it's difficult for small papers to devote the resources and so forth, depending on what the investigation is. I think if we can report the news, which is what we try to do, and report what's going on, sometimes that almost feels like investigative reporting. We had a situation in Greenville, Georgia, recently in which the guy elected mayor was not living there. And we brought that out and took a picture of this mobile home that he had as his

address, which was obviously abandoned. And I don't know – they finally put a judge in charge of the county – of the town. And he's mayor now, and he claims he lives there. But he really, I think, doesn't. That was not really investigative reporting. What we do is try to bring out what's happening. And we have a little paper in Talbot County, which is certainly one of the smallest counties in Georgia. You remember Talbot County, the Henry Jurden – Jordan and persons.

SHORT: Yeah.

GRIMES: They were from Talbot County. And there was another prominent family. And the Strausses were from there, who founded Macy's department store. And they have just, in this election, elected the first black sheriff and the first black probate judge in Talbot County, even though it's about 80 percent black. And so coming into this year, we'll have a black judge and a black sheriff for the first time in Talbot County.

SHORT: Speaking of that, how did you treat the civil rights movement from a news standpoint in your newspapers?

GRIMES: Well, in Columbus, we had a real strong family ownership, the

Chapmans and the Ashworths, during all the years I worked at the Columbus paper. It was later sold to Knight Ridder. I think they had real good newspapers because they wanted real good newspapers. But I would have to say we mainly covered it by ignoring it. During the 1960s, we did not play up civil rights commotions around. And we were kind of like the eye of the storm. Not only Georgia, but Columbus, in particular, to my knowledge never had a riot, never had any problems. And I don't think that it was strictly because of the newspapers, but we didn't have many problems. They integrated the schools. In fact, my children were in the first wave of integrated schools in Columbus. And I think Columbus probably has more problems now than it did then. But we did not play it up big. And I'll never forget the first time a black couple brought in an engagement and wanted to run it, a wedding. The publisher was really against it. So we finally ran it, but we didn't run it in the society section. We ran it back in the grocery section, I think, and they got real upset. I don't know. He was an old-time Southern publisher. And we forget how – well, not very easily. But most of the people were, of course, strongly segregationist. We didn't run high school sports on blacks. And we've all changed. Now we can't hardly get any whites in.

SHORT: What happened, do you think, that changed that attitude?

GRIMES: I don't know. I don't know that the attitude changed so much as the

circumstances had to, both from a business standpoint and a rights standpoint, I guess, and a readership standpoint. We forget. We say newspapers are in dire circumstances today, and to some extent they are. But we never had blanket readership, because the blacks didn't read the newspapers down in the 50s and the 60s. And that was true for Atlanta and Columbus. Even though they were a huge – I'd say a third of the population, we didn't run any news that appealed to them. We didn't, like I say, run the sports. The only thing we ran about blacks, frankly, was crime. Maybe church news, obituaries, which were carefully segregated. But it was 40 years ago. We forget how much that has changed. But today, I think our weekly newspapers run more about blacks in those counties than we do about whites, including social events and so forth and pictures. And they got mad with us, one guy, the county commissioner, because we didn't run a banner story about Obama winning the presidency. But we don't run – we didn't run one when Bush won. In fact, I don't think we even ran one when Roosevelt one, although he lived there in Meriwether County, so to speak. That's just not what weekly newspapers do. I mean, we ran how it ran in Meriwether County, Obama and McCain. Interestingly, Obama carried Meriwether County, slightly. And going back, I think, perhaps the Roosevelt influence is still strong in Meriwether County. Democrats have remained pretty dominant there.

**SHORT:** Did you visit any with President Roosevelt when he came to Warm

Springs?

GRIMES: No. No, I was just a child then. But I was always sort of a Roosevelt historian, I guess you'd say. And I've always been proud of the fact that we have a paper there and promote Warm Springs and promote the historic role that Warm Springs played. Just a few weeks ago, I carried a friend of mine out on Dowdell's Knob there in Meriwether County, which is where Roosevelt looked out over Pine Mountain Valley and where he went the day before he died to look out over the valley. And the grill that he used is still there. And there's a statue there of him now that was dedicated just last year, if you haven't seen it, that overlooks the valley.

SHORT: Mm-hm. Let's talk a minute about party politics in Georgia. How long do you think the Republican Party will be able to continue its dominance in the state of Georgia?

GRIMES: Well, I don't know. I think it still depends a lot on individuals. Right now, if you want to win an office in Georgia, in a lot of places you figure you've got to run as a Republican. For many years we know that it was true that if people wanted to win an office, they ran as a Democrat, no matter how they felt at the national level or at the state level. And at the state level, issues didn't break down along party

lines. I don't know if they do now. Well, they make them. As I said, I was a strong supporter of the two-party system. But I'm not sure now that one-party politics doesn't work better, because you don't have these conflicts develop as easily over issues that really aren't issues, but become party issues. And I think the Republicans have gotten to squabbling among themselves about who's going to run next year. So I don't know. We may develop a real two-party system. We've sort of gotten away from – we almost went back to the one-party system with Republicans being the party. Last time what did Perdue get? About 60 percent, 65 percent of the vote. And mainly because blacks still vote heavily Democratic, and I think they will continue to. I assume Hispanics will continue to vote Democratic.

Counties change so drastically. Rockdale County, which, like I said, we owned the newspaper there, for 17 years operated it. It has changed from being solidly Democratic, when we bought the newspaper, to solidly Republican, and it's almost back again to being Democratic, because blacks, now, make up something like almost 50 percent of the population. And when I had the newspaper there, it was about 90 percent white. And that does affect politics. We can't get away from the fact that they're a very strong influence on politics.

**SHORT:** Many disenchanted Democrats feel the Georgia is too urban and too dependent on minorities and labor. Do you think that's true?

GRIMES: Well, yeah. I think that that's why the Democrats need to nominate somebody from below Macon for governor who can help them pull rural votes. Because they're going to get the urban vote, now, around Atlanta, and that's a heavy vote. But if you looked at the last election last month, or November, it's rural counties below Macon and up in the mountains that vote so heavily Republican. And so I think they've got to get somebody who can pull votes down in the southern part of the state, because we're still a very – we're not only party line voters; we're regional – it's always been a very regional basis for the vote. And I think a guy like Dubose Porter might be able to win a statewide race if he ever runs.

SHORT: Getting back to newspapering, what effect has television had on the newspapers? And the Internet, has that affected circulation?

GRIMES: Well, yeah, obviously. I mean, Atlanta's pulled back. Columbus was pulled back. You can't even get an Atlanta paper now in Harris County, down there where I spend a lot of time. And I actually hate starting the day without an Atlanta paper, although sometimes I get upset at various things. About the way they cover news, not their positions, and about the way they – I feel that, obviously, newspapers face a challenge to their very existence right now. Actually, when I got out of college, people

were saying that, because television had just begun carrying news. And they said, “Well, this is going to mean the end of newspapers.” But it wasn’t. It was the beginning, as I said, of the golden age. And right now, young people don’t read newspapers. My children don’t read newspapers, and they were raised in the business. So I don’t know where we’re heading in the newspaper business. I’ve been in large dailies, fairly large, small dailies and in weeklies. I think weeklies still have a pretty good niche. And I think that’s the key for newspapers, is to maintain a niche in the market for media, just as radio has managed to do, and as a lot of magazines have managed to do. I think newspapers used to feel like they had to be the dominant media, that everybody had to take it. And that’s not going to happen anymore. But what they’ve got to do is aim at the market they can serve and the role they can fill and can sell advertisers on. I mean, advertizing still pays the way for all these media.

But the Columbus papers and the Atlanta papers did something last week that I thought was really dumb, and that was increase their price. We don’t get much money out of circulation in the newspaper business. What we really want is circulation. Well, when you go up a quarter from 50 cents, as Columbus did, that’s a 50 percent increase. It may not seem like much, but, I mean, it makes a difference. I know when sometimes I’m trying to buy a paper on a rack, I might not have but two quarters or three quarters when it’s a dollar. Back in the old days, of course, when I was first coming along, like I said, newspapers were a nickel or a dime, because we were a mass media. We’ve got to

realize there's other media out there. Television, Internet, they are considered free by most people. So I think we've got to hold down our costs. The newspapers got accustomed to such high profit margins. These groups, they had these plans, and they did make way too high of profit margins.

If you pick up your Sunday *Journal Constitution*, though, if you can pick it up, it's still hard to pick up, because it carries so many inserts. The same way is true of Athens and lots of other papers. Even a little paper like our *Manchester Star-Mercury* averages about six inserts a week, and that's in a county that hardly has any stores in it. It really doesn't. So newspapers still have a function, but it's to carry inserts and hopefully get a few other ads, and tell people we still are the only medium that tells people who got born, who died, who won the homecoming queen crown, who won the local football game and who scored the winning touchdown. So from birth to death, it's the little incidents that weekly newspapers can still carry, and a lot of dailies. But we've got to get away from charging too much, I think, to remain a mass media. And there's just a lot of competition out there, and we've got to try to make sure we're one of the competitors, the newspaper business.

SHORT: Can you see any way to encourage young people to read newspapers more?

GRIMES: Well, I guess – as I said, I get discouraged watching my own children and grandchildren. And I think they do look at sports still. Sports is one thing they seem to still go to the newspaper for. But you don't get that much sports off television. Even when it carries a game, you don't know exactly what happens. You don't know who the leading ground-gainer was. I was watching the Tech-Georgia game last night in basketball, but I still didn't know who the leading scorer was or anything about – if you want to know the details, you've got to look in the newspaper the next day.

And I know my daughters, they look for stuff about their children. If there's something about their children, it's still real important. My grandson is a pitcher for the Norcross High team. And I used to drive over to Winder in the mornings to pick up a Gwinnett paper to see what they had about the games he pitched. And I'm sure that people still do look for items in the newspaper about events they were involved with. It's hard to get that kind of stuff off the Internet or off television. So this probably isn't what they teach in journalism college, but that is what we've got to become. And we can also – we still cover all the county commission meetings, the school board meetings that nobody else is at. And we've just got to make that kind of news more relevant to the reader on what the county commission is doing, because you can sit through a long session and not get much.

So I'm optimistic a little bit that we can continue being a niche provider of information. But can we keep selling ads to the people? That's a big issue. Because

our main advertisers through the years as newspapers were grocery stores, which we no longer have; retail stores, which are fading out; and automobile dealers, which had a terrible year, and real estate. All four of those areas are hurting right now. Walmart kind of killed the retail business, because they don't advertise much. And they showed retailers they didn't have to advertise to be successful. And so about all retailers run now are inserts. We'd come to rely a lot on auto dealers. They were kind of the new supermarkets. And then last year they had a terrible year. And I just don't know. If they come back, maybe it'll help us.

SHORT: You mentioned magazines, which brings up the *Georgia Trend*.

GRIMES: Yeah.

SHORT: Tell us about the *Georgia Trend*.

GRIMES: Well, after I got out of *Opelika-Auburn News*, as I said, we mainly ran these suburban dailies during the 1980s. And then in 1991 – I'd always really loved magazines. As I said, when I was a kid, buying comic books and science fiction magazines is what really got me interested in writing. And so I'd always thought, "If I could ever get a magazine, that'd be great." And *Georgia Trend*, when it first started,

was started by Gene Patterson when he worked on the *St. Petersburg Times*. And they had a *Florida Trend*, and it was a business and political magazine. Well, the recession of the early 90s was very hard on print media. I was reading an article yesterday which finally compared the recessions of the post-war era. And the one in the early 90s was pretty bad. I don't think a lot of folks realized how bad it was. We did in the newspaper business. Because, I know in Rockdale County, we had never had a year in which we did not do more business than we'd done the year before until 1990. And the magazine trade got hit very by it, the *Atlanta* magazine, *Georgia Trend*.

Anyway, St. Pete decided to sell its magazines. So we got *Georgia Trend* in a pretty good deal. But, I mean, it was like losing about a million dollars a year, so you had to kind of act fast. But it was in this tower in downtown Atlanta. It was great, the Atlanta Gaslight Tower at Peachtree Center. We had an office up there on the top floor, and you could almost reach out and touch the blue dome there on the Hyatt Regency. And I really enjoyed – it was the highlight of my career, almost, was running *Georgia Trend*. And we later moved it – well, we moved out to Norcross to an office, but we also had an office here, which is where we actually put it out. It was in Athens, because I lived here and I didn't want to move. So we had an Atlanta office, but we actually put *Georgia Trend* out here in Athens. And I thought it was a great opportunity to tell stories about Georgia that I had not been – I did have another magazine, *Georgia Journal*, it was called. You may remember. And it focused on tourism and gardens and

towns. And it was very popular with some people, but not enough. And you couldn't get ads for it. But you could sell ads in *Georgia Trend*, because it went to – we mailed it to everybody in tourism and government and CEOs and so forth. If they just asked for it, they got it. So that was the way you had circulation. And you had about 50,000 of the key people. And it had a lot of features folks still like, like Top 100 and the Georgian of the Year.

So it was a lot of fun. And I got Bill Shipp to come over from *Atlanta* magazine and write a column. Bill was never involved in production, but he did write a column every week. And we had some terrific photographers, which I think were very important. But I sort of burned out, because I wanted the magazine to be a certain way. And so I think I kind of burned out trying to do much on it, writing every headline, every cutline. But my children worked with me on it, two of them did, and what a great experience. And I thought they wrote some great stories, like I said, the one on Carl Sanders. And I remember one article Jim Minter wrote for us called "Is Henry County the Next Gwinnett?" And actually, that was in 1992, and it did become the next Gwinnett, almost. Not quite. I think it's on its way to becoming what Gwinnett is becoming now. And we did an article on Vandiver later on and his role, which was very important. He was still bitter with Carter for not appointing him to the Senate when Russell died. And I did a series on Bo Callaway and how he ran for governor, his life, both in tourism and in politics, which I've got a little booklet of I'd like to give you.

But, in any case, we managed to write it up. I mean, it became a strong advertising medium during the 90s as the economy improved. And then, after we sold *Georgia Trend* back to the people we'd sold our south metro Atlanta papers to, Neil Young and Tom Cousins, 10 years ago, 1999. I've got these little weeklies down around there where Charlotte, my wife, and I had grown up. And that's what we've done for 10 years, and it's been sort of a tough road.

SHORT: I imagine you stay pretty busy with that number of weekly newspapers.

GRIMES: Well, not real busy. Because I'm here. I'm in Athens. I live in Athens, and they're all 140 miles away. So you don't have to be quite as involved, but I'm pretty involved with them.

SHORT: Well, you've certainly had a brilliant career. You've also introduced some people into journalism, Lewis Grizzard.

GRIMES: Yeah.

SHORT: Tell us about Lewis.

GRIMES: Well, Lewis was a sports writer on the *Athens Banner-Herald* when a couple of guys and I got this idea to start a paper here in Athens back in 1965. Glenn Vaughn and Claude Williams were the main – well, they turned out to be the main people. But I went to Claude, who had a little weekly here, and asked him about what he thought about turning it into a daily and challenging the *Banner-Herald*, which at that time was a fairly weak newspaper. And we knew it was going to be sold, because the person who owned it had died and it was in his estate and had to be sold by the end of the year, in 1965. And about the only thing I did for that paper, except kind of give them the idea – I was still in Columbus at that time. I was editor of the paper in Columbus – was hire the sports editor of the *Banner-Herald*, which was a guy named Wade Saye. So we felt like, “Hey, if we have a really good sports editor and section. That will give us a start.” I think Wade was making like 60 dollars a week, and so we offered him 70. He said he’d come if he could bring this intern he had, and that was Lewis Grizzard. So that’s how Lewis came to the *Athens Daily News*. And in his book, *If I Ever Get Back to Georgia*, he recounts his experiences on the *Daily News*, which he remembered very fondly, in particular Glenn Vaughn, who came up and was the publisher. Glenn was in Columbus with me at that time. If I decided I couldn’t come, he came.

SHORT: Rheta Grimsley Johnson.

GRIMES: Yeah. I remember Rheta when she was still here writing for the *Journal-Constitution*. She worked for the *Opelika-Auburn News* while she was a student at Auburn. Met her husband there. He was working as an assistant sports editor, Johnson. And Rheta was a great columnist, even when she was very young, and went on to become a – she's still a columnist for Scripps Howard, I believe.

SHORT: Mm-hm. Yes, she is.

GRIMES: But I have not seen Rheta in several years.

SHORT: If someone asked you for suggestions for a young journalist who is just beginning a career, what would you tell them?

GRIMES: Well, I don't know. I might tell them to try to get into the electronic media some way. Because it's a hard – well, I won't say it's a hard job. It's difficult in a way, although I feel very fortunate to have been in a position in the media for so many years. There's no heavy lifting, as we say. And you usually get to stay out of the hot and cold, unless you get sent to one of these foreign assignments. But it can be long hours. It kind of depends on the individual. I've had people who worked 12 hours a day and others that worked four or five and do the same amount of work. Some people

just get married to the job and like going there. I think newspapers, as I said, have a niche role to play. There's also magazines, which most newspapers are now putting out magazines. It's amazing to me how many magazines they're selling, have sprung up in the last few years. That was a lot when I was in the magazine business back in the 90s. But Mark Smith, who used to be here in Athens as a publisher and worked for Morris for many years, his father, his family owned the paper in Eatonton. And Mark took it over when he retired from Morris and has done a great job of expanding it into the Lake Oconee community. And he puts out two or three magazines and puts them in there. He has a real estate health magazine and then a regular magazine. And the Newnan paper puts out two magazines, I think, and Columbus puts one out. It's real funny. Everybody puts one out now except Atlanta, which started the newspaper magazine business many years ago.

I was looking at these questions you sent me about great experiences, achievements, disappointments – I guess I'm mainly a news journalist, I guess you'd say, and so I enjoy that part of it. But my greatest achievement undoubtedly was in Opelika, where we increased everything so much. I think there was a lot of luck involved. By going into Auburn, we became a border-based paper. And then somebody opened a big shopping mall between Opelika and Auburn, and that always helps when you're a publisher. And, of course, I had two great circulation people. One of them was a real good friend of Rheta Grimsley Johnson, in fact. They managed to get our circulation

just expanded all of a sudden – and back in those days you could do that – into the Valley and into the surrounding area.

And I think my greatest disappointment is that I haven't been able to develop a successor. I have three children, two of whom have worked in the business. But I don't know whether they're going to be able to be a successor, and I haven't been able to find any people that work for me. I think you need a good business type. And most of the successful papers of other companies have had that. I've never had a really great business type. And I'm sure that's hurt our company. We're probably poorer today because of it. But newspapers took a real hit during the past year, as did a lot of companies. And we've just got to hope for the whole nation and world's sake that 2009 is going to be a better year some ways. And I'm 78 years old. As I said, I was born just a few months after the Great Depression started. Looks like I'll be going out that way.

SHORT: Well, let's hope not. Millard Grimes, a great journalist, a great Georgian, I'd like to thank you on behalf of the Richard Russell Library, the University of Georgia and myself for being with us today.

GRIMES: Well, thank you, Bob. And I really enjoyed it. And I appreciate you asking me.

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**University of Georgia  
Millard Grimes**

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