

**Transcript of the video 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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The original video tape recording of the interview is permanently deposited in the oral history collection of the National Press Club.

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FLORENCE PARRISH ST. JOHN: We are gathered in the National Press Club, conducting a video interview of Ann Cottrell Free, a long-time member of the journalist field and the press corps.

The upper picture that's being shown is Ann with Mrs. Roosevelt. The lower picture is Ann and her husband, the late Jim Free. And she will include a bit about his background also as we go through the interview.

Today is February 25, 1998. As I said, we are in the National Press Club. Ann, why don't you tell us, starting maybe with the pictures, or about a chronological accounting of your career, your life?

ANN COTTRELL FREE: I will start off at the beginning. But, first, since the pictures were shown, those two people of course had a great deal of influence on my life. But I'll come back to them later.

I was born in Richmond, Virginia, 1916. And I was raised there and went to public school and private school. And then I became very much interested in animals and writing at a very early age. And I think that as the bough – as the twig is bent – develops in very early childhood. And I began protesting injustices when I was quite young, particularly to animals, older people, and African-Americans in my southern town. And it was very difficult for a child to do anything except on a personal level.

But later, when I went into journalism, which I'll come to in a moment, I found that being a writer was not only helps to blow off steam but also is a weapon for good. And also can be a weapon for harm. But I tried all through my career, from my earliest days in Richmond, all the way through college and working for the Washington papers, the New York Herald Tribune – which I'll come to later – and then going abroad to China and India and all those places and then coming back home again, I found that writing was the best way to call attention – journalism is the best way to call attention to inequities. And they all know that the world is awash in inequities. But it is also awash in love and kindness. So the main thing to do is to try to concentrate on the latter and banish the first ones, which is cruelty and injustice and all of that.

I've always been highly motivated as a journalist to get on my white horse, you might say, although a journalist is supposed to be quite objective. But I find that you can do it both ways. And it's a matter of shining the light. And the light is the most important thing because that leads us to the truth.

And I think our country has progressed because the truth has come out. And I think also that we have got to start when we're kids and not get brainwashed on every subject under the sun.

Now in my case – let's go back to Richmond – as I've said before we were all brainwashed about the African-American people coming in the back, using the back door, using their separate water fountains and all the other terrible injustices -- the very same people that you had in your house preparing your food, taking care of your children and all of that.

I couldn't understand it, nor could I understand how you could have pet animals, which you loved and took care of, and at the same time you could be so cruel, particularly in my day when we had so many horses that pulled the wagons and so on. Some of them were so scrawny and underfed. And to me that was a tragedy.

And then later I rode horseback a great deal in those days in Virginia. And I felt terrible about the hunting. But I did go to some hunting and there I rode – and here's a picture over here of me winning my first, one of my first cups, on my pony named Nancy. And she's resting her head on my shoulder. I remember how much it hurt. We were very friendly with each other – Nancy and I – and I rode in numerous horse shows.

And I was very fortunate. I always had good horses and I had a lot of empathy and give-and-take and that's very important with the animals because they know how you feel. And so I felt terrible about how horses were treated in those days. Because, don't forget, when I was growing up it was still kind of a horse-based economy. The milkman would come with a horse-drawn wagon, the iceman with a horse-drawn wagon. And then, of course, the – so many of the deliveries were done by very scrawny horses.

There's another one of me. That pony is up in Culpepper, Virginia, I think, right near where that lovely young man was injured – Superman – in later years. Right after that picture was taken that pony ran away. But I think I caught it. I don't know when I fell off or not.

But, anyhow, back to – I have terrific empathy about being – these poor creatures. And one of my first whistle-blowing – because that's been a thing throughout my life, was writing. My first printed article was in a magazine, amongst my first printed articles, was in a magazine about -- National Humane Review – about captive foxes that had been chased to their deaths.

And then another one of my first articles is in, was about the black women who – excuse me, can we cut -- The black women who had their own institutions. I have with me today one of my first articles, which was on a black women's church. I see there's a - - I grew up to be, as some people say, an adventurer. I'll come to that later. In their writing. And I think you have to have a philosophy to motivate your entire life. Otherwise you're an empty vessel.

And, of course, whistle-blowing is a common phrase used today. But it's the same thing, I guess, that Don Quixote did it, too. And you've got to call attention to bad things that happen.

But I want to get back to as – to the sequence, a chronological, from my childhood on up. I went to public school but I did not do very well in the high school era. And then I went to a very excellent private school.

And I wanted to get a picture put up in a moment about the person who took care of me, my early days of my life. Her name was Adeline Walker. And people – Yes. People today, they don't like to use that phrase, but you could use it. Now you have a British Trinidadian or an American nanny. In those days it was called, "Mammy." And that is a "Gone with the Wind" phrase, as you know. And also sounds very racist. But Mammy lived in my house. She came to take care of me when I was three weeks old and stayed with me until her death 10 years later. So she had an influence on me in my formative years, as did my mother and my grandmother.

I was a very lucky young woman. I had these marvelous three women who have had tremendous empathy and kindness. And I think that helped me a great deal. Her name was Adeline Walker and she's buried in Richmond. And to my everlasting regret I didn't – I knew nothing about her background. I'm sure she came from slaves. What else? But she didn't seem to talk about that.

But that was the iron curtain with which we lived in those days. So I went on to, into newspaper work, after I finished college. And one of my first articles was with – my first byline with the Richmond Times Dispatch – was on an African-American women's congregation. These women were very progressive and assertive and they started their own church. And I wrote about it. And that was July Fourth, 1937, before I was – when I was working there at the Richmond Times-Dispatch between my junior and senior years at Barnard College.

And that main thing that showed was the enterprise of these women and what they created, something that brought happiness to others.

And then later, I went to, I went up to Washington, D.C., from Richmond, where I was working on the Richmond Times-Dispatch because I had – everybody had been reading the papers about the Daughters of the American Revolution, of which my mother was one, had denied the use of Constitution Hall, a big concert hall, to the wonderful Negro – that's what they called them in those days – African-American contralto, Marian Anderson.

So I rushed up there and sat right on the side of the Lincoln Memorial. I was there not long ago and sat right on the side of the Lincoln Memorial. I was, not long ago, showed my daughter and granddaughter just where Grandma sat.

And then later, as that picture indicates, Mrs. Roosevelt -- did not by the way come to the concert because she didn't think that would be fitting. And she would draw away all the attention. But later, a few weeks later, she came down to Richmond -- Eleanor Roosevelt did -- to give a medal -- the Spingarn Medal; Spingarn was a black educator -- to Marian Anderson.

And I went over to this place where -- home, where some African-American people, where Marian Anderson was staying, and interviewed her. And she told me how she, what her reactions had been to the Lincoln Memorial concert and how her heart was so full.

And it meant -- and this is an aside, because this is an oral history -- I'd like for the listeners, or viewers, to realize this: I went to this home, which I think was the home of a lawyer and there might have been women's fraternity -- they had a lot of clubs. But can you believe this? Here I was a grown woman, a college graduate, and I had never socially been in the home of black people. I mean I was so ashamed that I lived in this parallel economy, a civilization in Richmond, Virginia, with our nice homes. And their homes were just as nice.

But nobody ever went back and forth. All we would see was the terrible slum housing that so many African-American women and men and families were doomed to live in because they had no economic base whatsoever. I guess they made about a dollar a day, if that they'd be lucky. And so that was a rotten shame all the way through and I hated it.

I mean I think that's one reason I left Richmond to go to college in New York, Barnard College, and there I didn't see -- I didn't see -- there the emphasis at that particular time was the gathering war clouds and the Spanish civil war was going on. And the Japanese were tooling up for World War II. And us girls, we all wore cotton stockings because the Japanese-furnished silk and nylon hadn't made its debut in this country yet. We had silk stockings and we were going to boycott the Japanese by wearing these awful cotton stockings --

ST. JOHN: And were you writing about these things?

FREE: I was at college then.

ST. JOHN: But were you writing at the college --

FREE: Yes. I wrote for the college newspaper a lot. And I wrote particularly about a man who was selling apples at the front gate. Because don't forget we were just coming out of the Depression. And he had had a good job before and he was kind of reduced to that.

And I would write about the Japanese thing a little bit; that the girls went downtown to the parade and, against the Japanese, and so I made some references to that.

But I was not on the newspaper in Richmond at that time, although I had worked there between the summer of 1937. And so my interest was very much stimulated. But then I – the first job – I skipped over the Barnard College and the Virginia Commonwealth University experience in my life.

I went to this Virginia Commonwealth University after I finished the Collegiate School. And I then went, transferred to Barnard College. I want to get us back abreast of that time frame here.

And I think the education at what's now called VCU was quite good. Not long ago, 1996, I was highly – I was surprised and highly honored that the Virginia Commonwealth University giving me an outstanding -- Oh, electing me – they were behind it – to the Virginia Communications Hall of Fame. And I've got some materials on that which we'll put on the screen later.

And that was a pretty big deal, I thought, because everybody likes to be the native son or native daughter. And I think that I got a very good education at that other school before I went on to Columbia University.

But my first job, really, in – after finishing college – was with Newsweek Magazine. And I worked in the New York office. And then I was sent down to Washington. I arrived on January the 20th, 1941. And that was the time of Roosevelt's third inauguration. And I attended that.

And then that's when I first got to know Mrs. Roosevelt. I wouldn't say "know." And there I was. I was pretty much of a green horn thrown right into Washington. And they said, "Now you can go to Mrs. – " The boss said, "Now you can go to Mrs. Roosevelt's press conferences."

And here I was, I felt like just out of high school when, in 1933, when the Roosevelts came in, I had not even finished high school. And here I was covering Eleanor Roosevelt. But I was in full agreement – although I wasn't much of a political animal – I was in full agreement with what Roosevelt was trying to do.

Richmond was amazingly untouched by the Great Depression because it seemed to have a very substantial economy, although it was built, of all things, on tobacco. But in any event, the experience of Newsweek and the press conferences was quite illuminating.

The women all seemed a great deal older, and they were, as I was 24, I think, when I got down here. And that -- picture of Mrs. Roosevelt – that one – that was not taken at the White House because pictures apparently were not allowed. But during the war she took a job as the head of the Office of Civilian Defense. And I'm going to come in here to the war. I'm jumping ahead. But that is a very good picture of the -- quote, unquote – "girls" who attended that conference.

That good-looking woman in the middle with the blonde hair and the nice smile is Ruth Cowan of Associated Press. And Ruth was a peach of a reporter. And she went on and covered World War II. And you know Mrs. Roosevelt. And if you can match up my white hair with that black hair, I'm the girl across the way from Ruth Cowan with black hair, smiling at somebody.

And, but, I liked Mrs. Roosevelt. And I liked those women. As you can see from the picture, they were all older – married, and they had different reasons for going to work; some of them for economic reasons and some had very small papers and then some had some very good ones.

And I was there with – as I say – with Newsweek. And that picture was taken probably by photographers from Newsweek. But anyhow I went on to work for the Chicago Sun and the New York Herald Tribune. But we'll come to that later.

ST. JOHN: Ann, do you want to tell – to include in the reasons why Mrs. Roosevelt had these and the outcome of her conferences with the girls.

FREE: Well, Mrs. Roosevelt had these press conferences from the very moment she arrived in Washington primarily because she could not accommodate all the questions that were asked her. She was a very vigorous woman and had a lot of opinions and everybody knew that.

And so her friend, Miss Hickok, who was with Associated Press, but had become very involved with Mrs. Roosevelt – and I think everybody knows the story that their association was probably, for that day and time, a bit close for most people. So she did step down from the AP. She lived a good while at the White House, really. I like the name – they called her “Hick.” I remember her in a camels hair coat. And she had, she was a stout woman, and ruddy complexion, and smoked a lot of cigarettes. I remember her so well. And she was one of those people who you might say was a tutor for Eleanor Roosevelt in the ways of public relations.

And the press conference then was catch-as-catch-can. Everybody asked all kinds of questions. And then later on, when the war came – I'm jumping ahead a little bit – they decided there were too many people – and the Secret Service decided there were too many women running around in the White House that hadn't been really certified by the Secret Service. And one woman was kind of a lobbyist. She was a suspect character. That kind of triggered it.

So, therefore, we formed Mrs. Roosevelt's Press Conference Association. We even had little cards. And huge dues of one buck a year. And the first president of that was Mary Hornaday, a very, very capable correspondent for the Christian Science Monitor, a woman to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude because she worked in the office adjoining mine in the Herald-Tribune and she was a real good tutor. She knew the ropes.

And then I was the next president -- by that time it was 1943 -- of the Press Conference Association. And we had cut down the membership considerably from about, oh, maybe 80 people, down to about, oh, 40 or so. And, which was the right thing to do, I think.

And as the president all I had to do was send information to the press secretary about the new members. And then we'd have to get out the girls -- everybody was called girls then, I'm not saying this in a denigrating way -- because that's the way it was. And Mrs. Roosevelt's all-female press conference -- all girl. I guess some people would like to know why did she have all women? Because women wanted to -- some people say she did it to help women find employment reasons. Oh, that was part of it. The main thing was she had a whole bunch of people and she'd better get them all in one room and do it all at once. It's as simple as that.

So she covered -- truly covered the waterfront -- and then, of course, when war came Mrs. Roosevelt was rushing out here there and everywhere but she did not take the press with her. She went to the South Pacific, she went to England several times, when she could.

And, but the only time the press ever traveled with her, actually before my day, that's when she went to the famous coal mines. And the famous cartoon of a miner with his face all filled with soot looked up and said, "My God. There's Eleanor." There's Mrs. Roosevelt way down in the depths of a mine. That was a standing joke because she would -- I think the word is peripatetic. She was everywhere at all times. And abounding energy.

And then she needed time to write her column everyday, which is very much like what you would do if you were writing a letter home to your mother or your kids or something like that, just saying what she'd done. Then every now and then she'd give them a little editorial jab in about what she felt on various things -- civil rights and of course the horrible situation that was building up in Germany. And she was one of those -- I think she didn't see the holocaust was coming in the dimension in which it did -- but she knew it was something horrible. It all was.

And, but I think that she probably, the White House probably knew about the death camps and so on later on, but I think -- the story is always told, and limited to it and absolutely -- I think it is also a bit irresponsible -- they said if they stopped and bombed all these Auschwitz and Buchenwald and took those places that that would divert us so much, and FDR, he said, "Win the war at all costs. Don't be diverted. Keep onto the military track." The bombing and the forces -- Patton was there, and then Rommel in the North Africa, "If you get off on this you're going to get it all twisted up." And diversion. He wanted to go straight on.

I think they knew. And Mrs. Roosevelt was always pushing him on everything along on that line. But he was a much more hard-boiled political animal than she was. I think.

But we might take a little detour back in our talk today. Is that, about World War I, World War II, beginning, I was at that time on the Chicago Sun and I had gone to that newspaper when it first started out by Marshall Field, who was, a rich man, he wanted to fight the reactionary Chicago Tribune.

Well, in any event, when war came, Pearl Harbor. My God. Pearl Harbor. I was out on a date you might say, for lunch with a Peruvian diplomat who had designs on me, I'm sure. And I think I thwarted him because we turned on the radio – I knew something, I thought something terrible was going to happen because those Japanese had been meeting with Cordell Hull. And I kept saying to this diplomat, “We've got to turn on the news and see what's going on.” He had lured me to his apartment. People always trying to lure me places. But nothing ever happened. They were very disappointed.

And so, anyhow, I turned on the radio. And Pearl Harbor. I said, “Oh, my God. I've got to go to the office.” And so his hopes were dashed.

And I did – I had on riding clothes. We had been horseback riding. He was an excellent rider. I remember him now, Fernando – wow! So, anyway, went on into the office and I was there before the guys; they were out at football games and all of that, and so were the admirals and the generals the Redskins didn't have the stadium, naturally they have now. But they – I have an article in here, which you'll put up later, about how they were called. The generals were called away from the gridiron.

And I did a man or woman on the street interviews, went to the Japanese Embassy up on Massachusetts Avenue, and saw the smoke coming up from behind. The Japanese had rushed up and were burning, in a bonfire, the secret papers, 'cause they were enemy. They were the enemy. They went to camps, as we all know. And that was really hot stuff that they were – really hot stuff – that they were burning up.

And then I went back to downtown. I wrote a bunch of stories that day. Went to the White House. I was there. The next morning Roosevelt made his speech to the Congress, which I have the original copy. “This is a day that will live in infamy,” which was in that we're not, said such-and-such a time yesterday, “The United States has been in a state of war with Japan.”

And can you imagine – you can't even imagine it – because the wars, you people who are watching this today, have been in a different type, as bad as they are. This was a sudden mobilization. People knew their lives were going to be drastically changed. Women were crying about their boyfriends, their husbands, their brothers.

And my roommates were that way. And one was – two of them, where their lives were destroyed by the war. And fortunately I didn't have a brother. But I had a lot of boyfriends. And all of them went into the service.

James Free, whom I'm going to come to in a minute – Jim and I had worked on the Chicago Sun and worked before that on the Richmond Times-Dispatch, and Jim went into the Navy. He served in both the Atlantic and the Pacific.

And he – we then went on a war footing here at home in Washington. And there were a lot of shortages began right away of course – food and clothing, automobiles, petroleum. There's everything. We went really, really from butter to guns. The food rationing came in. I still have my ration book. And, still, it wasn't too rough for us compared to the British and other places, too.

But we – I covered not only Mrs. Roosevelt during those war years. I went to the White House a lot. Covered some of Mrs. Roosevelt's press conferences. I went to the Army, the Navy, I went to all the war agencies, Office of Price Administration.

Then I was in on the early beginning on the legislative side and then into the actual thing, the beginning of the women in the military services, the WACs, the WAVES, the SPARs, and one other. And the Army nurses, who were marvelous people.

And then from there, I mean just worked really hard around the clock. But who were we to complain? Because after all, we knew what in the world was going on out in the Pacific and in the European Theater.

And so finally the war clouds – to coin a phrase – began to lift, we figured. And the tragedy was that Roosevelt, who had worn himself out by going to Yalta and making his various agreements, which most people disagreed with, dividing up, letting Joe Stalin have too much influence over Eastern Europe, which was something that took us a long, long time to change. Fifty years almost I guess – 45 years.

And then I remember going to the Congress to hear Roosevelt make his speech to the Congress. And this is when we were all shocked, not only by the subject matter in general, but in most particularly, by his appearance. And I knew that he was a dying man. He was thin. His coloring was that pallor of the grave, you might say.

And then he said, in a voice that was still pretty strong, he was seated, and I'm like in the well of the House. As usual he was up on the platform. He said, "You'll forgive me for being seated today. I'm carrying – I've just come back from a thousand (I don't know how many) miles a trip and I've 12" or whatever the figure was, "pounds of steel around my waist and legs." In other words, he just wasn't up to standing. And that was the tip-off. And so, I'm not sure the precise date of that.

But then on April the 12th he was down – everybody knows the story – he went on down to Warm Springs for rest and recreation and that's where – his daughter had arranged for him to meet up again with the love of his life, a woman named Lucy Mercer, whom he had said he was never going to see her again, but I'm sure he had been seeing her from time to time. She had married again -- in the meantime – and Mrs. Roosevelt, of course, had gone on her way.

I think that, literally, the discovery of that love affair had – although it broke Mrs. Roosevelt, not intentionally, it also liberated her energies and no sense of guilt whatsoever. She could go out and do all these things and, because she had him. And, you know, caught him red-handed, so to speak.

But I think they had a great affection for each other and respect. In a sense, I think – we don't know how as of this date in February 1998 how the Clinton marriage – Hillary and Bill – is going to work out. But I think they have a same kind – something of the same kind of arrangement – symbiotic. “I can do things for you; you can do things for me.”

And that's quite true. And that was true for Mrs. Roosevelt. “I can do things for you and you can do things for me and together we're a heck of a good team. We can do good things for the world.” And I think the Roosevelts did and I think the Clintons have done good things for the world. You know, education and all of that kind of thing.

So, back to the moment of Roosevelt's death, which came April the 12th, and I had gotten off the track, but life is spent going off the track - the secret is to get back on again, so I'll get back on again to the track. I was in the New York Herald-Tribune office at that time and those are the days that newspapers when there was what they call a flash – I don't think they have that in this day of computers – everybody was writing on typewriters and all then. We were not air-conditioned. It was very primitive – almost like people would think you were writing with a quill pen compared to today's high-tech.

But then the flash came through. I think that's four bells on the Teletype. And, my God, “The president is dead.” The president is dead! When you have been, particularly in my case, grown up with that man, 12 years of my life. It's true, he had become the father of the country.

And he looked the part – a very handsome man. And he certainly had overcome his terrible, terrible crippling illness of polio. He had tremendous character and stamina, that same character that carried him through overcoming the polio also, I think, was the same stamina that brought us through the war because he was courageous and he was smart and all the -- And so, therefore, maybe the polio had been a blessing in disguise. It was a testing ground.

So there he was, dead.

ST. JOHN: So let me insert a question here on Roosevelt. We hear so much now about people using the press, such as Diana. How did Roosevelt use the press in your opinion?

FREE: Well, let us not forget, the administrations before him – Herbert Hoover, and you know, going back to Wilson, Coolidge, and so on – the press was much smaller. And now the times were different. When Roosevelt came in we had a depression. And I

think the newspaper people had been rather desultory in their coverage. There hadn't been a lot to cover in those days until the – I think the mounting depression – Roosevelt had to get his story out. And if you call that using the press – I don't. I think that the press corps grew and grew and grew, because we had radio, we had newspapers. And radio was pretty small potatoes then. So, therefore, he had press conferences twice a week. Steve Early, his press secretary, I think met with the press every morning – because how else – this was the beginning of the world, the era of communications, which we are just getting really into now.

So I don't -- Of course, every president, every CEO, any leader, is going to have certain, probably, certain favorites for two reasons: One, they like them. Or that particular person has got access – is the head of The New York Times or whatever – can do them some good. But I don't think anything's wrong with that at all. That's just the way the game is played.

And I don't think the press took advantage of him; nor did he particularly take advantage of them. And Mrs. Roosevelt – the same thing could be said about her. I think our press conference – women's press conference – was a great educational medium.

I don't think she really made a great deal of news because a lot of people were not too much interested in an uplift. But she created a climate. I think there's nothing more important than stressing the creation of climates. And like they had the ecological climate, we had the Vietnamese protests climate, and all of that. It's a mood. And I think that Mrs. Roosevelt created a mood. And I think – of reaching out and making people more aware of the poor people, poverty, inequity, racial things.

And, likewise, Roosevelt made the world more aware of dreadful things that were going on. And don't forget, work – WPA, Works Progress – Progress – Administration, to put people back to work again. And the press covered that. And so, I hope that's an answer to your question.

ST. JOHN: Yeah.

FREE: I think that this, once again, was a symbiotic relationship, too. I guess everything is symbiotic relationship.

ST. JOHN: Was Jim writing during that time?

FREE: Jim Free. Jim came on up here to Washington from the Richmond Times-Dispatch, where I met him. I met him in 1937, the first year between my junior and senior years. I thought he was right handsome. And I thought – And we started going out then.

And, but, I was full of career. C-a-r-e-e-r. Not Korea the country. And so I didn't – Getting married or anything like that was the last thing on my mind. And he didn't have any money at all. So couldn't have been much on his mind either.

But (laughing) making like \$30 a week. I think my salary when I came to New York, Washington, was – big bucks -- \$27.50. When I worked for the Richmond Times-Dispatch I made \$17.50 and he made, I think he might have made in the late 20s. Inequity again. Men making more than the women. We just sat there and accepted it. What fools we were.

But anyhow –

ST. JOHN: So Jim came to Washington –

FREE: So he came on to the Washington Star, which at that time was the best newspaper in the -- Have we got a picture of Jim we can put – can find some of those pictures? There's lots of pictures of Jim here. That one. Yeah, that's nice.

He was crazy about – He went to the Washington Star. He had to cover local news at first. The Washington Star was a first-rate newspaper – much better than The Washington Post then and – particularly then; of course it wasn't much of a paper then – even better than The Washington Post today, particularly in reference to local coverage. This town. And he distinguished himself there.

And then when I got my job on the Chicago Sun, it was just getting started up, and I left Newsweek. And that's when I called up Jim Free. I said, "Hey. They're starting up a new newspaper. I think there'd be a good job there for you. Go see so-and-so. Go see Bascom Timmons."

And Bascom Timmons – right here in the president's office of the National Press Club his painting is looking right at me now. I wish you could move that camera around to get the picture of Bascom Timmons because he was a power in the National Press Building, National Press Club and the press corps in general.

And he had this – You can get it later if you like. But I think from the standpoint of the record – don't you? – Think it might be very well to have that because the Chicago Sun started – It was like Athena being born from the brow of Job, you know, in Greek mythology –

So, they pulled together the most wonderful bureau of men and – I have it here, we might put it on the camera right now – that one. That full-page ad – open it up all the way – and – All the way. I've got some smaller versions.

ST. JOHN: Just hold it up there for a minute, why don't you?

FREE: That's Joan Rooks, who's been a help to me, who's holding that up, and quite beautiful, too.

“Notable Additions to the Washington News Sources.” That’s Bascom Timmons on the far – which would be my right, your left – and he was the big cheese. And then I could run down those names quickly because they are a part of Press Club history. The next line was Cecil Dixon, who worked for INS; the next one is Turner Catledge, who was with The New York Times bureau. And then he came on over and joined the Chicago Sun hotshot bureau. And he later became the managing editor of The New York Times.

So Turner and I shared an office – me a little female creep -- shared the office with this big shot. And he’d write his stories in two minutes while I was still sitting there trying to think up the first word.

But, anyhow, then the next one was the famous foreign correspondent, named Knickerbocker, H.R. Knickerbocker. And then next to him was Harold Brayman. He went on to make big bucks as a public relations man. With DuPont, what else? We all could count on Harold getting us nylon stockings during the war because he worked for DuPont. And had invented nylon. And you didn’t have to sell your soul to get nylons from Harold, just part of them.

Anyway, there I am on the far right. And you can’t miss me because I’m the only female.

ST. JOHN: And that’s the third line down.

FREE: And Jim – Can you put your finger on Jim? Over here in the middle. Yes, that’s Jim. And he was doing the Department of Defense. That’s not the best picture of him. But he was a pretty good-looking man and we went out a lot.

And all these other people – I won’t take – go down the list – but that will give you an idea. That man there with the bald head, named Tom Reynolds, this one. Yeah. He was a big shot with UP, UPI. White House correspondent.

So they really did get the cream – present company excepted. Don’t want to look too self-serving. But that was a really first-rate bureau.

But then The Chicago Sun started up. But then Pearl Harbor came along. And then we couldn’t fight that other newspaper. And so we all had to unite. Nothing like love and harmony – it doesn’t work in a newspaper war. So they couldn’t build up all the circulation that they had planned to.

They had a newspaper war out there. Just beforehand they would – the trucks would go and get the newspapers and throw them in the gutter. Really. You know, big-time stuff.

And so, now I'll try to get back to my thread – like Ariadne, I'll be tangled up in threads -- always trying to get back to my threads. But the war had – we were talking about Roosevelt's death, I believe.

ST. JOHN: I think we have a picture of you in a uniform, too, that you might want to –

FREE: And then, when the war ended. I covered Roosevelt's funeral.

Before you leave Jim, let's put up the picture of Jim and me in the front of the Capitol. Here it is, right here. Looking right at it. That's good. Because that was more or less after the war. But who can be picky about these things?

So he – The war ended and Jim came home from the Navy and I said – and he hadn't seen me for a long time. I think he really was in the marrying mood. I said, "Goodbye, I'm going to China."

And, because I had not been a foreign correspondent like I had wanted to be. And I got this wonderful job as – as the special correspondent for the United Nations Relief.

Don't forget – I didn't tell you this. I was in on kind of the early boring days of the United Nations because I was in Geneva. One of these photographs – we showed them a while ago – in Geneva with Mrs. Roosevelt. She was the one who helped them formulate the whole human rights document.

And I might also say – Well, I'll come back later. But I didn't explain one of the pictures was with the Press Conference Association.

But anyhow, you can't cover all of it in one breath. I'm trying to. Trying hard.

But, anyway, back to the end of the war. Jim came home. And he went on back to the Chicago Sun, which was about to fold up. And I had gone to the Herald-Tribune in the meantime, which is a wonderful newspaper. I had left the Chicago Sun and gotten this grand job with the Herald-Tribune. There has never been a paper in the United States that compared with it. It was a combination of the old Herald -- .

Everybody knows their newspaper history – James Gordon Bennett and all that. And you remember the man who went out to find "Dr. Livingston, I presume," was sent out there by the owner of the paper.

So he went to the Chicago – not the Chicago Sun. Then he went to work for Bascom Timmons. The Sun set. And they just couldn't make it after the war. And it did combine to what is now called the Sun-Times. And it was a tiny little bureau and a tabloid at that.

So Jim went to work for Mr. Timmons. And then he reverted to where he started out in life, with the Birmingham, Alabama, News. He had worked for The Birmingham News right out of the University of Alabama. But he wanted fresher fields and he got them. But life, what goes around comes around. And so he ended up coming this way, got back to Washington. And got the job as the, became the head of the bureau.

Oh, that's the war –

ST. JOHN: Excuse me. That's the Herald-Tribune.

FREE: That's the Herald-Tribune. Oh, yes. That shows you.

And, therefore, we skip back a little, we're not too far off the track. If you want to put your finger – “Mrs. Roosevelt sees reporters for the” ... in the middle. No, down in the story. No, keep going. There. “Mrs. Roosevelt sees reporters for the last time.” And that was the front-page story and the date is – April what? Yeah, April 20, 1945.

ST. JOHN: Is this your story?

FREE: Yeah.

ST. JOHN: Ann's story.

FREE: By Ann Cottrell. Not Free. And he – because we weren't married, you see. And that shows you the kind of coverage –

This was right after his death, of course. But the war was still going on. Poor Roosevelt. He didn't get to see the end of it. But I'm not too far off the track in going back to Jim's career.

So he went to Birmingham – here in Washington – had a one-man bureau with me helping him. And that picture you saw a few minutes ago with us standing in front of the Capitol.

I did a lot of work for The Birmingham News, but I didn't like it. I didn't like anything about the South at that time. Wait a minute. Not yet. Just leave it there. Okay. That's the same one that –

We can – I'll finish up a little bit with Jim. But then I'll come back to civil rights because the big story for him was later. But I don't want to break my continuity too much.

War is horrible, horrible. But the civil rights thing, which reached its apex in Birmingham, Alabama, when the police dogs were set on the – and the fire hoses were set on the protesting black public. It was disgraceful. But I'll come back to that because Jim really did help to calm down the whole thing.

But let's come back to that later because we'll get too far ahead.
So at the end of the war, I felt the light had gone out for me with the death of Roosevelt.

And he – that's how I got this job was offered to me right out of the blue. I had been covering the early days of international relief; something called The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. And the captive countries, the war-torn countries, had to be put back together again. So all the other countries pitched in money-wise. But there were very many left; it was mainly U.S.A.-financed.

And that way we did all these countries in Europe that had been destroyed by the war. And Poland. And which was very bad, as you know. But I was invited by – not yet. I was invited to – I hate to sound so formal.

But a guy I know named Jerry McAllister, who had been on Time when I was on Newsweek, and he was kind of a halfway boyfriend. He'd been with the 14th Air Force in China - in Kunming. He doted on it.

I ran into him, I think – I don't know where – but he said, "I'm going back to China, with this United Nations thing. You'll love it. You'll love it. Annie, come on with me. Come on with me to China."

I said, "Do what?" I said, "Well, I'd like to work."

He said, "Could you get this job at the United Nations – UNRRA?"

I said, "Okay. Okay. I'll go to China."

So I went – I called up my mother, of course, and said, "Mom, I'm going to China." And then I went to see my boss. I said, "I'm going to China." And, by Gosh, I got a leave of absence, which I never did resume at the end of the leave because the paper folded up eventually. But, so, the China experience separated the girl from the woman. Just like the boys from the man. Of course it had its entertaining features, the glamour of it all. But it wasn't any real glamour.

Can you pause yours for a while?

ST. JOHN: Yes, I think we're out of -- The less pauses we have –
You'd gotten the job to go to China.

FREE: All right, go to China. Well then, we've got an hour and I've got to get in the trip coming back, I've got to get in animals, I've got to get in civil rights. So I'll just have to move along pretty fast.

ST. JOHN: You may want to go through this very quickly.

FREE: I will. China. I'm going to jump ahead on the China thing here. Yeah, had those poor little kids – that's another one. See that one man, me standing there at the creek? Yeah. In 1945. Took a boat out there and it was the original slow boat to China. It took a long time to get there because we had to stop at every port and then couldn't get out because of the wartime wreckage in the ports.

But it was a fascinating experience, which one of these days you'll see it in print.

Shanghai was an eye-opener. All the things you have read about or movies you'd seen, it was those in spades. And of course the White Russians and the Chinese and, of course, the equivalent of the British Raj was still there. The British that had dominated the business scene of Jardine Matheson, which was a big business house, which had shipyards, it had cotton mills, it had breweries, it had insurance, it had everything.

It was my good luck, serendipitously, that I had come over on a little coastwise vessel from the Philippines with a woman who'd been on the other ship, the Empire Joy. This was rather significant from the standpoint of history. Her name was Clare Keswick. She then became Lady Clare Keswick. Her husband, Sir John Keswick. And she and I were roommates on this little coastwise steamer – whatever you want to call it. Came through a typhoon.

We became fast friends, so that gave me an entrée into seeing that side of the Europeans and particularly the British and French. They had been running China traditionally, which meant they had gone through the war. Some had been in camps and now they were back again, trying to get business as usual.

But there wasn't going to be business as usual in China, ever, ever again until now, where we've got the business society and the more repressive communist society.

So there I landed right in the middle of all of that. And I think the best way to illustrate my sadness was that China was – as they say – war torn. And the refugees were coming from free China back home again to wherever they lived.

And the food – people were very, very hungry. And they needed everything, because after all, everything had been taken for the war effort. Chiang Kai-shek had, supposedly.

So, UNRRA sent food and clothing, all types of supplies, automotive, tractors, everything you can think of. Well, much too much sorrow and horror – because I was supposed to be the – I was going to be the Shanghai correspondent, writing stories. But I was also supposed to be able to talk to other members of the press about what I knew about UNRRA.

Well, I went out and saw that the godowns – that's the warehouses – were being filled up with the materials we had sent out there that were not being shipped out to the people who needed them. But UNRRA had a terrible contract, you might say, with the

Chinese government, that all the goods that came from the free democratic world went to China and became their property immediately for them to distribute the way they cared to. So, therefore, they wanted to hold them until we got out, hoping for higher prices and, you might say, to heck with the people who needed it.

Then, to make this thing more graphic, I went to the famine areas. I went by boat up the Yangtze River. And the three or four male correspondents – there's always male correspondents. And they always – everybody wanted to jump in the hay, but – hammocks – but that didn't work either. [Laughing.]

So then we went to the famine area. First, before you get to that. That's the boat I went on. And speaking about jumping in the hay – those men – there was a Norwegian, a Chinese, an Englishman, a Greek, me, a Yugoslav captain, a White Russian and another White Russian, I believe. In other words, eight nationalities on that ship.

And then I think there was a missionary woman on there. But she wasn't much of a threat. [Laughing] So, anyhow, we had a heck of a good time going out.

ST. JOHN: You strategize your crowd, don't you?

FREE: I could tell you a lot of stories about that. But, anyhow –

ST. JOHN: Wonderful.

FREE: But I loved Kaare Gythfeldt, a Norwegian correspondent. But all these people had wives at home of course. So I was pure as the driven snow. Nobody would believe it. I have to go on the record for the ages, I didn't want to get myself messed up in anything at that time. But I enjoyed them. And they were a lot of fun.

And then, there we are. And that man down there – she's holding up – he was one of the bright spots of China. His name was Jimmy Yen. Mrs. Roosevelt had given me a letter of introduction to Jimmy Yen because he was an educator. He was trying so hard to educate the masses. And a huge, enormous country like that, can you imagine trying to get everybody to read and write?

But anyhow he had all kinds of plans. And he needed more money. And I went and interviewed him at length. And I wonder if I ever sent that picture to Mrs. Roosevelt. There's Jimmy Yen, there's me. And those people behind there – those are what they call sampans – you don't need the top one -- where people lived in these. They still have them. But they spend their entire lives in these – they're not as nice as junks, they're just boats with very deep -- They lived under the –

ST. JOHN: Like in Hong Kong now.

FREE: Yeah, same thing. Yeah. So then I finally got to the famine area. And, my God, you won't believe it. I can't believe it, what I saw just walking up from the dockside, there were little kids lying there dead or dying.

And then, I brought that boy in. And took that picture. He died.

And there was one orphanage there. But then the orphanage could only take care of so many. They'd have to close their door, no more. And it was just – But –

ST. JOHN: Did you find this same condition as you went on through other countries on that tour?

FREE: No. This was a – Well, China, this was all of what – the reason for the famine was they had bad crops. But the Chinese – Chaing Kai-chek's soldiers – had been through there and helped themselves to foodstuffs. And then the rest of it there was held for higher prices and black market and all the rest. In other words, the starving people – if they weren't lucky enough – they've had it.

And then I went later – I wish I'd brought photographs of that. Kaare Gythfeldt and I went out, way out into the countryside, and found, went to – visited the people -- I wrote articles about all of this, which were distributed to the international press.

I guess you wonder how I – why I was there, what I was doing. I wrote about an article, two or three a week, on things I saw and participated in.

And one of them was going to the House of Wu. I didn't bring that picture. It was a huge Chinese house. And all these people sitting on the front – you might call it front porch – and they had the rice fields were out in front.

But their water buffalo, which they need for the rice patties, had been killed. And, in other words, they couldn't cultivate any rice at all. And they were sitting there. If they went to the cities they would end up like those people. They came from the country. Those people you're seeing in the picture. And they would die on the streets. There was nobody to give them anything.

And, by God, UNRRA had the materials. The Chinese government was holding them back. And I sent – once again back to the old whistle-blowing -- which I hadn't, which has been a thread of my life. I sent telegrams back to Shanghai and so did Gythfeldt. And this wonderful photographer who was with us. And Gythfeldt said, "I have covered World War II and Buchenwald, all those. I've never seen anything any more horrible than this."

Guess what happened? The Chinese – the telegram wouldn't go straight through. It was held up by the relay station in – up the road, you know, a place called Changsha. And the telegrams were held back and never got through, until later I found it out.

Whistle-blowing again. I raised hell about why those messages didn't go through. Why weren't they?

What the ship that came in one time over there, I looked over there to see, Oh, God, thank God. Rice is coming in. Food is coming. Guess what it was? Tar paper. You can't eat tar paper very well.

And so that was an absolute disgrace. That was when I became disillusioned with the Chinese government and that particular aid effort. I felt, my heart had gone out of my idealism. It was kinda crushed because we'd all gone out there to help these Chinese and too much of it was being diverted.

I mean, I know people that were – one was a former military officer – he was, he thought that the Chinese, that there wasn't going to be the rampant inflation was not going to last. So he took – He said, "Come on with me. Let me show you." Went over to his apartment and – he had a wife – but, anyway, and she was present -- Anyway.

Opened up the trunk. "I'm holding this money. It's going to be worth a lot later on." Frankly, it was worth nothing because inflation continued. He was trying to corner the market. I cannot – You cannot believe – That's why I left Washington as a girl, though I'd seen a few bad things as a reporter, I had never seen people masquerading as being helping on relief and stealing from the weak and the dying. What do you do then?

The empty rice bowl. Look at those children. Look at that.

And this apparently happens all over. It happened in Somalia in recent years because people want to skim off the things – But I was pretty naïve, wasn't it? I guess a lot of other people were naïve, too.

ST. JOHN: You want to talk some more about your whistle-blowing? Not only there, but –

FREE: Oh, on the whistle-blowing -- I did that 'way back'. All the time in my newspaper career I was always writing stories covering the inequities as I saw them. About the human – the civil rights and so on. But I've got a whole list of my – A lot of that came big time much later.

So, okay. China. I went to Manchuria, which was quite interesting. And all the Great Wall and all of that. It was a tremendous amount of what you might call it, "glamour" to it all, but there's too much, too much tragedy for my, for my taste, you might say.

The Chinese experience, which I've said covered Manchuria, but I don't have the time to go into all of that. But I want to say this: So there you were, torn between the nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek and the communist government.

I had the good fortune to meet and have interviews in depth with the Number Two man of China, Chou En-lai. It's quite a shame that Chou En-lai did not have the political clout to push Mao Tse-tung out, because Mao became a madman, as we all know.

Whereas, Chou En-lai and his wife were, they were communists; they wanted to take over from Chiang Kai-shek. Who wouldn't? And I always said – and I made lectures and things like that – there is a middle group in China. And Chou En-lai then he became and negotiated with other foreign countries.

But Mao was such a power. And then later, you know, the Great Leap Forward. And the deliberate famine. And all the dreadful things that Mao Tse-tung did. And Chou En-lai couldn't stop him because I guess he would have been killed.

In other words, this was a, a tough game. And we all know Mao was a monster. And then Chou En-lai – I interviewed him. I interviewed his wife. They'd both been on the famous Long March. People who are watching this, any scholars, will know about how the Chinese communists left south China and went by foot. It took them months and months and months and months to move their, all their people, to Western China where they lived more or less in caves for a long time and negotiated from there.

And the Chinese – that's why I always knew in Vietnam, you get these Asians who have devotion to their cause, they don't give up. And they didn't give up. And, of course, Chiang Kai-shek's government fell on its own sword by its corruption.

And I had met Mrs. Madame Chiang when I was here in Washington. I didn't go into that early on, but she came to Mrs. Roosevelt's press conferences – and to Mr. Roosevelt's press conferences. And because I think she probably got a bad rap. But she was somewhat imperious.

She's a visitor who came and didn't go. She just stayed on and on. And they criticized her because she had to have silk sheets. But, actually, I met her doctor out there and she did have hives. So, you know, you've got to give the devil his due. When there's a bad story there's always the other side. And that's what makes a good reporter, is not to buy it all hook, line and sinker. And I always tried to do that. Sometimes it might mess up your story if you find out the truth. But you kinda have to tell it.

But, in any event, the Chinese experience with the famine and Manchuria and the social British – if you want to call it that. And then I decided that I would go back around the world. That's the pictures coming up in a few minutes, will show you some of that.

I went back around the world with another American girl who had the same idea. We had thought we would go on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, but the Russians took my \$10 bucks and never gave it back and he wouldn't give me a visa. I'm real glad they didn't. [Laughing]

So we went on a ship. It took a year almost to go back. Oh, there's the picture of Jim. We can show that later.

Okay. My stops are: Hong Kong. French Indochina. May I pause for a moment at that? French Indochina. Vietnam. The French Foreign Legion was there. They were trying to hold down the – what became the Ho Chi Minh forces who were trying to take over from the French and they were having a war, a war that we lost many of our people later on because we were so stupid – and I mean stupid – to think that we could, if the French couldn't hold it, why should we go in there and pull the French chestnuts out of the fire?

And because we didn't want it. We just didn't want Ho Chi Minh to have it because everybody had gotten themselves brainwashed that Ho Chi Minh – the leader of the North Vietnamese – wanted to sell it out, all that part of the world, out to the Russians and the Chinese, whereas he hated them. [Laughing]

But he wanted to have his own independent entity. And, but he tried to sell that to the OSS people and nobody would buy it because everybody was snake bit on this red hunt – we gotta kill off those people. Then the Chinese are going to get us. And the Russians are going to get us. Woe is me.

So, therefore, we had the French lost – I mean, when I was in French Indochina I had a chance to go to Phnom Penh, which is the capital up there in Cambodia, to go to Angkor Wat, where the marvelous ruins are of a previous civilization. But I was warned, "Don't you do that, Miss Cottrell." This was by an American counsel. "It's not safe."

So I pulled out. But the French, they had laid on the transportation to go with a convoy. I didn't go, but a friend of mine who was going to go, she was out a few days later. She was blown up. I'm glad I made my decision not to go. Anyway, her name is Janice Skewes. You'll see her name on the, in the State Department lobby right now, of Foreign Service officers who were killed in action.

So, the French Foreign Legion boys – they had, there were not many of them were French, you know. You go into the French Foreign Legion and no questions asked. A lot of them might have been traitors to their own cause. No questions asked. Polish, German, Belgian, Dutch – and they were all running from something. And this poor boy was on the ship. I finally was shipping out on an American ship. My God. They – the Merchant Marine people – searched the ship, pulled this poor bedraggled young fella out. He was a stowaway. So that was the end. They hadn't cleared the territorial waters. And then the French Foreign Legion officers came out and took him back.

And I smoked cigarettes then. I shared a pack of cigarettes with him. And I said, 'Why are you leaving?' And he said, 'I couldn't bear eating rice for three years straight.' In other words, he had really gone stir crazy. They took him off and I guess shot him. And I have a picture of us standing there together.

Odd thing is, he looked a lot like Oswald, who shot Kennedy. Always reminded me of each other.

So then I went on and on, to Burma which was fascinating. And of course I was in India. Oh, I love India. It's so – It'll drive you crazy though, in a way. But I went to Calcutta. I went to Darjeeling, which is on the Tibetan border. But the highlight of India – I was always in the right place through my entire newspaper career. The right place at the right time.

I was there for the transfer of power when the British passed – Stood right there, right next to Lord Mountbatten and Nehru. The big ceremony was at night. But it went on for days, all those things do.

I stood there on the top of the Parliament building. Mountbatten and his wife – we've all seen these movies – came up in the carriage, you know, drawn by horses and all that. And he and Nehru was up on this thing with me – He's one of these people like Lyndon Johnson – he had to micromanage everything. "Come this way. Come that way. Come this way."

And so I've got some snapshots of Nehru. And then of course there was Mountbatten. But through these marvelous friends of mine I had met in Shanghai that I mentioned earlier, I had letters of introduction and sent them to all, to Lord Mountbatten. What did they call him? You know, all these people on first name terms with each other.

And I was invited to receptions and dinners at the governor general – whatever the place at the time – I went to all of these festivities. In other words, I saw the whole thing from top –

But there's a downside to that. Oh, my God. Was there a downside to independence. They had rushed independence. They shouldn't have done it because, you know, they're going to have a transfer of populations. The Moslems were going back over to the, guess you call it the Western side, where the – Karachi and all that. A man named Jinnah – he was their leader, Moslem.

And so the Moslems supposed to come, and then they'd get the Hindus back where they belonged traditionally, and the Moslems back there.

Well, they clashed. The murders. Oh, my God. The places were running with blood. Like a fool, I wanted – Sometimes when they, in the heart of a hurricane you don't even realize it. But Verna – that was my marvelous friend, Verna Feuerhelm, had been my marvelous travel companion. I couldn't have done it without Verna, she had much more sense than I have.

So we were mad to go to Kashmir to live on a houseboat. My God. Which everybody did. You know. The Shalimar [Gardens] and all that stuff. And so then we got on the trains. Oh, my heavens. I don't know why I'm here to tell the tale. People

were shooting up the trains. We put off on a sidetrack and then they got it – We just always escaping by the skin of our teeth. This, “Oh, they blew up the train before you.” But we went merrily on, somehow never a scratch. Too dumb to know the difference, I guess.

But in any event, that was a bloodbath. Right after the day of the transfer of power of – 50 years ago this year – this past year, '47 it was, July, Verna and I were almost killed because the Indian people are very emotional.

And the crowds broke and – I don't know why they were running, what they were running to. They trampled people. I saw kids getting trampled right in front of me. And this British couple had come to see the festivities. They saw us. “Follow us.” And got us out of there. They took us to their home. And so we weren't crushed in the stampede.

So, after India – of course I did all the traditional things – went to the Taj Mahal, Vera and I and two boys, two newspaper correspondents. One was – Ronald Stead of the Christian Science Monitor. And the other was Andy Roth. I never knew what's become of him. And I hate to say at this point in time in my life, this wonderful American girl who was with me at the Taj Mahal and this wonderful Englishman, Ronnie Stead who was with the Christian Science Monitor, and the other fellow was with the Toronto Star. At this day – 1998 – I'm the only one left.

I should ought to go back as we wrote our names and put it behind a brick up in a place right across from the Taj. I said, “One of us should come back and see if we can find our names.”

ST. JOHN: See if it's there. Uh-huh.

FREE: So we might. There was some kind of structure where you can -- Very beautiful.

ST. JOHN: You have a new mission now.

FREE: And so we did that because we had that sense of history. And I have a lot of pictures of us with the Taj behind us. And I said – So we put our names, three or four names there. And it was wonderful And I treasure the memory of that day and those particular people. I kept on with all of them. I did lose touch with Andy.

But then of course you saw a lot of poverty in India. And of course it's such an enormous country. I have to go back. I didn't really go into South India. And then after India we got on a ship – lucky to get on one.

And I was writing some stories. You're forgetting – I'm forgetting myself as a newspaper person. I wrote stories on all this stuff. I wrote stories. And go back a bit. Because that's my legitimate reason for doing all this.

When I was back in Vietnam I wrote stories for the Herald Tribune talking about how – It won't hurt to go back a little bit. You'd have pink champagne and bombs going off at the same time. There was an awful lot of sniping and bombing and noise and stuff around there in Saigon. You know, you can hear the guns going off. And sometimes quite close. But the food was good, being French, you know. Very good champagne. And all that stuff.

So you always had – it seems to me – someone in my position has a foot in both worlds – of the privileged and the poverty-stricken. It's a terrible responsibility because then you try to write about it. I wrote from Vietnam about the French Foreign Legion, about the Ho Chi Minh, and then, particularly, I wrote about these poor guys – they'd brought them in from the French Empire. A lot of them were African, you know, from Cameroon and all those different countries – Senegal. And they were lying there dying. Open wounds. They didn't have any – And this was before the days of antibiotics. Lying there in their own excrement in so-called hospitals.

I went over with this lovely French woman I had known previously. So you write about these things. But what good did it do? No good.

And then, because the French were soundly whipped by the time I got there. And then, like fools –

I'll jump ahead. And I came back. I made some talks. Not a lot of them. They kind of, you know, act local, think global, and might as well have been thinking about Mars. And I got up and made a speech one time – I said, "There's a country that you know as French Indochina, and the French have all tried to hold it, and I have a horrible feeling that we may be drawn into this conflict."

"And I will say here and now, and I'm sure you'll take my word for it, that we must never, never, never be drawn into that conflict there. Because I think that Ho Chi Minh and his dedication will win."

And I also felt the same way about China. Came back; therefore, I was not very popular when I came back finally to the United States because the Red scare was on in spades. And I had written stories and – But I didn't – My markets were somewhat limited. But I'll tell you more about that in a minute.

That's when somebody from – I don't know what it was, some kind of anti-spy group – came to interview my mother. They all thought – because I was saying these things and I was suspect, of course.

But this, jumping ahead. And it didn't bother me. It didn't hurt me in any way because I was forthright and spoke up. That's a part of whistle-blowing. And that's on a global scale.

But in any event, I went on to from – got on the ship to get out because the British were trying – they were trying to get out.

I saw Gandhi, by the way. I said, by the way, I saw Gandhi. Two or three times. And somebody said, “You want to interview him?” I said, “No.” I was stupid. “I don’t know enough.” Dumb bell, I should have gone and just, you know, I should have just kinda pretended I knew.

But, anyhow, I saw him several times. And I thought – I thought he was going to be a real old man. He looked pretty young and athletic to me. But that was his persona, to wear the loincloth and hang over the arms of these girls. His skin was, you know, very nice and young-looking.

Anyway, so, but he’s a good showman. You’ve got to be a showman to win. Look at Reagan. What a showman. Ronald Reagan, he’s the mastermind. Roosevelt was a good showman, too, but he has some substance. Don’t get me off on the last one.

ST. JOHN: But we want to be sure we don’t miss getting you in the association with the Press Club in what you’re saying, too. Your experiences here at the Press Club. I’m shifting gears a little bit. We’re covering these fabulous things that you have done. But if you’re at a point where you can connect a relationship with the Press Club, we want to have you do that, too.

FREE: There wasn’t any.

ST. JOHN: Did you not join the Press Club?

FREE: You know, I was a member of it. But I was more interested in the parties and stuff.

ST. JOHN: Well, why not?

FREE: Yeah.

ST. JOHN: But Jim was a member though.

FREE: He was a member. And I was also crusading to get the women as members. But that’s – But listen, Florence. I’ll say this right on the record. The fight between the men and the women in the National Press Club when I got back seemed rather unimportant.

ST. JOHN: Um-hum. After what you’d seen.

FREE: Because I think if that’s the case that women should go on their own. Most women are better in newspaper work than men anyhow. So I think the Women’s National Press Club committed hari-kari when they joined the National Press Club. And

they only did that because everybody – This is a back track. You want me to stay on this now?

ST. JOHN: Well, I just want to be sure we have a place for it in what you're saying.

FREE: Pull it in at the end.

ST. JOHN: Okay.

FREE: I'll come back to that. I'm going to develop that line a little bit more later. When I got back here. Now, how is the time? We've got half an hour. Half an hour.

ST. JOHN: Um-hum.

FREE: We can finish it easy.

ST. JOHN: Good, good, good.

FREE: Okay. Got to – went back around the world, went into – got pushed off in the middle of the night in the Suez Canal. And found a refugee camp and I became a refuge with a lot of Yugoslav refugees - lived with them, was with them several weeks.

And then that was in Egypt. And the Egyptians were very weird to us. But then I went – I got bailed out of that. I made some very good friends in the concentration – in the refugee camp. And hope that I helped some of them later on by getting them jobs after they got out. But that's another story.

Well, it was bad. Bad situation. But that's when you try to use – I always felt – I wrote a lot of stories from there. But I think that another thing here – to get back on my soap box – I think you've got to use everything in your power if you're in the privileged position that I was, to get the word out. Sometimes it's not always by writing. Sometimes you might – Like members of Congress came through on a junket who didn't know beans, only what the State Department had fed them. Try to tell them the truth.

ST. JOHN: Right.

FREE: And that's editorial. But why not? But the main thing is, because not everybody in power can go out and see everything.

But I've also forgot to tell you when I was out in China I had dinner not only with Chou En-lai but with General Marshall. And he was out there as the mediator between the Chinese communists and the Kuomintang government. And he didn't think much of Chiang Kai-shek. I could tell that. But he was a master diplomat. And he was a

wonderful man. I really liked him. And later on – in a few minutes I'll tell you how I went to work, in a sense, for him, working for the Marshall Plan. Back to Europe again.

So, I had, I got into Germany and all those places, and Italy. I had covered the Holocaust in a sense when I was with the Herald-Tribune as we had something called the War Refugee Board, trying to get those people out.

And as I told you, that we didn't do enough. And Henry Morgenthau being Jewish, he was always beside himself. And he – the War Refugee Board was in his department – Treasury.

But, anyhow, I went to, to several of the camps and then I saw that – I felt very sorry for the German people, but somehow or another I never could find anybody who would ever, ever supported Hitler in any way – all pure as the driven snow.

ST. JOHN: Yeah.

FREE: Except one or two women who, one put some stuff in my luggage, how she, her true feelings, how she – I don't know. They just blew; they just blew with the wind.

And, but, I did meet up there with a woman I had met and had known in Manchuria, a German who was going back from Australia. It's a long story. So, anyway, I found her there and I did load up food for her. I could use the PX. She's German. And she couldn't stand the arrogance of her own German compatriots. But, and I kept up with her until her death.

So then, I went to Greece. I went to Palestine. And, you know, I went -- There wasn't any Israel then, but the British were still there because they had the mandate to run Palestine under the League of Nations. And, but, Israeli – the Zionists really were pushing and I went out and saw how they were pushing these poor Arabs out of their homes.

And an English correspondent said to me, "They're going to be there forever." They're still there. They pushed them right out of Jerusalem and all their homes.

I said, this isn't right. But I, there's bombing – I had covered the radical wing of the – which became the Israeli government – back in Washington.

Menachem Begin was one. They had been Polish-based. And from a rabbinical background. And they didn't mind shooting it up. There was a lot of terrorism then. And this terrorism has continued. The Arabs took a leaf out of the Israeli book. And this is not very popular to say that.

But I think because the situation was not clarified sufficiently well in the beginning. That's why a lot of innocent people on both sides have had to suffer.

Because they are all caught up in dream. And it's a bad dream. And I don't know how it's going to happen, but the Arabs did not get a fair shake, just like the Jews had not gotten a fair shake back in Europe. So I – like insoluble.

But then, as I say, in Germany, that wasn't very good news. And in France that wasn't good news either.

And then I met Mrs. Roosevelt in Geneva. And as I told you this is sorta bringing us around full circle on that. I can only give the highlights.

In Paris I went to fashion houses. It was really funny. From famine in one place to fashion houses in Paris later.

ST. JOHN: Incredible.

FREE: So therefore, you have to keep a sense of balance and flexibility and a sense of wonder that we can be so many different people. You know, good and evil, ying and yang, is always there.

And so I always wished that I could have done more on helping. I mean it was awful about those refugees on all sides torn up.

So I had – back to whistle-blowing back there. I think that those lectures that I made – because we were talking about this theme of whistle-blowing.

And I think that is a form of whistle-blowing, not very important indeed. But coming back from China and Indochina telling people, at risk of people going and interviewing my mother, that that is a form of whistle-blowing.

And I was right. Quite right. And then that's when I got married.

I ran into Jim again (laughing). And he had seen everything and I had seen everything. And by that time I was 34 years old. And he was older. Because we had been so busy.

So we said, "Okay." We got married. And after all that time. We'd been talking about it off and on for years but nobody had been in the same country. And, God, I'm so glad I didn't marry him early. Can you imagine?

ST. JOHN: You would have missed all that.

FREE: He took me home one time; his mother fixed dinner for me. And – Ah – and I said, if I'd stayed here that's what it would have been.

ST. JOHN: Yeah?

FREE: So, anyhow. He had some real good jobs. And I was very much interested in helping him when he was with the Birmingham News. And I did not go back to the Herald-Tribune because the Herald-Tribune was about to go down the tubes itself. And that's when I started freelancing for North American Newspaper Alliance, Women's National News Service, and Washington Star and the Washington Post. I had my hands full.

And I was not on the staff. I got paid by the piece. I could tell you it was starvation wages and hardly enough for a cup of coffee. But, anyhow, you had the visibility and you could get the story out.

And the story I started getting out not long after I got married was – I went back to my old love of animals. I didn't realize -- And politics. I didn't realize until I heard about a humane, a federal humane slaughter law and introduced – And Hubert Humphrey was pushing it.

Well, this was to stop the miserable conditions in the slaughter houses, to substitute kinder ways of killing. But there's no kind way to kill.

And later on, I followed along on that. We got the law passed. It was a hard, long struggle. The packers did not, they did not want to do it. They did not want to have instantaneous unconsciousness pistol that you can use without spoiling the brains. They didn't want to have the carbon dioxide for the cattle, for the pigs. They didn't want to do anything that would cost them a dime more.

And the screaming and the horror of the slaughter house. I went in them. And I want to go on the record right now. I became a vegetarian and I have been one for more than, I don't know, I can't even count the -- 25 years.

If anybody who goes into a slaughter house even today with the so-called humane slaughter bill – it's wrong. It's wrong to take the lives of animals. The same animal could be your pet, as we know, pigs, cows, all the rest. They can be your friends. And they feel. And they have the same emotions that we have. Why do we study animals as a stand-in for man if they weren't similar to us?

And so, I mean, this is something that you have to come to gradually. And I believe that more people will come to it over time. I had been a big steak eater. Just loved my T-bones steaks and all that. But, in a sense, a sacrifice. I couldn't do it right away. Sometimes I'd fall back. But no more. Never.

But, therefore, and it's a funny thing is, getting help in these animals – they have helped me. I'm in very good health for my age. And – knock on wood. I think meat eating might be a deterrent to good health.

But, so that led me on to the laboratory animal situation, which I had always sorta scoffed at, because we had all been pretty much brainwashed by the medical community,

which is very well entrenched. The pharmaceutical houses. And all the big bucks. They had controlled the Congress. There wasn't anybody much controlling Congress. But some good guys had come forth like [Sen.] Hubert Humphrey early on. And then Governor [Herbert H.] Lehman, some real good people had come to the foreground and thought about it. Not only did they think about the subject of the laboratory animals and all that. But how I made my breakthrough – my whistle-blowing, big whistle-blowing -- on the laboratory animal situation, which opened the doors to subsequent legislation was when I discovered that in the food – in that Food and Drug Administration, did the testing, everything, kept their hundreds and hundreds of dogs in the basement of the Agriculture Department and never let them out of their cages – sometimes seven years – and they went insane and stir crazy, all the rest.

And I found out about it and wrote about it. And then I went to – this is when I caught, fortunately, with the downside of some of the civil rights thing, some of those congressmen never being strong enough on civil rights at least I could get them to help me on animal rights.

So I went to [Sen.] Lister Hill, who was a power, and showed him the stories. And then they got all the, a lot of other newspaper people writing, humane groups. And they put the pressure on Food and Drug and all over the place. And they got them out of the cages and they built a huge new facility where they suffered just as much, I guess, but not that way.

And that opened the gates for the whole beginning of this animal thing and this legislative – Finally we got the Animal Welfare Act passed. And that was, yeah, I'll get to that. And that is, it's been revised, amended and strengthened four times now.

But the main thing there is the certain provisos on housing and general conditions for these thousands and thousands and thousands of dogs. They still don't – the rodents – which are the main ones, they fall under, but not enough.

But what they've done to the monkeys is just intolerable, unspeakable.

ST. JOHN: What year was that act passed?

FREE: That was 1970. My Food and Drug thing was earlier than that. But I think – and that law was passed in 1966. That's when I – I had two influences; a big influence on me then beginning with Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who wrote widely. He had come to the consciousness of the American public when he was brought here to make lectures in the 1960s. And he – I wrote a book on him – I wrote that book. He wrote about animals. His whole message was quote, unquote, "reverence for life."

And he was a musician, he was a physician, he was a philosopher, and he built this hospital in Africa. I corresponded with Dr. Schweitzer and then I was fortunately – you can talk to me about that later – that medal.

So, anyway, he has been the leading light, the leading philosophical light, of my life. And he also, he influenced another person who helped me, who also had a big influence, and also – Was she a whistle-blower! Her name was Rachel Carson.

Now Rachel was a real whistle-blower. She blew whistle on the – all of the pesticide manufacturers, on what they were doing. I worked with her. I'd give her materials that I could get hold of, and so she could put them in her book. And so that really changed everything.

And she could testify. Rachel testified in favor of all this legislation I'm talking to you about. And she helped me on that food and drug dog thing. But then, in the meantime, I was further getting into the animal situation.

And then I got into more whistle-blowing. On the local level they were killing animals in the most unconscionable way. And I blew the whistle on -- They were moving what they call a decompression chamber, which sucked all the air, made, died an agonizing death. Got that removed. Wrote about it in The Washingtonian Magazine and called it "No Room, Save in the Heart." And it helped a whole lot.

Then I wrote a book on the bad conditions at the Washington National Zoo. Right here. And that's called "Forever the Wild Mare." That was – a sub-theme of that is better conditions for animals in zoos. And also, that horse was the first, one of the first, of the endangered species. That's a przewalski horse. The original horse. But some of them are still alive today.

It's a story for kids. Big kids. And all about a bunch of stuff. It's got Buddhist lamas in it, anything you want. And so that helped get me working in endangered species.

So all of these things broadened out. I became heavy into all this ecological and endangered species. In other words, it became central to my life. I'd forgotten about politics on the everyday level – you know, who shot John kind of thing. But you had to have political clout to make it work.

And so, therefore, I went on later, on more whistle-blowing. Speaking of zoos, they have a wonderful rare and endangered animal farm up at Front Royal, Virginia. And I went up there to look at some endangered species. And, my God, I saw some white-tailed deer bouncing across the terrain.

And somebody said, "Well, they're going to hunt them soon."

And I said, "What?"

"They're going to have a public hunt."

And, you know, the local folks coming in with their guns.

And I said, “What?” Bad for the deer and bad for all these endangered species all around here, too.

So I called the Smithsonian and they wouldn’t do a thing. Wouldn’t do a thing.

I said, “You’d better do something because I’m – ” I didn’t say, I’m warning you, but that was implicit. And they didn’t.

And then I drew it to the attention of all of the right people. And, my God, they ended up with a Congressman [Sidney] Yates, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, had a hearing. And, my God, we stopped the zoo hunt.

And sad for him, but he wouldn’t pay any attention to what I told him, this was Ted Reed, the director of the zoo. He was behind the whole thing.

I said, “Ted, don’t do this.”

He resigned. Had to.

You don’t do things like that. So that’s some more whistle-blowing.

So I had also, going down the line here on some quick whistle-blowing. They were putting a park it’s not always the animals and the people. But they were putting a big road through Glover Archbold Park, which is a beautiful park in upper Georgetown, that was going to go right straight through upper Northwest Washington.

I raised hell about that and got a petition – I have pictures here, somewhere. Secretary Udall said, “No, there ain’t going to be no road.” And there wasn’t. So we stopped that.

And there it is. That’s the petition.

But I took to – with a neighborhood man – Robert Robinson.

See, [Stewart] Udall was secretary of Interior. So sometimes you stepped aside from being a straight newspaper person – people were then writing about me.

I did write about, in Audubon Magazine, but I couldn’t sit down and write about it in The Washington Post, because I was the protagonist. [Laughing]

In other words, it’s hard to – those lines.

And so, anyway, I’ve stayed in with the animal thing right along. And I feel that – back to Rachel Carson, this is not whistle-blowing, but it’s again women not getting their due, which they certainly don’t – not even now.

And I thought this woman has awakened so many people, not only to the pesticide threat but with her eloquent writing and philosophical approach of Dr. Schweitzer's, she has – she's changing the world. Schweitzer is changing the world. Rachel Carson's changing the world. But we must honor her. Why don't we have a national wildlife refuge named for Rachel Carson?

I wrote it in a magazine – don't forget, I'm still in the newspaper world – called, a Sunday supplement called "This Week Magazine." And I said, in the middle of it, a little box, "If you agree there should be a refuge write to the Secretary of Interior." And the thousands and thousands of letters poured into Washington.

And then the Secretary of Interior took it seriously. His name was [Walter] Hickel; I've got a picture of this -- And, my gosh, they consulted me a whole lot about where they're going to put it. It was very fortuitous they picked the coast of Maine running more or less from Portland down to the New Hampshire border, mainly wetlands.

But it's protected. It's great stuff. I'm thrilled. I was invited back to the anniversary not long ago and, you know, it's just wonderful that we've got that and a woman was honored.

But, as I said before, if you don't get out there and push and remind, doing it by the press, doing it anyway you can, that's legitimate.

And I feel that these influences in my life have -- of empathy and injustice – and then I've carried it out with the writing for the – I was, I didn't go much into the civil rights thing because Jim was so involved in that.

And I may tell you I was right there with him 100 percent. He spent a lot of time with Bobby Kennedy. Nobody would speak to the – The rednecks and the Justice Department couldn't talk to each other because everything was so inflammatory then. They were turning over busses. And, you know, the water hoses in the streets.

And so Jim's people on The Birmingham News would tell him some things. You know, they'd deal with Bull Connor, and then Jim would kinda pass some of the word along to the Justice Department. And that way you got everybody together – somewhat.

So then it mitigated – we'll never know to what degree – mitigated more conflict.

But his paper, The Birmingham News, which I had thought was reactionary in early days, came through in flying colors to such an extent that the editor, who had been, I thought, conservative, he would stay so behind the African-Americans and the civil rights, and behind – pushing Jim – that the Ku Klux Klan came and burned a cross on his lawn. That's the highest accolade you can have, I guess.

And Jack Kennedy wrote to The Birmingham News thanking them for what they had done. And I tried to help Jim on all this, because I'd been pushing along on all this right along.

And he – when we went to Alabama – people were scared then to have D.C. license plates on their cars. Some of them would borrow license plate from somebody in Mississippi or somewhere and put it on [laughing]. You don't know. It was really something. But you don't know these things – you don't know anything until it's over.

So Jim was a very forthright, nice, honest person who called the shots as he saw them. And we got along just fine on this subject.

ST. JOHN: A couple of things about him. One is his book. And the other is his affiliation with the –

FREE: He was crazy on the subject of the Gridiron Club.

ST. JOHN: I was going to say, the Gridiron Club.

FREE: And the reason I think he liked the Gridiron Club was he had been an actor in his early years and they put on this wild satirical show every year. And they're very humorous. And he was a frustrated actor and a frustrated humorist, I would think.

And so then he loved – And he was the longtime historian of the Gridiron Club and he made a speech at every luncheon – they have an informal luncheon – every, for years and years and years, with all these little funny stories about Gridiron.

So when he – then he did this book. And open it up and you'll see how his, it has cartoons from the – And so I tried to help him some on that. And the book was very, very well received.

And see – if that picture's – just go flip it to the -- Anyway. Yeah, the Johnson treatment. The Kennedys, that's pretty good. Then LBJ – Jim was always hearing from LBJ.

So it was very tragic, but he played tennis a lot, much too much to my taste. I was like a golf – You say a golf widow, you can be a tennis widow, too. But, anyhow, he kept – He loved it.

And we had a wonderful daughter in the meantime. And she's the apple of his eye. She went to work – and is still there – she's got that same thing he has of steadiness. Crazy like me but steady like him. She's still with Cable News Network putting on shows. And he was very proud of her.

And I have a granddaughter who's very musical. And I think she's going to have all these traits. She's got a fantastic sense of humor. I think she got that from Jim. She can really put you down [laughing]. She's really something.

But anyhow, sorry that he's missing that. And I'm lucky to be here with my grandchild and my daughter and all of us in pretty good health.

And I mean I owe Jim so much. And we come down here to this old Press Club and all old Washington, these old restaurants we couldn't afford to go to nowadays.

Used to go to the National Theater. And of course we were there – thank God they got that integrated, you know. But you don't know what it was like in this town, these poor African-Americans. How awful. They couldn't go into the real good restaurants. It's just a shocking disgrace. But Jim never – He was totally color-blind.

There's a picture, speaking of color-blind. And the little girl in the front with the blue and white speckles on – that's my granddaughter – and that little girl, African-American girl, who's my granddaughter's little best friend. And that's my baby up there with a smile.

But makes me think of Martin Luther King when all of the little white children and little black children will be going to school together. And here we are in a public school, in D.C., and it's not such a bad system if you get a good school and a good principal.

And so, and I've still got a lot of dogs and cats – and don't have any horses anymore. But anyhow—

ST. JOHN: I think one of the big things about you, Ann, is that you are still at it.

FREE: Oh, you know I am.

ST. JOHN: And you just don't stop.

FREE: Don't get in my way –

ST. JOHN: And all your experience, and all of your smarts, and your passion about your areas that you have been in. I think that's very telling.

FREE: But the main thing is, you have to have a passion, I guess. I mean, every one of these things, about the animals and about the parks and about the poor downtrodden African-Americans.

And I didn't even tell you about nursing homes. I got into that. I'd better stop because I know that story. Home for the blind where these people were really treated very badly. We raised hell on that one and shook 'em up.

So we're just about to end up now, but I want to say that Jim – I wish Jim could be here today – he'd take up another two hours with some very funny stories, including one about L. Ron Hubbard, who was the Scientology guy that Jim went on a cruise.

The man was a promoter. And he took all this money from these people to go on this four-masted schooner all around the world but he ran out of money down here in South America somewhere and left everybody stranded.

And then he started Scientology and he – Jim has all the low-down on him and was writing about him in his papers on L. Ron Hubbard and his – these people are very litigious, they might hear this and, listen, I'm not going to say anything – they get a hold of this tape and they'll sue me. And I don't want that.

But, anyhow, they can -- The Library of Congress was quite pleased to have the material that Jim had collected on L. Ron Hubbard, his old shipmate. But – And where the money seemed to evaporate.

But, anyway, so –

ST. JOHN: Very colorful lives that you two to have had.

FREE: So, anyway –

ST. JOHN: We are very appreciative of this interview.

FREE: I'm so glad –

ST. JOHN: A valuable addition to our collection.

FREE: So, we would have talked more about the Press Club.

ST. JOHN: I know. Well, there's just so much you've done and so much that's valuable, so – But we do thank you very much.

FREE: Oh, I thank you. I thank you. I'm sorry I didn't get to more of the Press Club.

ST. JOHN: Now do you want to do the pictures? How do you want to handle that?

FREE: Oh, am I on? Oh, sorry about that. At the top is Jim with that Gridiron book that we just talked about. They took it over to the White House – and I have it in color as well. And it's Reagan and I guess Jim autographed it.

And the picture I have at home, Reagan autographed that.

And those are some of the leaders of the Press Club. Lou Warren. And that's Al Cromley, and Phil Geylin, and I won't name them all.

But Reagan, I think, because he liked a good story. And I think he enjoyed the book. And I think he got a nice note from him on that.

And below that is a picture of Jim and me in the middle. I had my hand up like that, and Jim right next to me, with Jack Kennedy, throwing his hat in the ring announcing he was going to run for the presidency.

And it was just filled with all these members of the National Press Club, all of them all over the place -- the man with the white hair in the foreground is Jack Bell of AP. Then there's the ubiquitous May Craig over there -- the little woman, you can see her. And Louie Lautier, who is an African-American. By the way, Jim -- being from Alabama -- he pushed to get him in the press club because they didn't want blacks. And I pushed the first black woman into the Press Club, too. I think southerners have a kinder feeling or something. But anyhow.

That was quite an event. Somebody took that picture and brought it over to me later and said, "You know, that picture is going to be historic." And it is.

But back to the Press Club. Jim joined -- I don't know what his Press Club, they have numbers -- he joined I think in 1939 when he first came to Washington. And he -- our offices, we were very much involved with the Press Club when our offices were located in the same building, the National Press Building. And Jim's office was in -- He first came in and worked for the Star, but then we were on the famous 12th floor of this particular building.

And that -- you could walk around the corridors and every door had the name of some outstanding newspaper. It was so thrilling. It was a heady business for young people, to see all those names from all over -- from Texas, from New York, from California -- wherever. And foreign, too.

And then, we had these very uncomfortable offices, but we didn't care. And then they'd come up here and have lunch at the Press Club. In those days, the women couldn't eat in the dining room with the men.

They had what they called the Ladies Dining Room, but I tell you, the men loved to come over there. And everybody just sort of drank up their luncheons over there. There was a lot more drinking in those days. A lot more drinking than there is today. People drink wine a good bit now, but in those -- My God, their hard liquor, and these horrible combinations of Manhattans and martinis in the middle of the day. I can't believe it.

But, anyhow, we were all very close to the National Press Club because we were right here in the building with it. And of course the men – don't ask me about the Press Club – because the men were always creeping upstairs, going up the back steps to the bar.

At the time of Roosevelt's death, what do you think I had to do? I ran down the hall and ran up the steps because I don't know whether they had a ticker upstairs - to tell my boss – I knew where he was; he was in the bar. It was in the middle of the afternoon.

So, anyhow, I'm telling it as it is. And women weren't even allowed in the bar. A good thing.

But, so then, the Press Club had some real good programs. And all that stuff about being up in the balcony – I didn't bother with them much because I was too busy –

I don't think that's the way to get a story, to go and listen to somebody at a luncheon. The way to get a story, I thought, was to go interview somebody and dig out the story, not sit there and have something that some press agent has written to be delivered to a hall full of people – most of them lobbyists anyway. So, therefore, why bother?

Some of the girls, later on, had fits because they had to sit in the balcony and not down below, and all that stuff. Frankly, I guess I'm a maverick because you know I'm for women's rights all over the place, all kinds of rights, animal rights, women's rights, all the whole thing.

Nobody should be discriminated against for race, creed or color or furs or legs or whatever. So, anyhow, as long as you're feeling, as long as you have the ability to suffer, I think, is one of the criteria.

And so, therefore, they carried on about that. I must say I kinda halfway sat that one out because I just – I was at that time digging out my own stories. And, but I did think – I mean I agree, and I think it was idiotic – to discriminate that way.

But I think that the end of the Women's National Press Club, which was started in 1919, I adored that Women's National Press Club. I became a member in 1941. And it gave up the ghost about 19 -- I should bring my roster with me. 1960's, I guess. Then it lost its identity because they had a terrible identity crisis themselves. "We better let men in." Well, if the men are in, how can it be the Women's National Press Club? I said just keep the name and the men could belong to the Women's National Press Club. Why shouldn't they?

So anyway, a man used to edit all those women's magazines. One minute more, the main thing is we lost our identity; we called it the Washington Press Club. And we went down the tubes because we didn't have enough money. We didn't have a bar for the new place. So then we merged with the National Press Club and it's now so big. I come to some of the events. I love them. I love coming. I'm very proud of the Club. I

walk around and see a picture of Mrs. Roosevelt and us Girls in the little Eleanor Roosevelt alcove around there. Come and see me sometimes, folks.

And I have a real sense of affection for the Press Club but I'm not working in the club anymore – physically. And I'm very proud of it. I'm delighted when you get these major speeches made. And I can tell you a lot of really wonderful people supplied the bricks and mortar to make this thing go. And I'm pleased and honored to have been taped for the Press Club Archives. I can't think of a nicer thing to happen to a little old girl from Richmond.

ST. JOHN: Well, we are delighted that we have been able to talk with you on camera. It will be very valuable to us. Thank you.

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