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P.1. Southern Journalism: Media and the Movement

Interview P-0014
Stephanie Coffin
8 March 2014

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ABSTRACT – Stephanie Coffin

Interviewee: Stephanie Coffin

Interviewer: Joshua Clark Davis

Interview Date: March 8, 2014

Location: [Home of Stephanie Coffin in Atlanta, Georgia]

Stephanie Coffin is one of the founders of *The Great Speckled Bird*, a weekly underground newspaper based in Atlanta between the years of 1968 and 1976 that focused on leftist politics and alternative culture. She also worked with the Institute for Southern Studies' *Southern Exposure* in the magazine's early days, where she was responsible for layout and design. Coffin was born in Seattle and came up in the city's alternative circles. After she and Tom Coffin married in 1967, the couple moved to Atlanta, where Tom planned to pursue a PhD at Emory. Both Tom and Stephanie were well-versed in leftist thought; soon after arriving in Atlanta, Tom found like-minded individuals at Emory, where he briefly ran the anti-war paper *Big American Review* (a.k.a. *The Herald Tribune*), and Stephanie became involved in anti-poverty work. Tom's paper at Emory was short-lived, but the Coffins remained interested in starting an underground periodical. Together with members of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC) like Howard and Anne Romaine, and Gene and Nan Guerrero, as well as VISTA volunteers like Don Speicher, Page Pennell, and Jim Gwin, they began meeting and talking about setting up a new paper, which would become *The Great Speckled Bird*. They organized and incorporated as Atlanta Cooperative News Projects. Diverse in its interests, the group aimed to fill a void in Atlanta's media landscape, covering topics such as anti-war efforts, civil rights activity, and countercultural art. The paper was meant to be readable and leftist, but consciously separate from the sectarian left; its first issue came in March of 1967.

The Bird shipped to subscribers around the world; it was also sold on the street and in the countercultural stores that advertised in its pages. Aside from sales, advertising revenue funded the majority of the project, coming from both local hippie businesses and national record labels (including Atlantic). This money funded printing and distribution, but almost all work was unpaid. Throughout the years, the paper shifted its focus in response to social movements such as women's liberation and gay liberation. The paper also faced a number of difficulties: a printer dropped them, police cracked down on sellers, the offices were firebombed. Eventually, as The Strip, long-time center of Atlanta's hippy life, became less vibrant, and the counterculture grew less politicized, support for the paper waned. Many contributors moved on to start new projects, such as Radio Free Georgia (WRFG) and *Southern Exposure*. After ceasing production in 1976, the paper saw a short-lived revival from 1984 to 1985, but lacked the direction of its previous incarnation.

In this interview, Coffin addresses both differences and connections between *The Great Speckled Bird*, which was the labor of activists, and the hippie movement. She also talks about divisions between white and black radicals of the era, as the rise of the Black Power excluded whites from black-oriented causes. The interview also includes lengthy descriptions of activist life in 60s and 70s Atlanta.

TRANSCRIPT: Stephanie Coffin

Interviewee: Stephanie Coffin
Interviewer: Joshua Clark Davis
Interview Date: March 8, 2014
Location: [Home of Stephanie Coffin in Atlanta, Georgia]
Length: One audio file, 1:53:47

START OF INTERVIEW

[Frequent sound of birds singing and wind chimes throughout the interview]

Josh Davis: I guess we'll just start. So, I'm Josh Davis with the Southern Oral History Program. I'm sitting down with Stephanie Coffin today. The date is March eighth, 2014.

Stephanie Coffin: Yeah! International Women's Day.

JD: Yeah, okay. I actually didn't know that.

SC: That's right.

JD: And, yeah, thanks for having me here. Beautiful day outside, and we're going to be talking about *Great Speckled Bird*. So, I like to do interviews a little bit chronologically at first.

SC: Sure.

JD: One thing I was curious about was knowing a bit more about your upbringing, where you grew up, and your life before college, even if just very briefly.

SC: Oh, well, I'm from Seattle, Washington. So, I came here in 1967 with my husband, Tom Coffin. [Clears throat]

JD: Okay. I didn't know—I knew that you were from outside Atlanta, but I didn't know it was Seattle.

SC: Right.

JD: Okay. And you came to Atlanta for grad school?

SC: No, I did not come to Atlanta for grad school.

JD: Okay.

SC: I didn't even have a college education at that time. I had some college but not finished. My husband came for grad school. He was going to go to Emory in the English department.

JD: Okay. Why Atlanta? Was it just random?

SC: Well, he went to Reed. He finished Reed and he was looking around for graduate school and he—and we just, we didn't really know each other very well. I mean, we met in January and got married in May in 1967. And we kind of wanted to go someplace that was totally different and far away from where we grew up. So, that's where we came. He got accepted to the scholarship. He got accepted to Emory in English, and that's why we came. [Clears throat]

JD: Where in Seattle did you grow up, what neighborhood, or outside Seattle?

SC: 419 Northeast 88th Street.

JD: Okay. I know a few of those neighborhoods.

SC: The Northgate area, University District, between Northgate and University.

JD: Uh-huh, okay. So, at that—you were in your early twenties when you came to Atlanta?

SC: Yeah, um-hmm.

JD: What had been your political activity prior to then?

SC: Well, I was pretty much involved in the alternative culture. I was hanging out in the University District with kind of people who read a lot of radical books and took a lot of drugs. But the political movement in Seattle was just kind of behind California, so it was just kind of starting.

JD: Right. You said January of [19]67, right?

SC: Yeah.

JD: Or spring of [19]67, you said. And that would have been really early almost anywhere other than San Francisco or New York.

SC: Yeah, so I was—I graduated from high school in [19]62, so—yeah.

JD: Okay. Yeah, good. And so, had you or Tom had any involvement in Antiwar Movement yet or Civil Rights Movement?

SC: No, Tom had much more involvement in Portland in the Antiwar Movement.

JD: Okay.

SC: So, he was coming from a more activist position, I mean, an *activist* position, although politically we're pretty, you know, agreeable, in terms of having anti-imperialist positions. And I was very well-versed in anti-imperialist history and all that kind of stuff, you know, read some Marx, some early leftist theory.

But when we came here, he started—we didn't have any money. But when he started Emory, it was so conservative. Oh, my God, it was so conservative! It's just like, ooh, he couldn't do it. I mean, it didn't happen, wouldn't happen. And at the same time, we started meeting with other people. He started this little group at Emory. And meanwhile, I was working. I worked at Southern Bell for a while, and then at this

antipoverty thing for a little while. They started this little newsletter on Emory, on the Emory campus, called the *Big American Review*, and met other people who were antiwar on the Emory campus, did vigils and that kind of stuff.

JD: Now, was that before or after the *Herald Tribune*?

SC: Yeah, that's it, the same thing.

JD: It's the same thing, just the name changed?

SC: Yeah, and there's copies of that down at GSU.

JD: Right, in the *Great Speckled Bird* collection they have.

SC: Right.

JD: Yeah. And [0:05:00] you said "they" started it. Who was "they"?

SC: Well, I was not a student.

JD: Right.

SC: So, Tom and Steve Abbott—maybe you know his name?

JD: By name, yeah.

SC: Okay. His daughter wrote this book about him. Have you read that book?

JD: I don't think so.

SC: Pretty interesting book about him. He was a gay guy and then went out to San Francisco and—anyway.

JD: Okay.

SC: He did a lot of our artwork, a lot of our covers, and he was a student at the time.

JD: Okay. A-B-B-O-T—?

SC: T, I think. I could go find his book.

JD: Yeah.

SC: So, I was in a helping role, but I was not a student there, you know. So, it didn't last long. We met other people in the city who were politically active.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And Atlanta was one of the few cities that didn't have an underground press. People started talking about that, and we started having meetings. And I think it was like in the fall of [19]67.

JD: Um-hmm.

SC: So, there were kind of three groups of people. There were the old SSOC people.

JD: Right. So, just for the recording, that's the Southern Student Organizing—.

SC: Committee.

JD: Committee.

SC: So, Howard Romaine and his wife, Rita, and Nan Guerrero.

JD: Who is Anne? Wasn't—?

SC: Anne Romaine?

JD: Yeah.

SC: Yeah.

JD: Okay.

SC: Excuse me, Rita is his daughter. [Laughs]

JD: Right. Okay, I just wanted to—.

SC: Yeah, yeah. Anne Romaine. And then, Gene Guerrero and Nan.

JD: Orrock.

SC: Right. She took his name at that point, but yeah. And then, there were a group of VISTA volunteers, Don Speicher and (Page Pennell) and Jim Gwin, who were hanging around the city doing different kinds of things, and they were all interested in underground press. And then, there were Tom and me. We were kind of West Coast, West Coast ideas. And then, there were just kind of odd, different kinds of odd people. Started to meet and talk about putting out an underground press, underground paper in Atlanta.

JD: So, two questions: What underground publications had you already been exposed to?

SC: Me?

JD: Yeah. Or what were your models?

SC: Oh, I think that we didn't have very many models. Yeah, there was a paper called *Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence*. They had a little newsprint paper. Oh, that's a good question! I don't know.

JD: I mean, did Seattle have a paper? Or had you been to San Francisco much?

SC: No, no, not until later.

JD: Okay.

SC: So, the SSOC people—now, the SSOC people, they had papers.

JD: Right, um—.

SC: Tom Gardner.

JD: *Student Voice*, or what was it called?

SC: Yeah. Steve is going to know all that stuff.

JD: Okay.

SC: He knows all that, because he came from that group.

JD: Now, the SSOC people, weren't they mostly from Tennessee, or had some—?

SC: No, Nan was from Virginia.

JD: Okay.

SC: Howard grew up in Louisiana.

JD: That's right.

SC: But Anne, his wife, was from North Carolina.

JD: Right, okay.

SC: I think, or South Carolina.

JD: I know that SSOC had been strong at Rhodes College, and I guess that people weren't from Tennessee, but a lot, like Howard—you know, there was a contingent there, a contingent in Nashville, and there was, I guess, a contingent at Emory.

SC: SSOC people at Emory?

JD: Well, where were the SSOC people—you know, the SSOC people in Atlanta?

SC: Well, Nan and Gene—we met Nan and Gene because Gene was facing induction. So, we met them first at a demonstration on Ponce de Leon in front of the induction center where he was going to refuse induction.

JD: Where was that, by the way, on Ponce?

SC: Do you know where Ponce City Market is being created, right across from Home Depot?

JD: City Hall East?

SC: There you go.

JD: Former Sears Building?

SC: That's it, yeah, yeah.

JD: Ford factory?

SC: Right, that's it.

JD: Okay.

SC: And so, that's how we met Nan and Gene. And then, through them, we met Howard and Anne, because they knew each other for many years.

JD: Um-hmm. Is that generally how you made your contacts and friends? I mean, you came to town not really knowing people, but it sounds like fairly quickly you were finding likeminded [0:10:00] activists.

SC: Yeah, yeah. It happened really fast, really fast. But that's the way it is with young people.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And that's the way it is with young movements.

JD: Sure.

SC: So, that's not unusual.

JD: Sure. What were your—?

SC: And the SSOC people, you know, were a little adrift. [Sound of sirens] You know, SSOC was shaky, and people were going through life changes and, you know, kind of floating. They were kind of floating around.

JD: This was 1967?

SC: [19]67.

JD: Yeah. I guess a lot of them had graduated from college recently.

SC: Yeah, that's right.

JD: And that organization had really been a student organization.

SC: Right. That's right.

JD: Obviously, that's going to change the context for organizing.

SC: That's right.

JD: What was your impression or impressions of Atlanta, coming here?

SC: Impressions of what?

JD: Of Atlanta, of the city, of the political culture or—?

SC: Oh, well, you know, the truth is, is that we really fell in love with Atlanta at that point and, I mean, thought the weather was wild. I mean, we got caught in some (downpours). You know, it was a real wet June, and we had—the storms were amazing. And then, we happened upon this really great group of people. So, we were really pretty happy in the South. We were happy to be here and never thought about going back and, yeah, thought that people here who were interested in doing work had long histories that they brought to the struggle. So, that was really—they were pretty amazing people, and they still are pretty amazing people!

JD: Yeah. I mean, it's interesting to think about what a long history is when you're twenty-one or twenty-two or twenty-three, and maybe someone like Howard Romaine had been, I think, maybe active in the movement for roughly five years.

SC: Yeah.

JD: That's a pretty long time—

SC: That's a long time.

JD: Both chronologically and in any movement, if you already have that experience under your belt, and you're not even twenty-five.

SC: Right. And that was the case with most of them. [Clears throat]

JD: Yeah. What had brought all of them to Atlanta? I mean, I should ask them.

SC: Well, I told you Nan and Gene came because Gene was coming to refuse induction.

JD: Oh, so he didn't even live in Atlanta? I didn't realize that.

SC: Well, yeah, I don't think—I don't know where they were. But they were just here. And Nan had to get a job.

JD: It's interesting, you know, because we're focusing on the South in this project, but Atlanta had had a longish history as a center of the Civil Rights Movement, but, I think, like you mentioned, there was no underground press yet. The counterculture didn't—.

SC: No, not in 1967. There was a little tiny bit, but it was more like a beatnik culture.

JD: Yeah. And so, your timing was very auspicious.

SC: Yes, it was.

JD: So, what were the discussions around forming a newspaper?

SC: Well, you know, we had to talk—I mean, there are huge numbers of things that we had to deal with, you know, in terms of money, what the organization was going to be, [sounds of dog barking 0:13:55-0:15:47] and, you know, we decided to organize as a coop. You know, we were Atlanta Cooperative News Projects and we incorporated as a coop. And because of that, we tried to—well, we didn't have a corporate structure. We really worked through the years to form a cooperative structure, which was a huge struggle, and how we would get it put out, who would print it, you know, how we would

distribute it, where we would have an office, who would do what, [laughs] all that kind of stuff had to happen.

JD: Right. So, obviously, the logistics were very, every involved. Why do you think you all wanted to start this newspaper?

SC: Well, most of us were really focused on the war, so I think most of us saw that as an antiwar focus, [0:15:00] although the people who lived here probably saw a continuation of the civil rights coverage.

JD: So, it's interesting just to think about how an institution like the *Bird* could mean different things to different people. For you, you had moved to Atlanta from out-of-town, and it sounds like the Antiwar Movement was kind of the focus of your energies, whereas other people had come from maybe different directions. Different paths had led them to the *Bird*, it sounds like.

SC: Yes, I think that's accurate.

JD: Yeah. I forgot to ask: Can you tell me a little bit more about the newsletter at Emory, about the *Herald Tribune*, or was it *New American Voice* was the second (name)?

SC: *New American Review*? *Big American Review*!

JD: Yeah.

SC: Well, you can ask Tom that, or you can go read them, but basically they were antiwar. I mean, I don't think they went too much beyond that.

JD: Uh-huh. And it was distributed on Emory's campus?

SC: It was just like one page, a page and a half. I mean, it was really—mimeographed, [makes repetitive sounds] tch, tch, tch, tch, you know.

JD: Sure.

SC: Now, Steve Abbott did some graphics for it, so it was a little bit of graphics. But it was pretty—[clears throat].

JD: So, these original talks—you, Tom, Gene Guerrero—.

SC: Oh, no. There was probably a group of between, I would say, maybe even twenty people.

JD: Oh? Who were talking about forming the *Bird*?

SC: Yeah, yeah. We had meetings. We had regular meetings.

JD: Okay.

SC: Yeah.

JD: And, you know, I looked at a few copies, and I've looked at various copies over the years, but the very first issue has a lot of names on the publication table.

SC: Okay.

JD: And so, I would assume those were mostly the founders. Who were the—there wasn't an editor, since it was more of a collective, but were there certain driving forces?

SC: Well, Tom was our first editor until he got—people said, “No, we're not going to have that anymore.”

JD: So, he had that title actually?

SC: Yeah.

JD: Okay.

SC: Yeah, he was editor, and so all the copy went through him. And then, later on, structurally we broke down into Local News, Southern News, International News, National News, as major categories.

JD: Um-hmm. So, the first issue—it sounds like the first meetings were actually in late [19]67? Did you say that?

SC: Yeah, in the fall. Yeah, late [19]67, because Tom started school like everybody else at Emory, in September, and did *Big American Review*. And then, that morphed into meetings, and it was clear—he never finished that first semester. [Laughs]

JD: Uh-huh, and that was in the English PhD program at Emory?

SC: Right, that's right. So, you know, we started the paper March fifteenth? 1968.

JD: Yeah. And the first cover was—?

SC: I can go get it.

JD: Yeah. I was looking, clicking on the computer, actually.

SC: Yeah, I have it. I'll go get it.

JD: Okay.

SC: The first thing was basically interesting. We made a statement against the liberal media.

JD: Ralph McGill?

SC: Ralph McGill! Yeah.

JD: That's what I was going to ask about, but—yeah.

[Pause in conversation while SC goes to get copy of *GSB* 0:19:10-0:19:43]

SC: Skillman?

JD: SDS at Florida State. I didn't know that, actually.

SC: Yeah, yeah. So, there you go.

JD: That's great, the bound copy. Yeah.

SC: Yeah, 1968, Volume 1, Number 1.

JD: I think that's a really important point is that [0:20:00] you mentioned—I mean, the fact that the *Atlanta Constitution*, it was by Southern standards, and I guess by national standards, a liberal paper.

SC: Right.

JD: But you all were directly criticizing Ralph McGill's stance on the war. And so, I think that is maybe a nice way to kind of tap into the question of: What were your thoughts on the media landscape in Atlanta at that time? What was the *Constitution* or *Journal* like? Why did there need to be another newspaper, I guess?

SC: Well, they didn't cover anything that we were interested in. Look here. Here's the draft. Here's Social Circle; that's a continuation of civil rights stuff in Social Circle—Social Circle, Georgia. Here's Birmingham. So, here's Southern news, right? Eliza Paschall was a liberal columnist, who—she—and then, they didn't cover art. Basically, they didn't cover alternative art, and this is pretty good. And here's some stuff on jazz. And this is like really the beginning of the counterculture stuff.

JD: Yeah. I mean, it's interesting, in the very first—I was going to say Middle Earth—.

SC: Right, Middle Earth Head Shop.

JD: In the very first issue, you've got ads for, you know, countercultural businesses, from the start.

SC: Right. And here's the Workshop in Nonviolence.

JD: Um-hmm.

SC: And here's soldier stuff, Howard Zinn. I mean, it's amazing to look at this stuff, because this was kind of the beginning of women's liberation, that *Lysistrata*. And this cartoon stuff, this guy right here was a fantastic cartoonist. That was Ron Ausburn.

JD: And he did that ad, too, didn't he?

SC: Yeah, he did the ad, okay.

JD: And there's, yeah, there's a series of these ads, which I'm interesting in just because, yeah, one of the chapters of my book is on head shops.

SC: Right. So, you see, we've got themes of dope and also language. We had language.

JD: [Laughs] Right.

SC: At the very beginning we made a decision that we would not peddle backwards in terms of language.

JD: Um-hmm.

SC: So, and here's another. This was a poster—what's it called? Poster—?

JD: Poster pad?

SC: Yeah, poster pad. It's all posters. And here's another one. Oh, that's just music.

JD: It looks like Ausburn did all of them, actually.

SC: Yeah. So, what we did is we had all these people here—(Page Pennell), Tom, here's Howard. This is a woman who left and went to California, Nan. Jim Gwin, he was from—Jim Gwin, Don Speicher. Stephanie (Urbanski) was from Emory. There's me. Gary (Chews)—I forget what; I think he was in school someplace. Charlie Cushing was around. Ron Ausburn, he's the cartoonist. Wayne Scott was our photographer. (Jay

Bowman), he was the circulation guy. There's Gene. Ted Brodek was a faculty member at Emory, and he was part of the Antiwar Movement out there with Tom and Steve Abbott. David Simpson was from SDS.

JD: At Georgia State?

SC: At Georgia State. He didn't hang around long. I don't know—I can't remember who this person is, and then, (Selka) was a real weird guy. I can't remember very much about him, but he was a weird guy.

JD: And just looking at these names, it seems like it's a decent mix of native Southerners and non-natives.

SC: Yeah, um-hmm, that's right. Jim Gwin was from Mississippi.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Yeah. [Laughs] Yeah, that's right.

JD: It's interesting thinking about the *Bird* as the most important Southern underground paper, but I feel like sometimes that almost sells the paper short. Like, my sense is that—and I don't know, maybe you have a different sense of it—but that that was a great calling card for the paper, but that actually *Great Speckled Bird* was one of the best and most active underground papers *anywhere* in the country. And it was very much part of the region, but it wasn't only [0:25:00] important for the South. But I don't know if that is—.

SC: Well, I think that's true. I mean, our circulation was international. And we had this policy where we had special rates for soldiers, so we were sending out papers to soldiers and papers to prisoners, and we had this huge exchange—but you probably know this—huge exchange with other underground presses.

JD: Right.

SC: So, every week we would get in, you know, the *Guardian* and all the papers from, and they got ours, and we got theirs.

JD: Underground Press Syndicate, right, or what was—?

SC: UPS?

JD: Yeah. Right?

SC: No, I don't think it was UPS. This was just an informal sharing.

JD: Oh? Okay.

SC: Yeah. So, every week we had almost all the papers.

JD: Ah, okay. Now, did you have any contacts with any other papers in the South, like *NOLA Express* or—?

SC: Um, *NOLA Express*, that's New Orleans, right?

JD: Yeah.

SC: No, not really. Now, we did with the *Kudzu*. You know, David Doggett came to the *Bird*. David Doggett. Do you know David Doggett?

JD: I don't think so.

SC: Now, he's a Southerner and he knows all those SSOC people. And he came to the *Bird* and he wanted to start a paper in Jackson, Mississippi. So, he came and stayed with us in the Birdhouse for—I don't know how long he stayed. I can't remember. But he stayed and learned about everything we were doing, layout and dah-dah-dah, and then went back and started that paper, the *Kudzu*.

JD: Oh, okay. Now, people were living at the Birdhouse, too?

SC: Yeah. Tom and me and Harvey and Charlie Cushing. And then, downstairs, YSA, Young Socialists, they rented a part of a section of it. And then, there was another young woman named Becky Hamilton, who came and stayed. She was our ad person for a while. She came and stayed shortly thereafter. I don't see her name here, but we do have a list of all of the people from the staff boxes throughout the whole history of the *Bird* and when they showed up.

JD: Uh-huh. Oh, that's great.

SC: Yeah.

JD: And the Birdhouse was on Fourteenth Street?

SC: Right.

JD: And why did y'all locate there?

SC: Well, that was the center of, you know, the old beatnik area, kind of, progressive. It was a Jewish intellectual center for a long time.

JD: I'm not as familiar with that, so—yeah, so that leftist intellectual tradition actually predated the hippies? [Sounds of dog barking]

SC: Well, I don't know if you could call it leftist intellectual center—[laughs] I mean, that's really pretty stretching it.

JD: [Laughs] Okay.

SC: There were people who smoked dope and there were, you know, some gay people there, and people who were into alternative music and theater, that kind of stuff. That was already kind of around there.

JD: That was there, okay, and the rents were still cheap.

SC: Yeah. I mean, it was an area of transition. We got this big house that Howard rented, mostly, but within six months we were being threatened, and then it was torn down.

JD: And it was torn down as part of a larger urban renewal project?

SC: Yes, yes.

JD: Or it was just a twofer that the *Bird* happened to be in the house?

SC: No, it was an urban renewal program.

JD: Okay.

SC: Not a real urban—okay, urban renewal is like a state taking over land?

JD: Right.

SC: This was corporate renewal.

JD: Okay.

SC: Because right across the street was Colony Square, almost.

JD: Right. And that was being built, or had already been built?

SC: It was—no, it had not been built, but you could see that whole—they were scheduled. That whole area was going to be developed.

JD: And this was—by 1968, people were calling it “the Strip”?

SC: Probably at the end of [19]68.

JD: Okay.

SC: Because we came out, what, March fifteenth, and they didn’t call it the Strip then, although, almost from the very beginning, we had some hippies coming and getting the paper—yeah, March fifteenth—and selling it. That’s how we sold the paper.

JD: Right. People selling it on the corner.

SC: Yeah. So, there was already enough of a counterculture there.

JD: Right.

SC: I mean, we were very dependent on those people to sell our paper.

JD: And to buy the paper also, right?

SC: Yes, to sell and buy.

JD: Yeah, and it's interesting.

SC: And give away. [Laughs]

JD: Yeah. I mean, the *Bird*, it sounds like, could have existed without the Strip, and the Strip could have existed without the *Bird*, but both benefitted each other [0:30:00] and kind of helped each other grow.

SC: Oh, yeah. Absolutely, yeah. Now, you know, at this point, I don't think we had any employees, so it was all volunteer. So, you say that Ron Ausburn—you noticed the style. Well, we did Layout Night, and people who walked in the door did it. I mean, that's the way it was.

JD: So, what were the economics of the paper. Of course, obviously, no one is getting paid.

SC: The economics was we had a couple of fundraising—one we had, a totally unsuccessful fundraising event. People reached into their pockets to pay the first printing costs. And, you know, this was done on a typewriter. And then, we would lay out the typed columns on big sheets, and we would take them, and they would be reduced. And then, we would cut it up again to get it this small. It was incredibly labor-intensive at the very beginning.

JD: Right. And this is called—what is it again? Off-press? No. What was this?

SC: It's cold type—I mean, it's just typewriter.

JD: Yeah.

SC: So, this is a typewriter. Okay, so we didn't get an IBM Composer until later. So, we did the first few papers like that. [Turns page] Oh, look it—Julian Bond. That's amazing, huh?

JD: Yeah.

SC: Julian Bond and [turns page] Army stuff, right? Here's something on SSOC.

JD: From the beginning, it seems like you had—.

SC: Look at this. See this right here? Those are almost all the organizations that were active. There's SSOC. What is COSI? I forget what COSI was. YSA, AWIN.

JD: What is AWIN?

SC: Atlanta Workshop in Nonviolence.

JD: Okay.

SC: YIP, yippies, I think.

JD: Yippies, right, yeah.

SC: And the *Bird*. I forget what COSI was.

JD: Okay.

SC: Steve could tell you if you want to know. But so, that's who was doing, active—that's who was active. And that's it; not too many people.

JD: I mean, we're talking about a community of maybe—.

SC: Fifty, maybe.

JD: Yeah, core activists.

SC: Yeah, doing almost everything. [Laughs] This guy came from the North, (0:32:41) Richard (Bueno), and he wrote that. So, there was a little bit of that. [Turns pages] See, anti-draft stuff. And here you get—here's all the draft counseling. We started getting music ads, cinema. This would be good for you, in terms of your going through this.

JD: Right. And that's, yeah, that's originally how I was using this. I mean, I had known about the *Great Speckled Bird*, but it is interesting to me, the advertisements.

SC: This Discovery, Incorporated, they formed and they started managing bands around. Okay, and so this was when Martin Luther King was killed. That was really horrendous. What are we going to put on the cover? You know, how are we going to respond to that? That was just like "Oh, my God."

JD: And that's an interesting choice, the Joe Hill quote.

SC: Yeah, I'm not so sure it worked, but—.

JD: I mean, "Don't mourn, organize!" I wonder if anyone else put Joe Hill on the cover for that story.

SC: [Laughs] Right.

JD: IWW.

SC: [Turns page] So, here comes this guy, Miller Francis, who did a lot of movie reviews and then made a name for himself doing rock and roll writing, writing about rock and roll.

JD: Um-hmm.

SC: He did a lot of that stuff. And so, we always tried to get people to subscribe. So, we had three methods of distribution: subscriptions, street sales, and then, bookstores.

JD: Okay.

SC: So, we had a distribution of bookstores.

JD: And so, the businesses that you got ads from that were mostly these hippie businesses, were they selling the *Bird* also?

SC: Oh, yeah! Yeah, yeah. Except for the thing that was not hippie were the music ads. [Turns pages]

JD: Right.

SC: And they brought in the big bucks.

JD: You just had an ad from Atlantic Records.

SC: Yeah, that's right. I was looking in here. Oh, [0:35:00] there's sandals and hippie clothes, Twelfth Gate. This was a coffee shop that was started before we started the *Bird*.

JD: Okay.

SC: Okay, and that was where we went to see Reverend Pearly Brown, which is the name—he sang “The Great Speckled Bird”. You know, “The Great Speckled Bird” is a—yeah, okay.

JD: Right, Roy Acuff originally, right? Or isn't there a Roy Acuff cover? It's a hymn.

SC: Well, actually it's a hymn from the Church of God.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Right. And so, we offered—right after we came out, we offered free subscriptions to anybody that would—I mean, free—the first free issue. So, all they had to do was write a letter to us, and then we got—because of “The Great Speckled Bird”,

we got all these requests from religious people, because they thought it was a religious paper.

JD: Because they knew that hymn.

SC: And they were so incensed because of the language.

JD: Right.

SC: A lot because of the language. And people were really, really, really upset about the language.

JD: Yeah. You know, it was interesting, the story that I saw—what was it?—the Dekalb Voters League, or whatever it was called.

SC: Right.

JD: The anonymous leaflet that had clippings from the newspaper that was probably used to embarrass the printing press that was linked to the political candidate in Dekalb County.

SC: Right. That's right.

JD: I'm forgetting his name.

SC: Right. And we lost our printer there.

JD: Right. And that was the Dekalb New Era, I think?

SC: Dekalb New Era. And we went to New Orleans for—sent our papers to New Orleans to be published.

JD: Drove down there, or mailed it?

SC: I think we mailed it.

JD: Wow, so you had to go that far away—

SC: Oh, yeah!

JD: To find someone who would print it after—

SC: You can see the paper—they had a different size, so the paper's smaller. So, we ran into all kinds of problems there. Look at that.

JD: Who designed the masthead?

SC: Okay, so this masthead was—this one right here—

JD: The first one?

SC: The first one, I forget. This is just (press type).

JD: Right.

SC: Okay, and then, we have this (mast type). Oh, then we have this one—okay, this is (Page Pennell).

JD: Okay.

SC: And he was like from journalist school and he wanted the paper to look the same all the way through, so he would go through and make everything dark, and everything like that. And so, we kicked him out. [Laughs]

JD: [Laughs] Too efficient.

SC: No, we just didn't want the paper to look the same.

JD: Right, not as standardized.

SC: We didn't want that. So, then, I think that he came up with this masthead. And then, we did this one, right?

JD: Okay. Obviously, you 're experimenting. Almost every issue has a different masthead.

SC: We're experimenting, right, experimenting. [Turning pages] And the post office, you know, we had a second class postage permit, and so, there are all these rules

about the masthead size, and it has to prominent, and all that kind of stuff. So, we got into trouble with the post office a little bit. Look at that one. That's press type, too. And then, let me see, where's the first one that we liked? That we really said, "This is going to be it." Let me see here. Look at that. So, this is Gainesville, Florida, so we covered a lot of civil rights stuff that the regular paper—here's the Panthers.

JD: Yeah. And it's obviously regional, I mean, if you're running stories about Gainesville, Florida. That's a six-hour drive from there.

SC: Yeah, we did Southern stuff. That's right. We did Southern stuff. And look, even here.

JD: Yeah, it's changing.

SC: Where's the first one? Oh, here we go!

JD: That's the one I noted, the most famous one, yeah.

SC: This is the one, yeah. Yeah, and we stuck with this one.

JD: And who designed that?

SC: I can't remember, but I think (Page Pennell) did it.

JD: (Page Pennell)? Okay.

SC: Yeah, I think so. But (Page Pennell) didn't last long. He went—he left town pretty much—yeah, there's another one. But after that, we pretty much stuck with the—and we were experimenting with all sorts of thing. That was a quarter-fold. Look at that.

JD: Oh, okay.

SC: See, that was a quarter-fold.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And our sellers said, “No. If you want us to sell this paper, you can’t—you’ve got to pay attention.” So, we really started paying attention to what’s above the fold.

JD: Right.

SC: And the color, right?

JD: Yeah, it’s very graphically [0:40:00] impressive, in the literal sense of the word; it’s very conspicuous.

SC: Yes. And so, if we did [sound of papers being pushed around?] issues that didn’t have good colors or didn’t have good graphics and was hard for people to sell, they would come in and tell us that.

JD: Okay.

SC: And so, then we started really paying attention to it. And so, then we started to really, like, if we have blue this time, we don’t have blue next time. So, to really differentiate.

JD: Okay.

SC: And so, the really good thing is, if you look at this—now, this is—shoot, what year is this? What issue is this? Let me look. Oh, here’s Steve Wise! Let me see here. Okay, so this is August 1969. Wow! August thirtieth to September twelfth. Anyway, look at this right here. See the same people right here? Howard Romaine, Gene Guerrero, Nan Guerrero, Tom Coffin, Stephanie Coffin, Jim Gwin, Pam Gwin—Jim married—Steve Wise, Anne Jenkins.

JD: Um-hmm, that’s a shorter list than with the first issue. I mean, it’s changing.

SC: So, they came down from Institute of Policy Studies. Don Speicher, Reggie Mitchell—he’s an African American guy, so he came on—Ted Brodek, Goodman.

Goodman came from the North. He was going to teach at AU—I forget where—and he was a fantastic addition to the *Bird*. (Ernie Mars) is the Southern guy, Linda Fibben, Howard, Wayne Scott, Eric Bonner, and they were husband and wife.

So, in some—my point is that we had a pretty consistent staff for quite a long time, which I think was really very helpful. I mean, it was really a cohesive—not a cohesive group. I can't say that. In some ways, it was cohesive, but people were really committed to the paper. You know, the paper was *so* much work. I cannot tell you how much work it was. It was like twenty-four hours, because we planned it, wrote it, produced it, turned around and critiqued it, planned it, wrote it, you know, distributed it. We did everything!

JD: And it's every week.

SC: Yeah. We were biweekly to begin with, but we went weekly very shortly. [Sound of plane flying over] So, it was *so* much work. And the only reason we could survive is if people did that voluntarily. I mean, these people—I think only one person was getting money at that point, and that was maybe Tom. We're like talking twenty-five dollars a week. I mean, this is *no money*. We made a decision we weren't going to pay people for articles and we weren't going to pay people for graphics. Good decisions because we didn't have money to pay them. But anyway, it was like an equalizer.

JD: How did you all pay the rent?

SC: Well, Howard paid the rent for a while.

JD: Okay. Was he working?

SC: Yeah, he was working for NSA.

JD: Oh, I didn't realize that was actually a full-time paid position, or a paid position.

SC: Oh, I don't know. You can talk to him. I don't know if it was full-time either, but he had enough money to rent this—you're not talking a lot of money here.

JD: Right.

SC: I mean, our biggest bill was the printing bill. Okay, so we called ourselves a co-op and we had co-op meetings. And our structure was anybody who came to the co-op, walked in the door, you were part of the co-op. If you did work, you were part of it, so that means you could participate in the discussion, participate in layout, write stories, do whatever you wanted to, so it was incredibly free-floating, explosive, controversial, challenge anything, very exciting, dynamic group.

JD: Um-hmm. It sounds like most people really came from an activist background, but—.

SC: Well, I think that that's—yeah, I think you could probably say maybe. I mean, certainly there was a—Gene and Nan and Howard and Steve and Anne Jenkins, that's true. I would say, I don't know, two-thirds.

JD: Yeah. [Laughs] Okay. So, when you look at the *Bird*, it's very—[0:45:00] obviously the paper wrote a lot about the counterculture. You see the counterculture on the pages. But were there hippies, per se, working for the paper? Or, you know, I guess in some places people try to distinguish between New Left and hippies, although my sense is that maybe in Atlanta, it was small enough so that you couldn't be one or the other.

SC: Okay, first of all, most of these people were older than the typical hippies.

JD: Okay.

SC: Okay, we're all older.

JD: Mid-twenties?

SC: Like, I had my first child in 1968.

JD: Oh, okay. I didn't realize that.

SC: Okay, yeah. And Pam Gwin and Jim Gwin had a child at the same time, okay? And Howard and Anne had their child a year later. So, it was—we were not eighteen and nineteen. We were more in the early twenties. Okay, so we were out of that hippie—I mean, this was a lot of work.

JD: Right.

SC: So, if you did a lot of drugs and you stayed up all night, you couldn't do this.

JD: Right.

SC: This was disciplined work. I never worked as hard in my life as when I worked on this, because it was so intense and it was so unrelenting.

JD: Um-hmm. That's a really important part of the story, I think, that doesn't always come across, because the counterculture was around you guys. I mean, what, for example—?

SC: So, we talked about them as hippies. We didn't call ourselves hippies.

JD: Right. That's what I mean.

SC: We didn't call ourselves hippies because we were activists, because we were political people.

JD: Right.

SC: And most of the hippies were not political people, although people became political, I mean, certainly, and we certainly reached out to them. And in some ways, the

hippie mystique of drugs, you know, fucking the establishment, kind of a live and let live anti-corporate structure or cooperative structure, democratic—I mean, all those ideas were embraced. Are they hippie ideas? Well, some of them. I mean, there were direct conflicts in some ways, like, I mean, I don't know what Howard's going to say, what other people are going to say, but Tom and I came from the West Coast, and we brought more than West Coast drugs and, you know, just kind of more of an open attitude towards lots of influences.

JD: Um-hmm. Yeah, I mean, I think it's a really important point to make.

SC: Now, the South was way behind, in terms of all that cultural stuff. I mean, behind—not behind Billings, Montana, right, where it never happened!—but certainly behind Seattle and Portland, San Francisco and New York, Chicago, you know.

JD: Sure, for a major city. I mean, I think it's also important that Atlanta was a big city in the South, but it was nowhere as big as it is now.

SC: Yeah.

JD: And it was—.

SC: Oh, it was a little town.

JD: It was still—I just talked to someone the other day who grew up in Decatur and Avondale, and he said, “Yeah, it was a big country town.” You hear people say that.

SC: Yeah. But the other thing is, is that, at that particular time—I mean, you have to think of—I think there were larger forces that we recognize, when you're doing this paper, and that is that people were flooding into Atlanta from the little towns, from Alabama, from Mississippi, you know, because they were running away from home, because they couldn't get along with their parents, because of the conflict with religion,

you know, lifestyle. You know, all that stuff was happening, so people were flooding into this city.

JD: So, people were flooding into this city. So, what did you see—tell me a little bit about, I mean, change seems to be happening really fast in these first few years. But how did the Fourteenth Street area change, maybe in the—you know, from the start of the paper in March [19]68, and then fast-forward two years?

SC: Well, we weren't there. We weren't there. We were kicked out.

JD: Oh, that's right. You moved several times, right?

SC: Yeah, we were kicked out. They kicked us out. So, we went over to North Avenue.

JD: Where on North?

SC: Okay, you know where—is it called Krispy Kreme?

JD: Yeah.

SC: Yeah, right behind there.

JD: Sure.

SC: In a warehouse.

JD: Okay.

SC: So, we were kind of separated from the Strip. But the Strip, I mean, the commercialization of that area happened at a fast pace. [0:50:00] Okay, so a person you should—if you're interested in this business and that, the Strip, you should—do you know The Strip Project?

JD: Yeah, the website online.

SC: Patrick Edmondson?

JD: Okay. [Sound of dog barking]

SC: Yeah, he is a great person to talk to about that. And he's done all this oral history, you know. And he was younger than us, but he wrote for us. I mean, now I know him more as an adult now, but he was around, kind of.

JD: Yeah.

SC: But he was a very important person, in terms of making that history, and he will answer all those questions. See, in some ways, we were separate from the Strip, because we went in the paper at nine o'clock and we worked, prr, prr, prr, prr, prr, right? And, you know, we put out the paper and all that kind of stuff. But the hippies, you know, [laughs] took drugs and hung out.

JD: Right.

SC: Okay, so then, we moved over on North Avenue. People still came into the office to get the papers to sell. But within two years, the Strip was pretty much gone. Commercialization, increase of heroin, you know, all the other forces, which I'm sure that you are aware of, I mean, just exploded or imploded. Harassment, police harassment.

JD: Which was one of the big issues that the paper focused on, right?

SC: Well, they busted our sellers!

JD: Right.

SC: I mean, we had this—do you remember that whole section in the exhibit of harassment?

JD: Right.

SC: You know, we were firebombed. Our paper was taken from the post office for the abortion ads. We were busted for obscenity. I mean, there's a whole history of that.

JD: Um-hmm, yeah, and I wasn't going to go too deep into that, if only because it's been documented a lot. But that is really important that there were a lot of different reasons that you all got in trouble, and sometimes the stated reason wasn't the real reason.

SC: Right.

JD: Because—yeah, I mean, maybe you could tell me more about—.

SC: I mean, even—you know that book *The Burglary*?

JD: No.

SC: You don't know that book? It just came out. It was on—do you watch “Democracy Now”?

JD: Listen to it sometimes.

SC: Yeah. These people up in, what, Philadelphia? My husband is reading it right now. These people who went in and took the FBI files?

JD: Oh, the—?

SC: The Catholic—they were Catholic workers people.

JD: Weren't they antiwar?

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah! It was antiwar. Right, right. Anyway, they pretty much documented the FBI harassment.

JD: Right.

SC: Okay, so now, even this one woman, Anne Jenkins, wrote the other day to everybody, saying, you know, “I'm rethinking this. And, you know, we never really knew how much we were harassed.” [Laughs]

JD: Right.

SC: We knew some—this one guy took money from us. What was his name? He took money from us.

JD: But he wasn't connected to the FBI?

SC: Well, we don't know.

JD: So, have you done Freedom of Information Act?

SC: No, no. I did some a little bit. But, no, nobody's really done that.

JD: Yeah? I bet it would be pretty revealing.

SC: Yeah, it might be. I mean, the stuff I did is just like everything is black. So, whatever.

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, look at this, [reads] "The racist pigs must free Huey now, or the sky is the limit!"

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, that's pretty outrageous stuff.

JD: Yeah, I mean, it is. Even as the underground press goes, I think, for—the *Bird* was on the radical end, not just for the South, I think, but politically—

SC: Yeah, I think it was.

JD: And that was something we were going to talk about. But, you know, what was the distinction between having a "left" paper and having, say, a "liberal" paper? Because, again, that was the *Constitution's* identity.

SC: Well, you know, this—I think we had more struggles not about that. That was clear. We saw ourselves different. We saw ourselves as activist-journalists and, see, we

wrote this paper. We wrote the paper and, also, we produced this paper. I didn't do much writing, but I did layout. Okay, so I was involved in layout.

But there was much more tension and much more struggle and conversation between—within the left. You know? And the paper maintained itself, and I think it was a real strength of the paper. We were not part of the sectarian left. Okay, so we were not a SSOC paper, [0:55:00] we were not an SDS paper, we were not a Weatherman paper.

And we veered away from that and we said, "We want this paper to be readable to the average person," so that was kind of a mirror that we put up all the time. All the time we talked about length and cut down stuff because we knew that people wouldn't read long articles. We had this huge discussion about white space, [laughs] called the White Space Discussion, to make the paper open. I mean, you've seen some of the earlier papers—well, *NOLA Express* and the (PL) papers and the papers that come from the sectarian left.

JD: Yeah.

SC: It's horrible!

JD: Yeah, very dense, hard to read.

SC: Oh, my God! I mean, who could read them?

JD: Yeah.

SC: So, that was really important to us. So, what did we do? We brought in color. We tried to create not the standard—if you look at the paper, [sound of pages turning] we had local news like towards the front, like this local news, this like here. But we even had big struggles about, "Why are we putting local news on the front? You know, that's the regular pattern."

JD: Uh-huh?

SC: Oh, yeah, everything was open for discussion. Everything! You know, why do you do this instead of doing this? [Sound of pages turning] Then, in the center, we always had—tried to have some kind of center spread. Let's see what's going on. We had yellow on the front and the back and the center. We had another color in the front and the back. Okay, look at this. This is Steve Abbott. This is a good one.

JD: That's a cover of the paper that's entirely violet or bright pink.

SC: Yeah. So, we—[sound of pages turning] I one time talked to a person, a student who was interested in graphics, and I laid out about five things that were really different that we tried to do. Where's the center spread? I can't believe—let me see, "Foibles", and if you look at this, "Staff Box", look at that. Here's Barbara Joye.

JD: Right.

SC: It's pretty much the same. That's good. I mean, that was really helpful because it's still the first paper, I mean, the first issue. Well, I guess we—oh, here's the center spread, and we didn't have color in the center spread. I guess we didn't (know/no). So, people would come in and do this on the night. We would lay out the paper, and the paper laying out would be going all night.

JD: Right.

SC: It was very arduous.

JD: And most of you were working around the clock, working every day? Most of you didn't have jobs?

SC: Well, Nan had a job. Gene worked at the paper. Tom started a moving business. Ted Brodek was a professor. Don Speicher and Jim Gwin, those people were VISTA volunteers. Okay, Howard was NSA. So, it was a mixed bag.

JD: Okay.

SC: But people were really carving out most of their space for the paper.

JD: How did you raise a kid? You just mentioned that very casually in passing, but—.

SC: Well, you know, it's weird when I think about back in those days. I mean, I can't remember what I ate. I can't remember going shopping. I can't remember any of that stuff. But, you know, our first kid came in [19]68, and we just dealt with it.

JD: I guess—

SC: There are lots of pictures!

JD: Yeah, so he was at the Birdhouse.

SC: He was at the *Bird*! Yeah, he was at the *Bird*. [Leaving room] I'll bring you a good picture. Tom has a lot of pictures now.

[Recording stops at 0:59:12 and resumes at 0:59:28]

SC: This is a good picture. I'll show you. Okay, so this is Miller Francis. This is Becky Hamilton. She became very important in terms of ads. This is—I think this our son.

JD: Okay.

SC: This is Roger Friedman; he was our legal person. He did a lot of stuff, too. And Sally Gabb and Linda Howard and Harvey. Okay, so this was a meeting, and that's kind of what it looked like.

JD: Yeah. Stuff posted everywhere and stuff on the floor.

SC: Yeah.

JD: A lot of people crammed into a tight space. It looks like [1:00:00] it could—

SC: Well, this was a warehouse, and what we did—it was a funky warehouse—we hung these partitions. We hung these panels, because it was a huge warehouse.

JD: Yeah.

SC: We set up a darkroom.

[Recording stops at 1:00:15 and resumes at 1:00:27]

SC: But we have a panel down there, downstairs, of the staff, and a lot of interior pictures of the office.

JD: Uh-huh, wow. What were gender relations like at the paper?

SC: What kind of relations?

JD: Gender. I mean, relations between—

SC: Oh, gender!

JD: Between men and women.

SC: Oh, well, that didn't get really dicey until women's liberation.

JD: Right.

SC: And then, it got really, really, really dicey. Really, really, incredibly explosive. Nan and Gene split up. People started having affairs. You know, there I was, married with a kid, so, you know, I was out of the picture in terms of the free floating of stuff. [Laughs]

JD: Right.

SC: Yeah, it was pretty wild! And, you know, the Women's Caucus formed.

JD: Within the paper?

SC: Within the paper, and we put out a statement, and we challenged the role that we were playing, and, you know, that was very positive. But that came about the same time as women's liberation, so that was even more of a very activist—.

JD: When was that statement, roughly? Was that—?

SC: Becky Hamilton wrote it, and it was basically, um, a statement talking about the worth of women, and we're not going to be oppressed, and we're sisters now, [laughs] and all that kind of stuff.

JD: Right.

SC: I mean, it's down there in the exhibit if you ever want to—or you can go look in the paper. We had a whole bunch of things happen. Gay liberation happened. I mean, women's liberation happened, and gay liberation happened. The same thing—that was a really incredibly explosive time because, like, all these people, wow, became gay, came out!

JD: Staff members?

SC: Yeah! Yeah, and also, we got all tied up with the Venceremos Brigade.

JD: The Venceremos Brigade, right.

SC: A lot of people went on the Venceremos Brigade.

JD: Those were the trips to Cuba, right?

SC: Right. And a lot—that one Venceremos Brigade, people went in as straight and came back, [laughs] they were all gay.

JD: [Laughs]

SC: I mean, it was like very explosive. And then, Alpha—Atlanta feminists, Atlanta lesbian feminists, whatever, they became very, you know, if you're not gay, you don't—I mean, very, you know, ultra, and they kind of went off. A lot of people went off. Marriages split up. Howard and Anne split. Nan and Gene split up. Gene and Pam split up.

JD: It's interesting, the underground press, I mean, it's like a lot of these activist movements, there was a kind of a macho ethos to some parts of the—.

SC: Oh! Oh, yeah!

JD: Of that, and it's supposed to be the new enlightened form of journalism, but there was, you know, these kind of archetypes of the tough male journalist.

SC: Oh, yeah.

JD: The confrontational aspect.

SC: But that was also true in—that came out in political style. Political style—SDS, and when SDS came over and took over SSOC, basically, and that huge conflict—I mean, it was all macho stuff, Klonsky and all those people.

JD: That was the national conflict you mean, or in Atlanta?

SC: Well, the conference was here in Atlanta. And a lot of people, they just came and [makes slashing sound] yeah.

JD: Oh, right. I do think Bob Hall was talking about that. And that was, yeah, basically, SSOC was forced to disband, right, for not—?

SC: Well, they were not forced to disband. They just kind of fell apart.

JD: They were publicly castigated at the conference for not hewing to the SDS line.

SC: Yeah, it was really—the whole thing was very nasty, yeah.

JD: And were those national SDS people, or were those Georgia State—?

SC: Michael Klonsky? Yeah!

JD: Okay.

SC: And that's when the left was just smashing into smithereens. And then,

[1:05:00] SDS—the Weathermen split up with RYM II.

JD: Right.

SC: That was the whole time.

JD: This was circa [19]69, [19]70.

SC: Yeah, that's right. And, basically, they were coming down here to get membership to—because they were basically raiding. I think they were raiding.

JD: Um-hmm. I'm interested in the, I guess, progressive media landscape in Atlanta.

SC: And I would say: *What* progressive media landscape?

JD: [Laughs] Right. There wasn't a lot, but you mentioned Barbara Joye.

SC: Except for WRFG.

JD: Right, and so, it's interesting. I didn't know that Barbara Joye, one of the founders, along with Harlon Joye, of WRFG community radio station had worked at the *Bird*, and I hadn't known that actually. And, yeah, what was the relationship between WRFG and the *Bird*?

SC: Well, she went off. I mean, she did a lot for the *Bird*. And she's really a very productive—was a very productive person. And kind of—I mean, when we did that exhibit, we went through all of the papers. And it was really good because you could see

that some areas you downplayed certain people's role or whatever. But she did a lot of good stuff, a lot of good stuff. She's always been very—a real worker person. But when they started putting WRFG together, she really didn't—I don't know. I think my memory is that she didn't do that much on the *Bird* anymore.

JD: Right. So, were those two outlets in competition?

SC: No! No, no, no, never competition. Never!

JD: Or did they compliment each other?

SC: And first of all, WRFG took—oh, my God! WRFG had such a struggle!

JD: Yeah. I mean, a radio station—.

SC: I mean, they were just like—ugh! So many watts. Nobody listened to them. It went on for a long, long, long time. I mean, the *Bird* was a splash. *Boom!* You know, and from the very beginning, went from biweekly to weekly, and then, pretty soon we were selling twenty thousand papers on the street and we were, you know, all over the world, and dah-dah-dah. WRFG was not—[laughs] it was not like that.

JD: Um-hmm. You know, it was interesting, as you were pointing out, WRFG still exists. And so, you know, the fact that it grew so slowly, maybe in the long run that was—

SC: Well, they don't have the marketing—they never had the marketing problems that we had, you know. They don't take advertisement. It's listener sponsored.

JD: You had advertisements in the very first issue. Was it hard to get advertisements?

SC: Well, it was always a conflict for us to get advertisements, because a lot of people didn't want to have anything to do with the corporate structure at all, were

totally—were anti-corporate. So, and then, we went through a period of, you know, “What kind of ads are we going to take?” Even though we had—that was a silly argument, because we hardly had any, [laughs] and so, we took almost all of them. But there was a period at women’s liberation when we started not accepting what we considered sexist ads, and that happened mostly around the classifieds.

JD: Right. I think I saw something about that. The classifieds were often men seeking women for x, y, and z.

SC: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, that ended that.

JD: Yeah. But it sounds like advertisements from hippie businesses were typically permissible.

SC: Yeah, and the thing about hippie businesses, a lot of them, as you would imagine, we had trouble getting our money. [Laughs]

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, the money thing was a big problem. “What do you mean? You’re a hippie. What are you talking about we have to pay your bill? What are you talking about? Isn’t this a free—?” You know, blah-blah-blah.

JD: Uh-huh, right. And they often—also, those same businesses were selling your paper, and so there was a relationship there to maintain.

SC: Yeah.

JD: And so—

SC: Now, we did have—with lots of businesses, we exchanged services. Like we would get—[speaking about an ad?] that’s in the black area.

JD: University Bookstore? Now, is that, “black books”, was that connected to AU?

SC: I don’t know. I can’t remember. So then, when we started getting radio ads, I mean, music ads, that was very helpful.

JD: Yeah. Those are big revenue.

SC: Right.

JD: I mean, Atlantic Records, A&M Records, RCA.

SC: But, see, Twelfth Gate—we would get free tickets.

JD: Okay. [1:10:00]

SC: For the ads. We would get free tickets. Merry-Go-Round, we would get stuff. There was a movie theater called the Film Forum, I think, and we would get movie tickets for that.

JD: Okay, so you got some other free stuff that came—?

SC: In exchange for ads.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Yeah. And then, that was available to people who worked on the *Bird*.

JD: Uh-huh.

SC: Yeah, we made that available to anybody. And we got a lot of free music. We weren’t that much into music, but other people, you know, they got the records.

JD: Yeah. Was there any connection to African American media? I think you mentioned one African American person who worked at the paper. Were there any—yeah, I guess that’s kind of several questions.

SC: Well, *Atlanta Daily World*.

JD: Right.

SC: But other than that, as far as I know, there was no—.

JD: There was also the *Atlanta Inquirer*.

SC: Okay. But they were straight presses.

JD: Okay. And so, you really didn't have much—no contact.

SC: No, very little contact.

JD: And were there other African Americans who worked at the station, or at the paper, excuse me?

SC: It was always a struggle.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Always a struggle. Oh, here's—this is—see this short, see this paper right here?

JD: Um-hmm.

SC: This is New Orleans. This is when we went to New Orleans and we did this.

JD: Oh, okay. Right.

SC: You can tell because it's small.

JD: Yeah. Why do you think it was a struggle, because actually the *Bird* reports a lot on race issues and race relations?

SC: Because [mic bumps around] because of the whole split between the white and the black movement, Black Power.

JD: Right. And that was really coming to a head in Atlanta in exactly these years, I think.

SC: Well, it came before that.

JD: Yeah.

SC: That happened before the paper started.

JD: Right.

SC: So, a lot of these people—Howard, Nan, Gene—they all worked in SNCC.

JD: Right. And that SSOC really was—SSOC was supposed to be a white organization that complemented SNCC, right?

SC: Well, SNCC kicked white people out.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And so, the white people formed SSOC. So, in that—Black Power, or, you know, “We’re not going to work with white people,” was all through—.

JD: Right.

SC: So, it was, you know, pretty hard to—I mean, and some people said, “Hey, we can’t put out a paper without—if we don’t have any black people. We can’t do this.” Well, then that means you don’t do it.

JD: Yeah. And who was the one black guy that you mentioned, Reggie—?

SC: Reggie Mitchell.

JD: Okay. Did he work at the paper for a while?

SC: He worked at the paper for a while. And then, he was in business, in a moving business with my husband.

JD: Okay.

SC: Hmm, Reggie Mitchell, nice guy. I don’t think he really did too much.

JD: Yeah, it’s interesting—.

SC: Also, Atlanta is like a really, really—and it still is—a center of pan-Africanism. [Laughs]

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, *still*, culturally and politically, pan-Africanism is like, wow, it's—you know, that's a hard one.

JD: Yeah. Institute of the Black World, Vincent Harding, I think that started in [19]69.

SC: Institute of the Black World, right.

JD: You know, someone who was interesting who passed away—I don't know if you knew him—Ebon Dooley.

SC: Oh, yeah, WRFG.

JD: He worked at RFG, right? And I learned a little bit about him because he had helped to operate the Timbuktu Bookstore.

SC: Yes!

JD: And so, I think maybe I can learn more about him from Barbara, but he seems like an interesting figure who had a foot in both worlds. But he was not the norm.

SC: Well, he deliberately joined WRFG, and you can get the history better from her, and brought in black people into that station.

JD: Right.

SC: And so, they were always much more successfully integrated than the *Bird*.

JD: It's a very interesting model, RFG, because, I mean, even to this day, there's a bluegrass show, and then there's a reggae show, and it's one of the few—maybe it's the only station in town that really has a multiracial staff in a really significant way.

SC: Pretty good radio station!

JD: Yeah! [Laughs] And [1:15:00] I think most alternative activist institutions of the era tended to either be almost all-white or almost all-black.

SC: College radio stations.

JD: For example.

SC: Yeah.

JD: By and large all-white, except for the ones that were at historically black colleges, and they were all-black.

SC: Yeah.

JD: Yeah. Well, you know, an interesting—we've gone through most of what I wanted to talk about, but one thing I also wanted to ask about was the election of Maynard Jackson. Were you still at the newspaper at that point?

SC: Um-hmm.

JD: And from what I could tell, it seems like the paper was in favor of his election, but I wasn't sure. That's been an interesting—.

SC: Well, you know, we didn't really—I mean, we had these big struggles about whether we would support electoral politics, okay, big struggles. And Howard was a big McGovern person.

JD: Right. In fact, I read that he ran McGovern's Georgia campaign.

SC: Well, I don't know about that. Who knows? [Laughs] But he always pushed that.

JD: Yeah.

SC: He was, you know, to the right of probably everybody else on the paper.

JD: Uh-huh, still left but not—but in a more traditional—.

SC: But, *but* you have to understand that Howard really did not—I mean, he played a fantastic support in the very beginning, but in terms of the day-to-day, he was not there.

JD: Right.

SC: I mean, he did some articles. I mean, he was really big on the JFK assassination and some stuff. But he was very—his articles were always late, you know, that kind of just—oh, my God, no!

JD: Yeah. You mentioned some stuff about, or I brought up *Southern Exposure* earlier today. What was your connection to that? I mean, that's interesting because that's also in Atlanta, and it's around the same time, a little bit later, early seventies, I think 1972 may have been the first *Southern Exposure*.

SC: No, earlier than that, I think. I have some issues here. Okay, so there's a woman that you may—well, you know Sue Thrasher.

JD: Yeah, not personally, but I know of her.

SC: Well, she—we lived next to her on Ninth Street, next to Tenth Street.

JD: Wow, okay.

SC: And then we bought this house together with her, okay, so she was a very big part of our life. [Laughs]

JD: Yeah.

SC: And still is!

JD: Where is she now?

SC: She's in Amherst.

JD: Okay. And so—.

SC: Okay, so she knew Bob Hall, knew Jackie Hall, because she came from the Institute for Policy Studies.

JD: Right.

SC: Okay, so she came down here.

JD: And so had Steve Wise.

SC: And she knew Steve, although Steve came down here much earlier. And Sue came when we were living on Ninth, Tom and I were living on Ninth Street, and that's how we met her. She lived next-door to us in a duplex. And then, we moved into this house, because we got kicked out of that house. So, when the Institute for Policy Studies decided to do *Southern Exposure*, they needed somebody to do the layout, and I did that.

JD: Now, the Institute of Southern Studies was an outgrowth of the Institute for Policy Studies, right?

SC: Right. And so, they had an office downtown, on 88th and Walton, and that's where Sue worked. She came down to work in that, okay. And Gene Guerrero was in the ACLU in that same building. [Laughs]

JD: Okay.

SC: So, I mean, everybody knows each other, alright? So, that's how we met Bob Hall and Jackie, although Steve already knew them. Steve would have been here already.

JD: Um-hmm. But were you saying that you were involved with the layout of the first *Southern Exposure*.

SC: Yeah! Yeah, happened in the front room.

JD: Okay. So, you were—were you just lending help?

SC: Do you mean did I get money for it?

JD: Well, no, I guess I was curious, yeah, how else were you involved in the paper? Was this just a friend showing another friend this is like how you do layout and stuff like that?

SC: No, I did it.

JD: Okay.

SC: I did it. So, I think they didn't have anybody else to do it. And I was—I ended up doing layout with another woman—primarily, we were in charge of layout for the *Bird*—Linda Howard. You know, we were in charge of layout for several years. So, we created a certain style, so to speak. And so, they needed someone to do this. [1:20:00] Do I have any training in this? No, I had no training in it at all.

JD: But you'd been doing it for four years, or however many years—.

SC: But I had been doing paper stuff.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Okay, but I hadn't—so, visually, I didn't have any experience in that at all, or training, or anything. But, you know, that was part of the whole underlying current of the paper and of the movement. You know, you just do it.

JD: Right. Well, I was just thinking—the reason why I asked is it's just interesting to think about the *Bird* as an incubator for other media.

SC: Yes, yes.

JD: You mentioned *Kudzu*, Barbara Joye, so that's WRFG, and now, *Southern Exposure*.

SC: Well, that was—we didn't—I mean, we helped them. She was around. We were much more—yeah.

JD: Well, even if the *Bird* didn't help start WRFG, she was getting experience in alternative media through the *Bird* that she then transferred to a different medium.

SC: Yeah, yeah. But, you know, Harlon, her husband, is older than us, and he goes *way back*. He's a pretty interesting guy.

JD: And he's still in Atlanta, isn't he?

SC: He's still in Atlanta and (emcees) a show every Sunday night, this fantastic show.

JD: Yeah, I heard he still does a show. I don't know if I've—well, I've probably heard it, but I didn't know it was him when I heard it.

SC: Yeah, "Fox's Minstrel Show". It comes on at seven o'clock, I think, seven o'clock. We listen to it mostly every Sunday. He's an amazing guy.

JD: Yeah, I think—.

SC: He comes from the north. He comes from—.

JD: New York, right?

SC: And Barbara comes from New York, too, so they're Yankees. [Laughs]
Okay, so but he was like earlier kind of movement stuff.

JD: Yeah. I guess—.

SC: Actually, he's in this picture right here. [Walks away from mic] Here's Sue. This is on the beach. Here's Sue. And this is my son, this is my husband, these are my grandkids. Anyway, and this guy right here, Doyle Niemann, he lived with Sue next-door

to us. They were not lovers or anything like that. And he now is pretty big in Maryland politics.

JD: Okay.

SC: This is my husband, Tom,.

JD: Hi.

Tom Coffin: Hey, how you doing?

JD: Josh Davis.

TC: Jeff?

JD: Josh.

TC: Josh. How you doing?

JD: Yeah, nice to meet you. What was his name? Niemann? [Sound of water spraying]

SC: Doyle?

JD: Yeah.

SC: Niemann.

JD: Okay.

SC: And he's in the House of Delegates or something like that.

JD: In Virginia.

SC: No, Maryland.

JD: Maryland, you said. I'm sorry.

SC: Yeah. And he has played a very interesting role up there. Been doing it for a long time now. So, he—when a lot of us kind dropped out of the paper at the end, he was like very much at the end.

JD: Yeah, okay. Well, that actually, yeah, that's bringing us forward.

SC: And then, he left the paper to go to work on—oh, what's the name of that paper? *In These Times*—no, not— yeah, *In These Times*.

JD: Right, a Chicago paper.

SC: Chicago, and he didn't last long at all. And then, he went to Maryland and got involved in politics and played a fantastic role, you know, just progressive.

JD: Um-hmm. How did the *Bird* get all this national attention? That's what I'm kind of curious about. I've seen various references to Walter Cronkite referencing it, or Mike Wallace.

SC: Oh, he came down and did a—Mike Wallace, they came down and did a show.

JD: On the *Bird*?

SC: The *Bird*, yeah.

JD: That was for "60 Minutes"?

SC: Yeah.

JD: How did that come to be?

SC: I don't know. You know, we had this big discussion about who was going to be our representative. And like Nan was our—you know, we—I remember those discussions, that we wanted to make sure we had to have a woman, who was going to be a spokesperson, and all that kind of stuff.

JD: I mean, that's an amazing—.

SC: And Tom has some pictures of Mike Wallace in the *Bird* office.

JD: Now, was that piece just on the *Bird* or on the underground press?

SC: I don't know. I can't remember.

JD: And so, you don't have footage of that news piece, or that "60 Minutes" piece?

SC: No.

JD: I wonder if they still have a copy, CBS?

SC: I'm sure they do.

JD: That would be great. You know, Vanderbilt has a television news archive that goes back three or four decades. I don't know if it goes back to 1968. But it goes back many, many years. And they're one of the biggest repositories. Wow, I mean, that's an amazing—that must have been—.

SC: They have copies of our paper, too.

JD: Vanderbilt does? Yeah. That must have been excited but also [1:25:00] complicated to get recognition from the straight media.

SC: Nothing happened. Yeah, but nothing happened. It didn't change our lives. It didn't do anything, except we had a big struggle about who was going to be interviewed and blah-blah-blah. I mean, that's the way most of those things turn out. You know, you go through this big struggle about how you're going to deal with this thing, but does it make any impact on your life? Did it change the paper? Did we get any more sales? Nothing!

JD: Oh, so that didn't happen?

SC: No!

JD: No more subscriptions or—?

SC: No! Uh-uh. So, maybe you, from your standpoint, you see that we got a lot of national.

JD: Yeah. Well, that's interesting.

SC: I mean, the things that really impacted us were, I mean, the harassment and the firebombing. The firebombing was really devastating to us. And then, the fact that we couldn't find a—nobody would rent to us.

JD: And the firebombing was on Westminster, right?

SC: Westminster.

JD: Did everything burn down? Like, what were the actual—?

SC: Well, first of all, we didn't have very much. But we lost a lot of our records. Now, I mean, thinking back, you know, we lost a lot of our records. But, then just the hassle of everything being destroyed. I mean, I have copies. We had archival copies. We saved fifteen for everyone, and those ones were burned. Even some of these, you can tell have come from the fire. They're burned. But just the disruptive thing, just the horrible disruptive thing. We had to—how do we do the next one? We didn't have—I think we had our IBM Composer, but we didn't have our papers. We didn't—it was just very disruptive. And then, we lost people.

JD: Right. Attrition and just the stress and—.

SC: Yeah, it was pretty horrendous.

JD: And it seems like that—I mean, obviously, that really took a toll on the longterm operations of the paper, just the constant harassment.

SC: It was much more at the beginning. The other thing which is really—I mean, it's just true in life, and that is that, you know, when you're a young organization, and

people are in the—just think of how many times you've changed in your life, right? And it's like people came through and went on.

JD: Yeah. It was a way station to somewhere else.

SC: And it was like a constant turnover. I mean, I showed you these people and, with pride, say these people stayed on, stayed on, stayed on. And yet, when a lot of the people left, it was huge because they gave so much.

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, like when Gene Guerrero left, and he did circulation, and he was a really hardworking person. When he left, I mean, you know, how do you fill that?

JD: Right. I mean, it wasn't a huge institution. It was a core of twelve or fifteen people, and it sounds like even within that core, there were certain people who formed the hardcore.

SC: Yeah, but that's true of every—you know, every organization with young people.

JD: Right.

SC: Because people move on in their lives. You know, they go on. They have kids and they get a job and they go on. So that's, you know, really hard. And you can't really—you don't have contracts with people, and they're doing it out of the goodness of their heart.

JD: Right.

SC: Right. So, but if you've ever been in any political organization, that's just a (hard/heart) thing.

JD: Yeah. or even—I mean, I worked at a radio station before and just keeping that on the air.

SC: Oh? Well, you know.

JD: The people who kept that station on the air were six or seven core people.

SC: There you go.

JD: And, yeah, all kinds of organizations. One like, you know, Bob Hall's organization in North Carolina. There is a core of people doing that, but he's really the single person who has kept that thing running for (1:29:24) years.

SC: [Laughs] I can't believe it. I believe it!

JD: Yeah.

SC: Yeah. And even today in Atlanta, you know, we have a Moral Monday, right?

JD: I've heard that picked up here, yeah.

SC: So, I see Nan. I see Goodman. I see Jim Skillman. There's me and Tom. Barbara Joye is always there, you know, and there's probably five or six other people from the *Bird*.

JD: Oh? Well, that's really—.

SC: I see those people like twice a week. I mean, they're still there. They're still—. [1:30:00]

JD: That's interesting, because I've only been hearing about it here recently. So, you were following what was happening in North Carolina?

SC: Oh, yeah!

JD: Yeah. I'll have to show you a picture really fast.

SC: Except people say, oh—we had a very tough time. The NAACP did not play a very active role here. You did stuff with them?

JD: Yeah. Well, I got arrested, so—[laughs].

SC: Oh, you got arrested? Okay.

JD: So, a little bit! I just—this is just apropos of—it's a random coincidence, but I just ran into Reverend Barber at the airport two days ago, actually. [Laughs]

SC: Oh, yeah! He was great when he came down here and spoke. He was so inspiring and really pulled people together.

JD: And he obviously is really important for that movement, but they have a core of—it is a mass movement, but I think they have a core of ten, twelve, fifteen people who are *really* important for making that thing happen. And you bring up how the NAACP here wasn't as open. And I think that's what happened in our state, is that he and other people, a group of people kind of almost staged like a progressive coup of the state NAACP. I mean, the NAACP has always been left of center, but in some states it's much—traditionally it's been very timid in certain states.

SC: Right, right.

JD: And they basically helped to get Barber elected to the head of the state's NAACP.

SC: Oh, okay.

JD: I mean, he helped himself but there was a kind of conscious effort, maybe as much as ten years ago. But the Moral Monday Movement is really the fruit of that transition in leadership. And if it weren't for him and a few other people, that probably wouldn't have happened, because that wasn't the way the NAACP was before.

SC: It's really, really important.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And it looks like South Carolina is starting something, and Florida is starting something.

JD: Right. South Carolina, what is it called there?

SC: Tuesday something?

JD: Something Tuesdays, yeah.

SC: Truthful Tuesdays.

JD: Truthful Tuesdays, right.

SC: But, I mean, if it pulls people together, and, you know, so many times people are working in fragmented—it pulled a new coalition here together. That's the most important thing.

JD: I mean, this is a broader topic, but it's interesting, this kind of nexus of, or the Southern progressive networks. I think, the last thirty or forty years, connections between the Research Triangle and Atlanta have been really important, And, you know, that's a transition that *Southern Exposure* took, was going up there—just because that's where Jackie Hall happened to get a job—but, you know, I think there's been a lot of interaction over the years between those areas. There's obviously other progressive hot spots in the South, but those two in particular—that's what you're seeing now.

SC: Do you know Leah Wise?

JD: Yeah. I don't know her personally, but there's another example, right? Because you was in Atlanta and then moved to—.

SC: Yeah, she was really good friends with—she worked in the Institute for Southern Studies, I think, yeah.

JD: And so, that's kind of an important—yeah.

SC: But she was married to Stanley Wise, who was very big in the Civil Rights Movement.

JD: Okay, and I believe she's in Durham still.

SC: Yeah, she's in Durham, I think.

JD: So, I guess, in brief, how would you summarize the decline of the paper?

SC: The what?

JD: The decline.

SC: The decline?

JD: The later years—just in your own words, why did it have to end?

SC: Well, a lot of people say we didn't have a business plan. I think that's pretty good.

JD: Okay.

SC: I mean, because, you know, you can only run on love for so long.

JD: Right.

SC: And nobody really had sat down—and, first of all, a lot of people were opposed to that, okay, so that was hugely a big problem. But we know that times change, and the war was over, and the hippies were no longer selling our paper. I mean, just things changed.

JD: Um-hmm. So, the decline of the Strip on Fourteenth Street, that also meant—did that mean the market for your paper was smaller?

SC: Oh, yeah!

JD: Or just that you couldn't find someone to go out there?

SC: Yeah.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And then, you know, then there were other issues like there's this guy, I forget his name, he's a Zionist guy. He had the distribution of, the paper distribution for the city. This happened pretty early in our history. And Gene and Susie, a woman named Susie (Teller), went over to Palestine in the early—I forget when—and did all these articles about Palestine. And he was a Zionist and he wouldn't carry our paper. [1:35:00]

JD: Wow.

SC: You know, he had a monopoly of the distribution: the airport, the bookstores.

JD: Okay, he was the person who stocked them.

SC: So, there was that kind of thing. And then, there was people moving on in their life, which was a big factor.

JD: Sure.

SC: I mean, by then, I had two kids, and Tom had to get a job and he didn't work on the paper anymore. I mean, he couldn't, because we were faced—so many people were faced with forced integration into the straight society because you had to live.

JD: Economic survival.

SC: Economic survival.

JD: Because were you ever a paid employee of the paper?

SC: Oh, I think I got some money at some point, but it was just—.

JD: [Laughs] Okay. It was never a source of full time—?

SC: We never gave more than—I think we never gave more than twenty-five dollars a week.

JD: Wow, okay.

SC: I mean, there was really never any money in the paper.

JD: Were you with the paper the entire time of that first run?

SC: Do you mean from the beginning of the paper?

JD: From [19]68 to [19]76, were you with—?

SC: Right, except that my role was very different at the end.

JD: Right.

SC: Because by then I had two kids and, you know, it was very different.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And by then, you know, we had gone through a new kind of like almost all the people who started the paper were not really there anymore. People had moved on.

JD: Right. It's almost a full different set of people, it sounds like.

SC: Right.

JD: I mean, eight years is a long time. I think eight years in that period was an especially long time, kind of politically, because so much stuff changed.

SC: And they were trying to make it in that new economic climate. And so, they did things. I mean, they went back to biweekly, and then they did the quarter-fold, and they did more of a, you know, a magazine format, trying to make it. So, that went on for probably the last two years, which was very painful.

JD: Yeah. I think those years, that was a real period of pain and decline for, you know, the left in general, but especially these institutions—alternative media or

businesses. I mean, the economy got terrible, and then, also, the politics were changing, and there wasn't as much interest—you know, there wasn't a Strip anymore, there wasn't—

SC: Right. People still smoked dope, but they never went to head shops anymore.

JD: Right. The counterculture was much less politicized, and people got burnt out, and they had to get jobs. Were you part of the revival?

SC: Yeah.

JD: That was [19]84-85?

SC: Yeah.

JD: Yeah, so what was that—?

SC: And some of the same people: Tom, myself, Gene, Nan, I don't know, a guy named Neill Herring, who has worked on the Capitol as a lobbyist for the Sierra Club for twenty, thirty years. I mean, you know, a fantastic resource down there.

JD: Um-hmm.

SC: It just never worked out. It was more integrated. We had more African Americans. But it was—people didn't understand where to go, in terms of economics. They were unclear about the politics. It just didn't go—just couldn't—didn't know how to make it. I think we did nine issues.

JD: And there also were—.

SC: It was painful.

JD: *Creative Loafing* existed by then, right?

SC: *Creative Loafing* came much earlier. *Creative Loafing* were really nasty to the *Bird*. They red-baited us.

JD: Really?

SC: Oh, yeah, and took a lot of our ads, music ads.

JD: How did—red-baited you in printed stories?

SC: No.

JD: Or what did they do?

SC: “You don’t want to advertise in this communist paper.”

JD: Ah, wow.

SC: Oh, they very deliberately—*Creative Loafing* was pretty negative.

JD: And it was was founded in Atlanta, right?

SC: Yeah.

JD: Oh, I didn’t know that.

SC: They didn’t have any politics. They were not a political paper.

JD: Yeah. I mean, they’re kind of in this tradition of vaguely liberal, free entertainment weeklies.

SC: Right, right. And they were free.

JD: Right. I didn’t know if they were free from the beginning. Okay.

SC: They were free. We were never free because we didn’t want to be free. We made that decision to charge money from the very beginning.

JD: People probably took you more seriously.

SC: And also, you got a second class postage permit and all that kind of stuff.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Yeah. So, our main goal was we were a political paper. I don’t think *Creative Loafing* ever defined themselves as a political paper. [1:40:00]

JD: Yeah.

SC: But before they came along, there was no place to put those radio ads, put those record ads. And then, when they came along, *whewww!*

JD: And that's really important. I mean, I just saw a story from *Business Week* from the late sixties, and it was a story about record companies and other companies advertising with underground newspapers.

SC: That's right.

JD: And this is a three to four-page story. And I think they even mention the *Bird* in there. And this is, you know, in a New York—.

SC: See, if you look at [19]69 and [19]70, which probably [19]69 and [19]70 were the most—you know, we were doing thirty-two pages and we had our highest print runs during those times.

JD: Twenty-five thousand?

SC: About twenty-five and even, maybe even got up higher than that.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Full-page record ads in the back.

JD: Yeah.

SC: You know, and that would almost pay the whole printing cost. Amazing! And we were the only place—I mean, for so long, we were the only place for people to show their photographs, for people to come in and show their graphics. If you go back and do the whole thing, we have—you probably don't remember this, but when you go back and look at the exhibit, we did this whole thing on covers. And those covers were—that was

donated art. Okay, so how did we get that? We'd get that because we were the *only place* that people—the only place that people could put their work.

So, it was—in some ways, it was like—we saw that almost from the very beginning, that people just, like who were artists, they came forward. Because, up until that point, there was never—they couldn't put their work in the *Journal-Constitution*. I mean, that's another thing about the press. That straight press was not open for all this huge talent that was bottled up and the *Bird* opened up. And because we had an open structure and because we didn't pay any money—you know, that was from the get-go, that was the relationship: you give freely—it was very exciting and very creative. And because people weren't, like, didn't—you know, “You have to go through this process in order to get this graphic in, or you have to see this person.” You know what I mean? It was *open*.

JD: Very flexible model.

SC: Yeah.

JD: Yeah, it's interesting thinking about it. I mean, you know, I think the *Bird* is known as a political paper. It's known as, you know, something that was for the counterculture. But also thinking about, you know, just cultural expression—art and drawings and sketchings—and how this vehicle, this new like platform for these forms of expression, came out of nowhere. It didn't come out of nowhere, but it was unprecedented in the city, and now, yeah, it's just a new vehicle that wasn't there.

SC: And a lot of underground press did not do that.

JD: Right.

SC: They were like either total hippie thing and just ignored local culture and local news, or they were so serious about local news and then didn't cover culture.

JD: Right. And that seems to be what made the *Bird* a really strong paper is that it did have a good balance of both the New Left stuff, and the countercultural stuff, *and* kind of, I guess, more traditional cultural stuff, whatever, art, and there's stuff about dance in there, and there's stuff about drama.

SC: Yeah, there's stuff about dance in there, but that stuff about dance wouldn't be in the *Journal-Constitution*.

JD: Right, exactly! And that's an interesting point, because those aren't hippies, per se, but they were, I guess, what you could call whatever, avant-garde, late sixties culture.

SC: Yes, and a lot of black culture.

JD: Yeah.

SC: Black music, black poetry, black dance, yeah.

JD: Yeah. Well, this has been a great interview. I think—I don't know if you want to conclude with any final thoughts, but, I mean, we've talked for a good chunk of time.

SC: Yeah!

JD: So, thanks so much for having me.

SC: I mean, it was real interesting when we did that exhibit, the fortieth anniversary exhibit, when we looked through all the paper and tried to, you know, organize this huge timespan, and what we came up with. And then, we had the whole thing with covers, you know, and that reflects. And then, if you want to look at—there's another thing that really became very obvious to a lot of us, and that is that we talked

about everything. We talked about baking bread and having gardens and bicycling.

[1:45:00] And, you know, was there *anything* that we did not talk about? You know, vaginal diseases and home births and breast feeding and, you know, unions and—you know.

But *now*, you know, a lot of that stuff is—[slides over a *Journal-Constitution*?] like this, okay, it's there. See, first of all, there's color there now. There was never color there.

JD: In the *Journal Constitution*, yeah.

SC: In all the straight papers *now*!

JD: Right!

SC: This was—all the things that we talked about, that was not legitimate subject matter when we were growing up.

JD: Right.

SC: So, there's an article here about, you know, children doing tasks, and here's race, and here's gardens, and dah-dah-dah-dah-dah.

JD: Yeah! That's an interesting topic, how the underground press, how the *Bird* shaped conventional media, and it may have been a very slow process, but over the years.

SC: I think the underground press was incredible! First of all, we didn't—look at this! It's—what do you call that? “Ragged right”?

JD: Oh, okay, yeah.

SC: I mean, that came in.

JD: As opposed to just blocks?

SC: Right.

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, I went—I told you I was interviewed by this one woman who's interested in graphics, and I laid out about five major things that we impacted. One was color; another one was this, you know; another one was the importance of all these lifestyle things, in terms of interspersing. But if you look at all this, you look at this, and then you look at the paper in 1967 and 1968, I mean, it's just like, "Whoa! Purple? Look at that! My God!"

JD: You're right. That would have been absolutely—

SC: I remember when we put purple on the cover. I mean, *purple*! My God!

JD: That would have been unthinkable.

SC: Right. It would have been just amazing.

JD: That's a really interesting point.

SC: So, I mean, the impact of—I mean, that's not only the underground press. I'm not going to say we can take that. But that was the whole impact of a *lifestyle*. I mean, I don't think we did anything new in the paper. That's one thing that occurred to me when we finished going over the fortieth. You know, we didn't do anything new. You know, not new, like your dissertation is like new research, right?

JD: Supposedly. [Laughs]

SC: Supposedly. We didn't do anything new in the *Bird*. But, basically, we took a lot of what was in the culture and brought it out.

JD: Well, it was certainly new for Atlanta.

SC: Right, but it wasn't, like something that wasn't like really created. You understand what I'm saying?

JD: It wasn't unprecedented.

SC: Right.

JD: But the grouping of the elements was very distinctive.

SC: Yes, yeah, that's right. Basically, we were in some ways a distributor of a new culture, a new lifestyle.

JD: Yeah. Hmm, that's an interesting way to think about it.

SC: I mean, how did people learn about those—you know, the Good Food Movement and the back-to-the-land movement, which I'm really involved in right now, we were doing that forty years ago.

JD: Right, yeah.

SC: Rodale and all that kind of stuff.

JD: Yeah. And that's one of the chapters of the book I'm writing is about the history of the natural foods business. And, I mean, you've got Erewhon cereal over here. Erewhon was the first really successful natural foods distributor nationally. And—

SC: Oh, the other institution that started early, I think in [19]72, was Sevananda Natural Foods Coop.

JD: Yeah, right. And I actually don't know a whole lot about the history of Sevananda and I'd like to know more.

SC: Well, it's pretty much been destroyed, but—.

JD: Who were the—who would be someone good to talk to about that? Do you know someone who was around in the early years?

SC: Well, we've just gone through this incredible—after I retired, I decided I wanted to do something totally different. So, I went to work for Sevananda as a working member in produce. [Laughs] It was really fun. I'm really glad I did that.

JD: And your mosaics are over there, also, right?

SC: Yeah, my mosaics are over there, yeah.

JD: That's cool.

SC: Yeah. There's a bunch of people you could talk to about that. If you want to, I can send you some names of people who—.

JD: Maybe I'll shoot you an email about that.

SC: Yeah.

JD: That's interesting.

SC: And do you know Cliff Kuhn?

JD: Yeah, I do know him.

SC: I wrote Cliff, and I said, "Cliff, [1:50:00] your graduate students are always looking for places to do research on. And nobody has come to Sevananda, and there's all this. There's all these papers, and there's all this documentation."

JD: Oh!

SC: "And there are all these people who have been there for thirty years, and blah-blah-blah-blah. And why is it that nobody has paid any attention to this?"

JD: Maybe I really should get in—yeah, I would be interested. You know, it's—do you remember *Mother Earth News*?

SC: Oh, sure!

JD: They did a story on Sevananda in the late seventies.

SC: Oh, I bet they did!

JD: And I've got a clipping of that somewhere, and it's pretty cool because there's—

SC: Yeah, Sevananda is *really* interesting.

JD: So, they still have papers there? Well, yeah, that would be—

SC: Oh, they have papers there. I mean, I'm talking about documents. A huge struggle going on—I think that's just about ended now. Do you listen to “Radio Free Activists” Monday from twelve to one?

JD: Is that on WRFG?

SC: Um-hmm.

JD: You know, usually, since I'm in North Carolina, I don't listen to RFG, although they have stuff on the internet, and I should just listen to that.

SC: Um-hmm, you can get it on the computer. Anyway, that's a—I mean, Brian, who does that show, was in Sevananda for many years.

JD: Yeah? Well, yeah, that would be—I mean, as I'm doing more, as I'm trying to—

SC: But the Good Food Movement, that's a whole other thing. I mean, that's really—I mean, the Sevananda really is a backdrop for that.

JD: I agree, though, that there's definitely room for a larger oral history project on that. I mean, [sound of dogs barking] even just the topic of the natural food movement in the South has really been left out of the story, because, you know, companies like Erewhon were in Boston, then there were very famous companies from San Francisco, Seattle.

SC: Right. Well, you really get into the Federation of Southern Coops.

JD: Yeah.

SC: You know about them?

JD: I've heard about it, but I didn't—

SC: Well, the federation is like a whole other—that's black farmers.

JD: Well, that's not connected to the tenant farmers' union?

SC: No, no, no, no! The federation is—uh-uh, no, no.

JD: Okay.

SC: But a woman who worked with them for a long time is just three blocks over.

JD: Okay.

SC: Heather Gray.

JD: Sounds familiar. I mean, *Mother Earth News*, I mean, even that, up in Hendersonville, was founded early seventies.

SC: Yeah. Yeah, we got that paper. We got that—we exchanged stuff. We ran stuff from them.

JD: Yeah. It's interesting to me, just a final thing, is you all had this *Bird* reunion, the fortieth reunion, and it sounds like you had hundreds of people there.

SC: Yeah, a lot of people came!

JD: It sounds like it was a really big gathering.

SC: It was a huge gathering!

JD: Yeah, and that's really impressive that there's still kind of an active alumni association, almost, and you've got the website.

SC: We meet once a year.

JD: Okay. I don't think that's the case—well, I wonder if, you know, *Berkeley Barb* does that.

SC: We have money. We have a treasury. [Laughs]

JD: Uh-huh. See, that's impressive. That level of organization even, you know, is visible on the website, just the fact that—.

SC: But we don't really do anything. I mean, we do. We're meeting in June and we have a dinner and we talk.

JD: Yeah.

SC: And we talk about a treasury and blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. But almost everybody that meets, I mean, like I say, I see those people almost all the time. I see them two times a week.

JD: Yeah.

SC: I mean, it's like it's still small. I mean, people have moved away and dah-dah-dah.

JD: Yeah. Well, that's interesting.

SC: Yeah.

JD: Well, thank you. Yeah, this was—.

[Recording ends at 1:53:47]

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Sally C. Council