



Editor Everett Ray Call in the Emporia Gazette newsroom in the 1970s. Photograph courtesy of the Emporia Gazette.

FORTY YEARS AT THE EMPORIA GAZETTE:

A Conversation with Everett Ray Call

edited by Loren Pennington

For Ray Call, working at the Emporia Gazette was not merely a job; it was an education in journalism. When he started at the Gazette he had no real idea as to the paper's history or reputation and knew little to nothing of its famous editor, William Allen White (then more than ten years dead), though he would work under White's shadow for the rest of his professional life. More importantly, he encountered White's son William Lindsay White, then the editor of the Gazette, and W. L.'s wife Kathrine, and that encounter is the principal subject of this oral history. William Lindsay and Kathrine White, both of whom grew up in Kansas, had gone east to make their way in the media world. There W. L. acquired a considerable reputation for his writings and radio work on World War II. For all intents and purposes they had become easterners, and when they returned to Kansas to take over the Gazette upon the death of William Allen White, they brought their eastern ways west. W. L. and Kathrine carefully and deliberately mentored and attempted to make over in their own eastern image this small-town grandson of Kansas farmers, Ray Call, as he advanced at the Gazette from photographer to reporter to wire editor to city editor to managing editor, and finally to executive editor. But the encounter was not one-sided; Call proved to be an astute observer, both admiring and critical, of the White family, the Emporia Gazette, and Kansas newspaper life.¹

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1. The material published here is part of a series of three Flint Hills Oral History Project interviews with Mr. Everett Ray Call, who resides at 927 W. 24th Avenue in Emporia, Kansas. The interviewer was project director Loren Pennington. Conducted on June 14, July 10, and July 31, 2007, the three interviews took place at the Anderson Library on the former College of Emporia campus. It should be noted at the outset that these interviews were not the project's usual "arms-length" type, as the interviewer and the interviewee have been friends and sometimes neighbors since 1960, and on a few occasions Professor Pennington was involved in the events Call discusses.

Everett Ray Call—“Everett” only to his wife Helen and relatives, “Ray” to everybody else—was born in 1932 in the small southeast Kansas village of Lowe, ten miles west of Sedan and seven miles north of the Oklahoma border. Though his parents lived most of their adult lives in Sedan, the 1,800-person county seat of Chautauqua County, both had grown up on nearby farms. The elder Call contracted polio as a child and was partially paralyzed for the rest of his life, but he chose to ignore the handicap as he worked to provide for his family, and among other things was elected Chautauqua County clerk, a position he held off-and-on for many years. Ray’s mother worked at a number of clerical jobs and at one point was elected county treasurer.

Although the family lived in town, Ray spent many of his younger days on the farms of his grandparents. The Call farm was not especially productive, but it did contain some natural gas deposits. The family spent much of its time drilling for oil, and although these efforts met with little success, Ray gained early experience as a tool dresser and familiarized himself with the southeastern Kansas oil and gas industry. The farm owned by Ray’s maternal grandparents, the Goodes, with its row crops and farm animals, was somewhat more prosperous. Ray spent part of his free time in such tasks as bringing the cows in to be milked, shocking the Kaffir corn, and carrying water to the threshers.

For all his youthful farm and rural Kansas experiences (he even began his elementary education in a country school), Ray grew up mostly in Sedan around the county courthouse. Although he cannot remember the bombing of Pearl Harbor, he spent his later elementary and junior high school days avidly following the battles of World War II in *Life* magazine and in the newsreels at the local movie theater, playing war with his boyhood friends in vacant lots and backyards, and practicing soldier-like drills with the local Boy Scout troop.

Throughout the 1940s, all the high school kids in Sedan worked. One of Ray’s jobs was driving a Model A Ford pickup to make deliveries for a local grocery store. Ray managed to get together enough money to buy his first automobile, an old Model A that was not running, and following his father’s direction, he rebuilt the engine. While in high school, Ray also took up music, “not as a musician, but as a drummer,” as he puts it, and was soon playing in dance bands around the area. It was an avocation (and a moneymaker) he would follow well into his days at the *Emporia Gazette*, and he is fond of remarking that playing with dance bands was the one thing he had in common with William Allen White.² Ray took

2. In his autobiography White remembered, “I began to earn my first real money, in terms of dollars, playing dances with a blind fiddler named Dol Cowley, who was good as fiddlers go, and with a



While in high school Call took up music, “not as a musician,” in his words, “but as a drummer.” It was an avocation (and a moneymaker) he would follow well into his days at the *Emporia Gazette*, and he is fond of remarking that playing with dance bands was the one thing he had in common with his predecessor William Allen White. Here Call plays outside the Emporia Public Library in the 1970s. Photograph courtesy of Everett Ray Call.

his drum lessons from Bunny Garrett, a Sedan old-time jazz drummer, and New Orleans jazz became Ray’s favorite music. On Sunday evenings, he and his friends drove down to the Peru beer joint where they listened to “New Orleans Jazz Club” radio broadcasts and musicians such as Sidney Bechet, Louis Armstrong, and Ked Ory.

It was in high school that Ray first became aware of the girl who was to become his wife. Helen Dalton lived a couple doors down from one of the dozen or so Sedan houses the Call family lived in at one time or another (Ray’s father continually bought, repaired, and resold old houses for a profit). Helen’s family was from a different walk of life than the Calls. Her father,

cornetist named George Yonkman. We played dances in the country, where they took down the beds, moved all the furniture outside except the cookstove, and danced in three rooms—leaving only the cabinet organ which I played to clutter up the floor.” William Allen White, *The Autobiography of William Allen White*, 2nd ed., edited by Sally Foreman Griffith (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), 37.

a prominent attorney, had graduated from the University of Michigan Law School and her mother, a holder of a master's degree, was a teacher at the high school. Health problems forced Helen's father to give up his legal practice, but through her mother's efforts the family continued to live in their large white house near the courthouse, "one of the nicer houses in town," according to Ray.

After high school graduation in 1949, Ray's parents agreed to provide twenty dollars a week so he could attend Coffeyville Junior College, some twenty miles away. He received a thirty-hour teacher's certificate at the end of one year and taught fourth through eighth grade for the next three years. Meanwhile, Ray took an interest in photography, and to bolster his meager income opened a small studio in Sedan that operated on weekends and in the summers. Photography provided another opportunity: he became a stringer for the Coffeyville Journal, which paid him for taking pictures of local events. Always on the lookout for part-time employment, Ray joined the Army Reserve in Sedan, and by the end of his third year of teaching, his name had come up for the Korean War draft, so he volunteered for active duty. This was in 1953, and on his first leave from basic training at Fort Riley, Ray and Helen became engaged; they married in 1954.

By that time the fighting in Korea was over, and Ray was posted to Alaska to serve out his enlistment. Because of his reserve time, he was a corporal, and this allowed him to take Helen along. Amidst his military activities, Ray completed a United States Armed Forces Institute (USAFI) correspondence course in basic journalism, but when he was mustered out he had no real interest in newspaper work and decided to go back to college under the GI bill to become a commerce teacher (typing and shorthand). Ray had been on the campus of Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia to attend high school band camps, and KSTC became his college of choice. The couple took a second-story apartment on West Street, and to supplement his GI bill income, Ray applied for and got the job as editor of the KSTC Bulletin. At the same time he had applied for a photography position at the Gazette. About halfway through the semester the Gazette offered him part-time work that paid more, so he quit the Bulletin and soon commenced his lifetime career as a newspaperman.³

3. Full transcripts of the three interviews, which are available at the Kansas Historical Society, the Lyon County Historical Society Archives, Emporia, Kansas, and the Emporia State University Archives, total 146 pages; the abridged and edited material published here represents approximately one-third of the total. Portions of all three interview transcripts are included here, but the materials have been rearranged and organized by subject to improve continuity. Words and passages added by the editor appear in brackets, and footnotes have been added to provide further explication of topics and individuals referenced. Everett Ray Call, Interviews, 3 parts, July 2007, Flint Hills Oral History Project, Library and Archives Division, Kansas Historical

Ray Call [RC]: At that point, there were three [Gazette] photographers, and I was the bottom of the totem pole. My first job every afternoon was to come in and mop the floor and clean up the mess that had been left by the other two photographers.

Eventually, I dropped out of college and became a full-time photographer there. And I did pretty well at that and had a job offer from the *Kansas City Kansan*, which I took. The *Kansas City Kansan* was a small newspaper, but it was a daily, and it was a healthy paper because there wasn't too much competition yet. And it was operated by the Stauffer chain, Oscar Stauffer, who had worked for William Allen White. I got on full time up there, and we were getting by, just barely, on a very small wage. We really struggled.

While I was at the *Kansan*, I was sent out to photograph a major story—it may have been the tornado that hit Ruskin Heights and Hickman Mills [on May 20, 1957]. I mainly went out and took photographs of that, and I came in and we did a nice spread of photographs and the editor said, "Could you do—can you write a news story?" And I said, "I've had a USAFI course [in the Army]; I can give it a shot." Well, they liked what I did, and from that stroke on, I became a reporter/photographer, doing both.⁴ And then I became more of a reporter.

After about a year, I had a call from Ted McDaniel, [managing editor] of the *Emporia Gazette*, asking if I would like to come back down to Emporia. We were starving—well not starving, but we were really in trouble. So we decided to come back to Emporia. I began as a photographer and then also in the newsroom in a dual role, reporter/photographer.

I took one detour from that. After a couple of years [in 1959], I had a call from my old hometown paper in Sedan, the *Sedan Times-Star*. I [was] hired down there to run the paper while the owner went to Reno to get a divorce from his wife. He had married a widow who owned the paper, and he had her put into an insane asylum and [planned to] divorce her and marry another

Society, Topeka, Kansas (hereafter cited as "Call interview"). For complete transcripts of the interviews see www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2010summer.htm.

4. The deadly F5 tornado, which became known as the "Ruskin Heights tornado," actually began its devastating path in the early evening of May 20, 1957, at Williamsburg, Kansas. See Bob Newman and Ray Call, "Heartbreak and Tragedy of Tornado Scene Tempered With Near Miracles, Narrow Escapes," *Kansas City Kansan*, May 21, 1957, and photos credited to Call in the May 22 issue of the *Kansan*; "Ruskin Heights Tornado," National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office, Kansas City/Pleasant Hill, Missouri, <http://test.crh.noaa.gov/eax/?n=ruskinheightstornado>; "Ruskin Heights Tornado," Genuine Kansas, http://www.genuinekansas.com/history_ruskin_heights_tornado_kansas.htm.



Call remembered that William Allen White, pictured (front center, in hat) with the staff of the Emporia Gazette in the late 1930s, had to “walk a fine line” between reporting and advertising: “What he had to do was the same thing that many weekly [and small daily] editors did in Kansas across the last century. They were newspapermen, but also they were merchants. They were selling advertisements around town to the storekeepers and to the banks and to all the other businesses in town. . . . It was very difficult to run a story that would offend the leading banker in town because it would really sock it to your income.” Photograph courtesy of the Emporia Gazette.

woman. And I didn’t know at the time what he was up to. He had promised that when all this was said and done, I could either buy the paper or buy in with him. Well, of course, being a Sedan native, I thought that would really be it; I would really show the hometown folk what a wonderful journalist I was. Of course when he got the divorce and everything was finished, he remarried and he didn’t need me anymore. But, fortunately the *Emporia Gazette* did, so I went back to the *Gazette*.⁵ By then I was ready to become wire editor, that is, to edit the Associated Press copy and write headlines and that sort of thing. And from then on it was just a steady climb. I became city editor; I became managing editor; and eventually [I became] executive editor. So that is how I evolved into a retired editor.

5. Call edited the Sedan weekly from February 12 to August 27, 1959, during which time Sam Shade is listed as “owner & publisher.” Shade returned as “editor” on September 3, 1959. See *Sedan Times-Star*, February 12, August 27, and September 3, 1959.

Loren Pennington [LP]: Why did you go [from reporting] to editing? Was it your idea or was it a *Gazette* idea?

RC: No, it was not my idea. It was the job of wire editor, that is, the Associated Press editor, to choose Associated Press stories for the paper and edit them and put the headlines on. That job was open, and they asked me would I like to try that, which isn’t all that unusual. That’s the way newspapers work. You started, and as jobs opened, you were given a chance to see if you could do them. And then I think the next one was maybe just a local copy editor, and then they needed a city editor and so on up the line over the years. You asked earlier why this happened. And I think back, and one thing I remember is I had a real knack for headline writing, working with words, and I was very proud of each line of my headline making sense. And I also had a pretty good knack for correcting, for copy reading, for correcting reporters’ stories. So I think I was pretty successful at that, and that’s the reason they moved me over.

I also, now that I look back, realize that W. L. [William Lindsay White] began to take a hand in what I was doing. I think the first sign of this [was when] he began to send me places. I began to go to the state meetings up in Kansas City or in Topeka. [And] W. L. would send [me and] business manager Kenneth Williams, for example, to the Inland Press in Chicago, which was a broad organization that covered business and news, to learn things and to have experience with other [editors and] business managers. I was there as an observer.

LP: You went strictly for the education?

RC: That's right. He [W. L.] was starting to educate and broaden me.

LP: Something he was doing later on at a more sophisticated level.

RC: Right. And I began to write editorials, and the reason for that was the editorials had been written by [Eugene T. "Gene"] Lowther. He died, and there was nobody to write editorials when W. L. White was away, and he was away a good half the time, maybe three-quarters of the time. And when he wasn't here, he wanted local editorials. So he conceived of the idea of letting anybody in the newsroom write an editorial for three dollars apiece. If you wrote an editorial that got published, you got three dollars in addition to your regular pay, and then he picked the best editorial of the week, and the writer of that got five dollars. Now bear in mind, I was a struggling father; I had three children. So I jumped at the chance. I wrote as many as I could, and I must say that I won many of the weekly awards. I don't know how many, but it seemed to me I won the majority. And also the other writers, the other reporters, began to drop away because it was quite a lot of work just for three bucks. I gradually squeezed everybody out; [and] this opened another door because it was the custom back then for the editorial-page writers of Kansas to communicate with each other, back and forth. I see Whitley Austin over at Salina is angry about the federal budget. Well, he doesn't have to worry about [that]. You would communicate back and forth.

LP: You mean by editorials: Whitley Austin writes an editorial, and you write an answer?⁶

RC: [Yes,] and I write an answer—to Rolla Clymer at El Dorado, Clyde Reed down at Parsons, or Fred Brinkerhoff

at Pittsburg. Editors across the state commented back and forth. And I began to attract some statewide attention.⁷

LP: People started answering you?

RC: Yes, and quoting, if they agreed. Or if you say, "I think Clyde Reed is right when he says," or "Clyde Reed made the. . . ." So there was this network. So I began to get my share of attention from this network, and also criticism. I remember Fred Brinkerhoff down at Pittsburg just blistered me one time for an editorial I wrote. And I remember John McCormally, an Emporia student who went on to become a Pulitzer Prize-winning editor out at the *Hutchinson News*, led off an editorial in answer to something I wrote with this phrase: "Of all the unadulterated bullshit I have ever read, Ray Call's comments about subsidies for farmers, blah, blah, blah." All this was going on, and so I got some attention that way. And then we would often pick up a whole editorial. If W. L. liked something that Clyde Reed had said, we would reprint that editorial. And they would do the same for us, and so I began to have some editorials reprinted.

I wrote a lot about politics because I'd grown up with it. My parents were both county office holders, so I knew politics. And I began to attract some attention with the comments I made about politicians. And then eventually, politicians began to court the *Gazette*. Of course, all politicians courted all newspapers. That was nothing new. But through the years, I was able to meet all the U.S. senators from Kansas. These politicians, when they had an appearance in Emporia, would make a stop at the newspaper, particularly if they were Republicans and the town paper was a Republican newspaper. They were building support.

LP: I presume they especially liked to talk to the editorial writers.

RC: Exactly right. When W. L. was in town, he would preside. But if he wasn't here, and he was gone half the time, I got to talk to senators, congressmen. Joe Skubitz was a frequent visitor.⁸ And then this grew on itself because you became more knowledgeable. These were, by the way, off-the-record private meetings where people told

7. Fred W. Brinkerhoff, *Pittsburg Sun and Headlight*; Rolla Clymer, *El Dorado Times*; and Clyde M. Reed, Jr., *Parsons Sun*, were perhaps the leaders among an impressive contingent of mid-twentieth-century Kansas newspapermen who were approaching the end of their careers as Call took his place behind the editor's desk. On Clymer see Craig Miner, "Editor Clymer Buys a Press: Continuity and Change in a Kansas Country Town, 1926-1929," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 30 (Summer 2007): 92-111.

8. Congressman Skubitz represented the Fifth District, southeast Kansas, from 1963 through 1978. See http://www.kshs.org/research/topics/politics/essay_congress.htm.

6. Whitley Austin was a native of Emporia who started his newspaper career as a reporter at the *Gazette* and later became the respected editor of the *Salina Journal*.



Call credits William Lindsay White and his wife Kathrine with giving him an education, both in the newspaper business and about life outside Kansas. Call worked under the Whites' tutelage from 1957 until the editor's death in 1973, and he remembers his boss as "a worldly man," who saw journalism as "an independent watchdog kind of thing." In remembering W. L., Call noted that "the people in Emporia have no notion of his broad background. They knew he wrote some books, but they had no notion of his stature, his international stature. . . . When W. L. went away to war, he started as a print correspondent, but became involved in radio. . . . [He] won the International Foreign Correspondents' Award." Photograph of W. L. White during World War II courtesy of the Emporia Gazette.

what was going on and what they believed without fear of being quoted—deep background maybe. This helped me build a knowledge of politics, and that continued to grow through the years.

[Along that line, the *Gazette*] supported Bob Dole [a conservative Republican], from day one when he first was a congressman [in 1961]. When he first decided to run for the Senate [in 1968], W. L. gave a big banquet in his honor at the old Broadview Hotel ballroom and invited all the political operatives from all over eastern Kansas, all the editors. And he had a lot of chits to call in. In my view, [that banquet] sort of launched [Dole] in this end of the state. And we supported Bob Dole through the years, up until the time of the Iran-Contra Affair, when

he embraced Colonel [Oliver North]. We criticized Dole for supporting [North], and he cut us off in an instant.⁹

LP: This was after William Lindsay White's [death]?

RC: Yes. I wrote the piece, and from then on, he [Dole] really wouldn't have anything to do with us. And, you know, even when we would go back for conventions and see him, he was very cool.

This was unethical as hell, but at one point I became a delegate to the Republican National Convention. It was 1972 [and] I was one of the delegates who nominated Richard Milhous Nixon for his second term—and my wife is going to put that on my tombstone. I had been there in '68 when Nixon was nominated in Miami Beach. And that was the year [1968] of the teargas and Spiro Agnew and all of that. "Tippecanoe and Spiro, too," was the motto down there among the delegates. But I became part of the political establishment and loved it. And this seemed to please W. L., mainly because I was writing from a fairly conservative Republican point of view.

LP: [You were writing from a conservative Republican point of view], which was your point of view. It wasn't one imposed upon you?

RC: That's right, back then.

LP: And it agreed with William Lindsay White.

RC: Yes, he liked what I wrote. And of course, he was a Nixon Republican. When I was a delegate [to the 1972 convention], he went down to Miami Beach. By then he had cancer, and [he] mostly stayed on William F. Buckley's yacht to watch the convention because he was too sick to go the convention floor. This was W. L.'s last convention.

Meanwhile, he had enrolled me in the National Conference of Editorial Writers, which was the national organization of people who wrote editorials. And that group had a national convention every year, Boston or New York or some place. I remember one time we went to Hilton Head Island down in the Carolinas. And it attracted national figures who wanted to get editorial writers on their side. They were the main speakers. So I was looking at national figures. And they had all the editorial cartoonists there, for example, at one convention. The point I'm trying to make with all this blabbering is that W. L. was educating me, and I apparently was doing whatever he wanted because he continued to do it.

9. Marine Lt. Col. Oliver North was a central figure in the 1986 Iran-Contra affair, which used money from arms sales to Iran to fund the CIA-supported rebel Contras in Nicaragua in their fight to overthrow that country's Marxist Sandinista government. Both the arms sales and aid to the Contras were illegal and turned into the chief scandal of the Reagan administration.

And it, I suppose, trained me to become executive editor when that happened.¹⁰

Before World War II, [W. L. and Kathrine White] lived a very active life, social life, in New York City. And I would like to credit him, actually both Whites, with giving me an education. And one part of that was to have me come back to New York City and stay in their house and go to a play or go to a museum, whatever.

LP: What was your position at the *Gazette* at this time?

RC: At this time, I had probably reached managing editor. I ended up as executive editor, but I think I had got to be managing editor at this point. And I didn't become executive editor until W. L. died. [As managing editor, I was] running the news department; not the advertising department, only the news department. So anyway, I think as part of my education, they had me back—I think the first time I went back, they had me as their guest at a meeting of the national convention of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) [in New York City]. I'm pretty sure it was at the Waldorf. I'm certain that LBJ was the speaker, Lyndon Johnson.

LP: Was William Lindsay White a member of the ACLU?

RC: Yes, which is quite a contrast with his Republican ties. This goes back to his liberal days. He was an early member. He may have been a charter [member].¹¹ I think they wanted their editor [me] to have a broader view of the world.

Now as a sideline of this ACLU dinner (they didn't like the word banquet), we heard LBJ speak. And at the end of the dinner, people were leaving, and the head table was up on the stage. And there was an elderly lady up there, and she seemed to be all by herself and sort of lost. And Kathrine White said to me, "Oh, Ray," she said, "Alice is having trouble. Go up there and help her, will

you?" And I looked around and I didn't see any stairs, so I just bolted up on the stage, being a country boy, and helped this little old lady get down off the stage and on her way. And it was Alice Longworth Roosevelt. I had no clue that that's who it was—the rascally daughter of Teddy Roosevelt. The one who said, "If you can't say anything nice about anybody, sit by me." But I didn't know it at the time. And then when we went home, she [Kathrine] told me who it was. And since [then] I have read a great deal about her family in Teddy Roosevelt books. So anyway, that was the main event.

But they also put me up at their house. Now it was a brownstone at 160 E. 66th Street. It was just a block away from the Russian embassy. It was in a very nice upper-class neighborhood. They owned this place. They bought it for a song before the war, and then when their health failed, they sold it for quite a nice profit. They had separate bedrooms with walk-in closets between them. They put me up in [their daughter] Barbara's old room. And they had yet another spare bedroom across from mine, up on the third floor. So it was quite a nice place. And after we settled in, I remember one of the first things we did—W. L. had gone upstairs—Mrs. White said, "Ray, would you mix the martinis?" And I said, "Mrs. White, I have never mixed a martini in my life." She said, "I'll tell you how. Go over to the cabinet and get out the bottle of gin." And I did that. And she said, "Now pour the bottle of gin into the pitcher." And I did. It probably wasn't full. It was probably half a bottle of gin or so. She said, "Now, there are ice cubes there. Put about five or six ice cubes into that." And I did. And she said, "Now, stir that." And I stirred it. And she said, "Now, pour it into the glasses." That was the way they made martinis. There was no vermouth even in the proximity that I could see. And as an aside, at the Emporia Country Club, they had their own martini pitcher with a Harvard crest on it because he was very proud of being from Harvard.

But anyway, then they sent me to my first New York play, which was *Half a Sixpence* with Tommy Tune, as I recall. They asked me where I wanted to go. Of course, I wanted to go [to] the Metropolitan Museum. I didn't go to the Empire State Building. I think I wanted to see the Museum of Modern Art. There was a party after the ACLU meeting, now that I think of it. We walked over there from the Waldorf. And these were old, sophisticated, very sophisticated, friends of the Whites. And I remember one of the young women looked at me and said, "Oh, you look just like an owl," she said of my appearance. And they all thought that was very funny. "You have a very owl-like appearance," she said. Anyway,

10. According to Call, his wife Helen deserved a lot of credit for his close relationship with the Whites. "They were very fond of Helen," he explained. "She was a lawyer's daughter. She had been kept at home with three children until the kids got into school. Then she went back to college, got a bachelor's degree, and then later got a master's degree, became a teacher and a counselor, meanwhile being mother to John, Beth, and Julie, our three children. And so [the Whites] had a lot of respect for her and sometimes would invite us over at the spur of the moment to have drinks and discuss things, and Mrs. White was pretty gracious with Helen. I never did see her as insulting as she could be with some people. I don't think they would have done this had I not had Helen with me. . . . [I think] they gave me some breaks because I had a wife whom they could be proud of, or could respect." Call interview, July 31, 2007, pt. 3 of 3, p. 22.

11. For a discussion of White's ties to the ACLU, "disenchantment with American Progressives," and interesting political journey, see E. Jay Jernigan, *William Lindsay White, 1900–1973: In the Shadow of His Father* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 189–90.

at this nice home we went to for a party afterward, which was mainly a cocktail party, I began to look around the walls. And I saw Picasso and [Raoul] Dufy, however you pronounce Dufy the artist, and you know, a number of very fine Matisses. They had a marvelous collection of art. So I was in the home of some very wealthy person. I have no idea who it was. But he [the owner] took me around and showed me the paintings and pointed them out to me and was very gracious. [The Whites] lived in pretty nice digs up there in a pretty nice neighborhood.

LP: When it comes to the newsroom and the editorials, you got considerable leeway from William Lindsay White?

RC: Again, this is because he was gone most of the time. He was a roving editor for the *Reader's Digest*, and he had to have somebody who sort of fit his philosophy. He was writing and he would be gone for long, long periods of time. He kept in touch. He often called long-distance or sent notes back. But he was gone a lot.

LP: How many people were in the newsroom at any given time?

RC: Oh, it would range, twelve, maybe eleven or maybe thirteen, but twelve was about it. Back in William Allen White's time, the *Gazette* was known as the White School of Journalism because Whitley Austin, Rolla Clymer, Stu Aubrey, John McCormally, on and on and on—some very skillful journalists, successful editors came out of the *Gazette*. So that was still going on. We were hiring, and we couldn't pay much, so we got people just out of college [for a] kind of finishing school internship. When they were skillful enough to get better jobs, they moved on.

That reminds me of a funny story that Ted McDaniel told me. He had been my boss for a while, but he said back in, I guess before the war ([when] E. T. Lowther was the assistant publisher, that is, he ran the business side of things), and Ted was trying to hire a reporter, and E. T. Lowther said, "Well, how much do we have to pay him?" And Ted said, "Well, we've got to give him a living wage." And E. T. Lowther said, "Not if we can get him for less!" So they were pretty frugal because reporters and editors didn't directly bring any income in. It was the advertising salesmen. As some people say, [advertising salesmen] sold papers. I don't know about that.

LP: Did you yourself do any of the hiring?

RC: Yes, I chose the people, but I had to get final approval from W. L. We would interview, and then when we'd chosen someone, he would have the right of refusal. I don't think he ever turned us down, but he looked at

everybody before we hired them. And sometimes he would find people he liked and bring them in.

LP: Ray, [now we want] to compare or contrast William Allen White with his son, William Lindsay White.

RC: That's right, and I'll try to make a distinction [between direct and second-hand evidence]. I think the main point I want to make is about their different philosophies regarding a newspaper. Now, I don't think either one of them sat down and said, "This is my philosophy." But we can look back and see from what they did that they had [very] different outlooks. William Allen White bought the *Gazette* [in 1895]. He had no money. He tells the story of getting off the train and he had twenty-five cents or half a dollar in his pocket. And he couldn't decide whether to walk to the *Gazette* and impress the townspeople because he was so frugal or to take a carriage to the *Gazette* and make them think he was a very affluent and successful man. And he decided to take the carriage. That's a story in his autobiography, and we've all heard it.

LP: Do you think that suits the character of William Allen White?

RC: From what I've heard, yes. So here he comes. He has no money. He bought the *Gazette* with borrowed money. It was not the major paper in town. So really his outlook was pretty grim. What he had to do was the same thing that many weekly [and small daily] editors did in Kansas across the last century. They were newspapermen, but also they were merchants. They were selling advertisements around town to the storekeepers and to the banks and to all the other businesses in town. So they really had to walk a fine line. It was very difficult to run a story that would offend the leading banker in town because it would really sock it to your income. If you lose a leading merchant or two, you're out of business. To emphasize that point, one of the first things William Allen White did, and it was very successful, was to organize a street fair. And he involved all the merchants. It was a tremendous success. He made a lot of friends. The point I want to make is that he was very much aware of his role as a publisher, as someone who was using the newspaper to give the community a good name and to make everything look good in Emporia. What I'm saying is I've been there as a weekly editor, and I've been around the business for sixty years, and I know that this situation exists. How do you handle it when a prominent person or a prominent business is involved in bad news? And I don't say William Allen White squelched it. I'm just saying he had to contend with this, and my guess is he didn't play it up on the front page with banner headlines.



For Ray
in deepest gratitude

George Docking W. L. White

While W. L. White was editor, the *Gazette* “won the national award for having the best-looking newspaper in the country. It was called the Ayer Cup. We won mainly on a design that W. L. worked out himself. . . . He came up with,” in Call’s estimation, “a very beautiful design.” Here White (right) and Call (middle) show off the cup to Governor George Docking. Behind them hangs a portrait of William Allen White. Photograph courtesy of Everett Ray Call.

LP: He was concerned with the bottom line of the newspaper?

RC: [Yes.] And this is happening again in the United States now. I can cite many examples. They’ve been written up in the *New Yorker*; the bottom line now has an effect on news coverage, whether it be Rupert Murdoch’s *Wall Street Journal* or the [*Chicago Tribune*] newspapers, or whatever. There was a trend started, I would say twenty years ago, towards what was called—I can’t remember the term, but the gist of it was community journalism. And that was nothing more than what William Allen White did when he started. That is, the newspaper gets involved in promotions. It publicizes its reporters and its columnists as if they were television personalities. And the purpose is to build up the town and to ballyhoo its activities. I’m not saying newspapers no longer cover scandals and crime. They certainly do. But I think that

there’s enough evidence in what I’ve read about even the major newspapers that the bottom line is influencing the content of the news columns more and more.

LP: So, in some respects, William Allen White did much the same thing when he assumed the role of booster, promoting the Emporia community.

RC: That’s exactly right. Good old Emporia. And so now, let’s switch to William Lindsay White. I’m giving you my hypothesis here. But let’s look back. William Allen White was the son of a doctor, but his father died and they didn’t have a lot of money. And so he really had to struggle, as weekly editors do, did [at the turn of the twentieth century], and as the weeklies did during my time. The reason I mention the weekly editors is [because] I served [for a short time] as a weekly editor. And in a small town like Sedan, where I was, or Osawatomie, wherever, the pressure is much stronger on the editor of weeklies and small dailies. The pressure’s much stronger than in Chicago or New York. [There,] if they lost one advertiser, who gives a damn?

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

RC: It applies not only to small dailies, but very much to the weeklies.¹² That’s the reason I’m using that. William Allen White’s father died, and he scuffled along. His mother was a teacher, and he made money one way or another playing in bands and other things. So he didn’t have a lot of money, and I think he really had to make the *Gazette* a success, which may have influenced his attitude.

William Allen White’s son, William Lindsay White, grew up in much different circumstances. [By this time] his father was not really rich, but he was comfort-

12. In the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth centuries, newspapers in medium-sized Kansas towns, such as the *Emporia Gazette*, often published both daily and weekly editions. The *Weekly Gazette*, which by Call’s time was printed by lifting type from the week’s dailies, was published from 1892 until 1964 and was delivered entirely by mail. According to Brenda Lavington, Lyon County archivist, it was designed for the rural areas surrounding Emporia and for Emporians who had moved away from the city. It was also intended as a means to widen the audience for *Gazette* editorials. Ray Call said that he never had any direct connection with the *Weekly Gazette*. For more on the elder White, the newspaper business in the early twentieth century, and boosterism, see Sally Foreman Griffith, *Home Town News: William Allen White and the Emporia Gazette* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Edward Gale Agran, “Too Good a Town”: *William Allen White, Community, and the Emerging Rhetoric of Middle America* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998); and for some additional analysis of the relationship between father and son, see Karen Manners Smith, “Father, Son, and Country on the Eve of War: William Allen White, William Lindsay White, and American Isolationism, 1940–1941,” *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 28 (Spring 2005): 30–43.

ably [well] off. [The family now] lived in a nice home and they traveled a lot. He [W. L.] was sent to KU [the University of Kansas in Lawrence] and to Harvard. And so he came from a little bit more independent background. Then he got out of school at a time when American journalism was dealing with many controversial issues and [with events leading up to] World War II. And so he had a global outlook. He worked for national radio chains. He had a newspaper column that ran in big-city dailies. And he traveled with the likes of Edward R. Murrow and people of the Murrow crowd. The point I'm trying to make: he was a worldly man. He saw journalism—he saw newspaper coverage, journalism—from a completely different viewpoint. It was an independent watchdog kind of thing. The books he wrote—except for the World War II books—were hard, investigative journalism. And so he had made his career, before his father died, in an international, national, sophisticated, cosmopolitan setting.

He comes back [to Emporia] when his father dies in 1944; reluctantly, but he comes back. He comes back a much different journalist than William Allen White. They had completely different upbringings in journalism. So he comes to town, first of all with a watchdog attitude, that a newspaper has to keep an eye on the politicians, on what the county commissioners are doing, on what's going on in the state. Is there graft in the Capitol? He comes back with that attitude, with a, let's not say a chip on his shoulder, but not much humility. He always prided himself in saying that the *Gazette* had more memberships, more members in the Chamber of Commerce, than any other business in town, and these were paid for by the *Gazette*. But he gave the Chamber of Commerce hell. If the Chamber of Commerce, the people on "Main Street," wanted to build a new courthouse, for example, he resisted. If they wanted urban renewal, he said urban renewal was for building homes for the poor.¹³ And so he was, quite frankly, not popular with a lot of Chamber of Commerce members, and despised by some.

13. Despite frequent references by authors to "Main Street" in Emporia, Emporia has no street by that name. The main downtown street is Commercial Street. In a recent conversation with the editor, Call said that W. L. White was not against using the federal urban renewal fund to build housing for the poor; but he opposed the Emporia proposal to use such funds to renew its downtown and the area around the ESU campus. The proposal included tearing down the *Gazette* Building, which may well have been the thing that sparked W. L.'s opposition. The building still stands at 517 Merchant Street, one block west of Commercial, and it remains the paper's headquarters.

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

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

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

LP: Did their philosophies of running a newspaper have anything to do with, what shall I say, political opinions, political proclivities?

RC: Yes. William Lindsay White was like the colonel up in Chicago, [Robert R.] McCormick.¹⁴ He [W. L.] was a very strong Republican, a Nixon Republican. I'll give you an example that really sticks in my mind. It was at the time of the college protests, the Vietnam era. There were sit-ins in colleges and universities. They burned buildings, a lot of them. There was violence on some of the campuses, including the University of Kansas. We even had a march here in Emporia. And the Nixon Republicans, including W. L., were incensed by this disorder and by the effrontery of these students.¹⁵ Back in those days we had an old teletype machine that would ring a bell, five bells was a bulletin and a continuous ring

14. Robert R. McCormick (1880–1955) owned the *Chicago Tribune* and was a dominant force in the Republican Party for three decades prior to his death in 1955. He was an isolationist, a conservative, and a harsh critic of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Richard Norton Smith, *The Colonel: The Life and Legend of Robert R. McCormick, 1880–1955* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

15. During this era (the late 1960s and early 1970s) of civil rights demonstrations and antiwar protests, college campuses in Kansas were



Call “became part of the political establishment” through his connection to W. L. White, attending multiple GOP National Conventions and even serving as a delegate in 1972. Call is pictured here capturing images of the 1976 convention in Kansas City, where Gerald Ford won the presidential nomination. The young woman at right is Susan Ford, the nominee’s daughter. Photograph courtesy of Everett Ray Call.

of the bell was a newsflash—you went over to see what was going on. Well, we had a bulletin. Either the wire editor brought it over or I went over to look, and it was about the Kent State massacre, about the shooting of the students by the National Guard up there.¹⁶ And I thought, “Well, I’d better tell the boss about this.” So I took it in, put it down, and said: “Mr. White, the National Guard troopers have shot rioting or demonstrating students at Kent State University.” And he said, “Good!” So he felt very strongly. As to his opinions, political opinions, getting into the news columns, again, I have to admit,

reflective of national developments on these fronts. ROTC activities and buildings were targeted in Manhattan and Lawrence, and arsonists fired Kansas State’s Nichols Gym in December 1968 and the Memorial Union on the University of Kansas campus in April 1970. James C. Carey, *Kansas State University: The Quest for Identity* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977), 219–28; Rusty L. Monhollon, “This is America?”: *The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 151–60; Gretchen Cassel Eick, *Dissent in Wichita: The Civil Right Movement in the Midwest, 1954–1972* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 145–62.

16. The shooting, which rocked the nation, occurred on the Kent State University campus in Kent, Ohio, on May 4, 1970. Coincidentally, on the day of the shooting, W. L. White registered his support for the president’s decision to invade Cambodia. “Brave and Wise,” *Emporia Gazette*, May 4, 1970; see also “Campus Death Probed: Sniper Story Disputed by Patrol Officials,” *Emporia Gazette*, May 5, 1970; “Student Strike Called” (photograph), *Emporia Gazette*, May 7, 1970.

sometimes they did. I remember a letter to the editor, written by a student who spouted the demonstrators’ line and smeared [President] Nixon and really stated the rebels’ cause. And W. L. White ran it. It was our policy to run letters. But the headline he put over that letter was “Letter from a Creep.” This wasn’t an editor’s note. That was the headline.

When they wanted to put the city dump south of town, down toward the airport, W. L. mounted a campaign against that. And he ran maps on the front page showing the prevailing wind in the summertime. And he ran a number of stories really against that location. Then, when we got into urban renewal, he did a number of stories against urban renewal. Now, if he got a rebuttal from someone, or if somebody else brought other information in, he would run it. But I have to admit on these occasions, he would run his opinions on the front page. This is the kind of journalism we’re beginning to get now, not only on cable news, but also in some newspapers.

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

RC: Yes—not habitually, but in certain cases he did. Now this eventually became accepted, in my view, I

suppose twenty years ago. It was called something like advocacy journalism. It was the kind of thing done by [Mike Wallace] and the fellows on *60 Minutes*.

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

RC: That's exactly right, in my view. Now, I'm an old curmudgeon here. I also want to cite an example that you were involved in that goes back to the point I was making about W. L. White being independent of the local Chamber of Commerce and the local establishment. Back when we were neighbors, as I recall, we were talking about the unequal pay that college professors were getting at Emporia State University.¹⁷ You explained to me that there were many people up there doing the same kind of work with the same kind of education who were getting vastly different amounts of money depending on how well they got along with [University President] John King. Now, you may deny that but anyway, this is my memory.¹⁸ So I thought, "That's a news story." And so I called the Board of Regents and asked if we could get a list of the salaries that were paid at Emporia State University, and I was told yes. But they sure as hell didn't want to give it to me. Why would I want that? What am I looking for? On and on and on. And I think at one point, I got our—I'm not sure of this—but I think I got our attorney involved. It was Clarence Beck, who had been a past [Kansas state] attorney general, and I think we finally pried out of the State Board of Regents a complete list of the faculty at Emporia State University and the salaries they were being paid.

Well, needless to say, word of this got back to John King—I admired him very much, but this put him in a horrible situation because a) we were accusing him of being unfair with salaries; and b) we had the figures, we thought, to prove it. King called me, [as did] some people who really didn't have an axe to grind but didn't feel it was fair to have their salaries trotted out before the community just because they were on a state payroll. Bear in mind that the county salaries in those days were published every month. But anyway, finally we were going to do this on a Monday. And we ballyhooed it: "Coming in Monday's *Gazette*, a complete list of salaries." And finally, John King, and I think it was Don Ek, who was a Chamber [of Commerce] leader, a real estate agent, decided to take it to [W. L.]. Well, they didn't come

17. Until 1974 the Emporia institution that began as the State Normal School was officially the Kansas State Teachers College; then it became Emporia Kansas State College, and finally, in 1977, Emporia State University.

18. The editor (and interviewer) does not deny it; Call's memory is correct.

to the office. They made an appointment in the evening, and of course it was the custom at the W. L. White house to have cocktails in the evening and kick back, and I thought, well, that's the end of my university salary story because they'll get over there, and they'll have a few drinks, and it will be good old boys together, and that'll be the end of my story. But W. L. backed us up, told us to go ahead. We published it on the following Monday. One effect of it was it sold a great number of newspapers. That wasn't our goal. We were trying to point out inequity at the university.

LP: Would you say this fit William Lindsay White's philosophy?

RC: Yes. A lot more than what I mentioned earlier about Kent State and about the city dump and so on. This was more W. L. White's kind of stuff. And I'm proud of him for backing us up on it. But I think, and you would know better than I do, but I think within the next two or three years, there were some pretty good salary adjustments made up at the university.

The point is nobody objects to [this kind of journalism] on the editorial page. Or nobody should, because that's the page of opinion. The question is, when it got into the news columns, was it justified, and that's a subjective call. I have my opinion, and others have their opinions. I can say that I feel very strongly that we're moving into advocacy journalism, particularly on television, and to a certain extent in newspapers.

LP: And I take it, you do not approve of this?

RC: Oh, it isn't for me to approve or disapprove. It's not the thing we did. And what's best for humanity, I don't know. I always felt that a news story should be like a criminal trial. The prosecution presents its side, and the defense presents its side, and the jury, or the readers, make the judgment. If somebody is arrested for child molestation, for example, did we go out and try to find out a defense for this person who was arrested? No we didn't. So it's hard to know where to draw the line. But, that was our goal; you didn't say "John Doe was arrested for speeding," you said "John Doe was arrested and charged with speeding." We did work very hard at that.

LP: Let me back up to a couple of things that you suggested here. One was the hard-line Republicanism of William Lindsay White. But I am of the impression that that was not William Lindsay White's background from his days in New York and before.

RC: Oh, certainly not.

LP: And in England during the war and this sort of thing. I had the impression that William Allen White himself started out as a pretty conservative Republican

and gradually, under the influence of Theodore Roosevelt, moved progressively toward the center of American politics.

RC: I agree with that.

LP: And that William Lindsay White in his younger days consorted with radicals, had radical friends, this sort of thing; whereas his father had from right to left, he [W. L.] moved from left to right.

RC: That's the point I wanted to make, and that is exactly right. I came along in 1955, so he was fifty-five years of age when I first knew him. W. L. White wrote a book called *Report on the Russians* [in 1945]. And as a prelude to that, W. L., Harrison Salisbury, and other journalists went into Russia. Now bear in mind that Russia was an ally of the United States during World War II, but very soon after World War II things began to change. And these reporters were over there, and W. L. White tells a story about Harrison Salisbury having an affair with a young Russian woman over there, and that his wife heard about it, and he was in trouble. And so he asked W. L. to say he was at a certain event that W. L. was writing about in this book so he would have an alibi with his wife. It wasn't true, but he asked W. L. to put it in his book so that he could prove to his wife that he wasn't having an affair with this woman on that occasion. And so the book came out, and it was a very strong criticism of Russia. And W. L. immediately became an enemy of his old friends who were leftists, as he [had been]. And so when Harrison Salisbury criticized the book, he pointed out that it was full of errors because W. L. White claimed he [Salisbury] was at this event, and he really wasn't there at all. He had since divorced his wife.

LP: But he had put that in at Salisbury's request?

RC: At Salisbury's request. W. L. told me that. A couple of times I've heard him talk about it. So I think it's probably true. But anyway, W. L. was, up until World War II, in with a kind of a leftist crowd, I think, in Washington D.C. His wife [Kathrine], of course, was a celebrated figure. She was a fact checker for *Life* magazine, worked for *Time* magazine, was at the home of Bernard Baruch on social occasions. John O'Hare once wrote she was the most beautiful woman in New York, this kind of thing. So they were in a very sophisticated liberal crowd.

People here, the people in Emporia have no notion of his [W. L.'s] broad background. They knew he wrote some books, but they had no notion of his stature, his international stature. His books have been made into movies, for god sakes, [they] have been best sellers. When I was a boy, [*They Were Expendable*] was one of the

great movies I saw because it was an action movie. It had, as I recall, John Wayne and two or three top-notch actors. When W. L. went away to war, he started as a print correspondent, but became involved in radio. For example, when Eric Severeid's child was born in Europe, in England, Severeid had to take off to be with his wife, and they got W. L. to take Severeid's broadcasts. And he also did several broadcasts [and] won the International Foreign Correspondents' Award, for, I think it was "The Last Christmas Tree" broadcast from Norway [actually Finland]. He did a marvelous broadcast about the Blitz in London and so on. Anyway, he was successful in this and considered going into radio and television after the war, according to Kathrine White. And Kathrine said that William Allen White called friends in high places, and this is hard to accept, but she told me this, she said she feels he called friends and pulled strings and prevented William L. White from going into broadcasting after the war. Hard to believe, but that's what she said.

LP: Because he wanted [W. L.] to be in the newspaper business?

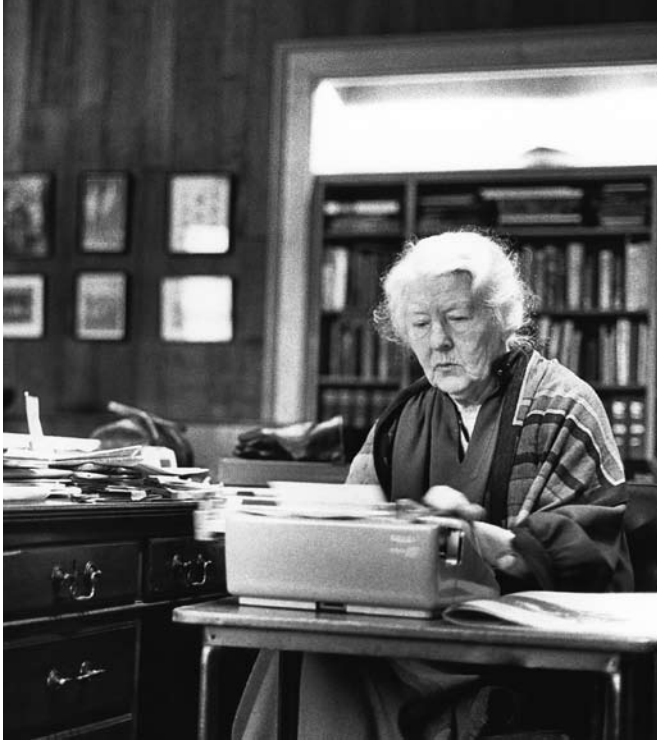
RC: Well, William Allen White really had no respect for radio journalism. And of course, television didn't come along for a while. But he didn't want his son to get involved with broadcast journalism, which would have led to television, because [he thought] it was considered cheap journalism, according to Mrs. White. This is, again, hearsay, but she did tell me that. And also I'm sure he put pressure on W. L.

LP: He wanted to bring him back to Emporia?

RC: I suppose. [W. L.] didn't want to come because he had worked with the *Herald-Tribune*, and he worked for some larger newspapers. He was a roving editor for *Reader's Digest* for a long time and wrote for *Reader's Digest*. So he did have a choice of careers, and he liked radio, but [there was] the influence of his father, perhaps a personal influence.

[Then there was] Kathrine White, Mrs. William Lindsay White—you know it's true, she just withered people here in Emporia with sarcasm. Mrs. White was a snob. But as I say, she had lived an exciting—I keep using the word sophisticated, but it fits—life in New York. While he was a war correspondent, she had almost a salon at the William Lindsay White house there. She would entertain people who were coming to New York City.

I remember one time I was leaving the house [here in Emporia], and she said something to me, and I didn't get it. So I went back two or three steps and I said, "Sorry, I didn't hear you." So she repeated it, and I still didn't hear it, so I went up to the steps. And she says, "I said, I was



Call remembers Kathrine White, pictured here in 1986, as “sophisticated.” While living on the East Coast before moving to Kansas with W. L. to take over operations at the Emporia Gazette, Kathrine worked for *Life* and *Time* magazines and ran in a “very sophisticated liberal crowd.” After W. L.’s death, Kathrine took over editorship of the Gazette and, according to Call, “she was very much the boss. . . . She didn’t ever write anything. . . . [but was very good] at picking things apart and finding errors.” Photograph courtesy of the Emporia Gazette.

looking at you, and I said, ‘What a nice behind.’” I mean, I’m not implying any sexual aggressiveness. What’s the term? She was very sophisticated. But she wasn’t making a pass at me. She was just saying something outrageous. She did that. And of course, in the Twenties in New York City, from what I’ve read, whether it be *The Great Gatsby* or whatever, this was considered very chic to do things like this. And she continued to do that all of her life. To hell with what the people of Emporia thought.

They lived, to sum it up, a very different life before World War II in New York City than they came back to in Emporia. And Mrs. White didn’t like [Emporia].

LP: [Speaking of coming back from New York to Emporia,] did [W. L.’s interest in radio journalism] have anything to do with his attempt to bring cable television [“Catfish”] to Emporia?

RC: You know, it could be. What they said was, they wanted to leave something to Emporia. They didn’t

want to leave a park. They didn’t want to leave a statue. They wanted to leave something that Emporians could have after they were gone.

LP: You’re talking about William Lindsay and Kathrine White?

RC: That’s right. And so at that point [1960–1962], cable television was fairly new. They were pretty early into it in Kansas. And so they got the franchise, and I might mention something here that tells us a lot about W. L. White. When they were putting in the system, they had a choice of poles they could use: Southwestern Bell Telephone Company poles, or they could put in their own individual poles. And of course it would be cheaper to use Southwestern Bell poles. And that was the way they were going to go, but W. L. then learned that if they went with Southwestern Bell, Southwestern Bell [would have] control of the content that went over it, along its poles. And he wouldn’t have that. And so they went all over Emporia and drilled holes and put in—I don’t know how many thousands of dollars worth of poles—and put in their own separate system. But I was told that their original goal was to leave something to Emporia. And this is kind of their monument, to have a cable television system.

LP: It wasn’t just to bring in [outside programs]. As I recall, you also had a locally originated program.

RC: Terrible as it was, that’s true.

LP: And you were in it.

RC: Yes, and I almost got fired over it because we jumped the gun. Once they had the poles up and they had a camera here, we decided—and the Whites were back in New York—the manager and I decided it would be great fun to put the city election returns on cable. And so we were out in a little building at the foot of the tower out here in northwest Emporia. And we went in there and put a floodlight up. And I read the returns, and he ran the camera, and we sent it out over the cable. Well, it was just absolutely terrible, and several of Mrs. White’s friends called her and told her how terrible it was. And they [the Whites] called me, I think it was the next day because that’s when they got the calls, and kept me on the phone for over an hour literally blistering me. And I thought at the end of this, they’re going to say, “You’re fired.” But they didn’t. I think they’d probably had a drink or two, but she—she had a little quip when she was running the *Gazette* for a brief time: if somebody made a mistake, she liked to say, “Rub their nose in it.” And I think that’s what they were doing to me. They were rubbing my nose in this rather than firing me.

LP: But did they themselves have any idea of running a local television operation?

RC: Yes, in fact, after it was all finished, they equipped a room in the *Gazette* with a television studio, with a little television control room. We had a daily newscast. We had kids come in on Halloween in their costumes. W. L. interviewed candidates for the city commission. It didn't really amount to very much, but it was fun.¹⁹

Let's talk about when [W. L. White] died [in 1973], because both of us remember when he had cancer and was in the hospital. Early on, he was diagnosed back in New York City. Of course they went to the very best clinics and surgeons back there and finally admitted that he had terminal cancer. And so he decided to come back to Emporia. And I remember he called me and Kenneth Williams, who was then the business manager, into his office and said, "Boys"—I think he used the term "boys"—"I have terminal cancer." Then he sort of broke down and wept for a little bit; then he composed himself. And that was the only time I ever saw him show any emotion. And he underwent some unusual treatments. He was involved with some New York and other out-of-town doctors, and they tried various chemotherapy drugs on him. And as we both know, they weakened him a great deal, and he struggled with them.²⁰ He was very strong. And I think the only thing that sustained him was that the hospital allowed him to keep gin and bourbon over in his little chest in his hospital room, so that if I went up there after work, we would have drinks and talk about what had happened during the day.²¹

LP: Did he continue to take a pretty active role in the *Gazette* even while he was in the hospital?

RC: Yes, he did indeed. I mean, not day-to-day things.

19. The Whites ran *Catfish* under a franchise from the city of Emporia, but when the city manager and city attorney claimed the right to examine *Catfish's* books, W. L. sold the operation in 1966 to an Oregon company with headquarters in Denver, Colorado. Time Warner subsequently purchased it. Jernigan, *William Lindsay White*, 252–53, 260–61. Today Cable One, as it is now called, is owned by the *Washington Post*.

20. The editor visited W. L. White six times in the hospital to interview him for the Flint Hills Oral History Project. Transcripts of these interviews are in the Lyon County Historical Society Archives, Emporia, Kansas. See also William Lindsay White, January and February 1973 interviews with Loren Pennington, Flint Hills Oral History Project, Library and Archives Division, Kansas Historical Society.

21. In a recent conversation with the editor, Dr. Gould Garcia, who was at the hospital when William Lindsay White died, said Dr. J. L. Morgan, W. L.'s physician, probably approved the liquor in the room.



"When I was there," Call recalls of his days at the *Gazette*, "the rule of thumb among small newspapers was to have one newsperson for each thousand circulation. So we had twelve people, thirteen in the newsroom." During his time at the paper, technology in the newsroom changed dramatically, from the days of typewriters and hand composition of pages to those of computers and on-screen layouts. Photograph of the *Gazette* newsroom in 1976, with Call dressed in a white shirt standing at the back of the room and typewriters alongside the desks of the reporters, courtesy of the Emporia *Gazette*.

LP: Policy matters?

RC: Yes, or a political issue, a state political issue or a local political issue. But when he died, his daughter, Barbara [Walker], and her husband were back east with their children. And then they called her, and Gould [Garcia, MD.] called me. And Helen and I went over to the hospital. And [Kathrine] assigned [Helen and me] the job of taking care of the funeral to the point of even picking out a casket. And her instructions to us were, "I want a plain pine box. Go down and get a plain pine box." Roberts-Blue-Barnett [Funeral Home], I can't remember who—[funeral director Mike] Turnbull might have been there by then.²² Well, they didn't have a plain pine box, nor could they get one. And so we reported that back to Mrs. White, and she wanted a simple wooden coffin. What we finally got was a nice mahogany coffin.

Another sidelight is that Mrs. White absolutely hated flower arrangements from florists. She just hated them. [Emporia florist] Otto Eubank told of taking flowers out to her house on another occasion, and she had told him that she didn't want flowers delivered to the house. [But] they [Eubank's shop] had an order so they took [them] out there, and she literally chased the deliveryman out

22. Mike Turnbull is now the owner of Roberts-Blue-Barnett Funeral Home in Emporia and was employed there at the time of W. L.'s death.

the front door and threw the flowers at him on the front sidewalk. That's how strongly she felt about this. So at the funeral then, or before the funeral, flowers began to arrive at the house. So she allowed them in the house, but she asked my wife Helen to rearrange every one of the flower arrangements that came in and put them into a more casual, natural arrangement. Every floral piece that came in had to be rearranged.

And as I remember, it was at his funeral where she wanted all the people at the funeral to be able to throw down a handful of dirt [on the coffin] as they did in the olden days. And of course, the problem was that they now have to have vaults, and so you couldn't. So we were all out there, gathered around the site of the White family graves. And we had to wait until a front-loader, a tractor, came out and lifted the lid off of the vault, put the casket in, and then we threw in our handfuls of dirt, clods. And then they put the lid back on and buried him. For a tombstone, Mrs. White had them take a printer's stone out of the *Gazette* [office]. A printer's stone is a [tabletop-size piece] of granite or sandstone. It's about three inches [thick] and about four by six feet, I suppose. And she had them put the date of birth and date of death and epitaph on the printer's stone and then put that down there beside William Allen White's grave, flat down on the ground, which I thought was unusual, too. [And] very appropriate. And at that time, we were getting rid of the stones because we were shifting to a new style of printing, from hot type to offset printing. So we had the stones, and that's what she used as a marker. And it's still out there.

LP: Now, of course, then we can say Kathrine herself was the boss?

RC: Yes, she was very much the boss. When W. L. really was deadly sick, he knew it was terminal, he talked David and Barbara [Walker] into coming back to run the *Gazette*. And he started David down in the pressroom. And David was to become publisher, and did.

LP: David's background was in college administration?

RC: Yes, but let me just say he had a bachelor's from Stanford, he had a master's from Harvard, and he had a PhD from Columbia. In college administration he was at Colby College in Watertown, Maine. So they came back here, and [he began] his training. And when W. L. died, then Mrs. White became the editor and David became the publisher. But she was, of course, the boss. She didn't ever write anything. Bear in mind that she, as I said, had been a fact checker and had worked for *Time* magazine and for *Life* magazine. She was very good at that sort

of thing, at picking things apart and finding errors. I don't know if she could write or not. I never did see an example of her writing. And I regret terribly that no one sat down with her like this and taped her life, because it was absolutely fascinating.²³ But anyway, she ran the *Gazette*.

She pretty much let us have our rein in the news department, except that I remember an example or two. For example, at one point [in the 1980s] the First Congregational Church there on 12th Avenue at [State Street] was going to build an addition on the building. The building had been designed by [deceased Emporia architect] J. Stanley Hagan, a close friend of the Whites. Mrs. Hagan thought it was a sacrilege to do anything with his design. And Mrs. White then decided to involve the *Gazette* in an effort to block this addition, which [in her view] would ruin the looks of the church. Keith Greiner, a local attorney, was, I think, leader of the building project out there. And we had a series of editorials, and we had news stories about the purity of architecture, I don't know what. But we had a drive to try to block the addition to the First Congregational Church, if you can believe it.²⁴

LP: Did you write any of the editorials?

RC: I think I did, yes, because she didn't, and she would say, "I would like to have this." And of course, I'm hired help, and so I do that.

LP: You wrote editorials to order?

RC: Yes.

LP: Did you necessarily agree with them?

RC: Not always, not always. Now another example of what Mrs. White did as editor came when City Commissioner Reuben Hammer died sort of unexpectedly, and they had to fill the vacancy. Mrs. White lived next door to Jane Hammer, his widow, who was a simple woman at the very best, in my judgment. Jane was a radical born-again Christian and was a terrible enemy of secular humanism. She saw this as a threat to the world and the state [of Kansas] and to Emporia in particular.

23. In a recent (April 21, 2010) conversation with the editor, Judy Price, longtime assistant to Kathrine White, said that she once told Mrs. White she ought to write an autobiography. Mrs. White responded that there were already enough writers in the family.

24. Keith Greiner was First Congregational Church's moderator and Larry Scott was chair of the building committee at the time the new addition became something of a controversy in Emporia. According to Greiner, he met with Mrs. White to discuss her opposition to the plan and to explain the project, and he believed she was "mollified." In a recent conversation with the editor, Call said that while Mrs. White may have dropped her public opposition to the addition, she was by no means mollified. Editor's phone conversation with Greiner, December 15, 2009; "A Brief History," First Congregational Church, Emporia, <http://www.osprey.net/~fccc/ourHistory.html>.

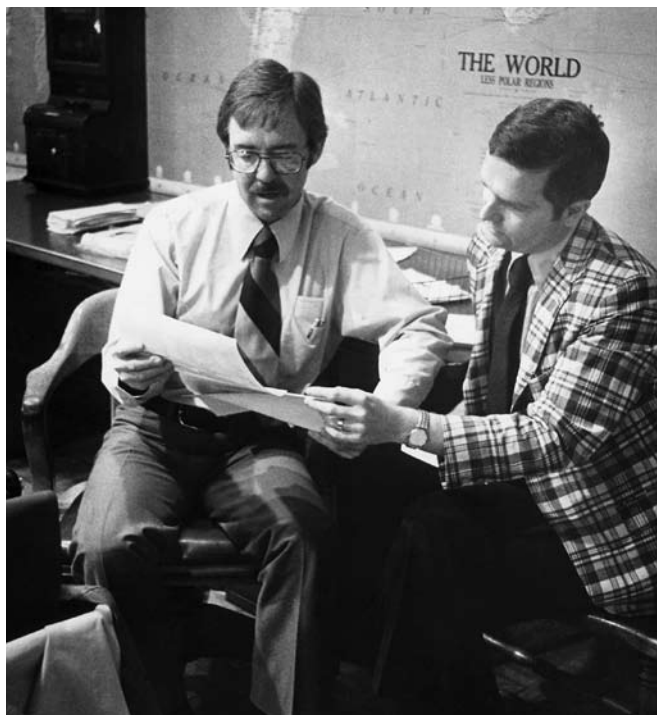
And she was just a terrible city commissioner. [City Manager] Virgil Basgall told me that she literally gave him ulcers when she was on the city commission because of her strange and simple requests.²⁵ She became friends of a guy who was selling radios, and so she made the city buy his brand of radios, this kind of thing. But anyway, I'm getting ahead of myself because Mrs. White decided that Jane Hammer would be the ideal person to replace her husband. And so, the *Gazette* then launches a drive: "Appoint Jane Hammer." They thought, "He only has a year left, or something like that. She could serve out his term." Well, she got a taste of power, and I don't know how long she was on the city commission. I'm virtually sure she was elected then at the next election because she had a following. She was [close to] the minister out at Victory Fellowship [Church], and they had a pretty good voting block. So as I recall, she was later elected after being appointed. I'd have to double-check that.²⁶ But the point I'm trying to make is that Mrs. White had her, what's the word, sacred cows, and once in a while she would pop into the newsroom. But generally, she let us take the bit and go with it as we pleased.

LP: You had to deal with her occasionally, rather than every day?

RC: More likely she would be nitpicking copy. For example, I remember one time, we misspelled Champs Élysées, the French boulevard, and she blistered both me and the reporter for that terrible error. One time, I did an editorial about the U.S. Senate, and she wanted me to add a comment about the famous woman senator

25. Virgil Basgall was, among many other things, longtime Emporia city manager (1960–1982) and a trustee of the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System for twenty-five years. Interestingly, in conversations with the editor, Ray Call occasionally referred to Basgall as the most influential person in Emporia; in a previous interview with the editor, Basgall referred to Call as the most influential person in Emporia. Basgall died in Emporia at age ninety-seven on July 17, 2009. Obituary, *Kansas City Star*, July 20, 2009; obituary, *Emporia Gazette*, July 20, 2009.

26. The Hammers lived at 928 Union Street, one block west of the White home on Exchange Street, and the two families were backyard neighbors. According to records at the Emporia city clerk's office, Reuben E. Hammer died on May 5, 1973 (less than three weeks after beginning his first term on the city commission), and Mrs. Hammer was appointed to replace him on June 6. In April 1974 the members of the commission chose her to serve as mayor, a position she held for one year; but there is no indication at the city clerk's office that Jane Hammer was ever elected to the commission. It also should be noted that Hammer could not have been a member of the Victory Fellowship Foursquare Church while she was on the city commission, as that church was not established until 1983, though she was a member after its founding. Hammer's outspoken public opposition to secular humanism may date from the early 1980s. See her letter to Governor John Carlin, published as "Emporian Fears Conspiracy," *Emporia Gazette*, September 1, 1983; for Call on secular humanism, see, for example, "The Topic That Won't Go Away," *Emporia Gazette*, February 28, 1985; for Rueben Hammer's obituary, see *Emporia Gazette*, May 7, 1973.



"When W. L. really was deadly sick, he knew it was terminal, he talked David and Barbara [Walker] into coming back to run the *Gazette*," Call remembers. Walker, who had been working in college administration at Colby College in Watertown, Maine, became publisher while Kathrine White served as editor. Walker retained his position as publisher after Kathrine's death in 1988, when his wife Barbara became editor of the paper. Photograph of Walker and Call in the 1970s courtesy of the *Emporia Gazette*.

of that time, the '70s and '80s, [Margaret Chase Smith, Republican, Maine]. And I misspelled her name or something, and she came down on me very hard. She would nitpick copy and spelling.

There are two or three books, *What People Said* and a William Lindsay White biography, that give examples of why she was miserable when the Whites were here [in Emporia]. She just hated it here. There are several references in *What People Said*, which is a book about the great Kansas bond scandal, about how she made fun of Emporia women for wearing machine-made lace instead of handmade lace, that kind of thing.²⁷ I remember I had a newsroom party out at my little old house on Frontier [Way]; it was in the '70s, I think, and this one girl came wearing a see-through dress. It was a gauzy kind of

27. William Lindsey White, *What People Said* (New York: Viking Press, 1938); Jernigan, *William Lindsay White*, 193–94, 206, 214, 246–48; for more on the bond scandal, which involved the Whites' good friends the Finneys of Emporia and forged or illegally obtained municipal bonds and warrants, see Robert Smith Bader, *The Great Kansas Bond Scandal* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1982).

blouse you could see through, with no underwear, and Mrs. White met her at the door. She said, "My dear, you're practically naked." I remember that vividly. But she did that for effect, I think. She loved to be a sophisticate. I keep coming back to that word.

LP: Did you find her hard to get along with?

RC: Well, no. I just did as I was told. She drove me crazy. You know, she made me angry. But no, I was hired help. I did as I was told. I didn't argue with her very much, unless I really had a valid point. I remember we were discussing salaries in the newsroom, and they had told me to survey salaries among the papers our size in the state. And I took the report in, and we were talking. And she said, "Well, that can't be right. They don't pay those kind of wages." And I said, "Just a minute, Mrs. White. I can go call them and ask them if I have the right figures." "Well, never mind," she said, "that's not important." But I would go that far with her. She could be like a tyrant.

[When Kathrine White died in August 1988, her daughter] Barbara Walker became the editor, and her husband David [remained] the publisher, and they made me executive editor.

LP: What did that entail?

RC: Well, same job. I was running the newsroom and writing the editorials and, you know, doing what an editor does. But they wanted to keep the title in the family.

LP: What changes came about in the *Gazette*? Was there any significant change between William Allen White, William Lindsay White, Kathrine White, and the Walkers?

RC: Oh, yes. I'll give a quick anecdotal thing first. When I first began to go to conventions, and when I went back to New York and all that, W. L. sat me down, and he said, "Now Ray, I have been on expense account for *Reader's Digest* and everything, and I have found that you're more apt to leave something off than you are to put too much on. So I want you to be careful to write down everything, every penny you spend. If it's a tip, be sure and put that down." He was a very generous guy, wonderful guy, and I did that. And we got along fine for years. [When I went down to] the Republican National Convention in Miami Beach in 1972 [W. L. was there, but quite ill]. I was a delegate to the convention, but I sent back dispatches [and] pictures. But then I turned in my expense account as I had always done, and she [Mrs. White] cut it about in half. For example, I put down "baggage tip, a dollar and a half," and she wrote over to



One of the biggest stories Call remembered reporting during his time at the Gazette involved a 1983 double murder and an alleged tryst between an Emporia pastor and his church secretary. "In my view," he recalls, the murders were "solved by Nancy Horst [center] and [Roberta] Birk—she's now Bobbi Mlynar [left]. . . . We nominated them for a Pulitzer Prize." At a public forum years later, Mlynar credited Call as the person most responsible for bringing the accused to trial. When Pennington suggested that it was really she and Birk who deserved the credit, she retorted, "you think that because you've been talking to Ray Call." Photograph courtesy of Everett Ray Call.

the side, "you can carry your own bags," and scratched it off. That's literally true. You could carry your own bags. And as I recall, Jerry Trowbridge was advertising manager, and he went with me. And I said, "now, Jerry, just spend whatever you want." Well, she made us pay back half of what we put down as expenses. So yes, there were changes.

Another one that I really disagreed with, and this happened after W. L. died: in William Allen White's time and in W. L.'s time, the *Gazette* gave complimentary subscriptions to widows of *Gazette* employees. For example, Isabel Lowther, the widow of Gene Lowther, who had been business manager. And one of the first things Mrs. White—and David was then the publisher—one of the first things they did was to cut that off, which I felt was a dreadful thing to do.

LP: There was a tightening of the reins, of the financial reins, even though the *Gazette* continued to be, I guess, a pretty profitable operation.

RC: Exactly right. Yes. Of course we now have yet another generation, and the *Gazette*, all newspapers, I think, in general, and the *Gazette* is one of them, are losing circulation. They're making money, but they're losing

circulation. And some day, there's going to be a real problem. So papers are making adjustments, all of them.

LP: During the time that you were at the *Gazette*, you must have worked on or been connected with some very interesting or important stories.

RC: Yes. The first thing that comes to mind is the weather; for example, the tornado of 1974, a major, major story for a number of reasons; first of all because of the death toll. As I recall, it was eight. [And then] because of the damage it did, because many homes and many families were involved. It also changed the economy because after the tornado had gone through, there was a great deal of rebuilding. They had to rebuild the shopping center, so there was an economic impact from that.²⁸

What's the biggest story? As a newspaperman, I have to say—spot news is the thing—the Anderson-Bird murder cases.²⁹ My greatest regret is this: in my view, this murder was solved by Nancy Horst and [Roberta] Birk—she's now Bobbi Mlynar. They became suspicious of this. Of course State Trooper John Rule was given credit for solving it in the movie, and they worked with him. But I think those two [*Gazette*] reporters should have had the Pulitzer Prize. And we nominated them

28. The F4 tornado struck on Saturday evening, June 8, 1974, killing six people (according to initial and subsequent official reports), injuring scores more, and causing an estimated \$20 million in damage to northwest Emporia, especially to the shopping center. "1974 Emporia Tornado," National Weather Service Weather Forecast Office, Topeka, Kansas, <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/top/events/june1974.php>; *Emporia Gazette*, June 9 (a four-page "extra," Sunday edition) and June 10, 1974; *Topeka Sunday Capital-Journal*, June 9, 1974; *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 10, 1974. The *Gazette* does not publish on Sundays, and this was the first "extra" Call had "ever helped put out"—he described the "extra effort" that made this possible in his June 10 column.

29. This sensational murder case involving an Emporia minister, Thomas Bird, his church secretary, Lorna Anderson, her husband, Martin Anderson (murdered on November 4, 1983), and the minister's wife, Sandy Bird (who became the first victim on July 17, 1983), received national attention. Bird was convicted first of "solicitation to commit first-degree murder" against Martin Anderson in August 1984 and within a year for the murder of his wife; he was released on parole in 2004. Lorna Anderson (who married Randy Eldridge in September 1985) pleaded guilty to a charge of criminal solicitation in August 1985 in the death of Sandy Bird and to second-degree murder in the death of her first husband in November 1987. Lorna Anderson Eldridge Moore (she divorced Eldridge in 1990 and married Terry Moore in 2004) was paroled in February 2007. See, among others, "Bird indicted in death of wife," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, February 26, 1985; "Bird murder trial reset by Lyon County judge," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, April 19, 1985; "Jury finds Bird guilty of murder," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, July 24, 1985; "Eldridge enters guilty pleas," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, August 25, 1985; "Emporia minister had been serving life term," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, May 22, 2004; Bobbi Mlynar, "Parole for Lorna Anderson Moore," *Emporia Gazette*, February 3, 2007; "Parole board hears comments on Lorna Anderson Moore," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, December 23, 2006; "She's out, will live in Hutch," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, February 10, 2007.

for a Pulitzer Prize. The winner of the Pulitzer Prize that year was a newspaper that reported violations in the athletic department of a college in Carolina or some place; I can't remember. But I thought the work [Horst and Birk] did and the result they got should have won the Pulitzer Prize. And I still believe that. And my role, then, was just to encourage them and get whatever they needed. I remember one time they were trying to get some information from the KBI [Kansas Bureau of Investigation]. So when Attorney General [Robert] "Bob" Stephan came to Emporia one time for a speech, I asked for private meeting with him. We gathered, the four of us, Bobbi Birk and Nancy Horst and I and the Attorney General, [and] met upstairs in the American Legion.³⁰ And they showed him the evidence they'd uncovered and asked him if he didn't think the KBI could help with this and maybe get this prosecuted.

LP: The Rev. Thomas ["Tom"] Bird was the accused person here.

RC: And his wife's name was [Sandra] "Sandy" Bird, and the [other] woman was Lorna Anderson. And [her husband's] name [was Martin "Marty" Anderson].

LP: And the accusation eventually was that Bird had killed his wife and may have killed Anderson's husband. I guess he was never actually convicted of [murdering Martin Anderson].

RC: Right, but there was strong evidence to that effect. Well, as I said, the reporters, Nancy Horst and Bobbi Birk Mlynar, had gathered a pretty convincing case, and they wanted to get some outside help because there wasn't too much from local law enforcement officers. So we had this meeting, presented this evidence, and as a result of it the KBI then became involved. I think that finally got this moving and eventually led to a conviction.³¹

LP: [The Bird-Anderson murder case], of course, from my memory of it, was certainly one of the most vivid to appear in the *Gazette*, and it was a trial that very much divided the town. Tom Bird's congregation [Faith Lutheran Church] had many defenders who thought this

30. The reference here is to the old Legion Hall on 12th Avenue. The Legion has since moved twice to new quarters, the last further west on 12th Avenue.

31. At a 2009 program at the Lyon County Historical Society, Horst and Mlynar discussed the Bird-Anderson murder cases and claimed that the person most responsible for bringing Bird to trial was Ray Call. From the audience Professor Pennington stated that his understanding was that the two of them really deserved the credit, to which Mlynar retorted, "You think that because you've been talking to Ray Call." For a sampling of the Horst and Mlynar coverage (the latter's byline at the time was "Roberta Birk"), see "Secret Witness Fund Total Is \$2,750; Calls Come In," *Emporia Gazette*, September 20, 1984; "Second Autopsy Is Performed Today," *Emporia Gazette*, October 2, 1984; "Bird Charged With Wife's Murder," *Emporia Gazette*, February 26, 1985.

was an absolute miscarriage of justice, and that he was not the type of man who could have done this sort of thing. Others in the community, like myself I must say, said it almost looked like an open and shut case, that there wasn't much doubt about it. How did the *Gazette* handle all of this controversy?

RC: Well, to this day, there are people who do not believe Tom Bird did it. And books have been written. He had a support group. One of the books, I think, was *Justice Denied*, or some such title in which they presented evidence to prove Tom Bird didn't do it.³² [At the *Gazette*] we thought we were trying to present a balanced case, and reports of the trial were fairly straightforward; you just say who said what and who did what. And we published comments.

LP: There were letters to the editor ad infinitum.

RC: The supporters sent letters, and we published all of those letters, and now and then we had an editorial comment about it. You have to be pretty careful when there's a trial going on because no one has been convicted. You have suspects, but you don't have murderers yet.

LP: And of course [the case] went on to appear in the *New Yorker* magazine.

RC: Calvin Trillin was [a] writer for the *New Yorker*, and he is from Kansas City although he's lived in New York for years and years. But he came here to research on that story, and we took him out to dinner down at the Bistro Cafe, which was a pretty nifty little restaurant down on Commercial Street across the street west of the courthouse. And of course, he is a food connoisseur, and we tried to give him the best, most interesting meal we could in Emporia. And he's a very gracious fellow. And as I say he eventually wrote that article.

LP: My personal conclusion was that Trillin didn't know a damned thing about [the case. Almost] anyone in Emporia knew more about it than he did.

RC: Yes. [His article was] pretty superficial.³³

LP: The case seemed to be so open and shut that most people certainly thought Bird was the criminal.

RC: Yes. In fact there were lots of jokes about the case. There was a story that Lorna Anderson had a little black

book with the names of her lovers and this included some people in the courthouse and some people at city hall. Those rumors still go around.

One of the cases I almost forgot, and yet it was almost an explosion at the time, and the impact on Emporia, from a news point of view, was explosive: it was the case of [Mark James Robert] "Jimmy" Essex, the New Orleans sniper. He was a young man who grew up in Emporia, and he was black, and came from a very fine family. After he left Emporia, I guess he became so angry about racial matters that he went into a building in New Orleans [in 1973] and began shooting and killed a number of people.³⁴ Suddenly, this became a major national story for three or four days or such a matter. And suddenly, the *Gazette's* newsroom was full of correspondents from television stations and from national newspapers and the wire services. They just descended upon us. I'd never seen anything like it. I didn't know how to cope with it. I didn't expect it, and we [tried] to help everybody we could. They wanted to use wires, they wanted any pictures we could get. And, of course, the Associated Press was there. We finally reached the point where we had to set up a news conference for all the out-of-town reporters over at the St. James Baptist Church, and we had a news conference over there with Jimmy Essex's parents and other people. And this went on for two or three days, and then suddenly something else came along, and they were all gone. It was what they call the feeding frenzy. But that was the biggest impact I'd ever seen. We were the lead story on national television broadcasts. And all the wire services, international people, you know, people from other countries were in here getting information about this case. And then suddenly it just went away. But for two or three days, it was just frenetic. And from the point of view of a frenzy that was the biggest story I was ever involved in. Just amazing.

I've been pondering this and, I think, to me the most fascinating part [of working at the *Gazette*] has been to watch the evolution of the town and the culture of the

32. A made-for-television movie, *Murder Ordained*, aired in 1987, and more recently a rather lengthy book makes the case for Tom Bird's innocence: Dave Race, *Caged Bird* (St. Paul, Minn.: Alethos Press, 2000). No book entitled *Justice Denied* that pertained to the Bird case could be located, and in a recent conversation, Call stated that *Caged Bird* is the book he had in mind.

33. Calvin Trillin, "American Chronicles: Rumors Around Town," *New Yorker* (January 6, 1986): 35-57; see also, Trillin, *American Stories* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1991), 73-97, 291-92.

34. Mark James Robert Essex, who was twenty-three at the time of the New Orleans shootings, left Emporia to join the U.S. Navy, where he reportedly became disillusioned by the racial prejudice he experienced; a "behavior disorder" led to a general discharge. Essex shot and killed six people from atop the multi-story Downtown Howard Johnson's Motel before killing himself. "Crime: Death in New Orleans," *Time*, January 22, 1973, 20-21; "Kansas Hometown Baffled by Violent End to Life of Mark Essex," *New York Times*, January 11, 1973; "Family Says Essex Was Seeking Justice," *New York Times*, January 12, 1973; "Sniper at Hotel on Terror Spree," *Emporia Gazette*, January 9, 1973; "Young Emporian Labeled as Sniper," *Emporia Gazette*, January 9, 1973; "Essex Family Offers Evidence of Persecution," *Emporia Gazette*, January 11, 1973; for a Call editorial on the case, see "The Human Side of the News," *Emporia Gazette*, January 10, 1973.

university. For example I came here about the same time John King did. John King was an ex-Navy man, and he came here as the president of the university in 1953. And when he arrived, the enrollment here was 959. He left thirteen years later in 1966 and the enrollment had gone up six-fold to 6,425. This is a pretty major story, the things that he did and the things he accomplished.

It's been fascinating to watch the political infighting in Emporia. It goes on yet today. For example, down at the city commission they have decided to grant revenue bonds for retail establishments. Always in the past they were reserved for industry: Iowa Beef [Processors, Inc. (IBP)], Diddle[-Glasser Company], and so on.³⁵ I see this happening just as land is being developed out at the turnpike entrance for a very large retail strip mall sort of thing. And I think, "Isn't that a coincidence?" And it reminds me that through the years I watched the interplay of the Chamber of Commerce, the fights over urban renewal or over industrial revenue bonds, and the turmoil, the friends who become enemies. Sometimes, I think that's really more intriguing than the very explosive, exciting news stories that come through. Of course I'm a political sort of guy. The hard news things are more fun. There's a lot of excitement and the adrenalin flows, and often you get some national attention, and you're quoted and so on. This afternoon we were driving up through Country Club Heights, and, as I was going along, I noticed that on either side I would see a house and I could tell you who had been there and what the story was. We went by the house [where] Kenny Calhoun lived on Morningside Drive. And his house was hit by the tornado [in 1974]. I come by another house, and I recall that an attorney lived there, and his wife had died under very mysterious circumstances in a car wreck. And you drive by the Country Club, and you think of some of the things that have happened there and some of the people who've been [there].³⁶ You become such a part of the town that you really know too much about everybody. But it's intriguing.

35. Iowa Beef Processors, Inc. bought and expanded the Emporia beef slaughter and processing plant originally built in the 1960s by Armour Packing Company. After several years of operation, IBP sold the plant to Tyson. Tyson recently closed the slaughter operations, which greatly reduced employment at the plant, though Tyson is continuing its meat processing operations there. Diddle-Glasser was founded in 1949 and at one time was a leading manufacturer of web printing presses. It went bankrupt in 2000, and was sold in 2001 to Alcoa, which closed the plant a month later and moved its operations to Denver.

36. Country Club Heights centers around the Emporia Country Club, and contains the homes of many of the city's old elite families, including the Calhouns. William Kenneth "Kenny" Calhoun's grandfather purchased Newman Dry Goods Company, one of the city's largest downtown retail stores, in 1936 and three generations of the



Call enjoyed pursuing stories about the interplay between Emporia businesses and institutions, such as the university and the Chamber of Commerce. An ongoing story of interest to Call was the construction and operation of a meat packing plant in town, pictured here in the 1970s. "It was Armour, IBP, and then Tyson," he recollected, "but there was no open discussion of whether [the town] wanted to do this. . . . thousands of new jobs, all this, you know, folderol—and I'm not saying it's wrong—but by the time it was announced, it had so much momentum, there was really not much people could do. They hadn't had time to discuss the pros and cons."

LP: You know where all the skeletons are.

RC: Yes. It's kind of like [Thornton Wilder's] *Our Town*. And I suppose people know stories about me. But I know anything I do or anybody I see who has been here very long has somehow popped up in the *Gazette*, either for something great they did, like Sam Mellinger getting us the turnpike and interstate bypass [in the mid-1950s].³⁷ We've had about five or six lawyers who've been disbarred for all sorts of things, ranging from money to sex. You know, I can recite those. There's no point to it here. I can recall a case where we had evidence that the county attorney was dismissing cases for a fee. There was no conviction, so I can't say names, or we'd be into libel. But just when we were about ready to publish the story, somebody stole the file from the *Gazette* and put

family operated it until it closed in 1999. Editor's conversation with William Kenneth Calhoun, January 21, 2010.

37. Sam Mellinger was probably Emporia's most influential attorney in the twenty years following World War II. His reputation was statewide and he was elected Republican National Committeeman from Kansas in 1964. He was one of the leaders in getting the Kansas Turnpike and Interstate 35 to connect with Emporia. He died in August 1966. "Mellinger Dead at 52," *Emporia Gazette*, August 10, 1966; see also Call's "Tributes to Sam Mellinger," *Emporia Gazette*, August 13, 1966.

it into the hands of one of the people involved. And those people are still around, some of them. So that's the intriguing thing as I'm about ready to shuffle off and become disengaged, shall we say.

But not only that, the growth, I mean, the change. Look at Emporia's cultural changes. I have talked to people in recent months who rue the day that the Armour Packing Company came to Emporia [in 1964], which was later sold to IBP [in 1967] and is now Tyson. They wish this had never happened because they object to the infusion of minority races, particularly the [Somalis]. They [the Somalis] are different, and they [some Emporians] are angry about it, and they wish they had never come to town.³⁸

LP: [Back to the relationship between the newspaper and the university:] under William Lindsay, how did the *Gazette* and what is now Emporia State University get along?

RC: [Let's start] with John King [who was the first ESU president] I was around. He and W. L. White got along very well, with the one exception that I mentioned earlier about publishing the salaries. And John King, I think, cultivated a friendship with W. L. White. And W. L. White liked him. Okay, who was next? After King was [John] Visser [from 1967 until 1984]. I was not aware of too much involvement between the two, and particularly when W. L. became ill the last couple of years [of his life].³⁹

LP: Were there any times or periods of friction [between the university and the *Gazette*]?

RC: Yes. I'm going to tell about one of those. I'm choosing my words carefully because I was personally involved. One of John Visser's good friends was Oliver Hughes, the president of [what was then] Citizens National Bank.⁴⁰ And Oliver sort of looked after John Visser's interests in the community. They had adjacent homes up at one of the lakes, [Pomona] up by Topeka. So they were close. But enrollment began to drop pretty

sharply. And there was a lot of unrest in the community about that. And John Visser became the scapegoat.

LP: The enrollment dropped from a little over 7,000 to [under 6,000].⁴¹

RC: Yes, over a fairly short period of time. It [started] when they quit giving draft deferments for college attendance. It doesn't matter why. The enrollment was dropping, the Chamber of Commerce was restless, but Oliver was still pretty protective of Visser because they were close friends. And the *Gazette*, we decided (and I say we—it would be David Walker and I, and I must say I was the ringleader), I decided it was time—Visser had been here a long time. So rather than just launch into an editorial campaign against Visser, David and I asked Oliver if he could have a meeting with us about this matter. And we went over to the Citizens National Bank. They had a conference room up on the second or third floor, and we sat in there and began to talk about the matter, and said if Visser continued to serve, we were going to launch an editorial campaign to get rid of him. And Oliver said, "Well, now just wait a minute." And we talked for some time. And Oliver said, "Well, I'll tell you what. Let him serve out the rest of this year, this term, and I will talk to him. And we'll get him to turn in his resignation effective at the end of the term or semester or whatever it was. And then he can go out with grace, and you will get your way. He'll be gone, and yet we won't have to embarrass him." And we agreed to that, and that's what happened [in 1984]. And the only one who could substantiate that is David Walker because Oliver's dead now. I think David will recall a meeting. He may remember it a different way, but he was there and he had the clout.

I really admired [Oliver Hughes]. And I've written about it. And yet, we would get into scuffles over how the Jones Fund money was being spent or whatever it might be, and he'd have me over there for a heart-to-heart talk.⁴² So I felt fairly free in talking to Oliver Hughes about the Visser matter.

38. Things continue to change, of course. During its last years of slaughter operations, Tyson employed a large number of workers from Somalia who came to Emporia with their families. Now that Tyson has closed its slaughter operations and reduced its work force, almost all the Somalis have left to find employment in other packing plants in Kansas and surrounding states.

39. John E. King was president of KSTC from 1953 to 1966; Lawrence Boylan then served as interim president until John E. Visser was appointed in 1967. Robert E. Glennen, who held the ESU presidency until 1997, succeeded Visser in 1984. See "Emporia State University, Office of the President," www.emporia.edu/president/past/index.htm.

40. Citizens National Bank has since gone through a number of mergers and is now a branch of Bank of America.

41. In the fall of 1967, the first year of John Visser's presidency, enrollment at Emporia State reached the 7,000 mark for the first time, and there was speculation both in the community and on the campus that it might eventually reach 10,000. It hovered around 7,000 until 1971, and then began to decline. By 1983 it was down to 5,800. Enrollment figures provided by the Office of Institutional Development, Emporia State University.

42. Citizens National Bank (now Bank of America) is the financial agent for the Jones Trust (incorrectly referred to here as the Jones Fund), which provides medical cost assistance through the Jones Foundation to needy persons under twenty-one years old in Lyon, Coffey, and Osage counties. It also supports educational development for residents of those counties and provides funding for other public purposes.

LP: And you say you were the ringleader in [the Visser affair]?

RC: Yes, I guess I was, for good or evil.

LP: Which says something about your position at the *Gazette*.

RC: Yes; I didn't realize it at the time. I was getting ready to write the editorials [about Visser], and I thought, "Well. . . ."

LP: Had you cleared these editorials with David Walker?

RC: I don't think he knew about it until I said, "Look, I'm going to go do some pieces about the need for a new president. Do you want, [etc.]?" Of course, he came from an academic background and shared my view.

LP: He didn't take much convincing then?

RC: No. And I think there was a mood on campus that it was time for Visser to go. He was a very pleasant man, but I didn't think [he was] the strongest leader. Now who was next, Glennen?

LP: Yes, Robert Glennen [from 1984 until 1997].

RC: Bob Glennen. We got along with him mainly because he got along with us. That is, if there was a controversy or a major change, he would have me come in and sit down and visit a little bit, or maybe David and Barbara. He would often go to them, and then they would pass things down to me. He was pretty careful not to surprise the *Gazette*. And I think Glennen accomplished a lot of good things for the university.

LP: [After you retired from the *Gazette*,] Bob Glennen actually hired you to write a history of Emporia State University.

RC: Which has never been published; it's in the [university] archives here, and I have a copy, and I hope someday somebody will get it published.⁴³ There have been three or four efforts [at a history], and none of them has ever been published for some reason. I really think Glennen's motive for that history was to get on the record the story of how he was treated by the Kansas Board of Regents, and how he was brought in and told he had to change these things and do these things to these departments and so on, and not to tell anybody that the Regents had told him to do it.

LP: This was to bring Emporia State out of the problems caused by enrollment drops?

RC: [Yes.] And they were telling him some unpleasant things he had to do here. He had to cut so many departments and all of this sort of thing. This was coming from Stanley Koplik. Stanley Koplik was, I would say, the czar of the Board of Regents.⁴⁴

LP: He was the executive secretary [from 1982 until 1993].

RC: Yes, but he was a Darth Vader influence, if you want my opinion. Anyway, they were giving [Glennen] these instructions in these private meetings, and he had to do these things on campus and not tell anybody why.

LP: He had to take the blame, the responsibility?

RC: For all these things that he didn't decide; Koplik decided.

LP: Koplik bulldozed the Board of Regents.

RC: Yes, he had an agenda.

LP: He had an agenda which they agreed with.

RC: Yes. But anyway, he [Glennen] wanted that on the record, I think—of how he had been treated by the Regents early on. Now this, by the way (and I'm not talking now about the history of the university; I'm talking about the incidents that were happening), we found out that the Board of Regents was meeting secretly with Glennen.

LP: In violation of state laws?

RC: My memory is that Glennen tipped me off about that. He said, "I can't say much about it but. . . ." I'm pretty sure [Glennen] just said, "Well, I'm having to meet with the Regents." And something caught my attention that [this] was not a publicized meeting because they're supposed to announce their meetings and have an agenda and all this under the Kansas Open Meetings Act. So anyway, I went down to see [W. Davis] "Buzz" Merritt at the *Wichita Eagle*. He was the editor there. And of course, they had a Regents school in Wichita, and I went down there and told him what I had found out and asked him if he would join us in going to the attorney general to seek a charge against the Board of Regents. And the Board of Regents was accused of holding illegal meetings, and they were convicted of it. [In reality] I don't think there was much of a penalty. But it was a public censure. I don't remember the penalty, but I remember they were found guilty of it in the courts. So the Regents were found guilty of holding

43. Ray Call Research Material, Record Group NA1999.0001, University Archives, Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas; see also Ray Call, *Emporia's Ascent: How the Town Grew and Life Changed from 1950 to 2000* (Emporia, Kans.: Ray Call, 2005).

44. Stanley Z. Koplik left Kansas to become chancellor of higher education for the state of Massachusetts and died in Boston on January 3, 2000. See his obituary, "Koplik dies at age 55," *Topeka Capital-Journal*, January 5, 2000.

an illegal meeting, violating the Open Meetings Act.⁴⁵ And as a matter of fact, one of them, one of those regents still doesn't like me very much because of that. He's an attorney.

LP: So obviously, when Glennen asked me to write this history [of ESU], and I declined and suggested you, I suspect his eyes probably lit up and thought that was an excellent suggestion because you already had some knowledge of what went on here.

RC: That was part of it.

LP: And he knew you were probably a sympathetic listener.

RC: Exactly. And if you look at that history in the archives, that's a very big part; I mean, that's the lead of Glennen's section. And it's laid out in detail; what departments he was supposed to close down or cut back, and really make some drastic changes. And he eventually refused to make them, I think. But anyway, that was Glennen, and I think he was a pretty successful president. I'm looking at my notes here. He raised the endowment fund twenty-five million; concluded the Trusler Sports Complex, the Sauder Alumni Center, the addition to Cramer Hall, and the renovation of Plumb Hall; Welch Stadium was renovated; the Student Union renovated; the National Teachers Hall of Fame was launched, as was the Kansas Business Hall of Fame. I mean, he was an active president. [Glennen] was the last one I dealt with because I retired [in 1996] while he was still president.

LP: We've talked about the [*Gazette's*] relationship with the university and with the various presidents. How about with the Chamber of Commerce?

RC: If I were to sum it up, I would say there was an adversarial relationship. The chamber[s] attitude is what's good for GM [General Motors] is good for America. What's good for the merchants is good for Emporia. It was and I think still is a custom for the economic development people—it used to be the

Chamber of Commerce, but now we have a separate organization that does that—to be very secretive. Let's say when Armour Packing Company was going to come to Emporia, somebody would leak a rumor. We would ask about it, ask the chamber or ask the city commission, the city manager. "Well, we can't comment on that, because if we say anything, they have told us they will pull out and completely disregard Emporia."

It was Armour, IBP, and then Tyson. But there was no open discussion of whether we [the town] wanted to do this. By the time Armour announced plans for a plant in Emporia, thousands of new jobs, all this, you know, folderol—and I'm not saying it's wrong—but by the time it was announced, it had so much momentum, there was really not much people could do. They hadn't had time to discuss the pros and cons; and what about the odor? How much more water will it require? What about the sewage system? Can it handle [the increase]? All of this was kind of just brushed aside in the excitement of the new industry.

LP: We'll work out the details later.

RC: Yes, and never mind. And see the chamber was able to keep this secret. But your original question was how did the *Gazette* get along with the Chamber of Commerce, and I would say, if not adversarial, at least we took a watchdog role.

LP: Would you say the *Gazette* was anti-growth?

RC: No, I would not say that, particularly not since W. L. died.

LP: After all, the *Gazette* depends on the growth of the community for the future prosperity of the *Gazette*.

RC: Let's draw a line here. The prosperity, the profits of the *Gazette* depend on growth, but that should be none of the newsroom's business.

LP: It shouldn't be, but we've already seen that it is.

RC: Well, not necessarily. As I say, W. L. took an adversarial role. He wasn't part of Armour coming to town; he wasn't told about it. Even though, yes, if the town grows, the paper grows. I told the story about the Montgomery Ward thing; [W. L.] had dealt with big-time journalism, and he was different from his father. And we covered that earlier, and this is another example.

As I look back, I'm more intrigued by the things we've been talking about, the interplay at the university, the Chamber of Commerce. Those things are the things that I kind of sit back and reflect on now and then, more than the hard news, the fires, like the Haynes Hardware Store fire.⁴⁶

45. According to the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, October 20, 1984, Call and Merritt "asked Attorney General Robert Stephan . . . to investigate the process used by the State Board of Regents in developing a plan to cut graduate programs" at ESU, and the attorney general agreed to investigate the editors' allegations that, as they wrote in their official complaint, "the Kansas Board of Regents has deliberately and consistently violated the state's open meetings law." A month later the attorney general filed suit against the board in the Shawnee County District Court alleging six violations of the act; a few days later, the board admitted "it had violated the Kansas open meetings law, and agreed to the terms of a consent judgment designed to prevent similar violations in the future." *Topeka Capital-Journal*, October 20, November 28, and November 30, 1984; for an example of a Call editorial on the Open Meetings Act generally, see "Continual Battle," *Emporia Gazette*, October 2, 1984.

46. Haynes Hardware was founded in 1894 and became a mainstay of downtown Emporia. It was destroyed in one of Emporia's most

LP: As I look at the *Gazette* [over the years], what changes do I see as a reader?

RC: Yes, the technology. Now, I say we went from hot type to cold type [printing]. But then came the computer, and when I was there the rule of thumb among small newspapers was to have one newsperson for each thousand circulation. So we had twelve people, thirteen in the newsroom. Okay, circulation is going down. And another thing is that, when I was there, the news people did nothing but gather and write the news, put the headlines on it and so on. Now if you go to a newsroom, you'll see the editors and the reporters sitting behind computer terminals, and they're writing their stories, yes, but they're also making up the pages, putting headlines, placing pictures in there, putting captions. They are literally making up the pages. The job of the compositor, the make-up man, is gone. That has been assumed by the same people who gather and write the news. In other words, the editors spend—I think one editor told me he spent about 80 percent of his time on this [kind of layout work]. [Editors are] not doing research on stories, or they're not working with reporters. They're actually making pages and composing the pages and all of this sort of thing. So, something has to give, and it's news coverage.

LP: How has the *Gazette* changed? If I were to pick up the *Gazette* today compared to fifty years ago, what's the difference?

RC: First of all, it's better looking. You've got pretty pictures, and you've got. . . .

LP: I don't know if it's better looking to me or not.

RC: Well, to most. Obviously it's better looking to average people because [the paper is] doing it to attract average people. They have watched graphics on television. They expect them in their newspaper. They expect to see color. We didn't have any color when I was there fifty years ago.

LP: You're not disturbed by this change in the appearance, then?

RC: Well, I didn't say that. The point is, what does it matter what I feel? That has nothing to do with it. Way back when, I think in about 1970, we won the national award for having the best-looking newspaper in the country. It was called the Ayer Cup. We won mainly on

spectacular fires, which began on the evening of April 23, 1964. The *Gazette's* coverage of this story lasted over a week; some of the photographs that accompany the articles are credited to Ray Call. The hardware store was rebuilt but closed in 1986. See especially *Emporia Gazette*, April 24, 25, and 29, 1964; "R. C." (i.e., Ray Call) wrote an editorial, "Cards of Thanks," on the fire for the *Gazette's* April 25 issue; on the store's closing see *Emporia Gazette*, September 3, 1986.



In 1895 William Allen White bought the Gazette with borrowed money. By 1900 the paper was well established enough that White was able to build the two-story structure that still houses the paper today at 517 Merchant Street in Emporia. Pictured here are the paper's offices after their 1967 renovation by W. L. and Kathrine White, with what is likely Call's white Ford Mustang parked out front.

a design that W. L. worked out himself. He got books of typefaces. He worked with different sizes of body type. He worked with what he called the X-line, that is, if you look at the letter "d" in newspaper type, the X-line is the round part, what would be covered by the X. The point is, he researched typography a great deal. We still have the books down there in the office. And he came up with a very, I thought, beautiful design, reminiscent of the *Wall Street Journal*, very reminiscent, Oxford rules. The type was Eusebius, and Cloister and Gowdy, those kinds of things. And we used lots of white space. It was kind of a delicate design, really.

LP: How far do you think [that] design would get you today?

RC: Nowhere. The *Christian Science Monitor* used to be a little bit like that. The *Wall Street Journal*—I haven't seen it for probably six months, but I think it still is in this same vein. Now, I don't discount pictures. We used photographs, and our theory was if a photograph is worth using, it should be used large enough—like a work of art, it should be large enough so it can be seen and tell the story. Now they use smaller pictures, color pictures. So what's better? Better is what works with this culture, not with my culture fifty years ago, but with the present culture. They have to compete, and it's an uphill battle because of the declining circulation.

I had a concrete example, a personal experience just last week that brings home another point. And it involves a journalist we both know. His name is Pat Kelley. He's now editor of the editorial page, and that is the crux of the problem. I was told last week that Pat has been told

that they are trying to trim the newsroom budget, and that they might ask him to do just some straight news reporting on the street, or the courthouse, or whatever, in addition to what he's doing as editorial page editor. Now bear in mind, he has been doing other things, but this would be an official and marked change. There is a very personal and somewhat painful example of another change that's happening in journalism. Newsroom budgets—and as I say, we touched on this earlier—for all newspapers are suffering. There have been articles in the *New Yorker* and in *Vanity Fair*, a number of publications, that tell how virtually all newspapers, including the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, other very large and successful newspapers, are cutting back on the newsroom budget. One of the problems, then, is the example here at the *Emporia Gazette*. The *Gazette* is a small newspaper. I don't know the circulation, but it's come down.⁴⁷ And the question is, can a paper the size of the *Gazette* afford to have an editorial page editor? Can a paper this size even afford to have an editorial page? Many of them the size of the *Gazette* have eliminated the editorial page or use borrowed material from other publications or, if they're a chain, they might have an editorial that circulated to all the newspapers in the chain, or several that they can choose from.

[For example] the *Kansas City Star* used to be [owned by] Knight-Ridder; now it's McClatchey. And these newspapers in these chains are cutting their editorial page budgets by sharing this material. Another example is the movie critic down at [the *Wichita Eagle*], another McClatchey paper. His name was Bob Cartwright. And his job was eliminated about six months ago. They no longer have a full-time movie critic. So what is happening is that news coverage suffers. You simply cannot reduce the number of reporters or the number of editorial writers and maintain quality. That added to the fact that you have editors spending a lot of time putting the pages together, rather than editing or assigning stories or doing research, and that is causing a lot of problems. So I don't know where it will end. I do know that a lot of newspapers have switched over or are switching over to Internet and Web sites and these kinds of things. They're making money by selling advertising on their sites. And it seems to me that newspapers are really going to suffer in the next, oh, twenty or thirty years.

47. According to Call, the *Gazette's* peak daily circulation during his years there was about 13,000. As of September 30, 2009, the paper's official daily circulation was 6,355. Though the paper is still composed in Emporia, it has since 2009 been printed at the *Journal-World* plant in Lawrence. For circulation figures, see Audit Bureau of Circulations, U.S. Newspapers, circulation averages for the six months ending September 30, 2009, <http://abcas3.accessabc.com/ecirc/newstitlesearchus.asp>.

LP: You talk about Pat Kelley. One thing that I have noticed is that Pat is certainly a left-of-center liberal, and his editorial work reflects that, and yet the management of the *Gazette* is still Republican. And as I read his editorials, which are very anti-[President George W.] Bush—if he's ever had a good word to say about the president lately it's escaped my attention. And what I wonder is, is part of this problem that we're speaking of here because of management dissatisfaction with Kelley as editorial page editor?

RC: I think you're right, and I'm not involved in the operation of the *Gazette*. I'm just like you or anyone else; I'm an observer. But I have observed these things. First of all, a lot of people, knowing I used to work there, complain that the [editorial] tone is absolutely and unrelentingly liberal.

LP: [Because] of Pat Kelley's influence.

RC: Generally the whole page. They do some opposing articles on what we used to call the op-ed page. And also the editorial page cartoons are consistently liberal.

LP: Does Pat select the cartoons?

RC: I assume so. I did, and as editor of the editorial page, he normally would have that duty. I have had complaints from a number of my friends. Some are furious with him. They say why doesn't the *Gazette* have . . . ? This harkens back to the time of William Allen White and W. L. White, when they expressed their opinions on the editorial page and the hell with anybody who disagreed with them. But those days are long gone. And also, probably the bottom line here is that there is a fierce struggle to maintain circulation. And conservatives, particularly in towns like Emporia or states like Kansas, are in the majority. And they sometimes get so angry that they just drop the *Gazette*. So the publishers are trying to soften the controversial part of their newspaper because they want to hold on. They've moved on to other fields. They do specialized features. They do health things. They do family things. And they try to get away from controversial things. But I don't think the decline in circulation is caused mainly by the editorial page.⁴⁸

LP: After all, the *Wall Street Journal* is losing [circulation].

RC: [And it] is not liberal. The point is younger readers, younger Americans, are turning to different sources of information. And newspapers are—first of all, you have pay to for them, you have to have some place

48. Pat Kelley was dropped from the *Gazette* staff in 2009. As he has not been replaced, his termination appears to have been chiefly a cost-cutting move.

where you can sit down and spread them out, and then they're not as easy to look at as the Internet. And also the younger readers are on the Internet doing things anyway. For example, we had a presidential debate on CNN a couple of weeks ago, and the questions came from people at their personal computers; they could send their question directly to the debate. And so the questions—and you could see them asking these questions—were televised along with the responses from the candidate. That is an immediate interaction that you can't get from newspapers. And it's that kind of thing, I believe, that's hurting newspapers.

LP: What effect do you think all this is having on, say, the *Gazette's* advertising revenue?

RC: I really don't know. I mean, the papers look healthy—they have lots of pages in them. And I think the advertising, advertisers rather, are getting results from the *Gazette* still, or they wouldn't do it. There is no local television station. At this point right now [advertising is] what [is] keeping newspapers, smaller newspapers especially, afloat.

LP: The reason I ask that question is, I think you indicated earlier that in William Allen White's day, he was very cognizant of the fact that it didn't pay to make the advertisers mad.

RC: And I think that has come back. I think that's one reason they want to soft-pedal that editorial page.

LP: But if you're a businessman, you have to think pretty hard about dropping the *Gazette* because you don't have many other ways to get your message across in this town.

RC: That's exactly right. I remember a story about Whitley Austin. He once worked at the *Gazette* and then ran the *Salina Journal*, and all of the car dealers in town were angry about some news story that appeared in the paper—maybe it was Ralph Nader, the danger of American automobiles or something. But anyway, they all got together and walked into Whitley's office and said, "If you don't stop this, we'll pull all of our advertising." And he said, "You do whatever you need to, and you come back if you need me. But I cannot change the news content for you." Well, they pulled out, and then over a period of months, they gradually came back one by one because they were getting results from newspaper advertising, and they couldn't afford to do without it. That's a true story. He says the hell with you. And that was the prevailing attitude back then. And I don't know if it would be now. It would take some real courage on the part of a publisher to do something like that now. Now

today, as I said, we don't have a television station here in Emporia, but we do have cable television. And if you watch enough television, you'll see advertisements for many Emporia stores.

LP: Of course we have radio too.

RC: Yes, radio. And it was a pretty good competitor for the *Gazette* before television.

LP: But now television is a competitor for KVOE and the other Emporia radio stations.⁴⁹

RC: But even so, from what I can tell, the local merchants are still getting the best results from their newspaper advertising, or else they wouldn't be doing it. And the papers are—I don't have any figures, [but] the papers seem pretty healthy, pretty fat.

LP: What do you think is the future of the *Emporia Gazette*?

RC: Well, my first answer is I'm not the person to ask. But as we discussed earlier, the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* are moving quickly and profitably into Internet services and international wire informational networks, financial things, all of this. They're moving away from the printed page for their profit. It seems to me it's going to be hard for a small-town paper to do that. But, on the other hand, a small-town paper has a monopoly. They really don't have the television competition, except for cable television ads. The *Gazette* has lots of advertising. The problem is circulation. That's the problem. And they [the newspapers are] all fighting it and they're all losing it.

Everett Ray Call retired from the Emporia Gazette in 1996, though he continued to write occasional editorials for the paper for about a year. Since then he has had no direct connection with the Gazette. In addition to his newspaper work, Call has written the unpublished history of Emporia State University discussed in the interview and which is in manuscript form in the University Archives; a book titled Emporia's Ascent, 1950 to 2000; and a portion of a history of the Emporia Chamber of Commerce, which (rather ironically) includes high praise for ex-city manager Virgil Basgall, with whom the Gazette had frequent clashes. Call and his wife Helen moved to Wichita in 1998, and resided there until 2003, when they moved back to Emporia, where they are involved in various club activities and with St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. [KH]

49. KVOE is Emporia's oldest and only AM station, but at least six FM stations currently operate in the Emporia area, two of which are owned by the same locally-owned company that operates KVOE.