

University of Illinois Student Life**Voices Now Oral History Project****Interviewee: Loren Tate****Interviewer: Thomas Littlewood****December 13, 2006****Length: 01:18:30**

Thomas Littlewood: Ok, I'll begin by asking you for a brief description of your early life before entering the newspaper business, where you grew up, how you got interested in sports, how you got interested in the newspaper business. Just a very brief biographical description of the early years of your early life.

Loren Tate: Well it's really simple, my mother married a fellow from Monticello, Illinois after my dad died and he ran the newspaper in Monticello, the *Piat County Republican*, and I was, I worked there in the job printing area when I was young and in the summers when I was teenager. And of course, I played ball and like most guys played basketball during basketball season and football during football season and baseball during baseball season and so that the two kind of converged indeed sports and newspaper work and then. So I decided to go into journalism when I went to University of Illinois and continued to work for my stepfather and continued to play sports and then went back after I was in service. And when I got back out of service I was sending in the baseball results to T.O White at the *News-Gazette* from our games. We were in, Monticello had a team in the Eastern Illinois League and I was calling in the results and he says one day, "An old friend of mine in Hammond, Indiana, John Whitaker, called and said he needed someone immediately to go to work for him and I thought of you because I talk to you every Monday when you call the games in." And I thought, "Man wouldn't that be something if all I had to do is just do sports as opposed to putting out a weekly newspaper in Monticello." Which my dad was gonna have me pretty much do, he was going to turn over the newspaper to me and he was going to take the financial end of it which was job printing which was a lot more money in that than in the newspaper. So I basically just left, left home in a matter of weeks. Right after that I met with John Whitaker up in Kankakee and went to work for him in the, let's see, that would have been the fall of 1955 and I worked in Hammond f. eleven years before coming to the *News-Gazette*.

TL: Did you ever aspire seriously for a career in the sports itself as an athlete?

LT: Oh sure. Oh yeah. I mean I am not sure I have given up yet [both laugh] but maybe at age seventy-five I should probably think I'm not going to make it to the major leagues now, you think?

TL: I'm not sure you're tall enough for basketball now.

LT: No, but I played basketball in the military against a lot of college players. Of course, Harry Combes was a good friend of mine from Monticello and I was on the Illinois team for a couple of years as what you would call a walk-on. And I was baseball too; I tried out with Lee Eilrbacht's team and was never good enough. Later on, I got to be a lot better when I was older.

TL: Ok, your newspaper career in Champaign-Urbana became, began, in the mid-1960s, which was at the end of an era that sports historians know as the Grantland Rice era. When readers would perhaps listen to a game account on a radio but of course this was just the beginning of television and they had no way of seeing what was happening as it was happening. And so sports writers were using extravagant, florid language in order to try invoke the excitement of the game that probably the readers, many of the readers have not, have not, seen. And the great syndicated columnist like Grantland Rice were just going out of style then. I want to ask you first two general questions. First about how intercollegiate athletics were different back then than the mid 1960s and then about how sports journalism was different. First about college sports generally, the most important ways then football, basketball were different than they are today.

LT: Well first of all, when I came to the *News-Gazette* in 1966, there were virtually no coverage of women's sports at all. In fact, there weren't, intercollegiatly there weren't hardly any teams that and certainly any that mattered as far as the public was concerned. So that was an area that we weren't even aware of, I think. I wasn't aware of. The other thing was that the African American athlete was just then beginning to come to the fore and I think that Governor Vaughn and Mannie Jackson were the first two that started for Illinois in basketball and that would have been like '59 or '60 right in that era and so it was, it was a new period where you had to deal with race differently than we had ever had to deal with it before. And it became much more of an issue. I think that there were fewer sports, there were, there was no concern about gender equity and just as the athletic director at the University of Illinois only had one thing to concern himself with, and that was the men's sports. The same thing was true with those of us in the writing field. We weren't involved with the women hardly at all.

TL: Umm hmm. You mentioned that for the first time you had to deal with race. What, what, can you elaborate a little bit? What, what do you mean?

LT: Well, it was just there, it's an amazing phenomenon I think if you just take the National Football League now. That roughly sixty nine percent of the players are Black whereas before, you know, they were just spotted around. When I was in college, for example, the only Black player in the Big Ten in basketball was Bill Garret of Indiana. You know, this was a period where when I was in Hammond the first all-Black game was played for the state championship of Indiana between Crispus Attucks and Gary Roosevelt that involved Oscar Robertson a famous player and a fellow by the name of Barnett that played in the NBA too. This was, this caught everybody, I mean we had, we had to be careful about the things that you wrote in regard to this because it was seen,

there was so much prejudice in the world anyway and, and I, it just affected the sport and the way it was handled.

TL: Yeah, there certainly was resistance to in certain circles, yes. Who were your, when you first started in the newspaper business, who were your idols? Who were the sports writers, the sports columnists that you first...?

LT: Well, I read Bertine all the time at the *Courier* when I was in Hammond and he was, of course I'm not at the national level here in discussing this but I don't guess I had, I didn't try to copy anybody. I didn't have anybody that I felt that way about I just was trying to survive the best I could I guess in doing something that I really didn't know what I was doing when I started. I took a job, the first football game. While John Whitaker asked me if I would cover a football game the first week I was up there because football was just starting and I thought sure and I've never covered a football game in my life. Never covered any kind of a sport in my life because I didn't do that. I'd never covered sports. I'd played in sports would, other than calling in the games, you know calling in the games to T.O White. I'd never written a story. So we had an afternoon paper in Hammond and I went, I wrote, when the game was over I wrote it out in longhand and went in the next morning and he said, "It was time for you, would you type up the story on the game?" Of course, we did it by typewriter in those days and I said, "I don't really type really fast." And he thought, "Boy you're pretty fast aren't you?" I thought he didn't know that I wrote it out before I typed it. All I was doing was copying.

TL: Right, right.

LT: So, I just kind of did what came natural at any time. I'm not a good example of somebody that studied the way I should have. It's just like when I got into television, somebody said, "Can you do TV?" I was here in channel fifteen and was looking for somebody and I said, "I can do that." And I did it but I didn't know the first thing about it when I went over to do it. Can't get away with that now, it's a different world now. Lot more specialists then when I was, when that was happening.

TL: Speaking of television sports, my recollection is, and I've read a little bit about this that in the beginning the Big Ten conference really resisted live game day TV of football. They were afraid it was going to affect attendance and no one would go to the game anymore.

LT: Yeah you know, I think the White Sox made a decision once upon a time that they didn't want to have their home games on on WGN. The Cubs took it and the Cubs just blew, you know, just it brought more fans, and it took a long time for everybody to figure out that the more television you get the more fans you get. Yeah, the Big Ten really resisted that. One game a week that was it. One Saturday game on television no more and that gave an advantage to the superior teams which were of course... You know, and I think Michigan more than any team grew in that television age to a monster from being a very good team but. Illinois always, Illinois fell behind during that era, and they fell behind number one in the ability to successfully recruit the Black athlete which was

because they brought several in who failed. And I recall when I was back when I was in school, we had, there were several, I mean after, actually I was out of school, but Illinois brought in several that did not make their grades and including a player from Crispus Attucks. And, I think that a number of the Black athletes from the big cities wound up going to Cincinnati, Michigan, and places that had academics set up to take care, to help them get through and Illinois did not do that. And, the other thing was that Illinois didn't get into the television thing very, I mean we're very slow to take advantage of the television opportunities, I think. Whereas Michigan really, really jumped up at that time and is now going strong still.

TL: The Ford Company Motor Company was very involved in television back in, in Michigan's behalf. They were sponsoring the Michigan games and that sort of thing. Let's, I think it's generally recognized that back in that era, the sixties, seventies, that sports reporting was much more positive and much less critical than it is today. Is that true?

LT: Yes.

TL: Why do you think? In other words, what, why was it less critical then than it is now?

LT: You know I hadn't thought about that. I, it certainly, I just think that it has evolved that way. First of all, there was only one of us covering football, basketball, and sports when I came to Champaign. It was me. There are three guys doing what I do now. And they're not, and I became ranked in other ways which I think a lot of guys, I became ranked because of radio, because of doing color for Illinois games and semi worked for the University of Illinois at times because of coverage. And I was very close to these coaches on a personal basis. You have much more competition, Springfield started coming, Peoria started coming in here, Chicago did not have reporters in here on a daily basis like we do now. They sometimes send somebody down for every game, the *Tribune* does, St. Louis paper. We now have more competition for the news and we're all in competition with each other. Whereas once upon a time it was almost like I had nobody to compete against. Although there was a *Courier* for a while and even then, when I worked with and on against Bertine. We were very close and a lot of new banks who succeeded Bertine, I didn't feel that strong of competition.

But you know, I was doing also doing the Harv Schmidt TV show which I was the first one to do a television show with a coach because Harry Combes never did and neither did Ray Eliot. So, I was close to Harv and too close. You know if you were going to do it over, you would say "Don't do that." But it was just the way it evolved at that time and so I was as time went by, I became less friendly with people I criticized. And course had my run ins with any number of coaches later on and an athletic director by the name of Neale Stoner but it was a fine line to walk that I had to walk and now you know that isn't even a consideration anymore that, that, has changed and I think it's, it's almost embarrassing to me to have been so close to the coaches originally. Because Harry Combes, I played golf with, I mean I grew up in Monticello. I ate my meals with his

mother I mean she served meals at the Coombs recreation parlor downtown and everybody knew her and everybody knew Linden, his brother, and when Harry came home after their season each year you know we would talk and we would get together and he gave some great advice one time, he told me, he says, "Sonny, if you want to play basketball don't come to the University of Illinois." [Laughs] But I mean I go a long way back with him, we're almost family friends. So that was, today it's, today at the *News-Gazette* we've got a guy from Nebraska covering football, we've got a guy from Gonzaga covering basketball after our guy from Kentucky had covered it before him. In other words, these guys had no ties with the University of Illinois. They have no ties with Illinois even, the state of Illinois and they don't care and that's good. But it wasn't that way once upon a time.

TL: So, it was quite natural that you were close, you cultivated the friendship in some cases of coaches and ADs back then. In a way that doesn't happen today.

LT: No, but you know something happened. I was here within the first few days or months I was here when the slush fund broke in 1966, and that woke me up and that was the first time I ever realized that I should have had a law degree to deal with all this stuff. I should have been, you know, more prepared for the controversy of people being fired and people under investigation and how the NCA worked and it was a heck of an education for me. But you know, and Illinois had several run ins with NCAA in terms of infractions that made it difficult for me to maybe sustain the same kind of relationships that I had had. Harry was fired within the first, Harry Combes was fired within the first, well but I came in September and he was fired in December. So, he wasn't around very long. He was a big factor in me getting the job. As a matter of fact, it was a member of the coaching staff that called me to tell me that the job was open. I mean that's how close I was with those people. And when I was in Hammond, I was part of an Illini club, and we helped Ray Elliot and Harry Combes recruit up in that area. Had a recruiting, was part of it and here I am as a sportswriter as part of it. But I had been a member of the Illinois teams as I told you and it was a long time before I broke that relationship because I felt very strongly toward University of Illinois. And that's why I came to Illinois, I didn't want to go anywhere else.

TL: This, this.

LT: I had all the wrong motives.

TL: This was not peculiar though to you and Illinois. Sport writers were generally very close to their sources, the people they writing about, weren't they?

LT: I think, I think in the beginning we were yeah.

TL: They, there've been some studies how and why this happened and it's been suggested that readers back then really didn't want to know that Babe Ruth was a lecher and an alcoholic and all that they were happier not knowing that sort of thing, is that the truth?

LT: Well, I guess. You know, I mean nobody knew that Roosevelt couldn't walk. You know, there was not much internal information getting out. I mean if the President can go along, how many terms did he have, four? And you still didn't know that he was wheelchair bound I guess that's amazing when you stop and think about it. I, I think that's just part, it was part of the culture at that time, and it's certainly evolved differently from then. I think people know what Bush does these days. And let you know if they don't like.

TL: And course they also know that Barry Bonds used performance enhancing drugs so the expectation on the part of the reader is different today.

LT: Yeah, yep. That's a tough one to deal with by the way. That, that steroid thing because who knows how many people, how many athletes were doing that and its going to be a real controversy as far as the Hall of Fame is concerned particularly with McGwire because if McGwire was using performance enhancing drugs and facing pitchers who are using performance enhancing drugs and other batters were using the same thing. I mean how do you pick one or two out and say we're not going to advance them to the Hall of Fame when maybe everybody, you know not everybody, but a high percentage of players were using something at one time or another?

TL: Umm hmm. You mentioned Harry Combes that was a special case because of your friendship going back before the times that you were working for the newspaper here. How about some of the other coaches and ADs? Tell me a little bit about what your relationship was, what kind of pressures you were under to, or was it a natural thing?

LT: The pressures I was under?

TL: The pressures to do positive stories, not be critical, not to really and I am sure there were confidences that you developed with coaches. They would tell you things that you were expected not to write about.

LT: Yeah, that's true. As far as the athletic directors were concerned, after Doug Mills, Doug Mills was in the slush fund, so I had only been here a matter of months, and he was fired and he lost his job and the ADs there after that I didn't have a very close relationship with. Particularly Cecil Coleman, who was rather cold and rather removed. I mean was a little distant and he was hard to get a fix on. Guenther I've known for a long time and is a person he kind of avoids the press as much as he can but I'm able to deal with him on a professional basis. The coaches were the ones I was much closer to. And I was close with Harv and then of course he lost his job and then Bartow was, you know, had Bartow in here for one year and never got to know him at all. And then Henson came in for a long term and Henson is a person that you just couldn't help but like. I mean I don't know anybody who doesn't like Lou Henson and he was. The only reproach I would have, and he had his ups and downs and when he had his downs and I wrote about his downs, I stayed away from him for two or three days and then usually it would be

gone by then, but I knew that it was somebody, I knew better than to. I wrote some critical things about him and, and he seemed to be seemed to accept that, but I didn't want to be around the very next day, particularly if his wife was around. Mary knew about, she was liable to say something to me. She's much more aggressive that way than he was.

TL: How about the football?

LT: Well, we had so many coaches, Jim Valek. I resigned in Valek's third or fourth year at the *News-Gazette*. I was doing television and decided I wasn't making enough money. So I missed his final season, and I was glad I did because the pressures were so bad on him and it was obvious that he was going to get fired. And I was gone from about July at the *News-Gazette* from about July that year to December. I was hired back on the same week we hired Bob Blackman and Blackman was a little bit removed, he was a little aloof and he had come out of the east, and I'd never got to know Blackman that well. I covered him and Moeller was even more distant when he came in. So I've never had, I guess I've never really had as close a relationship with any of the football coaches for any length of time because I usually, something usually happened that was negative and I would be partly to blame for writing about it.

TL: They, they, Gary Moeller for example, expected you to be to be part of the team then really.

LT: Well, I think, well I think they all do. I mean I think Ron Zook does, but you know Ron Zook even today, you know, he'd rather see about anybody but me, he doesn't like me at all. And that's ok. I, you know, each one of them expects a certain... When they come to town they expect to be treated, you know, that I'm part of the athletic department and, and you know when you win two games in each year there's going to be negative things written. I don't think I'm particularly negative but I'm reporting what happened and maybe that's negative.

TL: Do you get pressures indirectly from Zook to stop the negative?

LT: Oh yeah. Yeah he's tried calling me in the office and discussing things with me. He's tried, he gave up. At some point he just figured the guy is hopeless and so, and so that's where I am with him right now. And I don't think, you know, at my age and with the limited number of years I've got left that I'll ever be close to anybody again. There's too much of age difference and too much, I'm too willing to, I think basically criticize if I think there's a reason and I think probably in that regard I'm much more independent than I was when I was really young when it was didn't occur to me that's what I was supposed to do. I think when I came here I didn't have any idea what I was supposed to do. I just happened to be lucky enough to get the job and didn't know how to do it and came in and did the best I could and what seemed natural at the time and had as I had pointed out, I had Lou Baker who was from Monticello was on the football staff and I was very close with him. He was my coach at Monticello and, and just a great friend all his life and of course with Harry on the basketball. Things really adjusted for me. This is

a, this may be an individual situation, I'm not saying that it's the same at Bloomington or the same at, you know, in Iowa or Wisconsin or someplace else. It may have been, I don't know those situations, but my situation was that I came back here because this is where I was from and this where I wanted to be and I know all the people here.

TL: I'm sure though in all these places like Iowa, that the newspaper in the community where this athletic program is located that there are pressures from, I from, I would imagine, advertisers.

LT: Absolutely. Yes.

TL: What...tell a little about how that worked here?

LT: Well, I, I don't know anything about the advertising part of it. I, I mean I don't, no advertisers that I'm aware ever went to me directly. But they probably did go to the editor and say, "Could you get this guy under control?" or something. You know, we had, we had a real showdown over the Stoner thing because I was in the dead center of that one and basically was responsible for doing the investigative work that caused him to be, caused Mort Weir to ask for his resignation and he was a powerhouse at the time. He had changed Illinois athletics tremendously by, he had found new revenue streams as they call it, he had money coming in. He had, he had the program was upbeat. It was so much different than Coleman. It was so much better financed. He was, he was much more flamboyant. He had a lot of friends, and when that happened, well personally, I was barred from certain restaurants, I was not allowed to go, not allowed to do certain things and go certain places because of the alumni that would not put up with me. And so that, that was interesting period. I got some that still don't talk to me over that incident, over the, the Stoner thing.

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TL: It's certainly true that, and I'm going to tie this into the Stoner matter, that newspapers in university towns don't do what is generally described as investigative reporting of sports, local sports. I can think of one exception and I think at Lexington, they did an expose of basketball some, some years ago. But it's very, very unusual and it very rarely was done here.

LT: Well, that's right. I don't think, I think it's much more common now. I mean, for instance *St. Paul Pioneer Press* has their own investigative people that don't do anything else but. And we're very much involved in the Haskins thing when that was turned over. When Clem Haskins was fired up there for the exam problems and the academic problems that he was trying to fix but I, the, the Stoner thing came onto me as something that I had to do because it was a long time in building. I knew certain things and had them in the back of my mind and then had, I discussed them with Tim Johnson who was a State Rep at the time and, and Bill Kroll who was a strength coach at that time was the guy that was being pushed out to make room for a member, a family member of one of

Stoner's staffers and he came to me complaining and I thought, "I haven't got any choice I got to do this, this is wrong." And then one thing led to another and then we had people from the University spilling their beans to us, to me and then I started meeting with members of the staff privately in my home, you know sneaking them in after dark and stuff. It was kind of, it was kind of weird. We accumulated a lot of material and then Phil Bloomer was assigned to help me on the thing from the news side and we went to the, certain cleaners and certain different places where they were, and businesses where they were trading tickets for the work that was being done or whatever and so one thing led to another. We got about maybe twenty items of concern and presented those to Weir and said, "If these are true what do you do?" And he said, "If they're true, he would have to leave." And of course, we turned that material over to him and then ultimately Stoner was fired but I mean I was, I wrote story after story on that and got, you know, made a lot of enemies. So my life really changed at that point and since that time, I've been less concerned about my own, you know, whether I'm liked or not that doesn't seem to be a concern anymore.

TL: For a time your boss was a former PR man for the football program, for the athletic program. I'm speaking of Chuck Flynn. Did you get any pressures from him?

LT: Boy he was a terrific editor. He came in and revolutionized the *News-Gazette*. We had, he had yes. He had one problem. He didn't like any reference to the slush fund. But as far as letting us go, you know that Chuck Flynn never tried to influence me to write any story or not write any story the whole time he was there. He was basically removed from sports. He wasn't, he was a sports guy once. He was a sports information guy once upon a time but he became an assistant to the President and got more involved in the administration and things and then when he came to the *News-Gazette* he was not, he was not involved in sports at all except that every now and then I'd make a reference to this slush fund and he'd say, "You have to bring that up?" And that'd be about it. But he changed the financial workings of the *News-Gazette* and where as we working for pennies, which was the reason I quit when I did quit because we were so poorly paid. I was getting two hundred, I was sports editor and I was getting two hundred dollars a week, I guess and so he, he brought in the union, and the union made so much money they had to give the editors raises. And that's when all of us started making enough money where we can, you know, previous to that I always had two jobs. I was either doing radio or television or something on the side because I wasn't making enough money to send kids to school.

TL: How did you happen to return then to the newspaper?

LT: I was, I was only gone six months. I, I was trying to sell insurance and do television. I found that the two didn't mesh as well as newspaper and television. So I was, I was sports director of channel fifteen for eleven years and I ended that in 1980 and then went into radio. But I just wasn't happy, I guess. I just wanted to be a writer again and I, the thing about being a writer and a TV person is that you're working in the same area, so when you go on TV you already know what you're dealing with. You know, I mean I

spent all day gathering news and then you go on TV and report it and when you are selling insurance and then you go on TV to report sports you're finding out just before you get on the air what's really happened and so I went back to Michael Chinigo and I went to the *Courier* and they wouldn't hire me and then I went to Michael Chinigo. And actually, went to Harold Holmes and he said, "Michael will be back from Italy in a month or two and you'll have to talk to him." And he hired me on the spot again and I started over and didn't make any more money. He put me back to two hundred, but I don't, what are you going to do?

TL: After Michael Chinigo's death of course the sole owner and CEO of the newspaper was Mrs. Chinigo. Did she take an interest in what you were doing?

LT: Not much. She, she was always, we became friendly in the latter years of her life because I was the only one in the newsroom that she knew. And when she would come, she would always check my desk to see if it was clean and it never was and then she would raise a little heck because she wanted the place to be cleaned up better but a newsroom is never a clean place, there's paper all over the place. And so we'd used to joke and we, and I suppose other than John Foreman, I suppose I was just about her best friend at the paper. But she, in her latter years, the only thing she asked me to write one column in all the years that she was there. She even got, she went to a game one time and got mad at the officials and she wanted me to write a column about the officiating and so I really didn't want to do it but I did it and tried to forget it as soon as I could.

But that for all those years, you know for maybe, I've been there forty years roughly and I'd say that for the first thirty five, thirty six years I decided what I was going to write all the time. I mean I made the decision, I was the sports editor, and my first concern was my column and I wrote seven a week for a long time. And then when I retired at age sixty-five, ten years ago, I, I went to four columns a week and that's what I'm doing now but Jim Rossow, the sports editor, is so phenomenal I can't even tell you. He is absolutely the best there is. I mean he is just, and he comes up with ideas for me all the time. Even today I'm doing a column for him that I would have never thought to do and he, his mind is so fertile and he's so much sharper and has such a good view of things and he's able to dress up stories and he's able, he does things that I can't even imagine doing and just, it give you and an idea just how far the sports page has advanced.

As one example, when I came to the *News-Gazette* in '66, forty years ago, we had ads on the first sports page. We had maybe a third of the page, maybe a fourth of the pages was advertising and we had a relatively small hole to fill for sports. Today we have more sports writers than we have news writers. More sports writers than we have news people. Just think about that and look at the space, I mean, its just gigantic and have, you got eleven or twelve guys putting that sports page out. I just write a column, that's all I do but Jim keeps coming up, so I don't, I'm not the exclusive one coming up with ideas anymore. Jim comes up, not as many ideas as I do for my own column but every now and then, practically every week he'll come up with one idea that I'll think, "Man that's a good idea," and I'll try to follow that up. And so that, that part has changed for me in the sense that all those years when Marijen was, well Marijen was never here. I mean, that

was the point and John Hirshfeld for all his Notre Dame leanings when he was the boss never, never came up, never tried to pressure me to write about anything although we did get into it one time over when I was on the AP poll and I didn't vote for Notre Dame the way he wanted me to. And we had a real row about that but, but no, Mrs. Chinigo basically was in her latter years. She was very driving when she was younger but in her latter years, she was gone so much and she'd come to town and she'd have a lot of discussions with the editorial people but she didn't, she didn't bother me at all.

TL: She wasn't involved in the Stoner matter at all?

LT: No, that was all Hirshfeld. Hirshfeld, we had, this is, Hirshfeld didn't know about this. I forgot that now. Before we ran the first story, I'm talking to my son-in-law, Joe Burden, about it and I'm telling what this story is, "Man this is a bombshell." He said, "Have you told John Hirshfeld?" And I said, "Man I better tell him, hadn't I?" Because that, this has all been internal within the department and Hirshfeld didn't know anything about it. And I called him and course he approved it but I almost forgot to tell him. We had gone that far, we had had the meetings with Weir and everything before he even knew about it.

TL: What was his reaction?

LT: Well, he didn't like Stoner, so everything was ok [laughs]. He and Stoner had had their words and so I, he absolutely approved and I probably knew that without having to ask him.

TL: You mentioned Tim Johnson, how is he involved in this?

LT: That's a good question. I'm trying to remember. He was close with Kroll. I think that Bill Kroll was the main, the firing, the attempted firing or the planned it, the planned firing of Bill Kroll was what set this whole thing in motion. I think he was in Christian athletes or something and maybe Tim was too or they were related, maybe it was a church relationship. I don't know what their relationship was, but I know that Tim and I talked about it before it ever happened and this thing was a long time in the works. And in other words, Kroll and I had an agreement: If this happens I get with you and if it didn't happen he didn't want to testify because if he kept his job he was going to be perfectly happy but, but, I knew that this thing was going to blow up. I could see it and so I kept, I, the only people I talked to it about were within the office to John Beck and with Kroll and with Tim Johnson. For some reason Tim had brought it up and we'd gotten together on it somehow. I don't know what his, you'd have to ask Tim maybe, what how that, how he originally, I think it was through Kroll though.

TL: We can't talk about Stoner without talking about Mike White, huh? Tell me about your relationship with Mike.

LT: Well, Mike White was great with the media and he, he was, he was kind of a flamboyant guy and, and it took me a while to figure out that he didn't really care what

the rules were. He was more, he was more interested, he wanted to win and he was obviously did things that he shouldn't have and, and so we, Mike had us on an early run and everybody was excited and all of a sudden in 1983, I think this was, he came in '80, and '83 we went to the Rose Bowl. In 1983 we're in California and I talked to John Novak out there and we found out that Illinois was under investigation and was going to be in trouble with the NCAA over violations that Mike White and his staff had made and at that time Cribbet was the Chancellor, John Cribbet.

And I came back and waited one day. I mean we ran our stories on the game and everybody that was the game we lost but we had to break the story and so I did that like the third of January, the fourth of January whatever it was, and immediately thereafter that, that the NCAA was going to be coming down on Illinois and you know, that didn't please the, the department at all but we had to run the story because it was true and Mike, Mike handled it pretty well. I mean, I, as far as he and I are concerned we still get along but ultimately you know he survived that one, but Cribbet made a decision to retain him. Basically a zero tolerance type thing and then he was later fired for more infractions.

But I, I just never- the only thing I will say about Mike is he, he handled all those difficulties and his own firing professionally. He handled them well. He didn't do like Moeller did. Moeller just went berserk and Valek didn't handle his particularly well you know because he, he was basically fired in the middle of the season which is not a good situation. But isn't it interesting when you look back on it and see all the problems that we had and that I had to deal with. I was always seemed like I was on kind of a firing line because of the unhappiness with. What happens is these coaches build up these great support groups, and they support anything they do basically and then they get fired and the people that are involved in firing them are in trouble because they don't think its right but its happened and happened and happened.

TL: Your personal relationship with White...

LT: Personal relationship-

TL: Was good?

LT: Was good. As was every reporter that dealt with him. He just was very, he was very good with reporters, he was wonderful with quarterbacks. He treated everyone else terribly.

TL: Is that right?

LT: Yeah, I mean he fired Ted Bennett time after time. He had problems with people. He, yeah, but he just had a way. He had a personality and he had a way of dealing with reporters. He, I guess he figured that we were going to, you know, write the stories about him so he was friendly with us. And yeah, he was easy to get along with for us but boy for other people he was terrible and he was like a Jekyll and Hyde in a lot of ways.

TL: How about John Mackovic?

LT: Cold. You know basically aloof. Basically withdrawn. Very smart. Had very poor people skills. Wasn't a good recruiter. Was a genius coach, I think. I mean maybe that's too strong a word but a very good offensive coach and was fortunate to have an outstanding defensive coordinator in Tepper for several years whose style may have gone out of style defensively but, but Mackovic was not easy to reach. Now I played golf with Mike White. I played golf with John Mackovic. We actually played together. It was a big difference. Mike was out there having fun. John was grinding. You know, it's just that he was, he was in his own world and I think always was and never, every place he left there was not anybody, you know, not that he burned his bridges necessarily but that everybody accepted him going on his own way and were happy to go to the next guy. Whereas Mike White left a lot of friends.

TL: Well, how about Lou Tepper?

LT: Well Lou was a, you know, very religious guy and, and worked very hard at his trade and was simply unsuccessful because of his inability to find anybody to run the offense that he could live with. He, he, wound up hiring his close friend Schudel from Ball State and that was his undoing because the offense just continued to fail and ultimately, he was fired.

TL: How about your relationship with him personally?

LT: Well, you couldn't, you couldn't not get along with Lou Tepper because as I said he was very religious and he would forgive you no matter what you did. I'm serious. I mean you know, you could have just go in and write the worst things you can imagine and he would forgive you. You'd say well, you know.

TL: And the next one Turner?

LT: Well, Ron Turner. I think I had a good relationship with Ron Turner. He didn't do anything wrong necessarily he just, he just, his recruiting failed him and I didn't think there was, I was, it was hard to figure how they could go from such a bad team when he took it over and then win the Big Ten outright in what was that 2001? And then have it collapse on him the way it did. I, I just was totally unaware of what to expect there. I, I thought that once Illinois got to the championship and went to the Sugar Bowl and had that terrific team that, you know that was undisputed Big Ten champion and beat Ohio State and Michigan and was, and all of a sudden to go, I just, it caught me by surprise. I thought he had it on the way up. I thought all the arrows were pointing up and all of a sudden they were pointing down and Illinois has not recovered since.

TL: Did you, did you ever have a personal friendship with him, for example you mentioned playing golf with Turner?

LT: No, no I never had-

TL: Had a drink outside?

LT: No, no I never did. Now Mike White I did. But not with, Mike was much more, he tried to play up to the press and Mike was a different personality. Ron was a good guy I, but, it, I think too, I think my age has something to do with it. I think, it, once you get to the point of retirement where I was that they look at you a little differently and I don't think he was, we didn't, no we didn't have any relationship like that. But it was a good working relationship, but it just wasn't anything personal at all.

TL: Let's talk about somebody...

LT: And the other thing about Bob Asmussen been covering football you know, when Mike White was here I covered football and I was the beat guy and I was the guy out there everyday and I was the guy trying to find out who he was recruiting and I'm the guy trying to find out who's hurt and I'm, now I'm so much more removed from that. I have been so much more removed than that since I became just a columnist that I'm not there everyday and I'm not involved in the innerworkings.

TL: Right. How about some of the coaches since Lou Henson, basketball coaches?

LT: Well-

TL: Starting with...

LT: Lon Kruger.

TL: Yeah, Lon Kruger.

LT: Lon Kruger was, was a very easy guy to get along with he and I, he was on, we got him to play on our softball team. He was, he never went for drinks afterwards but he came to the games. We had a wonderful summer playing, one summer playing with him. We won every game he played in and he, I played golf with him maybe twice during the time he was here. I followed him and I thought he was terrific coach. And he won a Big Ten championship one year and basically I thought, he did a great job and I found very little to be critical of Lon Kruger. And he took the money at Atlanta and left and was pretty hard for him not to I guess because he was, you know they're going to offer you a couple of million dollars a year to coach basketball and then you know I think Bill Self was, Bill Self wrapped all the media around his finger. Everybody loved Bill, he was, he was very successful here and found little to be critical of that. The same thing with Weber. We've had, we've won six Big Ten championships here since 1999, I think or '98 if I get my years right. But that's a lot of Big Ten championships. You got to remember Lou Henson tied for one Big Ten championship in over two decades and then, you know, Harv never won anything before that. So, you're coming here, we've gone thirty years with minimal success. I mean Lou had some great teams, but he didn't even win the Big Ten championship in '89 when they went to the Final Four and so these three coaches it

really brings about an interesting issue as to the fact that Illinois has been successful with their last three coaches. Each one coaching the other guy's players. I mean Kruger won with Henson's players, Self won with Kruger players, Weber's winning with Self players, or has won with Self players and so that whole idea that you have to recruit your own players is crazy.

TL: Well, we're about to find out...

LT: Well, that's right. That's right.

TL: How about him?

LT: Weber?

TL: Yeah.

LT: Well he's just so open it's unbelievable. Now he's not a guy that, that I would ever have social relationship with because I think I'm just too far removed from that now but, but he is so honest that his assistant coach, Jay Price, I think spends a lot of his time trying to talk Weber out of telling us the truth because he thinks we'd...I mean that's an exaggeration of course but it's true that Jay worries about the fact that, that Weber is so honest and so direct and so outspoken and he really is and he tells us everything. You know, if a guy's having trouble he'll tell you about it. Now the one area that he can't get into is, is physical, medical problems because of the new rules there that you know they can't, they can't discuss those.

TL: Does he tell you some things and ask you not to report them?

LT: Yes.

TL: Occasionally we're told that a certain player has been benched or otherwise disciplined because he quote, "didn't take care of business."

LT: Yeah right.

TL: Now I don't know what that means.

LT: It means. I don't know exactly what it means because it could mean several things but it probably means he didn't show up for an academic thing or he didn't show up for weight training or he was late for a meeting or it was some little stupid thing that it doesn't amount to anything but it's important with the coaches and yes. But if he says that he may say that at a press conference, okay. But if the press conference is over, you walk up and say, "By the way what was that about?" He'll tell you and we should do that but the reason that we didn't in the case that you maybe referring to is because it was a teleconference and we weren't there and so we, we took it off the teleconference and but

he is extremely cooperative and I think he's just a terrific coach but you know there's great concern whether he can get the players that he needs.

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

TL: Did you ever, did you ever regret that you didn't, or I suppose I should first ask you whether you ever tried to move into a bigger market, into a big city paper, a Chicago paper, something like that. Did you ever think about that?

LT: I think everybody thinks about things like that. Anybody would think about it but I, the only time I ever tried to get into the Chicago market was when I resigned in 1970 from the *News-Gazette*. I was doing television work and I decided, "I wonder what it would be like to try to do television work in Chicago." And I went up there and I talked to people at WGN and one of the stations was, I can't even recall what it was now. It was a beginning station and I didn't, there was some kind of an offer or consideration. "Would I consider doing sports on weekends and the other three days news?" And the first thing that I sat down they wanted me to show how I would cover a car accident. I had no idea how to do it and I thought, "This is crazy, I think I'll try to get back at the *News-Gazette*." So I applied to get back at the *News-Gazette* and got that job and not, and have never wanted to cover, I never wanted to be at the metropolitan paper. Just a wonderful place to work and I would never, I really never seriously considered it during, during since 1970 and I definitely didn't want to cover baseball I just, to travel all that time and cover all those games day after day. I just didn't want to do that. I think this is the perfect market for me to cover sports, I think.

TL: The, the *News-Gazette* is one of the few newspapers of any size that is not owned and managed by a national media company.

LT: Umm hmm.

TL: Do you think your job is any different here in terms, with regard to that fact, the fact that the you're probably, I would assume that the pressures might be a little greater because of the fact that this is all a inside thing The division manager is not off in Cincinnati or someplace like that. Have you ever thought about that, do you think it's any different in terms of the pressures you get to be, you know to be satisfy the image that the athletic program wants? Is it any different? You think the pressures are greater or less because it's locally owned?

LT: I think that we, I think we, I have much more freedom in this situation than I would have, than I think maybe John Supinie has in working for the, you know the consortium or the group of papers that he works for in the sense of he's got to serve Springfield, Peoria, Galesburg, I don't know what others but he's got several and I would, and I know his deadlines are different, his responsibility. I think he gets more orders on what he has to do as opposed to me just having all this freedom all this time and I, I'm awful lucky I think. Two ways: number one to have always worked for an afternoon newspaper in the sense that I can work days. I never wanted to work nights all the time. I did that briefly

in, in my life and I didn't like it. I like getting up early in the morning and, and getting my work done during the day and of course if there're games at night then I cover them but, but the only work I do at night basically is game coverage and so I just, I think that, that this paper, locally owned has some great advantages. Maybe I, I've always had relationship with John Hirshfeld and Chuck Flynn and John Foreman, the people who run it. So that's a big bonus to be friends with the people that are going to fire you or could fire you.

TL: Well, we talked about pressures of course. We didn't mention fans. The fans I assume are particularly in a place like this were there's this is one of the things that really engages the interest of an awful lot of people who live and work and run businesses and whatever here, they're fans they...

LT: It's the culture.

TL: Go to the football games and so forth. Let's take the recent McBride column. Did you get a lot of heat on that from fans?

LT: A little, you know. "Why'd you have write that...Don't you"? I just thought a couple of people mentioned. I thought it was a decent column. I thought, I liked it myself. All it did was tell the truth, you know?

TL: It was quote "negative" unquote...

LT: Yeah

TL: Rather than positive.

LT: Yeah, that's because he's been playing negative instead of positive [laughs]. That's what I mean. I, yeah but, yeah but somebody called in and I'm vulnerable on that on the sense of adding you know being on the radio so much and doing the two-hour show on Saturday, the two-hour show on Monday. People call in and say, "I didn't like your column." You know? "How come you... don't you think?" No, the call was like, "Don't you think that he'll have trouble playing after all that negative stuff?" And he came out and hit his first two shots and had sixteen points and had a good game. And somebody said, "Well that shows you Loren, you know, you sure picked a good time to write that." And my reply was, "I never said he couldn't shoot three's." [Laughter]

TL: What did the coaches think about that column, anything?

LT: No, I don't, no, nothing, no reaction at all. I've never, I don't get any reaction on anything I write from *this* coaching staff. I don't know if they read it. And if anybody reads it it's Jay, and if Jay reads it and sees something I wrote negative he might tell Weber about it. That might be the extent of it. I don't know. Weber's never complained to me about anything I've ever written.

TL: As a general trend in the sports journalism there's been that movement during your lifetime toward the necessity of being provocative. It's certainly, it's demonstrated by most by the Chicago press there that's the style is to be provocative.

LT: Mariotti is the best example of that.

TL: And, first of all do you think this is a good thing? And secondly do you know why it's happened? Is that what the readers want these days?

LT: Evidently because Mariotti's the best read. Of course he's also the best writer but I, a fellow that writes a column up there along side him said to me, I said, "What's it like to try to write a column next to Mariotti?" And he said, "If I said that the coach should be fired, Mariotti would say that the coach should be hanged." He would always go to one extreme beyond whatever anybody else would write. He would take the further and, and be successful in, in getting, attracting more readers because he was so extreme. So I guess there is some advantage to doing that but that's their game and you know I'm not in that. I'm not into that. I, I'm, I like to be provocative too, but I guess I am just not as good at it as some people.

TL: The, of course the assumption is that a lot of your readers have watched the game on television. Has this affected the way you do your job?

LT: Well, I think, you see, way back when we started this conversation and we got into discussion how writing has changed and writing, in those days even if it was flowery or and you use an example, an extreme example of the best writers, you know, maybe Ward or I'm sorry...

TL: Red Smith was one of the great writers.

LT: Oh, Red was wonderful. But, but a lot of those stories dealt with what happened in the game. What actually physically happened in an inning or in a quarter or in the game and now it's more, why did that happen? It's more of a quotes from players and coaches. You didn't see the quotes from players like you see now. The players are giving reasons why, sometimes you can, sometimes if we're not careful you can pick up the paper after a game and not really totally know exactly what happened but you'll know, but you'll get visions of why certain things happened. How did you know, what was the sequence that we won the game at the end, let's say. The sequence of plays that were actually, that determined the result of the game. It's not there.

TL: Right.

LT: There's no lasting...what's the right word? There's no, there's no report of what happened. It's specialized on some angle quoting somebody or, or it's, it's just not a detail of the game and that's how it's changed a lot.

TL: And the reason for that, I gather, is that the assumption...

LT: You've already seen it.

TL: You've seen the game either in person or on television.

LT: Yeah. That's a bad assumption. I mean we should be a newspaper of record.

TL: Right.

LT: Shouldn't we? I mean, I think we should. And so when I was sports editor I wrote two stories after each game. I wrote a game story and a column. Save all the best stuff for the column, of course. But when I could do that, and but, at least there would be a report of the game. Now there isn't, it isn't necessary because Bob Asmussen for example who covers football tends to go toward angles. Grab an angle and go there and grab an angle and go here. But you may not get a rundown of what happened quarter after quarter and I don't know if that's good or bad. I mean that's the way we do it. And by the way I mentioned to you that in my day when I was writing two stories per game I would, and I was the only writer. Now there are three of us writing. I'm one of three and we have to put our heads together. The three of us have to meet and say, "Now what are you going to write about, and what are you going to write about, and I'll take what's left." You know? Or, ok, "Somebody's got to write about Juice, quarterback. Somebody's got to write the defense did something." Or whatever, or whoever, whatever the leading storylines are. We each take one. I don't get what I want necessarily every time anymore because I'm not the first choice.

TL: No.

LT: Basically, we say, "Bob, what are going to write about?" And Bob will say, "Well I'm going to write about Juice." "Ok, well then I'll write about the defense."

TL: What, how much do you assume, do your, the reader of your column knows about basketball? About, is there a tendency to slip into the inside stuff and to refer to the, the two forward or something like that?

LT: That's exactly what I was thinking about.

TL: Yeah.

LT: I wonder how many people know what one, two, three, four, five are? And I have avoided that even when the coach, I'm quoting the coach, okay and he said, "We should have Warren Carter at the four, but we might play Randle at the four, or we might play Randle at the three." And I fudge on that a lot and say, "We should have Randle at the power forward or the small forward." And I change his word from four to power forward and I change his word and I've done that and I talked to Rossow when I say, "What should I do about this because if I start throwing three's and four's out at people, do they

know what I'm talking about?" And I don't know if we've reached a conclusion yet. At some point surely everybody will know what that is but it's, right now I'm, I'm not comfortable using some of that language. But he's changed our language, we know what a big is now. That's a guy that's big right. He's, he's definitely, he throws a lot of those things out and I think we have to be careful about that.

TL: Well, the same applies to football.

LT: Yeah.

TL: There's inside stuff...

LT: Oh yeah.

TL: There's a lot of anxiety about the American newspaper about print. About whether print has any future or not.

XX: Yeah.

TL: Whether newspapers are endangered. Now you mentioned that the sports section of the *News-Gazette* is bigger than it ever has been in the past.

XX: Absolutely, way bigger.

TL: Why, what, do you share this anxiety about the future of print?

LT: Yeah. I don't share the anxiety about reporters having jobs. If we don't report for a newspaper we'll report for the internet or something. You know? It will get out there someday and somebody has to gather the news. So, you know, I wonder about it. I really wonder about. I see Decatur dropping drastically in terms of their subscriptions. I see Peoria dropping. We've dropped some at the *News-Gazette*. It's, it's a, it's a concern. I don't know how long Danville's going to last with a newspaper. I mean I can see that at sometime maybe in our lifetime that, that will fail. And I just, yes. I don't know. I read every chance I get when somebody writes about this aspect of it and in *Wall Street Journal* or whatever. You know, I grab it and read it and wonder what it means and I don't know entirely whether, I think that as long as there people of my era, you know, and a little bit younger are around there will be newspapers, but I don't know what happens when, when kids that are twenty three and twenty five today that have never, that have gotten all their stuff off the internet. Gotten all, you know, and they're really, they just don't read newspapers. Like, the young people don't read newspaper like the young people read newspapers when I was young and so I wonder what's going to happen. I would be interested to know what's your opinion on that is? Where do you think we're going?

TL: I don't know. I don't know but I do, I'm concerned about.

LT: There's reason to be concerned...

TL: Very, very definitely.

LT: Because you see, you see circulation just dipping everywhere.

TL: Yeah.

LT: I mean, I, I this just came up this last week. Somebody told me, and I'm going to get the number wrong but somebody told how many the Tribune had lost in the last year, and it was like a hundred thousand or something. I mean subscriptions. A hundred thousand? And I'm throwing a number out here, I don't know if it's accurate but-

TL: Certainly...

LT: But it's big and you know that thing is for sale now and people got to wonder what they're buying.

TL: Yep, yep, yep. Just two more questions. The first one is, are you comfortable with the role at this University now that the athletic program has? It's, it's obvious under Guenther in expansionist mode and this of course is tied into the whole controversy over the Chief. What, what...

LT: Let's stop the Chief and I'll go back to that because I'll be happy to talk about the Chief. But the first thing I think is that we're going into a hundred sixteen-million-dollar renovation of Memorial Stadium. Is that really needed? We're going, we're talking about getting rid of this, you know, changing the role of the Assembly Hall. Is that really needed? I mean, it seems to me we're spending or planning to spend millions and millions of dollars because we have to keep up with Jones' because Michigan State did it, and Iowa did it, and Wisconsin did it, Penn State did it, Ohio State did it. Two hundred million to improve their stadium. Well, I guess it's ok if you get the money from private sources which they do. I mean if people are stupid enough to want to spend their money that way I guess it's all right. I guess I shouldn't say stupid, but I just don't understand it. And, but I think that we're caught in this, in this race toward trying to have the best facilities and, and I think we've got pretty good facilities but you know, we're not even filling the stadium as it is now but we've got to get those suites in there because we can sell those suites for fifty thousand dollars and you can make more money that way. And revenue streams is a word I never heard of before, you know until a few years ago, and now we're looking for new revenue streams. And I'm not comfortable with any of this stuff. I'm not comfortable with talk about turning, building a new basketball arena next to a basketball arena. And, and it bothers me, but I don't know, do I want to take a strong stand against that? If somebody comes up with the private money and they say they can maintain it over time. I don't know what to say.

I'm at a loss of. I just was involved and they were very unhappy with me for reporting out there that Jerry Colanagelo called Atkins and, and Doug Mills and Bob Lynch and all

the money guys into a meeting in Phoenix and they're trying to figure out a way to build a new basketball arena. Which I'm sure that the administration is not going to accept because they don't want to put the finances of the Assembly Hall in jeopardy nor do they want to minimize the, the Assembly Hall and they can't blow it up. I mean they know it will take three million dollars to blow it up, get rid of it, demolish it. They're not, they know that decision's been made. They're not going to do that. So if they keep the Assembly Hall and build another arena can you make them both work? And do you put them in competition with each other like they have at Ohio State where you have two buildings both competing for the same acts and you know acts being able to play one against the other? That whole thing, that whole thing's got me. I don't, am I going to come out against the Memorial Stadium being renovated? No, I just don't understand all this. I mean it's just, it's just a race against your neighbors and they did it so we've got to do it.

TL: Course you, you work for a newspaper that is a commercial sponsor...

LT: Yeah, it's true.

TL: Of the football program...

LT: Yeah, yeah they are and I think, you know, because they, because of the relationship between *WDWS News-Gazette* and *WDWS* are sister companies, well *WDWS* wants to keep the broadcast. So the newspaper advertising because they want to stay in good stead so that *WDWS* can continue to be the voice of Illinois sports. And there're a lot of things that they do at *WDWS* to keep the football and basketball. For instance, they do volleyball which they wouldn't do otherwise. They do baseball which nobody listens to, and they do certain things that are in agreement as part of the contract. To do football and basketball you have to do others things and part of thing, and one of the things is advertise. Now as far as the Chief's concerned, I don't know where to start there.

TL: Well just a very, very briefly.

LT: Very briefly is, I don't know why both sides care so much. I don't know. I, I think if people want, if people want to so-called worship the Chief they should be allowed to do it. I don't think it hurts anybody that badly but of course they, I can be told, I'm told on the other side of it that you know it hurts people's feelings and hurts certain people's feelings. But I don't know why you'd want to come out against it, and I don't know why the people that love the Chief love it, why they care so much.

TL: Bill Self at Kansas just signed a contract for I think two million dollars something like that...

LT: Umm hmm.

TL: For the extension of his contract...

LT: Umm hmm.

TL: How much longer can we go in where the student athlete gets zero and coaches get two million dollars? You think, you think athletes ought to be paid?

LT: The problem with that question is that if you're going to pay athletes you've got to pay all the women athletes, all the volleyball players, all the golfers, all the tennis players. By the time you get done I don't where you'd find all the money. Now if you're just going to pay the football and basketball players because they're the ones probably that raised that money and so people think that they're the ones that should be paid. I don't think you can stop there. I don't think you can, I don't think that you can pay the basketball players and not pay the wrestlers. So I don't think it's going to happen.

TL: Right.

LT: I didn't answer your question as to whether should they. I don't think they should be but I don't have any complaint or have any problem with a small stipend if they want to do that. But as far as being able to pay them proper wages I, I think that's impossible. I don't think that money's there. But you're right about the coaches. That, that's another one of those keeping with the Jones thing. I mean, you, it's happening in all over sports. It's never been anything like this last month or two months of pitchers in baseball. If you could, if you could win ten games, you're worth ten million dollars next year. In other words, it's, you're worth a million dollars per victory.

TL: Yeah. Course that's professional...

LT: That is professional sports...

TL: Professional sports...

LT: But it, it's, kind of, well, and so is coaching. And I mean a coach is a professional coach basically coaching a college team. I mean when you make two million dollars. It's, I, I'm dumb founded. You ought to get Lou Henson in here to talk about that because he started out making about five thousand dollars a year and now he's, he's the highest paid, he's got the highest retirement of anybody in Illinois, University of Illinois history.

TL: Is that right?

LT: The highest retirement. So if he wants to buy you lunch, he can handle it. [Laughter]

TL: One last question.

LT: Yeah.

TL: As we sit here today, how much longer do you see yourself writing the column?

LT: As long as I'm healthy. I don't know. I'm kind of right at seventy-five. I, I'm looking forward to, I kind of got a goal of eighty now. But if I get to eighty then you know maybe I'll try to go... I saw some woman lived to be 116. She died the other day. That'd be great, wouldn't it? Think I can write it until 116? [Laughter]

TL: Well, we'll have to find out.

LT: I don't know. I don't feel any different right now, but you know Arnie Yarbor retired is retiring at Po' Boys the restaurant downtown and he said, "I just got tired." Well, when I just get tired, I guess I'll quit but I'm working long hours now. I take some summers off. I take eleven weeks off in the summer and play golf and fool around. So, you know, I come back refreshed every time and it gets hard in the spring to write columns because you start to run out of ideas and subject matter and so that makes it easy to quit then and then come back when the football season starts and I do, I come back in mid July every year. So I've got it kind of planned out and that's the way it's worked the last ten years and I, I don't know. I don't have any. I seem to be reasonably healthy. If I don't break a leg playing softball or golf someday, I'm going to keep going.

TL: Are there any obvious questions that you can think that follow up for something that I should have asked but didn't ask? No, no I think we've done it.

LT: Great.

TL: Great, great...

LT: All right.

TL: You were excellent.