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This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 465-006
Interviewee: Lloyd Schermer
Interviewer: John Newhouse
Date of Interview: 1975
Project: Lee Newspapers Oral History Project

Lloyd Schermer: Betty and I arrive in Missoula, and we'd bought a home and we had Greg with us. The home—all we had was our bed upstairs on the bare floor, and we woke up about midnight with our bed rolling across the floor. Right away, we knew it was an earthquake because the whole damn house was jumping around. It was that Yellowstone earthquake, you know, that killed 35 people—the mountain slid down into the valley and it tipped a lake upside down and so forth [likely the 1959 Hebgen Lake earthquake]. So, we ran out of the house, had Greg, and when it was all over, went back in, I called the office. I hadn't been down there on the nightside yet, and I asked a few questions. Finally, the guy on the other end of the phone says, "Who is this?"

I said, "This is Schermer."

He says, "Who in the hell is Schemer?"

I said, "You're going to find out in about five minutes." [laughs]

I got down there, and it was a hell of a good story. But the *Missoulian* was a very sleepy newspaper when it came to news, so I started stomping around the place, asking these guys to start calling around the state. Well, "Why?"

I said, "Well, find out where the damned earthquake was."

We finally called down to Yellowstone, down that area, and we couldn't get through, so we knew that the center was down there because all the telephone lines were screwed up. So, we had a good story then. We had a better story than the AP because we did the telephone routine. The next day I got down to the office, walked into the...and it turned out to be a big story. Walked into Guy Mooney's office, and he was in his office where he stayed most of the time. John Forssen, one of our reporters, was calling in, and they were arguing about whether John should get an airplane or not and go down there because the whole thing was beginning to break. Mooney turns to me and he says, "This is Forssen. He wants a goddamn airplane."

I said, "You mean he hasn't already rented one?"

He says, "No," he says, "We don't do that sort of thing around here."

I said, "Well, you started doing it right now!" [laughs]

So, John flew down there, and he got some beautiful pictures right away. Keith Fuller, who's assistant AP general manager now, walked in—happened to walk in. They did a good job through the AP through the office. It was kind of an interesting thing. That was my first contact. But they just didn't want to be bothered, or if there was any coverage of the earthquake, it had to be via somebody else—the Associated Press and that sort of thing.

John Newhouse: How about the guy who was going to find out who you were in five minutes?

LS: Well, he found out. [laughs] I forget who it was. It was funny.

JN: Must have been.

[End of Interview]