Partial transcript of the audio taped oral history

of National Press Club member

Ann Cottrell Free

Conducted by Florence Parrish St. John of the

NPC Oral History Committee

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Florence Parrish St. John: This is an interview with Ann Cottrell Free in her home June 10 [and 19], 1992, under the auspices of the National Press Club Oral History Program.

ST. JOHN: Ann, why don't we start talking about, kind of, where you came from; when you grew up, the Richmond, and your education. And use that as a beginning point. We'll do a little bit of this chronologically perhaps.

ANN COTTRELL FREE: Thank you very much. And I'm quite honored to be one of the people interviewed. It helps me to bring my thoughts together.

ST. JOHN: Good.

FREE: But probably not enough focus. But it does make you look back and see where you came from and where you are and where you're going and what the lessons are that you may have learned during a long life.

I started off in Richmond. The war – World War I – was still rather close to us. And I even remember seeing, as a child, Marshal Foch going up – a French general – going up [Monument Avenue in Richmond, Virginia]. I guess this was after the war, I was a little tot. So I feel as if I'm beginning to span a century in a way, and while I still have miles to go before I sleep.

I was educated – My parents were both Richmonders, came from Virginians on all sides – so I therefore, I thought the world was bordered by Virginia – nothing outside, nothing outside.

ST. JOHN: Several generations then of Virginians in the family?

FREE: Right. Yea, but I won't go into the ancestors side, except I do have a lot of letters from my great uncle, was a newspaper man, and he worked, wrote for The Richmond Whig.

ST. JOHN: And what was his name?

FREE: Jamie. I guess it was James. James Walters. And he went into the service, into the Confederate Army. And that really kind of ruined his health. At least he didn't get shot; but the dampness in the trenches and all that. He never really got his health back. [The letters and papers of James Walters were donated to the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond, VA.]

But that's another, and interesting, story, which I hope I can help pull together one of these days.

So I've always felt very close to the War Between the States and all of that, growing up in that atmosphere.

ST. JOHN: The Richmond atmosphere has a very historic perspective on that.

FREE: Yes. You know, we have Monument Avenue.

And I went to public school first. I was never a very good student. And, but (laughs)

ST. JOHN: I wonder if that's typical of a lot of our journalists?

FREE: (Laughs) In any event. I won't go into the grammar school days, but I went to the usual neighborhood schools. And of course my grand passion as a girl, a child growing up, was beginning to ride horseback when I was about six or seven. And my mother started me on horses, rather than ponies - she said you become a better rider. So there I was, a little girl, riding a 16-hand horse. And, you know how big that is. Because a pony – well it can be 10, 12, 14 hands. And a hand is four inches, you know; that's how you measure.

So we had, we were surrounded by animals, although we lived in the city. My father had built out, which now, it's almost downtown, of course. And we had converted his garage into a stable for a horse they bought in Washington, D. C. Can you believe it?

And that was my first contact with the nation's capital, although I didn't go up myself. But that's how I knew -- She was a wonderful mare. And her name was Windmill. And she won a lot of cups and all of that.

I rode and jumped and showed in horse shows. But one thing I did not care for – although you might say it was de rigueur of the Virginia community, all people who rode in those days – it wasn't necessarily a rich man's sport the way it is today.

There was hunting, but I did not care for that at all. And I've written it had a tremendous effect on me as a writer.

ST. JOHN: So early on you began your love of animals?

FREE: Yes. My sense of justice. And also my sense of justice, living in a segregated community – Richmond. And I had in the old-fashioned way – a lovely woman who came when I was three weeks old – and she was my quote, unquote, mammy. And I loved her dearly. And she told me stories, and she even had some books, you know, she had a book about a little girl called "Edith and Her Ayah" about a tiger coming after her.

All those early impressions, you know. That's when I first knew about India.

But, then I went to India later. All these things were back in my mind. And I was there when India became independent. We'll jump ahead on that in another part of our conversation.

But I'm saying these formative hints that, you might say, that are there, which you never know are going to come to some fruition 30 years, 40 years later.

As I say, I went to girls' camps, and that was again, horses and nature and all of these things that I'd loved and influenced me a great deal in my life.

And, however, when I went to a public school – high school. But Richmond, Virginia, was going through a problem, which plagues many schools today – not enough money, and not enough schools for the students. And we went a double shift, like 40, 50, 60 to a classroom even.

ST. JOHN: At what grade level was that? Was that high school?

FREE: That was when I got into high school, senior high school, and I did miserably, miserably. And my mother was frantic. And she said, "Well, you're going to have to stay in high school 'til you're 21. (Laughs) Great threat. But, however, then she managed to get me into a private school, which was called the Collegiate School, excellent teachers. And that was the beginning of my real exposure to writing and quote, unquote, literature.

ST. JOHN: Did you find that writing came to you –

FREE: Naturally.

ST. JOHN: Very naturally when you were in high school?

FREE: Yes.

ST. JOHN: And you started doing papers?

FREE: Yes. And that just – Was not long ago. Here we are in 1992, and I was of the class of 1934, at the Collegiate School in Richmond, Virginia. In 1992, I was given a lovely award by my school – which we can talk about later.

But I spoke really from my heart. It's a very successful school. [Now] It's out in the country. Now it's co-educational. But I do believe that, you know, the whole thing, the way the twig is bent in early days. So that's when I really was saved, you might say, by having small faculty, dedicated people like that, and –

ST. JOHN: Let me ask you one question right here. You're such an articulate person, and you started writing so early. In your own home, did your parents talk with you a whole lot? Was there a lot of conversation in your house?

FREE: Well, that's an interesting question, too. Yes, we were talkers; I'll say that. And when, I must give all the, anything I have accomplished in life, I owe totally to my mother [Emily Blake Cottrell]. She never got to live the life that she deserved to live.

ST. JOHN: Um-hum.

FREE: But of course she came up in the era when there were limited opportunities for women. So limited. She did go to work later on, particularly after she and my father separated. She had to, which she became the secretary of the Humane Society. But she also sold magazines. She needed the money. We'd had the Depression and the family had broken up. And she kept – And I was the only child.

But I won't get into all those personal things. But I was not very close to my father [Emmett Drewry Cottrell]. I was very close to my grandparents [George McDuffie and Emma Walters Blake]. My grandfather had a country newspaper, in Louisa, Virginia, which was about 50 miles west; I guess you'd say, of Richmond. And Mother and I used to go up there - used to take the train early on. And then we had a little car and we'd go – like a flivver, you might say – a [Ford] Model A.

ST. JOHN: So you were really exposed to expression, we'll say, oral expression, early on.

FREE: But he was a fire-breathing Democrat and all that. And I –

ST. JOHN: And there again there was a lot of use of language.

FREE: I guess so. But my mother was a reader. You asked me about her. And then I went on saying how she didn't get a chance to fulfill all of her, I think, potential; although, she was a wonderful rider. Marvelous with horses and with animals.

And she – I think she would have been a gifted writer if she had had a chance. But she – however, she was a great reader. She used to read aloud to me night-after-night-after-night. And she was just as carried away by the stories as I was. And I think that's terribly important.

So, therefore, I had that atmosphere –

ST. JOHN: Encouraging.

FREE: Well, I mean she wasn't –

ST. JOHN: But she was there.

FREE: But it all rubbed off. You know, the public library was a second home. And then I had, we had a lot of books. And I have a lot of those right now. We have all these bound copies that had come from throughout the family of the old – Thackeray, and Dickens. They're right here now. And how people could read that fine print I don't know.

And then my grandparents, in their little parlor, that little country place up in Louisa, the parlor was always – it was a small place, but it was very austere. I always felt kind of scared when I went in there. It was musty, you know. But that's where all those books were.

ST. JOHN: Did you have this feeling it was a formal place, too?

FREE: Well, that little living room was formal, 'cause everybody sat in the dining room with the wood stove, you might say.

ST. JOHN: Customs of that era.

FREE: That's the way it was. And I have a place in the country now where we have the stove, and that's where everything takes place. But I don't want to be taking up too much time on that. But I do think these early beginnings, very important. And I know with my colleagues – women that we'll talk about later on in this interview – I wish that I knew more about what made them tick early on.

And I do think it's terribly important as a journalist to – particularly like in this field, that I'm in right now, animals and the environment and ecology, to, as a journalist, if you're thrown with these people, or even if you're not one, is to find out the kind of things that you're finding out from me today. Then you get a key to the person, because we don't change that much.

ST. JOHN: I agree with you.

FREE: You know, it sets you in the right direction. But anyway, to get back to the theme here, to the thread. I wrote poetry. Some of the poems that are in this last book [No Room, Save in the Heart] that I did were written at that time.

ST. JOHN: And so, this again, was high school? Or college?

FREE: This was at high school. And a lot of them were printed. And I never will forget – this, don't sound like I'm one of these self-serving – but the English teacher, she was a Vassar graduate, and an older women, she seemed ancient. Of course she was probably was, probably about 55, but she seemed quite -- I thought she was 180. But she said, "You didn't write these." That was the highest flattery. I said, "I guess I did."

ST. JOHN: She was quite impressed, but of course she encouraged you no end, I'm sure.

FREE: Yeah. So, then I had a good classmate there, named Isabelle Burroughs Dunn, who – a woman of great talent. And she wrote fantastic poems, too. And then we were both – she was editor of the school annual, yearbook, one year, and I was the next. She'd gone then, and a lot went out of my life. Unfortunately, she died. I think she had a hard time. Life's disappointments. That's the other thing you have to learn, that you're going to get a lot of rebuffs and disappointments. And bad things are going to happen. Bad things always happen to good people (Laughs). Do bad things ever happen to bad people? You know, that old phrase, "Bad things happen to good people?"

ST. JOHN: All in the way you tell it sometimes. (Laughs)

FREE: So, she's not here. Like she wasn't here at my nice little moment in the sun not long ago. Just too many tough things, I guess, that happened. You have to learn how to get up and keep going.

ST. JOHN: Um-hum. Um-hum.

FREE: Because everybody's going to have them, professionally and personally.

ST. JOHN: As a note along that same line: Do you feel that dealing with the disappointments and the rebuffs and what appear to be problems – What does that do for one as a journalist?

FREE: You mean personal problems? Well, I think you've got to have - The main thing is you can – Well, as I -- You'll have – I put this in the thing I wrote the other day, I mean, about Mrs. Roosevelt. You have slights. And I'm sure the shoe is on the other foot, too.

Probably what I think happened to me, I may do to somebody else out of just carelessness. Being single-tracked; you know, running ahead and not thinking. But the main thing is -- that so many slights are probably imagined slights.

But the main thing is, get angry if things happen to you but get over it.

ST. JOHN: Good point.

FREE: Get over it and go on. Don't rake over old coals. There's nothing to that.

ST. JOHN: Let's talk about your college years, where you went.

FREE: Well, I went to Barnard College [class of 1938], which you know is connected to Columbia University, but I didn't go there right off. I went to – which is now part of the, it's called VCU, Virginia Commonwealth University, which is a big

town university in Richmond. It's gone through several transformations. At that time it was connected with William and Mary.

But, anyway, I went there as a stop-gap in between, an interim thing, then went on to Barnard. I'm glad I went there.

ST. JOHN: How did you happen to select Barnard?

FREE: Well, I had thought about Radcliff. And I did not want to go to Vassar or Sweetbrier because I felt like I was, at that time, that a lot of people in their hometowns, particularly in the South get into their upper adolescence, they want to get away from everything about what it was like at home. All the girls went to Hollins or Sweetbrier.

And then some went to – And I didn't want to go to Vassar, that's the world of privilege and so on. But I wanted to get away. And I had met a French teacher at this William and Mary, who was a young woman – she had gone to Barnard, and she liked it – and she was getting her Ph.D. on [Pierre-Augustin Caron de] Beaumarchais. And so I got to know her pretty well and that was a great influence on me. Her name was Margaret Johnson. She became the dean down there and, unfortunately, she died early. I've got a lot of sad losses in my life. And they even have a building named for her.

But, anyhow, I decided not to go to Radcliff. And applied to Barnard and went on up there. And I wasn't terribly happy at Barnard because it was a city college. And I liked getting out -- I mean I thought that was going to be the greatest in the world. But I didn't have money enough to go downtown. You know, I'm not going to go to the theatre and nightclubs all the time. You don't do that when you're that age and living 'way up town around Columbia.

But I had good friends there. And I did pretty well, I guess.

And then, that takes me back – the transition there was I got a job, actually my friend Dr. Johnson was interested in being a writer and all of that, but she went to Europe instead. And she had been talking to the Richmond Times-Dispatch about a summer job. And so I went down and said, "I'd like to have it."

And this was between my junior and senior years. Richmond Times-Dispatch, which is a very fine newspaper, and I'm sorry to report that it's the only daily paper left in Richmond, Virginia now. Because just this past week – I guess it was in the last week of May or maybe the first week of June 1992 – the other paper, the Richmond News Leader, expired. And that was the one that had been edited by --

ST. JOHN: So you started writing for the newspaper –

FREE: The Richmond Times-Dispatch in 1936 and '37.

ST. JOHN: -- a newspaper in your college years?

FREE: Yes, right. I had a regular job. And I –

ST. JOHN: Now was this just for the summer? Or was it all the time?

FREE: Well, I had to go back. They said to stay on. I went in absolutely cold. I'd never worked for a newspaper before. I had written all these things at school. I had worked for the college newspaper at Barnard. And I'd done that. And I found, I'd gotten a taste for it. The Barnard Bulletin, we called it. And I had worked for the little Richmond, for the Atlas, which was the newspaper for the VCU, the other little college. At Collegiate, they didn't have a newspaper, but we had, did a lot of other – We had that school yearbook and a lot of our poetry and stories were printed in it. And so that was the outlet there.

But, anyway, so I, in Richmond, the Richmond Times-Dispatch gave me a wonderful opportunity that first summer to kinda, in my memory it's kind of merged now - which stories came at which particular time.

But I guess one of the big things that I did around about that time – and I'll just pull it out here – but we can put it in for supplementary material. The summer of 19 [39] -- I'll go back and correct this date later. This is my first encounter with Eleanor Roosevelt and Marian Anderson.

ST. JOHN: Um-hum.

FREE: I had felt, you see, as I told you a little earlier in our talk that I had – I didn't expand on it – about my feelings about the injustices, the way the black people, Afro-Americans, in those days they were called colored people. And everything is a matter of semantics and so on. I think what you want is a term that has the most dignity to it. And I think Afro Americans is a marvelous solution. I never cared too much for "black," because that was a term of, of, from, you know –

ST. JOHN: Every term has its followers and has its –

FREE: So, in any event, I knew about Mrs. Roosevelt and the Marian Anderson incident which was based primarily on the fact that the Daughters of American Revolution stalled on the idea of letting her have the [Constitution] Hall. But I'm over-simplifying. I think the DAR did have some – because they did change. I think they probably got painted more into a corner than anything else.

ST. JOHN: How did you meet Mrs. Roosevelt the first time?

FREE: I think I met her – I mean I don't think I met her, when she came to Richmond and gave Marian Anderson – Well, I guess maybe I said something. And I'll have to get those clippings out. She gave Marian Anderson the Spingarn Medal in the Richmond Mosque, which is an enormous theater we have there.

But it was a little bit prior to that, however, that Marian Anderson spoke – I mean sang – at the Lincoln Memorial. And I went up there. And I met a classmate [Lois Sachs Kaufman] from New York who came down. And I – Well, that was a great event in my life.

And then it was after that, that Mrs. Roosevelt came to Richmond and gave the medal to Marian Anderson. And that's when I met or talked with Mrs. Roosevelt the first time. And Marian Anderson. The whole thing. I have the clipping, which I will –

ST. JOHN: How did it happen, for the record? I'd like for you to tell us how it happened that you connected with Mrs. Roosevelt.

FREE: Well, I didn't really connect until later, when I went to Washington. That was just another –

ST. JOHN: But these were events that you attended.

FREE: Well, I was sent. Listen. A lot of those things I went as a self -- I would get the stories in the newspaper. But they weren't thinking much about sending a reporter out to do that. I went on my own and said, I'm going to do it. And they ran the stories. I could pull it out right now.

ST. JOHN: So these were interviews you decided to do.

FREE: Well, this was the ceremony. And then she gave this medal and then I had some talk with Marian Anderson and all that. And she was very dignified, as she is today. She's still around.

ST. JOHN: Yeah. Lovely lady.

FREE: Indeed. And of course I had her records. And that was a great era of everybody, all of us had all the wonderful recordings, you know, because we didn't have any television or high-fidelity, or FM, any of that stuff. So we'd always have these wonderful records. I guess you play them now. They were those 78 rpms. I remember Kirsten Flagstad, and all these wonderful things. And we all just swooned over them. And because that was an outlet to the bigger and richer and more romantic and wonderful life.

And so in Richmond I worked – I graduated from school, from Barnard, in 1938. And I had a couple of opportunities, not that anybody was beating on my door to come work for them. But I did have a couple of things, but they were up around New York.

But I decided maybe the best thing would be – although it was sort of an admission of failure in a way – to go back home. But I thought I had loved working on that Richmond paper because – and this is interesting, Florence. The city room, the

newspapers of, let's say, the 1930s and all through there, I'm sure they didn't change much during the twenties and thirties, even to the forties.

Okay, let's take the Times-Dispatch as a prototype – [it] was down in an unattractive part of town, right across from the cigarette factory. It always had this sweet smell of tobacco in the air. And I always worried – I was always worrying about everything. I hated to think of all those people in there rolling those cigarettes all the time because I thought maybe it wasn't good for them.

Anyway – You see, Richmond was built on tobacco. That's where its wealth came from. And Philip Morris and Chesterfield and Lucky Strike, the whole bit.

And we were right across from that. I think the Times-Dispatch was a converted – God knows what – we went up these rickety stairs. And we had a big city room. And then they were all men, except one woman, a very talented woman named Maggie Leonard who became quite a good writer. You know. She was a good writer then, but she did some books after she left.

And, but she had an unhappy – This was, once again, an unhappy domestic life and didn't reach her potential. And this always saddened me. And there were several people. I was always saddened by people not realizing their potentials. I saw this happen so many times.

And I went to – I was working for the Woman's Department. But that was great because – it was kind of insulting in a way – but I was the club editor. That way I had to write up these boring things about such-and-such a club is going to meet on such-and-such a day and tea is going to be served. And so-and-so is going to speak. And all that. But --

ST. JOHN: We used to call that the Society Section.

FREE: Well, they had Society. But that was different. I mean it was part of the same Woman's Department, but the Society – Let me tell you quickly on that, because this is a part of any student coming along ever wanted to sit and listen to all this stuff – The Society pages – I guess this is true right even now in New York – they still have a very sticky Society, mainly the weddings you know. You've got to impress that guy up there to get in, I'm sure.

But this is the way it was in Richmond and so many papers, that they had Society editors. They didn't get just any newspaper person. What they wanted was somebody who was part of the social scene themselves, who needed the money. And, God knows, a lot of people needed it of a good family, quote, unquote, needed the money then, because we were still sweeping up from the Depression.

So, I never talked about the Rich – Medium-sized newspaper. Don't you?

ST. JOHN: Um-hum.

FREE: For journalism? Well, the editor – Are we back on?

ST. JOHN: Um-hum.

FREE: Well, the editor of the paper, the big name editor, was a man who was, you might say, considered something of a liberal of that time; although, today, he's considered much more of a conservative. And he's written many, many marvelous books. He must be in his nineties now. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if another one wasn't out soon. That was Virginius Dabney – V Dabney. He must have been a man in his 30s. But V Dabney – he was young, but he seemed old you know, because I was young.

His counterpart on the Richmond News-Leader was Dr. Douglas Freeman, who wrote all those books, "Lee," and "Lee's Lieutenants," and all that.

And Mr. Dabney was – didn't have anything to do with day-by-day work. The city side – I started to tell you – the city side was all men. And that's where Jim Free was working, my husband. But that was years and years ago. Years and years went by before –

ST. JOHN: Had you met him at that time? Is that where you first met?

FREE: I met him there. Yeah. But I didn't have my eye on him especially; because, you know, I was thinking about other things. There were a lot of attractive guys on that paper though.

Virginius Dabney. He was world famous. And I won't go down through the personnel, but the managing editor was a man named Leon Dure, who was very smart and progressive.

A lot of – some of – the reporters there, many of them, had come up from the Deep South. They didn't come from Mississippi. But a lot of them had come from Alabama and Georgia. And kind of on their way north, some stayed on, you know, a way-station.

And southern newspapers were good. And I think southern men and women have always been kind of articulate and liked to write and express themselves. The assistant editor was a man named William Shands Meacham. And I got fairly chummy with him because he, like I, felt so badly about the situation – don't forget, this was the 1930s – on the housing, slum housing, for the Afro American community there.

And so this was before anything like HUD, naturally. But we did, there was something called the U.S. Housing and something-or-other, headed by a man named Nathan Straus. And, anyhow, I wrote some articles. And he wrote some articles. And he

carried the ball, but I always felt that I was involved. And I don't remember all of the details, but we managed to get that public housing, you know, slum housing, replaced. And, of course, a lot of those housing projects became disaster areas later on, but not then.

And we did some good things. And I was real young then, of course. And I was flattered that I had a, you know, that I could work with a top editor that way because he, an older man, shared my feelings this way.

And so, but the other good thing that happened to me there was also I was editor of the Children's Page, which they don't have like that anymore. It was a full page every Sunday, self-written by the kids, with art, stories and poetry. And we'd give a little book – three books every week – for the prize winners.

And that is when, I guess you might say, I started on my, quote, unquote, humane education. I wrote an editorial and I was always getting in a plug for the animals and advising these kids how to handle their animals.

And I realize now, that was, I felt like I wasn't accomplishing anything. But looking back at it now, who knows? Maybe I was –

ST. JOHN: Influence that you had.

AFC: -- influenced somebody.

So, I met a woman here. It seems – I feel like she's older than I am – I'm not looking in the mirror. She said she was one of my kids.

ST. JOHN: Oh, my goodness. That can be a jolt, can't it? Let me go back to one thing that I don't know that we really covered. And that was the difference on the Richmond Times between the society section and the woman's section.

FREE: Yeah. Well, go back in that particular one. And all I know is what I did.

ST. JOHN: I think that could be interesting for now.

FREE: Yes. To go back to the Richmond paper. We did get off of that a little bit. I suppose the two Society editors were snobs. They had to be snobs. They loved being snobs. They were very selective. And I'm sure they talked behind everybody's back on the paper. And I'm sure we did theirs, too.

But, anyhow, they, you know, have the wedding pictures and who's going to get the big play, and all of that. The were arbitrators of the caste system.

INTERVIEWERS: That's a good point.

FREE: You see. And that's entirely what it is. You've got it everywhere. But the caste system here in Washington, New York – My God, all you have to do is pick up the papers, you know how that works its dough-re-me. All based on conspicuous money.

ST. JOHN: Don't you think that's a little bit different in the South during that time?

FREE: Don't forget. You've got to peel it back another layer, is the old families. How did they get to be the wonderful old families but money? There is such a thing as shabby gentility, and there was plenty of that around, too.

ST. JOHN: Broken down aristocracy.

FREE: And it's just as I said earlier, you have these old families you know, names, like Randolph and so on like that, which comes from education – The kind of people like Thomas Jefferson. I knew a lot of Thomas Jefferson's people. They certainly weren't rich. But that was enough for them, because they were to the manor born.

ST. JOHN: But how about the Women's section?

FREE: We were right all in the same offices. My God, it was just a little thing, it seemed like two-by-four -- jammed in there together.

Well, I don't know what they said about me, but I know they used to criticize one of the other women writers. And they didn't like the girl who was in charge. And she would give assignments – the woman in charge, she was from South Carolina. Her name was Josephine Griffin. I'm not saying anything critical about her, except she wouldn't want to hear that the others didn't like her. But she didn't like them either. So, anyway – (Laughs)

We had friendly friction.

ST. JOHN: Can be very productive.

FREE: And so – But Jo was very methodical, and she would lay out the paper. She went down to the composing room every night and laid out the papers.

ST. JOHN: And this was for which?

FREE: For the whole Women's and Society section. We had a couple of pages.

ST. JOHN: What was in the Women's section?

FREE: Well, the Society was these two gals who – the weddings and parties and so and so's visiting and all of that. And the rest were – a lot of mine were the clubs. The

Woman's Club of Richmond, Virginia, has always had a lot of money. And it was very, once again, it was quote, unquote, FFV [First Families of Virginia], hard to get into.

I must say, as a parenthesis, my mother was in – she belonged to all the right things. But maybe that was a case of not much money but more family. You know.

ST. JOHN: The connections.

FREE: But anyhow. But, the Woman's Club, which was on Franklin Street. And they had enough money to bring in high-powered lecturers. And I got assigned to the Woman's Club and that opened a lot of doors for me, covering those stories.

I mean I first heard – what sticks in my mind – well they had picked H.B. Kaltenborn. And then Maurice Hindus. Remember him? He had lived in Russia. And people – these foreign correspondents, economists, and people who were out on the lecture circuit early on, and made big bucks that way, too, you know.

And that's when a woman – a famous woman, Phyllis Bottome, but pronounced Ba-tome. B-a-t-t-o-m-e. You know, fame is fleeting. She had a great influence on literature and social affairs, you might say. She knew about what was going on in Germany. And that's when I first learned about bad things going on over there, at those lectures.

So that was good. Very, very educational for me.

ST. JOHN: But you also learned first hand about women and careers and women and achievements.

FREE: Oh yeah, that's right I had role models, early on too.

ST. JOHN: You had an unusual exposure in that era.

FREE: I had, wonderful, another role model in Richmond whom I met and can't say I knew her well, but I certainly revered her, was a novelist named Ellen Glasgow. And she has made a tremendous influence on literature in this century. She and Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and all that era, and as a matter of fact there is an Ellen Glasgow newsletter that is published by scholars. I enjoy reading it because she was in love with a man named Henry Anderson and this is, quickly I'll get past this, and he went over in World War I to do relief in Romania and apparently had an, I don't know if I would use the word affair, but fell in love with Queen Marie of Romania, who was quite a sensation. She came and visited this country, you don't remember this but the newspaper people went crazy, and she was stunning, absolutely divine, but she was Queen Victoria's granddaughter. And so anyway, the romance with Ellen Glasgow and Henry Anderson broke up over Queen Marie.

ST. JOHN: I take it he and Queen Marie didn't really get married?

FREE: Well she was married. She was married. Anyway I guess she was.

ST. JOHN: It was not unusual I understand amongst some of the Europeans in that society, it was not as stunning as it would have been in our country.

FREE: That's right. Then in Richmond in the newspapers I think that amongst the men and women going around there was entirely too much emphasis on something that went on and on and on throughout the years. When I come to the National Press building I'll talk about it more. Too much drinking. I never saw many people drunk but I saw a lot of lives wrecked and I'm certainly not a tea-toddler by a long shot, but everything, and there wasn't anything like light wines then, and I didn't see drunkenness on the paper but that was how you sort of proved yourself with the men. I never took a drink until I was 25 and it's funny because think of the way people are now.

ST. JOHN: Well, now you were a first in so many situations.

FREE: Well, I wasn't the first one there but…

ST. JOHN: No, but in things that you've done, you mentioned that you were, well, you weren't the first female at the Richmond Times [Dispatch] but obviously you went in there at a time where it was not usual, it was unusual.

FREE: No, then I did get off on all kinds of stories which I wrote some editorials, things and so on and so on. Anyway…

ST. JOHN: What was the reaction of people to you, your colleagues; the men particularly?

FREE: I got along fine. And I think the main thing is they could see she could write a good story and she, you know, we all kidded around a lot, that's part of the game you know, and I wanted to get away, though I stayed there two years and that seemed like two centuries. And it's very hard to make a connection unless you have connections and I had no real connections because I had gone back to work there.

Anyhow, I went to Hollywood and I've got those stories to prove it. I was going through all these old clippings and everything. I wrote articles about Hollywood for the Richmond paper, and I just loved every minute of it and that's when I met a producer who was going to make a film in Virginia. It was named Virginia, and it starred Madeleine Carroll, Fred McMurray. I have a picture of me with Fred, well he died not long ago, he was such a nice man, and a lovely, nice young man whom I helped to tutor, in other words, he said his lines back and forth with me, named Sterling Hayden, who became world famous.

ST. JOHN: Oh, married Madeleine Carroll.

FREE: He married Madeleine Carroll. We all ended up there in Charlottesville and I went to my paper and so Mr. [Edward] Griffith called me up from Hollywood or came over or something and said, 'will you come and work for me, us?' Well, I'm glad I wasn't very smart, a lot of people would have just gotten a leave of absence but I went right to my boss and said 'oh I'm going to go work for the movies. I'm quitting.' It wasn't quite that bad but you know, I just gave up the job, because of my idea of heaven would be . . . I was movie struck. I wanted to work for a movie magazine.

I had done an interview one time, maybe that was later on, that was later, with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. Oh God. Then I met all these movie people and then so we had, he, they did it up in grand style, he took over all these old southern antebellum homes up there around Charlottesville, and the picture was shot. They had all the stars, usually they do background you know the B crew would go and get the background, but they had the Farmington Hunt Club and everybody riding to hounds and over the fences, no foxes, but anyhow, I met all these people, these columnists you see and –

ST. JOHN: Now did you write script?

FREE: No, I wasn't doing a damn thing, except well I wrote, well, I did write some stuff, I wrote the biography which we gave out, it was actually, I hate to say it, it was sort of public relations for them, but I remember writing a big bio which I have here now, on Sterling Hayden. You know he had been a sailor, he had his own schooner, had done the seven seas you might say, and so I liked Sterling a lot.

And so I wrote things, made myself useful and met everybody, I was having an absolute ball you might say, met people, all these people, columnists from New York. Don't forget there was no TV, just put yourself in, it's a short period of time, all the things that we take for granted you know, radio talk shows, TV all that, but what was taking the place of it were all these columnists. Of course Walter Winchell was the one full cry, but there was a man named Frank Farrell on the World Telegram, Earl somebody else, on the Washington, New York Post. There were all these, kind of gossip columnists or whatever you want to call them, but they loved going out on a movie thing like this, they all came down there, and I remember one of them really wanted to frolic in a haystack with me, and I ran. So we had a wonderful time and when that was over, what did I do but go to New York to follow up on all these contacts? You see, to get myself a job.

ST. JOHN: Did it work?

FREE: It worked. But the first one was, it didn't work right off. Well, one thing led to another. I got one little thing with, I became associate editor of a very good little magazine, I still have some of that stuff, it was called Fashion, it was sort of the poor man's Vogue. It was Dell Publications but they weren't making enough money fast enough, and so Mr. Dell, you've heard of the Dell Publications? He closed it. Then I think either before or after that, I got a job working for these press agents. This was a really interesting thing. That's when I learned what a bunch duplicitous liars they all

were. Think up all these cute stories about our clients. One of the clients was Hildegarde, Hildegarde went somewhere and did something and make it up out of full cloth, just to get an anecdote into a columnist's column. And I said 'oh, ugh' and then they told me that they didn't think I was very good at that. That was the end of me.

ST. JOHN: And who were you working for at that time?

FREE: Those people . . . no, they were press agents. They had accounts with the one I remember the most was Hildegarde, who I never got to meet, and they probably had one with the Stork Club or El Morocco. That was the world of that day and the whole thing was to get exposure of your client's name in newspapers.

ST. JOHN: Okay. After there who did you move with?

FREE: Then, that was, I don't know which job, one of them folded up and the other one, they didn't want me. Then I got a call almost simultaneously from, I had made an inquiry through, something about Newsweek. I knew some people, and they said come over there and the job I got on Newsweek. See I went from all this crazy world of movies, I had done the solid newspaper work, you might call it that, in Richmond, then this era of frivolous stuff, and then come over to Newsweek, and they had a going operation then of course, and I became, I have a magazine upstairs with my name on the masthead, I was an editorial assistant I guess, there was a whole slew of us. Guess whose name is in there with mine? If he's going to listen to this, Wes McCune, but he was down in Washington, however I'm jumping ahead because this is before I came to Washington but – [gap]

ST JOHN: Okay.

FREE: So that was it, that was it, you just took these papers around to them and there was a lot of good camaraderie, but we sat up a the clip desk you might say, and we were all young, and one day the boss called me in, and named Rex Smith, and I don't know why his name hasn't gone down the annals of newsmen, he was very good because he had been a famous reporter covering the Spanish civil war, one of the wire services and then he ended up being the editor of, the managing editor, of *Newsweek,* then later on went later on to become the editor of the *Chicago Sun*. He called me in there and said, "Do you want to go down to Washington? Can you go down to Washington?" I thought he wanted me to like - to courier - to take something because we were working with the Washington Bureau a lot and I said "When?" or something like that and he said, "Well, as soon as you get your stuff together." To the Washington Bureau -- I thought it was a trip to take something!

ST. JOHN: Where were you which city?

FREE: I was in New York City.

ST. JOHN: Okay with *Newsweek.*

FREE: With *Newsweek.* And we were located in the 40s somewhere in a kind of gruesome building, as I recall.

ST. JOHN: This would be your first time to work in D.C.?

FREE: Yes, this was my grand entrance, some time around Christmas and –

ST. JOHN: And this was with the Chicago –?

FREE: No this was *Newsweek.*

ST. JOHN: Oh okay.

FREE: Came down with *Newsweek,* and that's this article right here, my first press conference of Mrs. Roosevelt was on January 13, 1941. I came down in 1940.

ST. JOHN: Was this time where you first met her?

FREE: I had met her in Richmond but she didn't remember me, but that didn't amount to much. And this article which I wrote –. The press conferences had started before I arrived on the scene. When Mrs. Roosevelt first became the First Lady she was getting so many requests for interviews that her friend and the AP correspondent suggested that she hold press conferences. Her name was Lorena Hickok. I think for students in the future that some notice should be paid to the character and the background of the women reporters who covered her conferences, and they had a lot of the old stand-bys, and to me, because I was very young, they all seemed quite old, and probably they were. There was one named Marie Manning Gash who was, she had been the famous, she was the first of the Ann Landers and she wrote, she was Beatrice Fairfax, the first of the lovelorn columns, and she came from a very elegant family but she had lost the money in the stock market and that's why she went into newspaper work, and she made a killing on that you might say. Her son is a judge, not the court of appeals, but one of the higher courts here in the District of Columbia now, Oliver Gash. And I adored her, she was so, she seemed like 10 feet tall, but 6 feet at least, and she had a marvelous dry wit. And so then there was another older woman, named there were two, Maude McDougall, she had covered William Jennings Bryant and President McKinley. That goes way back.

ST. JOHN: Now you worked . . .

FREE: They all attended that press conference and shows that there were news women in the old days around Washington but the one I particularly want to point to is Winifred Mallon of the Washington Bureau of the *New York Times.* She was a feisty little person. She was kind of a small stature and kind wore kind of nondescript clothes and kind of one of those [plush?] hats always seemed to be down on her face and very intent on what she was doing. Her newspaper work was her life and she asked really good questions, and it wasn't just Mrs. Roosevelt she covered, but other things as well.

And I was kind of puzzled that she was omitted and no mention in the index of a recent book, oh I think called "Ladies in the Balcony" or something like that, ["Girls in the Balcony"] by a *New York Times* correspondent Nan Robertson. What happened there was a discussion of the Washington Bureau and the women in the *New York Times* and so on, and there was no reference to Miss Mallon so I'm putting in my pitch for Miss Mallon right now. She was a great old gal and all of us young ones called her Miss Mallon, and the older ones called her Winnie.

ST. JOHN: And this was during the 40s, the 30s?

ACF: This was in the 1940s when I came there you see but she had been around for a long time. She had worked in Chicago before that. Then of course another woman in the *New York Times* who made quite a name for herself in the Washington Bureau, was Bess Furman –

ST. JOHN: Now was she also part of the –

FREE: She was the press conference association but she came a little bit later than Miss Mallon, a good bit later. She had had her own bureau and I think she worked for AP at some point and I know she had and she became a very good friend of Mrs. Roosevelt. This is the interesting sidelights, it's all public record, but she was getting in her 40s and she suddenly had, she was married, she suddenly had twins and Mrs. Roosevelt was the godmother and became the godmother, so –

ST. JOHN: How elegant can one get!

FREE: Anyway, conflict of interest. Then there was Ruby Black who worked for the, she was, I think, the first woman in the UPI – wasn't even called UPI – it was just United Press then, and that is why they took her on full-time to cover Mrs. Roosevelt. And Ruby wrote a very good book on Mrs. Roosevelt and wrote columns and was a splendid reporter. I have a lot of her columns and so on. So, when I was there at the press conferences, going back to the *New York Times,* I was, later on, came on later on to be with the *New York Herald Tribune,* we'll get to that point later on. When we left the story I was with *Newsweek* and this was a little bit later, but later on Bess Furman, as I told you, Miss Mallon, Bess Furman and then a lovely woman named Nona Baldwin Brown was on the *New York Times* Washington Bureau and then a woman named Nancy McClenahan, it's a hard name to pronounce, was also on the *New York Times*, so they had a large representation in the Washington Bureau of the *New York Times*. But there seemed to have gotten lost in the rush when it comes to people writing books. Anyhow, then Ms. Brown, Nona, went into the WAVES during the war, but Bess was well known for her good stories.

ST. JOHN: So, now we were talking about the Washington Press Club

ANN FREE: Oh, yea.

ST. JOHN: Let's just take a quick listen and see what we're going –

ST. JOHN: Okay now the Washington –

FREE: The Washington Press Club and the Women's National Press Club. Well, the Women's National Press Club was founded in 1919 by six Washington newspaper women and press relations women. They got together and had lunch and so on, so let's have a club, that's the American way isn't it? So that was the beginning of that, of the press club and they had their first dinner and then they started having dinners so on. And the reason I'm familiar with this background, I wrote, I was the historian, when Liz Carpenter was president, she asked me to be historian. I said, 'You know, one thing a historian can do is put a little bit of a capsule history on our roster. Nobody knows who we are.'

So I was flattered that for years after – until the Women's Press Club and Washington Press Club went out of business – my little write-up, my little history you might say, of the Women's National Press Club and the Washington Press Club remains very much the same except for things they had to add in for changing –

What I wrote was that 'In the few months the club, in a few months the club – this is 1919 – had 28 charter members.' And then it went on up to more than 600 people, I think.

And then I also put in that the – and this would be of interest because I believe these tapes are going to be deposited in the Cora Rigby Library. Well, Cora Rigby was the longtime bureau chief of the Christian Science Monitor. And she was also the president, became the president of the Press Club for some years. She was its president from 1920 to 1928.

So when succeeding presidents were always given, when they were sworn in – they only had a year's term – a silver bowl. And that was called the, they kept this bowl, the Cora Rigby Bowl, for a year. And then I think then they would give it back and their names would be on it. I think they got a duplicate they could keep forever.

ST. JOHN: Where is that bowl now?

ANN FREE: I assume it's in the Cora Rigby Library.

And this brings us to a couple of other things. Let me just get back to that in a minute. So, the Club during those years had a lot of really good speakers. And when I wrote this thing up I put down the first speaker was a woman speaker, member of Parliament in England, Margaret Bonfield. And then we had throughout the years Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, and I think Ronald Reagan. Maybe there were some others in there.

And then we had these stunt parties, which – something you could talk a good bit about that – which rival, in a way, and meant just as much in Washington of that day as the Gridiron Club, believe it or not. In its way. But it was attended only by women. And I can show you a newspaper article with all the, with the guest lists. For years, the Gridiron used to run their guest lists, too. All men, you see, at that time. This was all women. They did stunts and take-offs and had a grand time.

And they had a lot of VIPs, just like the men. So that was another thing which I wish we could expand on, that there was not this whole thing of, 'Oh, you ought to let us into your club,' or into that, men only, women only.

I don't think there was much bitterness at that time. And I was around. Everybody – that was just the way it was.

ST. JOHN: Did any of the men want to join your club?

FREE: Well, they did later. They – wanted to join Mrs. Roosevelt's press conferences. But nothing doing.

But then – that's – you've put your finger right on it. In the '70s when everybody was getting all mixed up on their identity [laughing]. You want to be all women or you want to integrate or what.

One way, like a lot of the people, like you say in some of this NOW organization, want everything all women. And then there's another whole school of thought, we've got to integrate. So we had this mixed identity. We had an identity crisis back in the 1970. And that is why the women's – wonderful Women's National Press Club, long may it wave – was started in 1919, lost its name and lost its character.

Anybody listening out there?

And I'm for men. But I thought, let the men come in, but why should we give up our name, Women's National Press Club? That's when we changed the name, in 1971, to Washington Press Club, and we lost our identity. And it's a real horrible situation. Too bad the National Press Club wasn't called the Men's National Press Club, and gotten known that way.

But it's really a semantic jungle you're in. But it seems to me – that's like a trademark.

ST. JOHN: But now the women's –

FREE: National Press Club. Women's Press Club.

ST. JOHN: -- was the name of the group. And was it merged as a –

FREE: It didn't merge.

[Unintelligible crosstalk]

FREE: It didn't merge it. It didn't merge it. It stayed. But all you had to do is change the constitution to let some guys in.

ST. JOHN: But is there still a Washington Press Club?

FREE: No.

ST. JOHN: When did it die?

FREE: Whenever it merged, whatever year, it merged with the National Press Club. And you ought to know that. I should, too.

ST. JOHN: 1974.

FREE: Was it? Really? You think that was the year?

ST. JOHN: That's what I hear.

FREE: Because I thought we were in a lot longer than that. Well, let's see.

ST. JOHN: I was wondering what –

FREE: Well. I've got it written right here, in front of me, that the Washington Press Club, 1971 – this is, I've got the yearbook – "In January 1971 the Women's National Press Club voted to admit qualified male journalists as members, subsequently changing the organization's name to the Washington Press Club.

And you tell me that it only lasted for four years? I thought we merged later than that. But I may be wrong; I don't have that date with me. But in any event –

ST. JOHN: I know –

FREE: What happened. What happened on that whole thing, if you want to put in my two cents –

ST. JOHN: What it was, it happened, because that's very significant.

FREE: Well, what happened was that we had everybody – everybody was having this identity, having this horrible identity crisis, and we must lean over backwards to be good to the men and maybe the man – I don't know – it's just all this fussing and fighting, which I think everyone acted most ridiculously.

Anyway, I felt that the press club had its own – The Women's Club had its own identity. If men wanted to join, so what? I was one of the seven people who voted against the changing of the name, but not necessarily opposed to the men joining. I knew that makes a problem. But don't forget there were women's magazines like the Women's Home Companion, which was edited by a man, for example.

And I don't know what you do with this sort of thing. But it was just a horrible situation. So we had to drop the "women." You could be National Press Club so they changed it to Washington Press Club, which made it look like a local outfit when it really is national.

ST. JOHN: So when did –

FREE: So that was in '71. And then they got the notion that they wanted to have a clubhouse. Well, I – not in on the business side of this thing -- But they picked a place that it was like a condo with a couple of rooms down at one end of a hall and business office at the other end of the hall and they found out they couldn't get a liquor license. And what are newspapers going to be unless you can have a cash bar?

ST. JOHN: Lose your identity if you didn't have that.

FREE: But you know what I mean. That was not very good. And then financial problems dogged them. And that's why they gave up the ghost.

ST. JOHN: Be a little more specific. 'They,' being whom?

FREE: The Washington Press Club couldn't make it. And they – I was not in on all this 'cause I stayed aloof from it.

ST. JOHN: The Washington Press Club –

FREE: was the old Women's National Press Club. The Women's National Press Club was dead from the standpoint of being a name. The Washington Press Club came along, took in men – that's fine – they had some men presidents.

ST. JOHN: When did the group then join the National Press Club?

FREE: You told me – I don't remember the date on –

ST. JOHN: But then did the –

FREE: It merged in – Well all of that is the record and I don't want to make any mistakes on tape. Somebody will jump me on it if anybody bothers to listen. But the whole deal was a financial situation where our dues would not be as – go up a lot – because we'd been paying very meager dues. And we continued with our meager dues.

And that we would also – our assets – how much of the assets were transferred over because we couldn't very well keep them because we weren't nothing to keep. But we started this Washington Press Foundation.

And I might say by parentheses, some years before I had – It's all on the record. And the people in the old Washington Press Club and the new Washington Press – what do they call themselves? Washington Press Foundation, the one that gives the big dinner? I wanted to get a foundation going 'way back 'cause I thought maybe we could be the tail that wagged the dog 'way back on some way, that we could do some educational things, get out publications, and be truly tax exempt. And, you know, all the good things that foundations are able to do.

And I worked on it really hard, and so did the woman who's an old-time member with me, and I have all the memoranda, which were filed, and they shot it down.

And then it seems to me, a few minutes later – a few years later—they came up with this Washington Press Foundation which does the oral histories, with the little bit of it that was left.

INTERVIWER: What? Okay.

FREE: But it's called the Washington Press Foundation. And they're doing some oral histories and they've raised a good bit of money. And they took over the one pretty good thing that the old Women's Press Club had started – the congressional dinner. Of course, as you know, any dinners like that in Washington are just like going to Barnum and Bailey's from the standpoint – of a big tent, you know, just over a thousand or so, as many people as you can get into these super ballrooms –

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: And so they kept that up. I mean, the right to that.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: And also the, they have this foundation, and I guess they're doing some fellowships and scholarships; I hope so.

ST. JOHN: Then the women generally became members of the National Press Club –

FREE: No, they came automatic members of the National Press Club.

ST. JOHN: When that changed –

FREE: When that changed over. We became members.

ST. JOHN: That was the point I wanted to make.

FREE: And I might give – I'm going to come back to it later when I talk about Mrs. Roosevelt at some length even in a future session.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: We had something else in the old one – not only did we have – we used to have dinners for the editors, you know, that came -- The American Society of Newspaper Editors would meet here and we'd have an editors' dinner. And then we had diplomatic dinners. And we had a European trip.

The thing that I'm most proud of was something that I started and that went by the boards, too, was the first Eleanor Roosevelt Golden Candlestick Award Dinner, which was the – which I'll go into at some length.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: But that was our way of – and I would like to – I'll put you on notice because it's something I've been thinking since these last few days and thinking about all this and going through this old material and get more perspective.

I'd like very much to see the National Press Club – of which I am a member – which is part of the old Women's National Press Club – to revive the Eleanor Roosevelt Golden Candlestick Award. I think it would be wonderful. We have mixed, male and female leadership in the National Press Club. And who could be a better role model for all of us?

ST. JOHN: And recognizing leadership? Is that the purpose?

FREE: It's for selfless service to humankind.

ST. JOHN: For the tape here, there will be a session, probably one side of a tape, on Ann Free and Mrs. Roosevelt and her experiences with her so we won't go into depth. So for that information please, go onto another tape.

I don't want to keep you too long.

FREE: And you've got to get back, too. I keep looking at the clock here.

So, anyhow, I haven't made any news yet from the standpoint of being valuable. But we have to fill in all of these little details.

ST. JOHN: They're very, very interesting.

FREE: I don't know how much of this is going to be on tape -- You say you're going to get a more – I wouldn't say critical, but certainly objective -- analysis of the whole thing. And one who had the continuity to make these judgments because I came in so early and there are not very many of our gang left. To set the record straight.

ST. JOHN: Let me ask you this: You've done quite a bit of lecturing. When did you start that?

FREE: Oh, I'm not much of a lecturer.

ST. JOHN: Get into your career. Haven't you done a good bit of that?

FREE: Not a lot. Not a lot.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: No –

ST. JOHN: I gathered from your resume that you –

FREE: No, I mean some. But, I'm going to give that for the United Nations this summer, August of 1992, on our debt to Rachel Carson and Albert Schweitzer. I never tried to get on the lecture circuit, it pays big bucks. But I don't think I have the stamina for it. Or much to say.

ST. JOHN: Well, one more question for today. Let's talk a little bit about wartime Washington, since you were here.

FREE: Oh, yes.

ST. JOHN: What was it like? Transportation and what was it like to be a reporter here at that that time?

FREE: In that context. Well, I said I came down here to Washington from Newsweek in 1940. And think how long ago that is. My God. Is that 52 years? Is that right?

ST. JOHN: If you say so.

FREE: Anyhow, well, of course, everything – let's take transportation first. Streetcars, trolley cars as well as buses. Taxies, Like in the First District – Of course your salary wasn't much either, but it's a matter of what things cost, what you were paid. Twenty-five cents for a cab ride. And I would go to work, however, sometimes I could walk because I lived up around DuPont Circle in the beginning.

But when I arrived here, in 1940, although everybody acted as if the war was a surprise – I'll have to tell you about Pearl Harbor because I covered Peal Harbor from Washington you might say – on Constitution Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, the War Department, the White House, the whole bit.

I was the first member of our bureau to get there, you know, all the guys were at the football game. But, anyway, we'll come back to that.

ST. JOHN: You mean to get to the office? Or to get to the –

FREE: Get to the office. Get to the office [New York Herald Tribune]. And I heard it and I got in there really fast. But that might be – I'm getting out of the sequence. Except in general wartime, that was when I arrived the war had not – we were not at war.

But it seems odd to me that anybody thought that Pearl Harbor was a surprise because it was coming. And already the, all the government offices were expanding. And that's when we had this housing shortage, which was quite palpable. It was just no place for girls to live. And I went to the YWCA and – my mother took me down there because they had a housing bureau – and I met a very nice girl there and her mother was with her. She had come as a secretary, stenographer, or something.

And then we looked in the ads and followed whatever the people at the Y told us and then we shared a room up on Q Street. And that – because I looked around at a whole bunch of others where they, my God, they were piled in there like four or five to a room. And sometimes they would give them food because there were not many restaurants around. There were no such thing as –

ST. JOHN: I was going to ask you where did you get your food. Where did you eat?

FREE: Well, we ate there, wherever we lived. Like boarding houses, actually, Florence.

ST. JOHN: They prepared food for you all?

FREE: Yes, but I – being a newspaper person, I had horrible hours. And where I lived the woman got so mad with me because I got in late. And sometimes she would put food aside. And I got – That's how I left there. Got into a terrible row. But she drove me crazy anyway because she was a cosmetician at a funeral home. And she's always talking about her job. [Laughing] Hair and lipstick and all the rest. And clothing.

INTERVIEWER [Laughing].

FREE: And she kinda got on my nerves and I think I got on hers because I was always –

ST. JOHN: Affected your appetite, didn't it?

FREE: So I stormed out of there one night. And called up some men – boys – I knew. I said -- She said, 'I'm not going to give you a dinner.' Anyway, I'm getting off my story. Anyhow, I went out stayed with somebody, a friend.

But the girls just crowded in –

ST. JOHN: You said you called some boys that you knew.

FREE: The boys. One was Jim Free.

ST. JOHN: Oh, is that right?

FREE: And the other was a cousin of mine, another man, bigger, better and stronger 'cause they carried my luggage out. Because I was so put out with that woman –

ST. JOHN: But they helped you to find a place to stay then.

FREE: Well, I don't know where I went that night. Over to another friend's, I think. They just took my suitcases over.

And, but, stormy goings-on. But there weren't any places to eat because, don't forget, number one, we didn't have money enough to rent apartments and this place did not have many apartments then. Washington didn't. Certainly not – Well, just look around. They – all these new places that came after the war and during the war.

But, anyhow, we – I used to eat my breakfasts -- and then I moved to Georgetown into a place that was perfectly charming but it didn't have any heat. My mother came up and said, 'It's going to get cold soon. What are you going to do?' And it was a cute little wooden box – I moved from there – but I used to eat my breakfasts up at People's Drugstore. But those were the days that drug counters had really good food. And then I'd take the street car down to the National Press Club, Press Building, and then go on up to the famous 12th Floor.

ST. JOHN: Where was the Press Building located –

FREE: Same place. That was dedicated in, when Coolidge was president, I think. I think there's a plaque outside. 1926? Something like that.

Anyhow, to me the most glamorous thing of all was going up to the 12th Floor where, all the papers with which, publications with which I worked, were on the 12th Floor - all their lives. One was Newsweek magazine, the other was Chicago Sun and New York Herald Tribune.

I think I said earlier in the tape that other papers on that floor, didn't I? That was, like I said, the great white way of journalism.

But then, of course, a lot of the men used to go upstairs to the bar, which was certainly women only. And when things happened you always – the call came in, your boss wasn't there, and you knew where he was.

And, so – I never will forget when Pearl Harbor came. I knew exactly where he was. And, anyhow, though I must say he had charge of his wits when he got down.

We had upstairs, in the Press Club, still on the 13th Floor where it is today, a little bit different location you might say, more where the bar is, was – everything, the entire configuration is entirely different, the lovely stairway and all that stuff.

But there was something they called the Ladies Dining room. And I don't know whether you had to be – you could get a special card, or your husband could be a member. But the women – we all held forth there, men and women, so you can't say it was a very sexist, you know, there was all this integration – that's where the action was - in the so-called Ladies Dining room.

But I thought – I sound like such a prude. But I didn't think much of that daytime drinking. I don't see how they did it. But –

ST. JOHN: A lot of people would agree with you.

FREE: And a lot of them didn't last forever, either.

Anyway, don't forget –

ST. JOHN: That was very much a part of the scene –

FREE: That was the whole thing – the hard-drinking newspaper people. That was something that had gotten dramatized, I guess, the flavor, ambiance is not quite the right word, that you got in that film, "The Front Page." You know, the newspaper man with the press card on his cap, he didn't have to have any sleep and, you know, it all came out of prohibition.

ST. JOHN: Heroes.

FREE: Yeah. That was the time. So this was called the mystique, or whatever you want to call it. And I don't want to sound like a prude. If they want to drink and kill themselves that's their business. Of course everybody smoked cigarettes. I smoked. And don't forget, we were not air-conditioned. Hotter than the hinges of –

And the whole town was hot in the summertime. Jim – my future husband and I used to have some dates with him – and we would drive down to Haines Point and that's where half of Washington would sleep.

ST. JOHN: Oh, because it was cool.

FREE: So hot. People would – Just think now, it's so tragic, they all went down there. I don't know whether black or white or mixed or what. But there was no burgling, no drugs, no problems, no nothing. Just nice people wanted a nice cool place to sleep at night.

ST. JOHN: Well, did they put out blankets on the ground?

FREE: Yeah.

ST. JOHN: Blankets and things.

FREE: Jim can tell you about it. But, so then, of course there were so many things we could do that we really can't afford to do now. Used to go the National all the time. The theater. That was long before the Kennedy Center was ever dreamed of, naturally.

And that was cheap. At least we could afford it. Even though we make more money now, it seems to me I can't afford to go to the theater like I could afford to go then.

ST. JOHN: How about the movies?

FREE: Well, yeah, movies were all the rage.

ST. JOHN: Movie theaters were far more -- different than they are now.

FREE: Yea. They were more ornate.

Guess what we had then? What we had then was something like Cable News Network today, Translux Movie. All around the clock -- newsreels.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: Up there on 14th Street.

ST. JOHN: You could see it walking along the side—

FREE: No. No, you go in. You pay. [Would you like some more? You want some more ginger ale?]

ST. JOHN: No, thanks.

FREE: To wet your whistle

But the downtown was, seemed no effort to go downtown like I feel it is today. To me. Because it's no problem. I didn't have a car so I didn't have to worry about that. There was no Metro.

ST. JOHN: How about shopping?

FREE: Shopping. It had Woodward and Lothrop's. They had all these stores down the way. Kanns. The Palais Royal. An interesting little quick Washingtoniana sidelight: I try to help folks when I can and I'm trying to help a woman get into the nurse's – get training for nursing aid – and the money is from a school which called the Hannah Harrison School established by Julius Garfinkle, you know, the Garfinkle stores? And there is a home – I'm trying to get a woman into a senior home, a nursing home over here, the Lisner Home. And that was started by a Mr. Lisner who was the owner of a wonderful old store called the Palais Royal. So these people did look out for their own in their own community and it made me feel good.

ST. JOHN: Were the downtown stores primarily on F Street?

FREE: All on F Street. Raleighs was down there. And there was Kanns and Palais Royal, and the Hecht Company – the Hecht Company is still there, of course. They've moved. And Woodies. And I've forgotten some. But plenty of stores – and a lot of little shops, too.

ST. JOHN: Well, now, the Press Building was not as large as it is – it did not take the whole block.

FREE: No, that was a movie theater next door – the Palace? I've forgotten the name of it – a great big ornate thing. And then the Willard. The Willard Hotel is different today. It's very elegant. It was very nice then. And during the war years I worked very late and I had a beau, escort, whatever you want to call him, who was at the Pentagon. And he had to work late, too. And I'd always meet him over there in Peacock Ally, almost 10 o'clock at night because we both worked so late, and had dinner.

ST. JOHN: At the Willard?

FREE: Yeah, we'd eat at the Willard, or the –

ST. JOHN: The Occidental?

FREE: Well, I remember more drinking Manhattans. If I drank a Manhattan today I'd fall out dead.

ST. JOHN: Soothing supper, huh?

FREE: Yeah, soothing. Anyhow.

So, now with the war thing. They had a thing here at the Press Club the other night called The Stage Door Canteen. I didn't go. Neither did Jim. He was away. But there I was, in the Press Building the whole time, working my heart out – really hard work, you know, during those war years, not that I – much harder for people in the war, of course – but long hours. I never sent up to the thing. I didn't know it existed because I was too busy. That was deadline time.

ST. JOHN: Who did go in there mostly?

FREE: I don't now. I saw that thing – the most of the people up there in the Press Club bulletin –

ST. JOHN: Were they Washington residents though?

FREE: No, I think it was like USO. The soldiers around here. There were always soldiers around town. There was a USO over there near Lafayette Park.

ST. JOHN: But the people would at least be there, to entertain –

FREE: I don't know very much about it. That's why I didn't go because it would not have been -- There I was, right one floor below but I was doing my job and I noticed that most of the people there, they were not here in the write-up. Most of them, not all of them, were not here during the war. They came afterwards. And, but, I, so I didn't know a whole lot about that.

ST. JOHN: What other kind of things –

FREE: So, then, other things – We had – I guess you had to have tickets. But they had the Watergate then – the name Watergate came from a barge, a floating barge that was anchored kind of on Rock Creek Drive around the Tidal Basin, where they had a shell, and had symphonies.

ST. JOHN: I attended –

FREE: You did? Years ago?

ST. JOHN: Uh-huh.

FREE: And I went to those. And the other theater would have been mainly going to the National because that's all there was, there wasn't any Arena Stage. And so that was all there was and I saw some very good plays there.

And the other things you did for fun – I rode horseback a good bit on weekends. And –

ST. JOHN: Where did you go to ride?

FREE: Out where what would be Potomac today. I shared an apartment later on with a woman named Claude James, whose – it turned out her father was editor, managing editor of the New York Times. And she was my successor on Newsweek. That's another story. She was a good rider. And I was, you know, I told you, early-on, interested in horses. So we used to ride a lot.

And I'll tell you another thing though, more for amusement than -- I guess -- there were more small parties.

ST. JOHN: In homes?

FREE: At homes and apartments. That was kind of a form of amusement. And suppers and all that. I think now it's gotten so much more expensive for the entertaining and all. We eat out… [tape goes silent]

GAP - (Tape 1 from the June 19 interview is missing)

INTERVIEW ANN COTTRELL FREE, June 19, 1992
For The National Press Club's Oral History Project

Tape 2

ST. JOHN: Florence Parrish St. John

ANN COTTRELL FREE: Well, let me move faster. But I hope I don't get charmed with my own stories too much. But one thing always seems to lead to another, Florence.

FLORENCE PARRISH ST. JOHN [INTERVIEWER]: It's so interesting.

ANN COTTRELL FREE: But back to – Are you back on tape? Oh, China. So, all these wonderful adventures out there in China – went up to Manchuria and was evacuated out, did I put that on the tape?

ST. JOHN: You put that on already.

FREE: Then I was at the Yangtze River, and you really do see the bodies float by.

And then, before getting off to the next part of my adventure in the Far East, is that it was filled with three types of Europeans. I've just spoken about the old time, old

China hands – Americans, British and some French – but we also had two other categories, one were White Russians, who was also, some of them became the Radish [phonetic] Russians, who had made their homes there and had taken rather lowly jobs because the Chinese didn't want anybody to take their jobs.

So I got off the tape here, speaking about the White Russians in Shanghai. They were all over the place. And then we had – the Chinese had set aside a part of Shanghai called Hongkou – which was filled with German and Austrian Jewish refugees who'd gotten in there; like taken the last ships out.

And they had made their own civilization, they had their own symphonies, their own newspapers and all. But they lived under the most barren and modest of conditions. And I wrote articles about them, which I also sent out to the international press because we were trying to help to facilitate finding relatives and getting food to them, and jobs and housing – everything.

And my heart went out to them. I had no way of doing anything much for them. And I was there to tell a lot of them goodbye when they were repatriated to Europe. And I guess they worked out pretty well; you know, getting back home again.

And I then left China to go, couldn't – I was saying I was going to go back on the Trans-Siberian Railway, but the Russians never did give me a visa. I wanted to go there and see Lake Baikal.

But I'm awfully glad I was turned down because then I would have made that long, tedious – and I guess it would have been boring – trip all the way across the top of Siberia. You can't get off. You can't do anything.

But instead, I met up with an American woman that I had known very slightly, who had -- Verna [Feuerhelm] who came from California, who had been with the Bureau of Labor Statistics here and gone to UNRRA [United National Relief and Rehabilitation Administration], with UNRRA as the statistician-economist.

And so us two girls joined up together and took more than a year going around the world. And we went first to Hong Kong and then to Vietnam. I was there. I'm going rather fast, but I was there during the beginning of the – during the fighting.

And it was filled with French Foreign Legionnaires, young men from not just from France, but the people who had lost their way. And, you know, if you stayed home – you could always go to the French Foreign Legion, no questions asked.

And just really quite romantic you might say, but not romantic when you meet these guys how, they were lost. They'd maybe done bad things at home. You had all nationalities. And I never will forget.

Of course, we – bombs went off there, and I felt that everyone was a spy. Everyone was, I guess.

And then a friend of mine, a woman named Jan Skewes, whose name is now on that large plaque in the lobby of the State Department here in Washington. She was killed, out, ambushed in her Jeep out not too far out of Saigon. She was a United States Information Service officer there.

And Jan, I have now a little American flag she'd given me to put on my luggage because I'd planned to go with the French, a French convoy, I think, up to Ankor Wat, that's Cambodia. And she said, "Oh, you'll be safe." But we had an acting consul there then, a man named Reed, and he said, "I can't tell you what to do and what not to do. But don't go. I mean, I wouldn't—I'd advise you not to go." And I didn't go.

And then Jan said, "Oh, I was …" She felt I was really quite timid. And it wasn't long before she went out in a Jeep and was blown up; a young woman.

So, therefore, I said – I came back to this country and made some talks. And I said, "I think a lot of the Vietnamese." I think they're not going to want to hear me. I wrote articles for the Herald – at that time, by that time I was free. I was writing articles for the Herald – New York Herald Tribune – and I went back to doing that after my stint with UNRRA was over.

And I was selling articles or placing articles – didn't make any money much – but anyway – A lot of papers all around the country, particularly my old one, naturally, the New York Herald Tribune.

So I wrote, I remember writing one all about bombs going off and pink champagne – oh, what a lead. Anyway. [Laughing]:

So that's the way it was out there. And we interviewed the – Oh, I met up a lot of those old French, those French people I had known in Washington, who had surfaced there. One of them was the consul general. The French were still -- This was before Dien Bien Phu when the French were pushed out.

But I always felt – and came back and crusaded against – I said, never, never get involved in Vietnam. It'll be the mistake of our lives.

ST. JOHN: And it was. That it was.

FREE: And I carried on about that. People called me a Red and all that stuff because I said, that's a bottomless pit. And a lot of those people I don't think had any intention of going in with China. They don't like the Chinese.

People just thought Chinese – they're all the same color, I guess – that (laughing) so it's just idiocy.

But, however, then I went on to Burma – which is a closed society now. I'm so glad I saw the Golden Buddha and all the rest. And went on to, oh, any country that got in the way, we went to. Malaysia, Singapore, Raffels Hotel, all the whole thing. But I couldn't, didn't have money enough to stay at Raffels. I think we stayed at the Y.

Anyway, then I went to India. And that's worth a book in itself. And I'll try to make it brief. The highlight of India was being there at the time of the transfer of power and seeing Mahatma Gandhi, Mohandas Gandhi, several times -- and as close as I am to you. And I should have done something about an interview. I don't know why I didn't try to make a big deal about that.

I'll tell you why the way – this is interesting for the record – a lot of the people said, "Oh, he does – he's not the story." Some of these blasé correspondents. And, "He's over the hill now politically."

And I said, oh, I don't believe that. And of course then I was there for the actual transfer of power and stood – And I did talk with Nehru. And met Nehru's sister. Went to parties.

Through some contacts, a girl named Betty Graham, who subsequently died most tragically or mysteriously, rather young. She was my age exactly – left her back in China. She had lived in India and had gotten to know all that in crowd. So she'd given me an introduction to all these families – the Nehru family – so I went to a lot of these parties. They love giving parties.

Anyway. Therefore I had that little bit of entrée there. And then Verna and I went up to Darjeeling, and lived under rather primitive conditions, you know, because India was still – although it had no war, it was, the British were leaving and it was the beginning of the riots and, oh, I won't go into all of that.

But I'll say this: That then we were in Delhi and I was standing as close to Nehru as I – once again – I'm always standing close to people. [Laughing] Like I was with Gandhi. Watching on the top of their kind of government parliament building as we watched Lord and Lady Mountbatten drive up in the coach, to come in to hand over the reins of power.

And then the masses of people – But what of course stands out so much in my mind was a scrape with death, you might say. And when it was over – there must have been hundreds of thousands of people, and they're very emotional people, the Indians. You know, I think probably more emotional than most. I don't know. It's very hard to make that judgment.

But if you get a little bit of a crowd moving, it turned into a stampede. People – just, they're running. They didn't know why. They had nothing – They were jubilant. Nothing bad had happened. Something good had happened.

But people got trampled. I saw people get trampled. And I said to Verna, my friend, 'For God's sake let's get over here on the side.'' And we spotted some English – Europeans – over on the side. I said, 'Let's follow them.' And they saw us and they said, "Come on." They got us away from the crowd because if we'd gone as we had – you know, just a mass –

ST. JOHN: You'd have been caught up in the –

FREE: Crushed. Yeah. So I'll never forget that day.

And I was invited to a lovely party through some contacts I had in Shanghai that Mountbattens gave, and I didn't go because I had bought the tickets to go up to Kashmir where we lived in a houseboat on the lake, you know, like everybody does, although there were no tourists in Kashmir then. And we had a marvelous time getting up there in an old bus, which broke down with a landslide and we all said our final farewells and prayers, you might say, because we thought we were going in the a chasm. You know, excitement, excitement. I loved it, and scared to death the whole time.

So, anyhow, then went up on a pony back, trek into the outskirts of Tibet, a place called Ladakh, and where the people – There was no such thing as a wheel. I think there's probably a road that goes up there now. But we went on pony back. So that was a big adventure.

And then we went to Indian villages. And that's where you could see firsthand not only the caste system but the poverty. But yet the tremendous resilience of the people.

And the thing that interested me so much, the versatility of the cattle. Of course they don't eat them, which argued in their favor, but they utilized them in – their cow dung is used as for cakes for fuel.

And then also, because there's so much ammonia, I have photograph – I believe its right here – not that it's going to show on this thing, but see this woman up here? My daughter used to call her her sister. She's a woman draped in a sari and this thing over her head – I don't know what her face -- She is in a hut, which she has, in front of her is like a brass cuspidor – a large bowl.

ST. JOHN: Large, uh-huh.

FREE: And she is, has in her hands, looks like mud. It's this watered down cow manure, which she used for paving and also the walls of where she lived. And it's sanitary. It dries hard. And the ammonia keeps down on germs. Isn't that?

ST. JOHN: What a recycling item.

FREE: Isn't that true? And of course, and the cows give milk, too.

So India, in every way, in Bombay that was –

Oh, I was writing some stories about the transfer of power and some of the – I didn't write as much as I had planned to because we seemed to be on the go all the time. And we did have correspondents there.

And then the next thing was to get shipped out through – this is significant. I think I wrote about this – the British were leaving. They were going back to a home they didn't have.

You remember those movies on Masterpiece Theatre about the – oh, what do they call them – it's a whole series of them? But the British that have lived in India all their lives and they speak of home – but there is no home because they've been there always.

Now they were terrified because the Indians – it was their country at last and they were going home.

And it was so hard for us to get out. We finally got, booked passage on a pilgrim ship that was going to Mecca. And, but, going empty. Was going to pick up people. So, anyway, it's like a long story on that. Went out from Bombay. It was quite interesting.

And then we got up near the Suez Canal; we were put off in the middle of the night. They said the ship could not go through the Suez Canal unless - it was under the British flag - unless they paid a certain amount of license, freight, and we were paying passengers. And we would put up the thing –

They said, "Too bad. You're going to put you off right here." And they put us off in a little town called Tufik. And we were put in the custody of the police. And the police, they guarded our port hole before we put off in a row boat.

But I said, 'Don't put us off in the – don't put us off in the night. Wait until morning.' And then, therefore, then I remembered – this brings me back to my earlier newspaper – Couple of years before, it seemed like a lifetime, I had written an article about a refugee camp run by the international refugee organization which was in the Sinai Desert.

And I said, 'Aren't we near the Sinai Desert?' And I got a message through to these people at this international refugee organization camp, which was filled with Yugoslavs, Serbs and Croats – the whole thing – 'cause don't forget, they had all fled 'cause when the Germans came in they were fighting each other then – the Croats, the Slovenes –

I know all about it because I lived with them for weeks. Got caught in all their crosscurrents right there in the desert. They lived in tents on the Sinai – and the Sinai Desert is on the banks of the Suez Canal – and so did I.

We couldn't leave because of a cholera epidemic and we couldn't go on to Cairo. They came for us – these people, they were British and Canadian and so on, who happened to be running the camp – and they came all the way over in a truck, a weapons carrier, and rescued us two girls from the police.

I was too dumb not to give -- They wanted money. But I was heavy on indignation at that point. So, however: 'How dare you put us off that ship in the middle of the Red Sea?'

And why not? You're just another life thrown overboard.

And so, no consul there or anything. But the funny thing is, you're never scared. I mean I might get scared in an airplane or something like that. But in those situations one-on-one with people. Didn't seem to faze me. I used to get – Because I was so – I would try different techniques sometimes, sometimes to be the soft sell.

So, anyway, we stayed in the desert with all these people for months – scratch that – weeks. And so finally we left. And of course I left a lot of intrigues. My God, the romances. I got caught up in a couple of them myself. And, which I won't go into now.

And, but I'll say this, Rebecca West – this wonderful book called "Black Lamb and Grey Falcon," the great Rebecca West, and which was about Sarajevo, the beautiful Moslem city of Sarajevo. And all these wonderful people. It's a great classic. You remember Rebecca West?

ST. JOHN: Oh, yes. I haven't read that book though.

FREE: Well, so. The characters – there was a Jewish family that were living there in the desert, and the most elegant Sephardic family, Nina Salam and her family. And they were the ones that Rebecca West had written up passage after passage, 'cause she visited them in their home in Sarajevo. And there they were Sephardic Jews now living, and they were so elegant, so beautiful. I'll always remember.

You remember "Ivanhoe" , Rebecca in "Ivanhoe"? With the beautiful aquiline nose and the black tresses? Well, I am an incorrigible romantic. So I always felt that Nina was right out of that. And then I saw Rebecca West later in England and told her about Nina's plight and gave her all of the information. And I heard that something worked out.

But funny thing is – things you work out, you work hard on, then you don't hear much from the people again.

ST. JOHN: That's what my husband used to say about his writings.

FREE: So, anyhow –

ST. JOHN: Which doesn't mean that they are not being used and absorbed and written. You just don't hear about it.

FREE: So, anyway. That was – I mean the rest of that trip was writing articles and – In Italy and – Oh, yeah. One of my best articles of all from the standpoint of being dramatic and getting a good play for the Herald Tribune was up on a dateline "The Greek Bulgarian Yugoslav Border" and that was when the Andartes, which were communist-backed rebels coming over the line all the time preying on the Greeks. And that's when the – Truman put in their policy – that Truman Greek policy after the war. Because, to save Greece after World War II. And it was sort of like an early Marshall Plan, just a direct aid thing.

And, so, there we were. It was really kind of scary because we had to stop the train to get the darn mines off the tracks. They were always blowing up things.

Well, my God, I'd just gone through India where I escaped by 10 minutes one of the worst slaughters in Lahore, which is when the – you know, the Moslems and the Hindus – because I was there, I told you, after the transfer of power. Going back a little bit. But I was lucky – knock on wood – in escaping these horrible bloody slaughters, you know, throat-cuttings and slashings –

ST. JOHN: Like happened in South Africa just yesterday.

FREE: Oh, wasn't that thing awful? So they did the same thing in India.

And, madness. So, therefore, in Yugo – I wrote a really good – I keep on saying good, but this was syndicated all over the place. And we sent a bunch of pictures, too. And I – Pictures of people digging out and living in little hovels.

ST. JOHN: And this was about the slaughter –

FREE: This was on the Greek -Yugoslav-Bulgarian border.

ST. JOHN: Greek. Okay.

FREE: Actually I took the train from Salonika, which goes on to eventually to Constantinople, you know, Istanbul, if you keep going. And this is up there – you look at the map in this remote Balkan corner of the world where a lot of this fighting was in the pockets. That's how they would win and lose wars, in these little villages.

Just take -- and they caught this boy who was an Andarte, and I knew they were going to kill him --

And just like I never did finish on the Foreign Legion. When we left we went on a ship, a freighter, and my God! It was an American freighter. And they caught this poor little stowaway. Oh. And before we had gotten out of French territorial waters, and he – they called the French and they came out and killed him, I guess.

I said, "Why'd you do that?" And he said, "I couldn't stand it any longer. And all I eat is rice and I'm going crazy. He had gone crazy. He was young, and in too much stress and all that. And I have a picture of him. I gave him cigarettes.

But, anyway, but that's the way it was. The same boy, the Andarte, I knew as soon as we turned our backs – we didn't even have to turn our backs – they were going to shoot him.

When you see it up close like that you can't believe it. Television can't take the place of it.

And so then we went from Greece into Rome and then – in other words, went around the world.

And then I went, when I got on back up to Paris, that's when I settled down for a while and wrote all kinds of stories about education in Germany. I spent a lot of time in Germany. All kinds of things about refugees because I had my outlet right there, my own paper, you see. And they were really good about it. Wrote all kinds –

There's one of them that I – That's called "Shanghai to Paris, a Rocky Road."

ST. JOHN: Clever.

FREE: And then I kept on writing pieces for them. That's when I met this marvelous woman named Lucie Noel, whose husband – that's her name spelled backwards, Leon – and she was a Greek – a Russian Orthodox – I mean White Russian Orthodox. And married to him, this Paul Leon, and changed her name for writing purposes.

She had landed on her feet, had become the fashion editor for the Herald-Tribune. He was the assistant and researcher and special friend to James Joyce. And that's all I knew all the time staying with her was all about the whole Joyce family—you know, they had all these mental problems in the family – the son, I can't remember which one. I'm going to sign a release on this; I don't want anybody suing me, but –

And so, and that, he was like a secretary, an accountant; in other words he's the kind of person every writer likes to have around them, who did all that stuff that drives you crazy, keeping things straight.

And, guess what? Paul was taken – the horrible knock on the door. And the Germans came and took him and he was killed in a camp. She, she tried – she joined –

she was a member of the Red Cross and she went up there to try to find him and the Red Cross kicked her out of the Red Cross because she shouldn't be taking sides.

I don't' know, it was horrible. Horrible.

ST. JOHN: You really have seen some of the raw side –

FREE: I saw some horrible, horrible things. And, so he was killed. Gassed. She lost track of him, you know, which camp.

And then she and I – every time I would go to Paris I'd stay with her. And she died. And then Verna, my good friend that I traveled around the world with and wrote all – She would help on the articles. She took pictures, too. And then she died. Lost a lot of good friends.

ST. JOHN: You have. But such marvelous experiences and memories with these people who've been so significant to you.

FREE: Well, so anyway. This, I want to get into the major part of my life because we're running down on tape and the rain has stopped and I know you'd like to move along. Is the tape still running?

ST. JOHN: Uh-huh.

FREE: Then the watershed period of my life came along. Not only did I get married – because I guess the time had come – I came back and I didn't know what, to go back to the Herald-Tribune or – So I started doing a lot more freelancing. And worked a great deal for The Washington Star. And which I told you, it's a real good paper.

And then Jim and I decided to get married because [laughing] I'd seen everything.

ST. JOHN: And you were ready to settle down instead of him.

FREE: That's an old term, you know, "settling down."
So, anyway, we –

ST. JOHN: You were ready to start a partnership.

FREE: That's right. A partnership. And we were congenial. And I wrote a lot about China stuff and all that at first. But then I'd always been, as I told you in the beginning, extremely interested in animals and I think it was 1963, I wrote this book on what is an endangered species [Przewalski horse], called, "Forever the Wild Mare." And I'm happy to report it won a lot of prizes. It was a young people's book. The Boy Scouts, the Boys Life, and also – that's when I got – it was kind of thrown in as a part of that Schweitzer Medal thing too.

And then I – But one time I found out, just read a little article that – something I didn't know anything about. I never thought about it. Just like most people don't think about things, that there was, a bill had been introduced in Congress for humane slaughter of meat animals.

I said, "Oh, can they do that?" So, anyway, I jump ahead on that. That was in the 1950s. I got deeply involved because I had these syndicates I was writing for. And The Star. And I felt that, whatever I learned, and what we could do politically –

It was mainly so the cattle would not be struck, as many times, countless times in the head until they're knocked out with these, what they call a pole ax – it's a long ax with a handle. Brutalizing for everything – everybody – to bring them to their knees then cut their throats. Now they have been perfected, something called "the captive bolt pistol." The animal comes up like a little chute thing and the person stands above them. And you go, boom, like that, they don't know what hit them.

And they even fix it so – everything in meat is economics – they can even use the brains. It's a, it doesn't go in, it's not, it's a concussion but not an explosive. And so that knocks them out cold and then while they are unconscious they can have their throats cut and they're bled out and skinned and quartered so they can be nice delicious steaks on people's tables.

So, anyhow, I worked like a damn dog on that. I really did because I not only in every possible way – In fact, I was finally the one that President Eisenhower – I'm kind of tooting my own horn – but if I don't get this on the record I'm going to put it in a book. But if anybody's ever looking at this –

I, we figured, that he might not sign that bill and would be a pocket veto. Oh, it could go on for years and years, and years, the pressures were intense. And all that's in a book I'm writing so it will be the first part of the book I'm writing on the animal protective legislation in this century.

And, cause nobody knows it. But scholars should know it. You have to know about everything that's significant, what's happens behind the scenes, and this is a subject I care about.

ST. JOHN: Absolutely true.

FREE: So, anyhow, I was the one , I got hold – could have gone to the press conference myself and I should have, but I knew I wouldn't get recognized by Eisenhower. He didn't know me. I wasn't a regular, although I had a pass to go in.

I got the United Press correspondent to say, "Mr. President, are you going to sign that bill?" In other words, it would have expired in about – several hours. My God, the pressure was then.

He said, "Well, I'm getting more mail on this than any other subject."

He was, more than the Korean War, on anything. And the pressures were intense, although the packers would begin to keel over a little bit.

And of course with the – I'll tell you about the other kind of animals after I come back.

So, he signed it. And I got a call from Ann Wheaton, who was the woman's press secretary at the White House. So once all this press thing was going on – I was partisan as all get out, and the White House knew it, and every congressman knew it. I never got paid a cent by anybody. I was just writing my story straight out. So –

I want to push this along on the animal thing.

But I do want to get this on the record because through the animals – and by the way then Eisenhower signed it, because he saw when you get asked at your press conference –and guess what, not long ago, I got hold, I've been in touch with the Eisenhower Library and got the transcript of the press conference and everything he said. Exactly right. It's in my book but I get all these sidetracks, you know, like that speech I have to make next month and all these things.

I've got to get back to that book, Florence. Knock me in the head. Make me do it.

ST. JOHN: You will.

FREE: I've done all this background on it. You see, you've got to have the specifics and you don't always have all of that in your notes. And so, with the pigs, at least they're going – None of it's good. None of it's good. And you shouldn't fix yourself up and say I can eat meat now because they're having a lovely time being killed. Not at all. It's just a lot better than it was.

So we got that legislation through. And through that –

And then I started learning about – then I got involved in saving a park here in Washington called the Glover Archbold Park, which is not on Rock Creek, but a dagger was pointed at it. They were going to put up the Three Sisters Bridge across and it would have gone right through the stream valley, which had been given to the city by the Glover and Archbold family.

Archbold – she was a Standard Oil heiress – and Glover was the Riggs Bank and the owners of the builders of the city. In other words, it came with big credentials. But they couldn't save it. They couldn't save it. And there were lawsuits and everything.

You know what? Did something simple. I was on the board – I was all mixed up with the local Audubon and all, except this was kind of an offshoot from the animal work, you see. One thing kind of leads to another.

And so then we got – we did the simple thing of getting thousands and thousands of signatures on the petition to keep the road builders out of Glover Archbold Park.

In the meantime I had found a secret memorandum that had been written by a top person in the Park Service to the road builders, "Oh, yes, you can put a little park road through." We knew darn well if you put a darling little park road through it would soon be a six-lane highway or something. At least four lane.

So, anyway. I got hold of that and we got on this and we got the word to Udall – Secretary Udall was in the – and, God bless him. And I have the picture. I took a lot of those pictures down from that other thing I was doing not long ago. But, anyway. Trust me. Believe me.

I'd taken the petition to him. And he said, "No, there'll never be a road through the Glover-Archbold Park, and he was Secretary of the Interior. And that knocked that thing out.

ST. JOHN: That cinched it.

FREE: That cinched it. And so, I, then I was writing, started writing about endangered species and trying to do something about better housing for laboratory animals as I had, somebody had told me to go in the sub-basement of the Department of Agriculture South Building on Independence Avenue and I would see something. I would see hundreds and hundreds of animals, and small dogs, in small cages kept left there for a lifetime. And indeed they were.

So I raised –

ST. JOHN: This was in the Department of Interior main building?

FREE: Department of Agriculture main building. Just happened to physically be there. They were animals for the Food and Drug Administration, and they were used to testing something as trivial as the colors used in lipstick or jelly beans; you know, red and blues and all that.

So they fed in their foods –

ST. JOHN: Dyes [unintelligible].

FREE: Different dyes. Right. And this was my first introduction to the laboratory animals where it is totally unnecessary. Those marvelous, darling animals which can be your pets one minute or they're taken in babyhood or puppy hood and put in these cages. Some of them when I went in there – Some of them were just, screamed for companionship, anything. Some were too far gone. They were circling in their cages. They were what you call stir crazy. They were gone. Some were just depressed.

And I never will forget. When I left, I cried. And I said I'm going to get them out of there.

Well, then I negotiated. You can't do things unless you work through channels. And I think I went down there through channels, said, "I want to see." And don't forget, I was a writer. How are you going to turn me down?

And I had a legitimate reason. I surely wrote about it. My God in Heaven! Did I write about it. And alerted everybody else. And that these animals should not – that they were there for life.

And so I had the stories. Humane groups found out about it. Everybody visited and saw it themselves.

Then I wrote enough stories and gave them to certain members of Congress. One of them I sent to Senator Lister Hill, who was the chair of the – all the medical – and he had the purse strings on the Food and Drug Administration.

So he suggested, "Why don't you write about getting a building?" Well, the upshot was that they appropriated money for a laboratory facility and dog facility, for – it was bad for the people down there in that horrible place, too. But worse for the animals and the rabbits. And, oh God, I can't tell you.

So they built it and they got them out of there. It wasn't heaven but at least they had an indoor-outdoor run – something. But the horrible thing is, I thought this was going to be a sign to the scientific community - well, we've got to shape up. They're still doing it, in many cases, although a law has been passed they should be taken out. They're circumventing the law to this day. This is under the Animal Welfare Act now – which I'll come back to in a moment. But it was the first breakthrough. It was the first protective legislation for laboratory animals in the history of this country.

And we'd also gotten – we'd gotten the poor livestock helped some; we got these ones helped some. Then the next thing was to move on to these animals that were being stolen all over the place. These dogs and cats all over the place. And we worked like that until we – and I wrote article after article after article for all kinds of publications. But I had these syndicates, you know. That was the day of these syndicates and it was fantastic.

ST. JOHN: Now they saw that your articles were diversely printed around the country? Around the world? Were these mostly humane –

FREE: Mainly in this country. So – And then in the meantime I had met this woman named Rachel Carson whose book I had read, "The Sea Around Us," and I admired her so much for that. But she called me up one time because I had found out about somebody who'd been made deathly ill from herbicides. And she wanted to get –

She needed documentation. She was a good reporter and she was reaching for everything she could get.

ST. JOHN: Was she essentially a reporter or was she more an environmentalist –

FREE: She was a scientist and a writer. She was a poor girl, from the standpoint of never having a break. She had to look after her mother and her sisters and then her nieces, not sister, and she had one brother only – and the nieces. And then that one niece died and that child, baby, she adopted him.

And then she had cancer. And they didn't get it all. And then her mother died. And she finally – she made enough money on "The Sea Around Us" to --

And then she thought she was going to write a big book on ecology. And then she heard about, discovered how awful these pesticides were, DDT and all these things. And that's – and so she said, "I'll have to stop and do that temporarily."

But she never – Funny I'm going to mention that. Maybe in one of my talks, that she never wrote the book on ecology. But it was the book on ecology because it started the ecological environmental movement.

And I had even gotten her to help me on getting those dogs out of the cages. She wrote letters. And then I introduced her – or maybe – I don't know how she met her, Christine Stevens, who was absolutely the dynamo of legislative genius in getting animal protection – There's not one piece of 10 or more bills that have gone through in the second half of the century that she hasn't been the starter on them.

And just this week she's been spearheading, along with all kinds of people from various Massachusetts, Audubon and all over the place on, curtailing this horrible trade in these poor birds. You know they're captured under – Senegal, all of these places – and most of them die stuffed into boxes or and they're smuggled in -- Anyway, she's into that.

So she and I have been colleagues, you might say, for years. You know, I don't – We're friendly all these years, known each other all this time. We've seen these people come and go. Everybody – a new group comes along and invents the wheel every few years anyway.

So, and then we got busy on the endangered species, all these horrible situations where these animals were just disappearing all over the place. I was writing like crazy on that subject.

And here's a headline from -- This is where I really came into my own and very, very active. I couldn't write as many foreign stories naturally because I was moving around so much.

But here, here's one, like "Preserving Animal Life". It's a horrible title, I mean headline. But here's one on endangered species just before the law passed. "The House

of Representatives tomorrow is expected to offer a helping hand to many of our fellow creatures in Eden, and through this act of conscience it would touch with its fingertips both the primeval past and the unknown future." So you can –

ST. JOHN: What does Eden refer to?

FREE: The Garden of Eden.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: And so you can see how deeply I felt it. So I wrote on this, all the time. And then we, later on, we got this other thing to the convention in the trade – international trade in endangered species – and, you know, it's come into its own now.

And then from that, carrying on from that, then there were all these little things that were going on in smaller communities. The way they kill these poor, poor dogs and cats, you know. So many of them. People breed, breed, breed. And they're either going to be killed on the street or something.

And, but they had this thing called the Euthanaire, which is, to suck all the air out of this box and they would more or less suffocate to death. I wrote a story blowing the whistle on that and got the first one taken out here in Washington.

And all these little things like that. Because you've got, you can think, act locally, think globally – you know, that stuff.

So, anyhow. Then I got onto the Friends of the – the board of the Friends of the National Zoo. And later on, that was 'way back in the sixties, because that was the horrible zoo. And I thought they'd ought to shut it up. You notice the London Zoo is closing. Either shut that one up or improve it.

It's been improved, but I got into a big howdy do with the director there about feeding all these live animals to snakes. And now they don't do -- They changed. And then years later I went up to their Front Royal wild, endangered animal preserve run by the zoo, and found out they were going to have a hunt, a deer hunt, Virginia deer hunt there within the zoo grounds, all fenced in.

And I begged them not to do it. And then I did, mostly on television, on that one because I blew the whistle and carried on about it. And then all the humane –

So then we had a congressional hearing. Representative [Sidney]Yates, you know, who holds the purse strings on the Smithsonian, which is the zoo. And it was packed. Standing room only.

And Senator Harkin and I – he had come in on it – and later – he's interested in wildlife. Anyway, we were the – I was the lead-off witness on that.

The whole point is, you don't have local people running around shooting animals in a zoo. And it's bad on the poor deer because they can't get over the fences or they fall and get themselves impaled. They were right next to a national, the Shenandoah National Park.

I said, for God's sake, if there are too many in the zoo, cut down the fences and let them out. And so that's what they've subsequently done.

But they fought me. They fought me down to the ground. And I was trying to find ways of how you could – compromises.

And guess what happened after that? And they had all these meetings down at the Smithsonian, and the hearing. And the next thing I knew is that the director of the zoo -- after all, the responsibility is always with the top man, you know that from the military – he's no longer, he resigned.

And that's the story there. But I just feel like you have to have to blow the whistle. And it's really hard. I see people blowing whistles and sometimes they just get kicked in the teeth after doing it. It takes – it's hard to do – you've got to get a lot of allies to come in with you. And I've tried to do that on every occasion; otherwise, you could just find yourself sitting out there –

ST. JOHN: I think that's a very important point for you to bring out, especially in journalism, because a lot of people pay attention to what's written. If they read it in the newspaper, read it in a magazine all of a sudden they see truth in it. And so, the effect of that writing does need resources. What you've been telling, you've indicated –

FREE: You never know, in our field, probably more in writing than in television, because you can pick it up when it's more convenient, you can put it aside and pick it up, and read it later.

ST. JOHN: Independent access –

FREE: It's a pity that we've got such a short attention span – busy people don't have time to read much. But I hope that those articles that I wrote on the humane slaughter, and all those things, made some effect.

I wrote on trying to save those poor wild horses out West, you know. We're talking about our own personal archives – I've got so many articles on all that stuff.

And I became a real good friend of this gal named Wild Horse Annie. Remember her? And we were great buddies.

And so – Then that led me into Albert Schweitzer. And I was very honored. Honored. I can't tell you.

ST. JOHN: Oh, sure.

FREE: To have won the Albert Schweitzer Medal for my work in, primarily I think, on that, getting that first legislation on those poor dogs, you know. And all this general stuff.

And then I ended up becoming a member of an Albert Schweitzer group in New York called the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship. Didn't do much about animals.

But I got to meet some of these people and I became, read more of Albert Schweitzer's thing. And I realized he was the defining influence in my life. He and Rachel Carson. She dedicated her book, "Silent Spring," to him. And in the front of it she had written, "To Albert Schweitzer, who has said 'Man has lost the capacity foresee and to forestall. He will end by destroying the earth.'"

But nobody knew from whence that quotation had come. And when I was in Albert Schweitzer's home in Gunsbach, Alsace in France in 1986 – something like that – the woman who had worked with him at his place at the hospital in Lambaréné, who now was running his Archives in the old home over there – she said, "Do you think you could find this for me? We've looked and looked through all his correspondence and everything."

And I said, "I'll do my best."

INTERVIEWER (Florence Parris St. John]: Correspondence. Okay.

FREE: And came back to this country and wrote to everybody, everywhere. And it was finally turned up by a scholar – was actually a newspaper man who was rummaging through some papers of hers, hadn't even been indexed. And he found there was a letter that Dr. Schweitzer had written to a bee keeper whose bees had been destroyed by DDT – and this was 1953. It was in a little newsletter of a small organization, which has since grown bigger. The International Union for Conservation of Nature.

And she – then he said, "Poor bees. Poor birds. Poor men." She sort of shortened it. And I found it. And everybody's been pleased ever since.

ST. JOHN: Oh, yeah.

FREE: And, but you see, the reason I got into more on the Schweitzer thing is that I'm—I wrote a book called, "Animals, Nature and Albert Schweitzer." And in 19 – My Gosh, it's been a long time now, almost 10 years ago, because I felt there was a philosophy of reverence for life and the fact that we've got to extend it to everything that lives. And then man has got to meet the horrible challenge of the will to live. "I am the life which wills to live, versus the life that wills to live." So everything wants to live. And we have to make these choices. And you can't make a choice unless you think about it.

And what can you do without? Do I have to cut this tree down? Do I have to step on this ant? Do I have to slap this mosquito? Do I have to eat this steak? Think about it. And that's all he asked.

And I think if you have good conscience and you think about it, and you're honest with yourself, that you will come up with the right answer.

And I think he did his damnedest. And I think most people, if they think about that, will do so.

And I felt that – I had a lot of quotations in the book and a lot of pictures. And his quotations and my continuity, interpretations and so on. I want to give you a copy of that book. Would you like to have one?

ST. JOHN: Oh, please.

FREE: And did I give you one? I mean I had it out here last week. I thought about it before. I didn't do it, did I?

ST. JOHN: No.

FREE: So, anyhow. So that was – the reason I wrote that book then was because I felt there was a need. And it's gone into a whole lot of printings and we've done it mainly through distribution of humane societies and bookstores as well. And so on. It's been about, I don't know how many readers, but about 35,000 or 40,000 copies have been distributed.

ST. JOHN: Terrific. I know that's a source of enormous pleasure for you.

FREE: Well, it makes me feel good because if you can reach out and touch another person's live in any way, particularly if they're [unintelligible].

You know what? Anything you want to do, if you feel too alone, you can't do it. And that's why with Doctor Schweitzer – I always felt so alone, and I would look to him for strength.

ST. JOHN: It was there for you.

FREE: It was there. And so, that's why I did that. I had planned to do a book and it was rather soon after my mother died. And I was kinda – It's a long, complicated story. And I got into it to do a book called, "Meat: The End of the Affair," which Houghton-Mifflin was going to bring out. But it got so big – and I might as well make a confession – in that we certainly don't achieve all of our ambitions.

And I went out West and went to all these slaughter houses and did all these things. And then they said, "Do it in a hurry." And I couldn't do it in a hurry. And I was trying to cover everything. Ecology. Why the meat thing -- Ecological, economic, health, ethics – the whole thing.

I got sick. My back gave out on me and then I just got so, wanted just – Took this medicine, it made me sick and all that. I said –

ST. JOHN: Things didn't come together for you.

FREE: Well, it was too hard to do in a hurry. So I've always been mad with myself because I tried to do a book on the whole animal picture way back when it was too early. Too early.

ST. JOHN: Oh. Um-hum.

FREE: And then it got –

ST. JOHN: So timing makes a difference.

FREE: Timing makes so much difference. That's why now, I'm working on a book on – a sequel, you might say – on the Rachel Carson – something that people can grasp, like they could with my little Schweitzer book. And then this other one I told you about, too. And that's all I really am trying to do right now other than – Fill in the blanks. [Laughing]

ST. JOHN: Very much involved –

FREE: So, anyway –

ST. JOHN: One question: Have you and your husband, Jim, ever collaborated on –

FREE: Some. We did it on a column, which a columnist named Ray Tucker, maybe Jim told you this in his thing – was sick. And this editor of this syndicate came to us and said, "Would we write the column?"[Washington Whirligig] And we did. And then the man got well. And I wanted to go on with it. I really did. Only it was a quite hard – it was daily – and Jim was writing his other newspaper stories. It was much too hard. And I wanted to go on with it.

And, yes, I think we should – You'll ask him that question. I would like to have gone ahead with a column if we – I said, "Let's try to find somebody to take one just once or twice a week."

And I don't know. He and I – we got along very well on that – and we've written some articles together in the past.

ST. JOHN: What type column, what –

FREE: It was political. Of course, I got – I wrote a bunch of them. You see, we put the joint – That's when I came down heavy on pesticides –

ST. JOHN: So you were writing about environmental things?

FREE: The things I knew a lot about and then he'd write the things on stuff on Capitol Hill and all that carryings-on and it was a good balance, it was good.

ST. JOHN: Then both of you were writing what you knew well?

FREE: I know it. And I would liked to have seen us kept it on. You ought to work on him on that but –

ST. JOHN: So over the years did you assist each other when you were writing and filling in?

FREE: Ask him that. I'll tell you, when he was working for the *Birmingham News*, particularly when he gave up having an office downtown, he worked out of home, here, and then at the other place, we had a little machine here you know like a fax – the early days of faxing – and I helped, it's up to him to say I helped him.

ST. JOHN: You worked together on a lot of things.

FREE: I wrote a lot of stuff for the *Birmingham News* but the *Birmingham News* had a very good editor toward the end, a man named John Bloomer. I was very fond of him and he was interested in a lot of subjects I was interested in. Jim told you about those days with Alabama and all of that. He was working very hard too.

ST. JOHN: And some situations I think it's not usual that husbands and wives can successfully collaborate and I think –

FREE: I would have liked to have done more really and truly, but –

ST. JOHN: Well each of you were doing so many things that were so very significant and it must have been very demanding on your time.

FREE: It was and don't forget we had, you had your personal problems – we had this darling little baby.

ST. JOHN: I have to describe the growls here, these are these darling dogs that are here they are yorkies and they are so well behaved.

FREE: They are all mixtures.

ST. JOHN: They are so delightful -- well mixtures, okay.

FREE: This . . . I wonder what she is? She looks like a Belgian Griffon to me, but anyhow, I feel that some of these things like the things we worked on the civil rights, certainly is far from perfect God knows, but at least the laws are on the books – with the ecological thing. They have to get their foot in the door on these things and then just keep pushing.

ST. JOHN: Well, I asked your husband at the end of our interview any if comments that you would like to make about journalism or the Press Club or what you see coming along for journalists?

FREE: Well, I guess journalism today is divided into print and they don't even call it that any more – media. Journalist is becoming kind of old fashioned word I guess. I think media sounds awful don't you?

Anyhow, you have the print and the air picture – all these different things, I think, that this latter non-print media is taking off in so many directions now, the high tech on that is going to be something where you'll get your information off our wrist watch and, you know what I mean, you can just push a button and get all the information, so I think with the computer and all of that, that's going to make journalism, the information age is here that's a given, and how much leeway there is for imagination and digging so therefore the print journalism should, has got to fill in that side of things, and also to crystallize something you can look at again to crystallize, like editorials.

I think we all pick up the papers in the morning to see what our peers are thinking, and I think that is a good future for that, but it's apparently very expensive for papers to flourish. Look how many have gone under. So, and of course I think the journals of large organizations are very important too, they are filling in a lot. You know, Sierra Club, Green Peace – I'm thinking about the field that I know, so journalism, every little organization has its own publication now. So, I think it's going to be there, but the main thing, all these new trends.

It's entirely different from what it used to be, but I think the opportunities for young people will be boundless with all these new things. But I don't think it will be as interesting as, maybe the times I have come through, because you had no competition from, quote unquote, media. You did it all. Radio didn't amount to much. So therefore, you could, you did the word picture, you didn't put the picture on the screen, you did the word picture. It makes you a better writer, a better observer, a better analyst .

ST. JOHN: You had them take your reader there through your words.

FREE: Oh, yeah. I wanted my readers to see it and feel it just the way I did. And I don't think there's a – some exceptions – a heck of a lot of that anymore. Do you?

ST. JOHN: That's quite a point.

FREE: And the National Press Club – long may it wave, too. I think that it certainly is a bridge to understanding. I think the fact that it's carried on C-SPAN is fine. I'd like to see it get out to expand itself more.

One of the things I'd like to say right here: I'd like to see an Eleanor – Have those rooms all around the side in the building. You know. What are some of the names of some of those people that they named after, you know, like –

But I think we ought to start a thing now. Get on the record. Why not have an Eleanor Roosevelt room? She was a writer. A columnist. An influencer.

ST. JOHN: Well, there is another project for Ann Free.

FREE: There's another project. Anyway. And I'd like to see that Golden Candlestick thing started up again.

ST. JOHN: And I'll put my money on you.

FREE: [Laughing] I need you to help me on this, Florence. I can't do it. I'm not in the "in crowd" of the Press Club.

ST. JOHN: Well, thank you, Ann, very much. This has been a fascinating interview.

FREE: Florence, a little P.S. - we were just talking about Eleanor Roosevelt and a room for her. If we can have a wildlife refugee for a woman, Rachel Carson, we can certainly have a room for Eleanor.

But I want to bring that up for a moment. Speaking of Rachel, who I think will go down in history the same way Eleanor Roosevelt has. And I want to say before I get onto my main point, was, I have a column that -- I wrote for The Washington Post a great deal – a column on ecology, about – in September 1965 – that ecology is a word that nobody knows.

"The word ecology gets short shrift these days. We live in an era of forgotten words. Although it deserves to be one of the familiar of household terms – ecology – continues lamentably - to be a stranger in the house."

Well, that's not true now. And a lot of it we can say thanks to Rachel Carson. And that's why – the Wildlife Refuge in 1969, she had left us five years before, died when she was only 56 – when she – And she would have gotten on with greater books. But then, that's when I wrote an article –

We've got to get back to me as a journalist instead of just going out there, raising hell all the time, tilting at windmills.

I wrote an article for "This Week," Sunday magazine section for – it was like the Parade, a supplement – on "The Great Awakening". And crediting it, the ecological awakening, to Rachel Carson. And then told all how she wrote the book and what it was all – and what she was like and so on.

Then in the middle of the article I had this box. "And why not a wildlife – name a wildlife refuge for Rachel Carson?" For indeed she had worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service. And so I exalted the American public to write letters to the secretary of Interior to name such a refuge.

Well, by Gosh, he did so. We did a lot of maneuvering around on trying to find one. And it's on the coast of Maine. It goes 'way from the New Hampshire border all the way up to on the other side of Kennebunkport. And so it's about 40 or 50 miles, mainly wetlands.

ST. JOHN: Was it right on the coast?

FREE: Yes, it's all wetlands. And we're going to have an interpretive center built soon. And I hope -- So people will understand better about the role of ecology and wetlands and also the role of Rachel Carson.

So I feel that that was a marvelous inspiration I had.

ST. JOHN: But you had a leading role in getting that –

FREE: And wonderful people that wrote these letters, how they looked forward not only to a high-tech world ahead but a world where they could take their children.

ST. JOHN: Does the Park Service supervise – oversee?

FREE: Yes. Yeah. The Wildlife Refuge Service, actually. And they –

ST. JOHN: Is it a separate service?

FREE: Yes, it's separate -- part of Interior. They're both separate within the framework of the Department of Interior. We have more than a hundred – my heavens. Maybe 200. I don't know how many wildlife refuges are in this country.

And it's supposed to be – they should be sanctuaries. But don't get me onto that. But at least they are kept inviolate. And otherwise, the developers would have put up high-rises and everything else.

ST. JOHN: Maybe we should say that the Rachel Carson Wildlife Preserve is the first one –

[Crosstalk]

FREE: Well, I'm not working on that. But, and then I was very pleased that – you commented on this right over here. You might want to see this for the tape. The tape can't read it. But I was very pleased – and you might want to see that.

ST. JOHN: I am looking at a framed certificate presented to Ann Free not very long ago. It reads: "Rachel Carson Legacy Award for Notable Achievement in Sustaining the Vision of Carson presented to Ann Cottrell Free for imagination and persistence responsible for the Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge and other tributes. By the Rachel Carson Council. December 3rd, 1987," in the 25th anniversary year of 'Silent Spring.'"

FREE: Well, I was much too modest to read that. But it did please me a lot because we've got to keep her spirit alive. And Doctor Schweitzer's as well. So –

ST. JOHN: Well, you certainly have done that –

FREE: What I'm trying to say – and thank you again.