Everett Ray Call interviews

Section 2, Pages 31 - 60

Three interviews with former Emporia Gazette editor Everett Ray Call conducted by Emporia State University professor Loren E. Pennington. The first interview addresses Call's boyhood days in Sedan, Kansas, his early days as a newspaper photographer, and his commentary on William Allen White. The second interview continues Call's comments on William Allen White and follows with his commentary and analysis of the Emporia Gazette under William Lindsay White as editor and publisher. The third interview covers events of his own career with the Gazette, including famous murder cases, local, state, and national politics, and the newspaper's relations with Emporia State University and its presidents and with the Emporia Chamber of Commerce.

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Allen White had been a very famous man. The *Emporia Gazette* was probably considered the epitome of the small-town, or the small-city newspaper.

RC: Yes.

LP: How much did that reputation weigh on your thinking when you started working with the *Gazette*?

RC: Not at all. Not at all. I agree that the reputation was important, and as I became aware of the world and the newspaper business, I realized what a help it was. And I eventually began to go to some national conventions and regional conventions, and always, the *Emporia Gazette*, William Allen White's paper.

LP: In other words, it assisted you?

RC: Yes, right. That's right. [Helen says her mother told her that William Allen White once stayed in their house when he was running for governor, which makes sense because her father was active in the Republican Party and ran for Congress during the Depression.]

LP: The reputation of the *Gazette* and of William Allen White assisted you personally in your career.

RC: I'm sad to say over my career, that faded, and by the time I retired, I would go to a convention and the young men and women wouldn't have any idea who William Allen White was. The old-timers still knew, but the young people didn't.

LP: His reputation has not worn well over the years?

RC: He's faded. I think his reputation has faded through the years.

LP: Did this give you any sense of pride and accomplishment that you worked for this newspaper?

RC: Absolutely. Again, it was an education, and as I became aware of things, aware of the *Gazette's* role in American, even world, history, then I realized this is quite a privilege. And I really became proud and am proud of the *Emporia Gazette*, but when I first started, I was just a struggling young bridegroom from Sedan, Kansas.

LP: When you came to Emporia after your stint in the Army, did the *Emporia Gazette* and William Allen White—were they famous in your mind when you started?

RC: Not at all. I didn't even remember him, Loren. I'm sure I must have read the Mary White editorial when I was growing up, but it didn't stick.

LP: Yes, because he was in all the literature books and this sort of thing.

RC: Yes, the Mary White editorial.

LP: The Mary White thing.

RC: Which is one of the great pieces of American writing, I think. . . . And it was a lot of fun to be around a newspaper office and to develop pictures of fires and car wrecks and to write about politics. And it was only gradually that I had been here awhile and as I continued to work, I really became aware of how lucky I was.

LP: When I told my mother that I was moving to Emporia State University, the first thing she said was, "You're going where William Allen White was." I mean, William Allen White meant a good deal to her.

RC: And I was just rereading his autobiography, and he was a marvelous guy. He did wonderful things. Of course his son—and we'll talk about his son later—but I was, I really was privileged to work here.

LP: Well, let's talk about William Allen White. Let me start with this kind of general question, and I don't know exactly how to phrase it. What was your thought about the

quality of the *Gazette* coming from William Allen White? What did you think of this newspaper when you were working there your first, oh, months or years?

RC: Again, I really wasn't aware of William Allen White early on. I was aware of the surroundings, of the people I was working with, and certainly of his son, William Lindsay White.

LP: You're telling me it took you a while to get acquainted with William Allen White?

RC: Yes, exactly.

LP: Do you think you're pretty well acquainted with him now?

RC: I think so.

LP: I mean, you never knew him personally. But you know of him.

RC: No, but I've read enough and heard enough from the family and from the community that I'm aware of his role in history. And as I say, it's a matter of pride.

LP: Do you feel that you know him?

RC: No, but I as I say, there are some things that I can relate to. He was a small town Kansas boy, and he grew up in a fairly simple town. But he had quite a family. He was the son of a doctor and so on. So he was a remarkable man.

LP: Can you tell me some of things that come to your mind when you think "William Allen White" today?

RC: Okay. Before we started this project, you told me to try to pick my memory and to think back of the legends or the stories I've heard about William Allen White. Of course one thing that made me aware of him particularly as I made mistakes as an editor, was well, if William Allen White were alive, this wouldn't happen. I have heard that many, many times.

LP: You've been compared to William Allen White and not favorably.

RC: Yes; "If he were alive today, the *Gazette* blah, blah, blah. He's turning over in his grave." I have heard that. I literally have heard that. But my image of him as a person—let me back up; I would say my image of him as an editor, that image has come from what I've read, from his autobiography, from what I've learned from countless sources.

LP: You mean from countless personal sources, by talking to people.

RC: Whitley Austin, Rolla Clymer. Whitley Austin was editor of the *Salina Journal*. Even old Oscar Stauffer of the Stauffer publications, I've talked to him and heard stories by him. I remember that John McCormally had memories of him [William Allen White].

LP: Now these are all outstanding editors in Kansas journalism.

RC: Stuart Aubrey was another one. Rolla Clymer.

LP: And you have talked at length with all there people?

RC: Well, not at length, but you know, at conventions, and journalists are great drinkers, and after the program, you go to a room and gather around and have a bar open and listen to stories from the old-timers. But my memories of his personal life have come mainly from things I've heard from W. L. White, his son, and Kathrine White, from Emporia people, from movies. The scene, for example, in the movie *Mary White* of the Ku Klux Klan parade in Emporia and his fight with the Klan. These personal memories have really come from different sources, from people I've talked to in the business and in Emporia. We didn't talk about what kind of stories we wanted to reminisce about, but I'm going to just mention three or four of them, and you tell me what you'd like to talk about. The one about William Allen White and liquor in the *Gazette*.

LP: Let's talk about William Allen White and liquor, because he had a reputation for being a big teetotaler.

RC: This is absolutely right, and I just reviewed in his book, I just reread the piece about the night when he became a teetotaler, when he swore off, as they say. He was a college student, and he had gone up to Lawrence for a wedding in a prominent Jewish family, and he described the evening as it went along, and they were being served an effervescent drink, bubbly drink, which he thought was ginger ale or soda water or something. And he describes how his behavior changed at the evening went on. He was with his close pal Vernon Kellogg, who was the son of Lyman B. Kellogg, the former president of Emporia State. They were inseparable for years and years and years, very, very close friends. But anyway, they were both drinking this, what they thought was sarsaparilla, and their behavior became more outrageous, and they began singing and they began dancing with the Jewish mother. And William Allen White decided he wanted to play the piano, and they had to dissuade him from doing that. Well, as you probably have guessed, they weren't drinking ginger ale. They were drinking champagne, and they got just blind drunk and just made utter fools of themselves. Of course, the morning after, he felt terrible and was horribly embarrassed, and became a teetotaler. I mean he wasn't mean about it, but he didn't care to drink and didn't have it easily available around the house. All right, so we get to the story. This is a story about, and I've been told this, and I think maybe you've heard it, it was about a linotype operator at the *Gazette* who somehow got his hand caught in the mechanism of a linotype machine, these big, mechanical monsters that set type. And they have great gears and things. Anyway, the linotype operator got his hand caught in a linotype machine and was pretty badly injured, bleeding and in

pretty great pain. And they didn't, of course, in those days, have instantaneous ambulances, so they sent out for—generally ambulances came from funeral homes; I don't know if that was the case here. But anyway, they sent out for an ambulance, and meanwhile, this guy was in great pain. Well, William Allen White would not have liquor around the *Gazette*. There was a hard and fast rule about it, but people being people—there was an old pressman by the name of Sam Gage. I say pressman, I think he worked in the press room, but an employee named Sam Gage, who always had a pint of whiskey down in the basement, and everyone assumed that William Allen White was ignorant of this. But as this man was really writhing in agony and screaming in pain, the story is told that William Allen White said to Sam, "Sam, go get your bottle of whiskey and let's see if we can't help ease the pain for this man." And I've heard that story two or three times, so I think it's probably true. We can talk about the bond scandal or Cary Grant.

LP: This is the famous Finney Bond Scandal.

RC: The famous Finney Bond Scandal. This is a scandal involving an Emporia banker and his son, and books have been written about it, so I won't dwell on it. But the banker and his son were caught stealing money from the State of Kansas by forging bonds and selling them to the state. And they got caught. And it was during the Depression, and the state, the attitude in the state was one of utter fury. People were just—the Finneys lived well, and they were rich people, and here they were stealing from the poor school districts of Kansas. And there was just a press frenzy about it, we would say.

LP: And of course Kansas had a very militant governor at that point by the name of Alf Landon.

RC: Alf Landon.

LP: Who was a big friend of William Allen White, supposedly.

RC: Yes, so they assumed. One of William Allen White's close friends in Emporia was W. W. Finney. W.W. Finney, the father. And the son, whose name escapes me [it was Ronald Finney—ed.] was a friend of W. L. White. The Finneys were great friends of the Whites. And in fact, [W. W. Finney] was associated in politics and in town events with William Allen White. They were allies in a lot of things. And as this fury about the bond scandal grew, people began to pay some attention to William Allen White. Well, did he have a role in this? You know, he's a prominent rich man, they thought.

LP: And certainly Emporia's most prominent citizen, and probably before this, best liked.

RC: Yes. And did have a hand in this? Was he one of them who had stolen?

LP: It was almost like your father had been accused.

RC: Oh, yes. There was just a close association. The guy investigating it was from Emporia, Clarence Beck. So anyway, when this really peaked, when things were at their very worst, William Allen White was in Europe on tour. And the talk I remember was from Kathrine White, William Lindsay White's wife, the daughter-in-law of William Allen White, and of her husband, William Lindsay White. And the story they told is that the family of William Allen White and several close friends in Emporia really began to worry about William Allen White being arrested and put on trial for this. And so they came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to urge William Allen White to stay over in Europe.

LP: He was in Europe when this broke?

RC: He was in Europe. For him to stay in Europe until this died down. And then if

things really were terrible, he could stay in Switzerland or something, I don't know. They really talked about this.

LP: They really thought there was a possibility of his arrest?

RC: That's what they said. I've heard this from Mrs. White and from him [W.L. White]. And you know, they had a group of influential friends here in Emporia, and they talked about this. And at one point, they, whether it was by telegram, I don't know how, but they urged, I think by telegram, they urged William Allen White to stay put over there, and not come back to Kansas and get involved in this scandal because there was a chance he might be arrested as a co-conspirator. Well, of course William Allen White would have none of it, and the first thing he did was pack up and come home and stand by Finney as best he could. And he was never accused, and it all turned out well. But there was serious thought of having him become a fugitive in Switzerland, I think, at one point. So that's the Finney Bond Scandal story. Another amusing story involves Cary Grant. Do you know the story I'm talking about?

LP: No, I don't. Are you talking about Cary Grant the movie star?

RC: That's right. And this involved a very famous person of the time. I'm thinking in the Thirties. But her name was, I believe, was Belle [Livingston]. The stories I remember, she was an orphan who was taken up by a preacher and his family in Americus. But she was something of a wild child. She ran away with a no-good and finally ended up in New York City where she was an early-day Texas Guinan, that is, a night club personality.

LP: Entertainer.

RC: Entertainer and a kept woman of some notoriety. And she even became an international figure. She went to Europe and attracted a great deal of attention. She was an international personality.

LP: Are we speaking of Belle or Texas?

RC: Belle.

LP: You're just comparing her to Texas Guinan.

RC: Texas Guinan.

LP: Who was a well-known saloon keeper.

RC: Saloon keeper. Exactly. In New York City. And that's the way Belle started out earlier. But anyway, she became an international personality. Well, at one point, she decided she was going to California, to Hollywood. And on her way, the press followed her, [as they do with] these girls in our time, Paris Hilton and so on. She attracted a lot of attention from the press. But she decided she was going to go to Hollywood. She was going to take the train out, and on the way, she was going to stop in Emporia to see her "Old friend," William Allen White. Well, of course, I don't think he even knew her, but she was doing this to attract attention. So a lot of attention was focused on Emporia because she was coming this way with a traveling companion. About that time, William Allen White was entertaining the governor [he was really entertaining a famous former Emporian] who was going to give a speech down in Soden's Grove, and [who was going to stay the night with the Whites]. By this time, William [Lindsay] White was grown and married, and he and his wife were here too, W. L. White and Kathrine White [the year was 1931—ed.]. And all of these forces began to come together. Belle [Livingston] was coming to Emporia to visit with William Allen White without really his knowledge or

consent; she was trying to attract attention on the same day [a famous person] was staying at the William Allen White house with his wife and was speaking at Soden's Grove. And, on that day, Kathrine and W.L. White took it upon themselves—they knew all about Belle [Livingston], and they knew she. . . .

LP: Naturally, being New Yorkers.

RC: Yes, they were New Yorkers. They had lived in New York, and in fact were part of this crowd. But they knew it would be a scandal if she came to the William Allen White house. So, they were all going to go down to the speech. And W. L. and Kathrine took the housekeeper, Bertha [Colglazier] aside and said, "Now, if this middle-aged woman comes here and tries to get into the house, you must not let her come in under any circumstances. It would be a terrible scandal." So, they went down to hear the speech. During the course of the speech, the [speaker's] wife became ill, and she decided she would go back to the William Allen White house because she wasn't feeling well. So they took her back up there, and she was met at the door by the housekeeper, who wouldn't let her in.

LP: Thinking she was Belle [Livingston].

RC: Thinking she was Belle [Livingston], this scandalous woman from New York City. Well, I guess there was quite a scene, and it all ended well. And Belle [Livingston] didn't go to the William Allen White house. But she did stay at the Broadview Hotel. And here we have documentation about her being there, stories in the *Gazette* and in history books, of her being there with her companion, her traveling companion. The traveling companion was Cary Grant, the actor. And there's a story—I swear to you there's a story about a *Gazette* reporter going over to see them. I don't think Cary Grant

was famous then, but Belle [Livingston] was, and Cary Grant came around modeling some of Belle's underwear and all kinds of outrageous behavior over at the hotel. And there's a story about this in the *Gazette* at that time. And so, I guess what I'm saying is this is how Cary Grant almost met William Allen White or something, I don't know what. But that's a true story.

[There follows a mistaken discussion as to whether Governor Henry Allen was the speaker on the above occasion and it was finally decided that he could not have been. This discussion has been omitted from the manuscript on the grounds it had nothing to do with the subject—ed.]

RC: And how about the story of Teddy Roosevelt and Estes Park? Have you had that or heard that?

LP: Let's go on with that because that would just about finish this tape.

RC: All right. As he became more prosperous, William Allen White bought a cabin in Moraine Park, which is just above Estes Park in the Rocky Mountains. And I might tell you this was in the days before air conditioning, and a lot of people with money in Kansas put cabins out in the mountains so they could get away from the terrible Kansas heat. William Allen White built a main cabin. Then he had a little cabin as a quiet place where he could go and write. And then he had a couple of guest cabins. And they were very primitive. They were not fitted with bathrooms or gas heat or anything like that. I cannot pinpoint the time, but at the time of this story, he was a friend of Teddy Roosevelt. I'm wondering if it wasn't when Teddy was putting together the Bull Moose Movement, or something like that. Anyway, he and William Allen White were by then good friends. William Allen White invited him out to use one of his cabins in Estes Park, which was

right up Teddy Roosevelt's alley. As you know, he was an outdoorsman and loved the mountains. So he agreed to come out and visit William Allen White with all of his entourage because he was caught up in international affairs, either as president or as candidate for the Bull Moose. I cannot tell you the time. Anyway, they did have a telephone at the cabin. And Teddy Roosevelt came out and sort of set up an office with his staff and communicated with people back in Washington, D.C. and New York and so on, on William Allen White's telephone. Well, the thing he didn't know was that the telephone out there was a party line, and according to the forest rangers who tell the story out there, people all over Estes Park were listening in on Teddy Roosevelt's conversations. That's my story about Teddy Roosevelt.

LP: Well, Ray, we have come just about to the end of this tape, so I think we will put off further talk until next time, because I don't think we have the time today to go on. So we'll pick on our next tape with anything more you have on William Allen White, and then we will go on to talk about William Lindsay White.

RC: Good.

LP: Okay.

RC: Okay.

[Tape ends side A, count 401. Total count of side A is 432.]

FLINT HILLS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
COVER SHEET

Interviewee: Everett Ray Call, retired Executive Editor, the *Emporia Gazette*
Date of Birth: February 5, 1932
Place of Birth: Lowe, Kansas

Date of Interview: July 10, 2007
Interviewer: Loren E. Pennington, Emporia State University Emeritus Professor of History
Interview Editor: Loren E. Pennington

Editor's Note: This is the second of what became three interviews with Mr. Call. This interview continues the interviewee's comments on William Allen White and follows with his commentary and analysis of the operation of the *Emporia Gazette* under WAW's son William Lindsay White as editor and publisher. The interview concludes with a description of *Gazette* operations under WLW's widow Kathrine. and finally under his daughter Barbara White Walker and Barbara's husband David Walker. As is the case with all three of the Call interviews, the interviewee's remarks are notable for their analytical and frank nature. In reviewing the interview Mr. Call made only small changes and additions. The additions, as well as minor corrections by the editor, are enclosed in square brackets. Taken as a whole, the manuscript closely follows the material on the tape.

Release Form: Enclosed

Interview Tapes: 2 audio cassette tapes: Tape 1 Side A to count 424 & Side B; Tape 2, Side A & Side B to count 420 (total count per side of tape is 436)
Manuscript Transcript: 56 pp.
Depositories: Kansas State Historical Society: Manuscript Transcript
Lyon County Historical Archives: Interview Tapes and Manuscript Transcript
Emporia State University Archives: Manuscript Transcript

Manuscript Contents by Pages:

This is a second interview with Mr. Everett Ray Call, former executive editor of the Emporia *Gazette*. The interviewer is Loren Pennington emeritus professor of history at Emporia State University. Today's date is July 10th, 2007, and the interview is taking place at the ESU archives in the Anderson Library on the old College of Emporia campus.

[This is tape 1, side A.]

Loren Pennington: Ray, last time we talked about the reputation and I suppose we could say the folklore of William Allen White. Your remarks were based on what you had heard during your years at the *Gazette*, even though you were never there when Mr. White was the editor. I understand that today you would like to add a couple of more remarks about William Allen White before we go on with our next subject, so I'll let you begin with that.

Ray Call: There are two or three other things I would like to add. They aren't that monumental, but a couple of them are kind of fun. The William Allen White family and the Herbert Hoover family were fairly close through the years. They spent time together and went on camping trips, things like that. One of the most amusing stories I heard was from W. L. White. And he said one time they were up in Colorado fly-fishing, and when they got to the stream, here was former President Herbert Hoover out there in a tuxedo. And they had a laugh about that and finally asked the former president why he was doing that. He said, well, the tuxedo was a long way from being worn out, and he hated to throw it away until he had got all the good out of it he could get. So that's the reason he was wearing it, and he had done this many times, apparently. That's the reason he was wearing a tuxedo to fly fish. And I think that's a story that people might enjoy.

Then, on a more serious note, when William Allen White ran for governor, W. L. White was his driver. He of course had to drive all over the state and make speeches in the various counties across Kansas. And W. L. said that a lot of people believed that his father really wasn't serious about this campaign. He campaigned against the Ku Klux Klan. He was adamant against the Klan. And a lot of people thought he was just trying to put pressure on the other candidates to make them come out against the Klan. And in the end, as I understand it, they did back away from the Klan. But the point that W. L. made was this: he said his father honestly thought he could win that race for governor. And although he was running against the Klan, he was a deadly serious candidate for governor. So there's a misconception there in some books, I think.

And finally, I'd like to point out that I was fascinated by W. L. White's, pardon me, W. A. White, William Allen White's ability to play music. Like me, he was a country, that is, a regional musician. He played pop music, but he could play by ear at a very early age, Tin Pan Alley hits, or whatever they were at that point. And he could play not only pop music, but he could play by ear the classics, Mozart and things like that. He made some money on the side by playing these dances. He said in his autobiography that he made three dollars a night playing piano for the country dances. And then because he could call a square dance, that is to tell the dancers where to move around the floor, he got an extra dollar. So he was making four dollars a night playing in dance bands, which I think was pretty good money in those days, certainly for a man, and he started when he was sixteen or so doing this, and continued on up through college. And I think the clincher for me was when he went up to KU. And he had given local recitals of classical music and had played some serious stuff in Emporia, so he decided he

would try out for the Kansas University symphony orchestra. And this is from his autobiography again. And he went in, they gave him some music, and he put it on the piano. They began to play a serious piano piece that he was familiar with, and he played his part for awhile, and then the conductor suddenly stopped the orchestra. And he went over and said, "Young man, where did you get those chords? Let me hear you play that." And William Allen White played this piece by Mozart, or whoever it might have been, and the conductor says, "Just a minute." He says, "You can't read a note of music, can you?" And William Allen White says, "No, I can't." And that was the end of his orchestral career at KU. But those two things fascinate me because I had a lot of fun and made a little money through the years playing at college dances and high school dances and even country dances. And it was fun to think back over the years, and to think I had this one thing in common with William Allen White.

LP: Now, before we leave that, I think we should mention what you played.

RC: Oh, I was a drummer through the years.

LP: So you were not exactly a pianist.

RC: No, no, I can't. I'm not a musician. I'm a drummer.

LP: Ah, there's a difference between a musician and a drummer.

RC: I think in this.

LP: As a drummer [myself], I know what you mean.

RC: In this league, not in an orchestra where they play xylophones and all those other percussion instruments. But for a country drummer, I have never claimed to be a musician. But I've had a wonderful time playing with the band. But anyway, I wanted to add those couple of things about William Allen White.

LP: I think today, Ray, we were going to talk about—what shall I call it—to compare William Allen White, or contrast William Allen White with his son, William Lindsay White. And I think you probably have some information to impart on that. Is that the route we want to go?

RC: I at least have some very strong opinions, and they're based on things I've read.

LP: Okay, let us have your opinions.

RC: Okay.

LP: And of course we should say that you knew William Lindsay white very well.

RC: Right, and I've read not only his, William Allen White's autobiography, but I've read other things about him and talked to people about him.

LP: So on William Allen White, you're based on your reading and on what you've talked to people about.

RC: Right.

LP: But William Lindsay White, you knew personally.

RC: Oh, towards the end of his life. I will talk about the earlier part of his life. I wasn't there, but I've read his biography by Jay Jernigan, and then the family, members of the family, have told me stories about him.

LP: So this is part hearsay and part direct evidence.

RC: That's right, and I'll try to make a distinction.

LP: Okay.

RC: But I think the main point I want to make is about the different philosophies regarding a newspaper. Now, I don't think either one of them sat down and said, "This is my philosophy." But we can look back and see from what they did that they had a

different outlook. William Allen White bought the *Gazette* in, what was it, 1905, wasn't it?

LP: Oh, William Allen White, in the '90s.

RC: Yes, 1890s.

LP: In the 1890s. I forget just exactly what year.

RC: But anyway, he had no money. He tells the story of getting off the train and he had 25 cents or half a dollar in his pocket. And he couldn't decide whether to walk to the *Gazette* and impress the townspeople because he was so frugal or to take a carriage to the *Gazette* and make them think he was very affluent and successful man. And he decided to take the carriage. That's a story in his autobiography, and we've all heard it.

LP: You think that's suits the character of William Allen White?

RC: From what I've heard, yes. So here he comes. He has no money. He bought the *Gazette* with borrowed money. It was not the major paper in town. So really his outlook was pretty grim.

LP: This was the Emporia *Times* [at the time], wasn't it?

RC: No, this was the *Gazette*.

LP: Oh, it was the *Gazette*.

RC: Yes. Earlier it had been other things.

LP: Okay.

RC: But at this time, it was the Emporia *Gazette*. Okay, so what he had to do was the same thing that many weekly editors did in Kansas across the last century. They were newspapermen, but also they were merchants. They were selling advertisements around town to the storekeepers and to the banks and to all the other businesses in town. So they

really had to walk a fine line. It was very difficult to run a story that would offend the leading banker in town because it would really sock it to your income.

LP: You mean some sort of an uncomplimentary story?

RC: You're right. Well, suppose the banker got picked up for DWI.

LP: Ah.

RC: Of course, they weren't driving too many cars in those days, or for drunk and disorderly, or whatever. Do we run that story back then? I can't speak to specific instances, but the point I'm trying to make is, you have to be very careful, and I've been a weekly editor, you have to be very careful about how you handle those things because if you lose a leading merchant or two, you're out of business. And so this is the thing that William Allen White had to contend with as he started at the *Gazette*. And this was the custom I think pretty much across small towns.

LP: He did take that into consideration then?

RC: Yes, that's my feeling.

LP: In fact, he took it very seriously.

RC: Yes, and to emphasize that point, one of the first things he did, and it was very successful, was to organize a street fair. And he involved all the merchants. It was a tremendous success. He had, I think, one of the first automobiles in this street fair, and all kinds of attractions. I remember he had a group of young boys dressed up as Indians. And some of them were black, and this caused a racial ruckus at the time. But in general it was a very successful fair. He made a lot of friends. He made himself known with the merchants. It brought people in from all around. So the point, in answer to your question, the point I want to make is that he was very much aware of his role as a

publisher, as someone who was using the newspaper to give the community a good name and to make everything look good in Emporia. And I cannot cite to you an example of him squelching a story about a banker. I don't mean to imply that I can. What I'm saying is I've been there as weekly editor, and I've been around the business for sixty years, and I know that this situation exists. How do you handle it when a prominent person or a prominent business is involved in bad news? And I don't say William Allen White squelched it. I'm just saying he had to contend with this, and my guess is he didn't play it up on the front page with banner headlines. I mean, [the problem] came into play. That's what I'm trying to say.

LP: To put it in modern parlance, he was concerned with the bottom line of the newspaper.

RC: Now, it seems to mean this is happening again in the United States now.

LP: It happens in relation to the *Chicago Tribune* and the Los Angeles paper, and this sort of thing.

RC: That's exactly right, and I can cite many examples. They've been written up in the New Yorker, and that is that the bottom line now has an effect on news coverage.

LP: What you print.

RC: That's exactly right. Whether it be Rupert Murdoch or the Trib papers, or whatever. And also there's a trend started, I would say twenty years ago, toward what was called, I can't remember the term, but the gist of it was community journalism. And that was nothing more that what William Allen White did when he started. That is, the newspaper gets involved in promotions. It publicizes its reporters and its columnists as if they were television personalities. And the purpose is to build up the town and to ballyhoo the

activities. I'm not saying newspapers no longer cover scandals and crime. They certainly do. But I think that there's enough evidence in what I've read about even the major newspapers that the bottom line is influencing the content of the news columns more and more.

LP: William Allen White assumes the role of booster, as it were.

RC: Boosterism is exactly the right term. That's exactly the right term. And I think we're coming. . . .

LP: He's promoting the Emporia community

RC: That's right.

LP: He's a spokesman for them.

RC: That's exactly right. Good old Emporia. And so now, let's switch to William Lindsay White.

LP: How does this square with William Lindsay White, or not square?

RC: Now I'm giving you my hypothesis here. But let's look back. William Allen White was the son of a doctor, but really his father died and they didn't have a lot of money. And so he really had to struggle, as weekly editors do, did, in the last century, that is the 1980s, and as the weekly did during my time.

LP: Ray, now you keep speaking of weekly editors. Is the *Gazette* a weekly at the time?

RC: No. The reason I mention the weekly editors is [because] I served for a few years as a weekly editor. And in a small town like Sedan, where I was, or Osawatomie, whatever, the pressure is much stronger on the editor in weeklies and small dailies. The pressure's much stronger than in Chicago or New York. If they lost one advertiser, who gives a damn?

LP: You're saying that even though the *Gazette* is not a weekly, the same sort of thing applies here in Emporia?

RC: It applies not only to small dailies, but very much to the weeklies. That's the reason I'm using that. William Allen White, as I said, his father died, and he scuffled along. His mother was teacher. And as I said, he made money one way or another playing in bands and other things. So he didn't have a lot of money, and I think he really had to make the *Gazette* a success, which may have influenced his attitude. I don't know, but that's my feeling. All right, now William Allen White's son, William L. White, grew up in much different circumstances. His father was not really rich, but he was comfortably off, I think we could say. They lived in a nice home and they traveled a lot. He [William L.] was sent to school to KU and to Harvard. And so he came from a little bit more independent background, I'd say. Okay, then he got out of school at a time when American journalism was dealing with many controversial issues and also World War II. And so he had a global outlook. He worked for national radio chains. He had a newspaper column that ran in big-city dailies. And he traveled with the likes of Edward R. Murrow and people of the Murrow crowd—in fact, he used to tell a story—let me come back to that. Let's go ahead with this. The point I'm trying to make: he was a worldly man. He saw journalism, he saw newspaper coverage, journalism, from a completely different point. It was an independent watchdog kind of thing. The books he wrote—except for the World War II books, the *Report on the Russians,* and so on—these were hard, investigative journalism. And so he had made his career before his father died, in an international, national, sophisticated, cosmopolitan setting. So he comes to Emporia. The newspaper is. . . .

LP: You say he comes to Emporia. You mean he comes back?

RC: Okay, yes, he comes back. That's how he was. . . .

LP: When does he come back?

RC: He comes back when his father dies in '44, reluctantly, but he comes back. All right, so he comes back a much different journalist than William Allen White. That's the point I want to make. They had completely different upbringings in journalism. So he comes to town, first of all with a watchdog attitude, that a newspaper has to keep an eye on the politicians, on what the county commissioners are doing, on what's going on in the state. Is there graft in the Capitol? He comes back with that attitude, with a, let's not say a chip on his shoulder but. . . .

LP: Certainly not with much humility.

RC: No, none, and we'll get into that in a minute. But not much humility. So he comes back with that attitude. He always prided himself in saying that the *Gazette* had more memberships, more members in the Chamber of Commerce, than any other business in town, and these were paid for by the *Gazette*. But he gave the Chamber of Commerce hell. I mean if the Chamber of Commerce wanted to build, if the people on Main Street wanted to build a new courthouse, for example, he resisted. If they wanted urban renewal, he said urban renewal was for building homes for the poor; we have no business taking Federal money to do that, this kind of thing. And so, he was, quite frankly, not popular with a lot of Chamber of Commerce members, and despised by some.

I have—this is a digression, but when I was at the *Gazette*, I had in my file a news release that George Pester, our Advertising Manager, had given to me. And it was a news release from Montgomery Ward, and the gist of it was Montgomery Ward had

come out with a high-quality tire that was much more efficient than any other tire ever produced in years past, blah, blah, blah. And George writes on there, "Montgomery Ward is our biggest advertiser. Shall we run this?" So I went in and gave it to Mr. White, to W. L. White. And in about ten minutes, W. L. White comes out and drops it on my desk, and W. L. has scrawled across this news release with his Scripto Automatic pencil, "Shit no!" And he underlined both words and put an exclamation point at the end of it. Now, I don't know what William Allen White would have done, but I know today, it probably would have gotten some place in the paper, or in papers like the *Gazette*. I don't know exactly what the *Gazette*'s attitude or policy is now. But this, I think, is an example of the different approaches that the two editors made.

LP: William Lindsay White is not in the business of advertising for Montgomery Ward?

RC: That's right. If you want to advertise, take out an ad. If you want news coverage, put up a new building or whatever. Make news. I thought it was a wonderful example of his attitude.

LP: He didn't plan to call Montgomery Ward tires excellent tires is a news story.

RC: No, and that was what was proposed, to put that, not on the front page, but, you know, put it in the paper because they were a big advertiser. And it was still in the file when I last was down there. I don't know if it's still there. But for starters, Loren, I think this shows the difference between the two philosophies of the two editors.

LP: Okay. One thing I'd like to ask you about is did their philosophies of running a newspaper have anything to do with, what shall I say, political opinions, political proclivities?

RC: Yes. And there you kind of caught me in my own trap here, because. . . .

LP: That's the object.

RC: I know. I see what you're doing is what I'm saying. Yes, William Lindsay White was like the colonel up in Chicago, McCormick. He was a very strong Republican. And I can give you. . . .

LP: William Lindsay White?

RC: William Lindsay White, a very strong Republican, a Nixon Republican on back through, and I'll give you an example that really sticks in my mind. It was at the time of the college protests, the Vietnam Era.

LP: Kent State riot and all of that sort of thing.

RC: That's exactly right, and that's going to be my point. I'll get to Kent State. But before Kent State, there were sit-ins in colleges and universities. They burned buildings, a lot of them. There was violence on some of the campuses, including the University of Kansas. We even had a march here in Emporia. And the Nixon Republicans, including W. L., were incensed by this disorder and by the effrontery of these students. And so one day, I'm sitting on the desk, and we get—back in those days we had an old teletype machine that would ring a bell, five bells was a bulletin and a continuous ring of the bell was a newsflash.

LP: It means pay attention.

RC: Yes, when Kennedy was shot. You went over to see what was going on. Well, we had a bulletin. Either the wire editor brought it over or I went over to look, and it was about the Kent State massacre, about the shooting of the students by the National Guard up there. And I thought, "Well, I'd better tell the boss about this." So I took it in, and I said, "Mr. White." I put it down, and I said, "The National Guard troopers have shot

rioting, or demonstrating students at Kent State University." And he says, "Good!" So he felt very strongly. As to his opinions, political opinions, getting into the news columns, again, I have to admit, sometimes they did. I remember a letter to the editor, written by a student who spouted the demonstrators' line and smeared Nixon and really stated the rebels' cause, let's say. And W. L. White ran it. It was our policy to run letters. But the headline he put over that letter was "Letter from a Creep." This wasn't an editor's note. That was the headline. "Letter from a Creep" was what he put over that.

Then another real uproar we got into was when they began to do tornado warnings, and the radio station was very much into those because it brought in a lot of listeners. And one evening, he went to concert at Emporia State, and they interrupted the concert because of a tornado warning over KVOE. And the next day, W. L. ran a front page story, right hand column, top of the front page, about the silly hysteria about tornadoes created by these radio broadcasts. This was presented as news.

During the—let's say for example, when they wanted to put the city dump south of town, down toward the airport, and they did, W. L. mounted a campaign against that. And he ran maps on the front page showing the prevailing wind in the summertime. And he ran a number of stories really against that location. Then, when we got into urban renewal, he did number of stories against urban renewal. Now, if he got a rebuttal from someone, or if somebody else brought the other information in, he would run it. But I have to admit on these occasions, he would run these opinions on the front page. Now, what do we have now on television when we watch Fox News or CNN or what's the one in the evening, the commentator?

LP: Are you talking about PBS?

RC: No, I'm talking about the cable news network.

LP: CNN.

RC: No, I think it's on Fox, the fellow who comes on and is very one-sided commentator.

LP: Not being a watcher of Fox News, I can't answer that for you. [It is Bill O'Reilly—ed.]

RC: Rush Limbaugh you've heard of?

LP: Oh, certainly.

RC: This is what we have now. This is the kind of journalism we're beginning to get now, not only on cable news, but also in some newspapers.

[Tape 1, side A, ends count 424; total count of side A is 436. This is tape 1, side B.]

LP: Ray, are you suggesting here to me that this idea of the editorial spilling into the news that we have so often, particularly in television journalism today, that William Lindsay White used the same sort of thing?

RC: Yes—not habitually, but in certain cases he did. Now this eventually became accepted, in my view, I suppose twenty years ago. And one of the advocates was Buzz Merritt, the editor of the *Wichita Eagle*. It was called something like advocacy journalism. No, I don't think Buzz Merritt was involved in that. Before Buzz Merritt, advocacy journalism started to become popular. And it was this sort of thing. It was the kind of thing that Dan Rather and the fellows on *60 Minutes*. . . .

LP: Mike Wallace.

RC: Mike Wallace is a perfect example of it, where they are covering a news story and they advocate one point. They are persecuting or prosecuting someone.

LP: Well, there's a fine line between that and investigative journalism.

RC: That's right, that's right. And I have struggled—one of our most famous journalists is David Halberstam, who became famous in the Vietnam War doing this, doing this very thing. He exposed the lies being told by the military in Vietnam. How far do we go with that? A lot of old war correspondents were dismayed by what he was doing there. And yet now it's become the norm.

LP: And now we seem to accept this provided it's an opinion being expressed that agrees with our own.

RC: Yes. I don't know where we're going. I'm dismayed.

LP: What you're saying is there is a connection between investigative journalism and advocacy journalism.

RC: That's exactly right, in my view. Now, I'm an old curmudgeon here. I also want to cite an example that you were involved in that goes back to the point I was making about W. L. White being independent of the local Chamber of Commerce and the local establishment. Back when we were neighbors, as I recall, we were talking about the unequal pay that college professors were getting at Emporia State University. You explained to me that there were many people up there doing the same kind of work with the same kind of education who were getting vastly different amounts of money depending on how well they got along with John King. Now, you may deny that or you may care to, to. . . .

LP: No comment.

RC: No comment, all right. But anyway, this is my memory. So I thought, "That's a news story." And so I called the Board of Regents and asked if we could get a list of the salaries that are paid at Emporia State University, and I was told yes. But they sure as hell didn't want to give it to me. Why would I want that? What am I looking for, on and on and on. And I think at one point, I got our—I'm not sure of this—but I think I got our attorney involved. It was Clarence Beck, who had been a past attorney general, and I think we finally pried out of the State Board of Regents a complete list of the faculty at Emporia State University and the salaries they were being paid. Well, needless to say, word of this got back to John King, who was the President of Emporia State, and I admired him very much. But this put him in a horrible situation because a) we were accusing him of being unfair with salaries; and b) we had the figures, we thought, to prove it. John King called me. Tom Ladwig called me, a number of people at the university, and some people who really didn't have an axe to grind but really didn't feel it was fair to have their salaries trotted out before the community just because they were on a state payroll. Bear in mind that the county salaries in those days were published every month. There was suddenly an uprising against this, and as I say, John King called me, and a number of people up at the university called me. I don't know if anyone, if you heard anything about it. But anyway, finally we were going to do this on a Monday. And we ballyhooed it: "Coming in Monday's *Gazette*, a complete list of salaries." And finally, John King—and I'll have to come back with this name—I think it was Don Ek, who was a Chamber [of Commerce] leader, a real estate agent, they made an appointment with W. L. over at his house, in the evening.

LP: This was while W. L. White was still in charge of the *Gazette*?