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Oral History Number: 465-018

Interviewees: Albert Gaskill and Duncan "Scotty" Campbell

Interviewer: John Newhouse

Date of Interview: 1975

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Note: Albert "Bert" Gaskill began his career at the Montana Standard in 1949. He was editor from 1966-1985. Duncan "Scotty" Campbell began work at the Standard in 1947, assuming various positions until he was named publisher in 1967. He retired in 1979. Jeff Gibson was a long-time editorial page editor at the Standard.

Albert Gaskill: —It's gorgeous.

John Newhouse: Full page color.

AG: John S. Durston came from the *Syracuse Post Standard* and came into Montana for Marcus Daly, one of the Copper Kings. They had this *Anaconda Standard*, which was quite a plant.

I'll show you briefly some of this stuff. I've got recruitment. I've got applications coming out my ears. I've got to get them answers. Even on form letters.

They put out Christmas edition and so this woman in Massachusetts is a relation to the former editor-in- chief, asked if we could reproduce this. Well I found the original Russell when I was here as a summer intern in 1947 or '48 and we took months and months to get it reproduced because some St. Paul calendar company had—

[Break in audio]

—June 1, 1959, you were here as a reporter, and we had, of course, a full Anaconda Company oriented crew although that didn't mean that they were dedicated Anaconda people or anything, they were workers. They had newspaper jobs, myself, I came here to get some experience and I got to like the town and I stayed. I had no real hopes of being the editor at any time, but I think because of Lee I became the editor although I think maybe I'd have made it under the Anaconda Company too, although I fought them tooth-and-nail as a reporter. Some of the things I've recited earlier for Don was the fact they never carried mine deaths on page 1, and I insisted that this was a thing that shouldn't be hidden.

JN: And you did it.

AG: I did it.

JN: How'd you get away with it?

AG: Oh, I've got lots of guts, and it's hindered me lots of times because I talk too much. But anyhow, at that time, our editor, Law Risken, who had been with the Anaconda Company all his life became editor emeritus in the polite way that Lee took care of their old employees.

JN: What was his first name?

AG: Law. He was a Wisconsin boy. Oh, yes, and from down in the Plattville area, one of the towns close to Plattville, I can't remember the name of it. But his family was in the newspaper, and their last name was Law. But then at that time, about August 1 [1959], they bought Tom Mooney from Helena to become the managing editor, which I didn't know until many years later. I thought he was the editor. He didn't much like it and he didn't stay very long, and Walter Nelson became the editor, and I superseded him 9 years ago in 1966. Walter stayed on as our editorial writer for some time after that.

But we've thinned out all the old employees to the point now where in the newsroom the first of June, I'm going to be the only one left. Bill Clark will be 65 in May and will retire; Roy Anderson, who worked as sports editor at the *Billings Gazette* for 14 years, was editor of the Livingston Enterprise under Lee Enterprises and came to me as city editor about five years ago, had a bad heart and he's taking disability; we're in the process now of giving him disability. So in the newsroom itself, there will only be myself left out of what was really a large crew when we had both the *Butte Daily Post* and the *Montana Standard*.

JN: The *Butte Post* was the afternoon paper?

AG: Yes. That was the albatross that Lee had to accept in order to get papers in Montana. My understanding is they didn't want the Butte papers. Very strong union situation in which unions pretty well ran the papers as far as conditions, and I've been told—I have no authority for it—but I understand Lee lost 250,000 dollars the first year they owned the *Butte Daily Post* and the *Montana Standard* on this operation, while the others were profitable papers. So as soon as they could, they phased out the bureau and the *Anaconda Standard*, now we're down to one man and he's also a former Anaconda company employee. He has about 44 years I think, including office boy status; certainly, he'll be the oldest employee left in the newsroom. There are people in other departments who were under the Anaconda Company. Scotty Campbell, our publisher, was an advertising salesman.

JN: In Butte?

AG: Yes, he was here, he came approximately 1948, as near as I can recall. He's a Butte boy originally. He's been in the service stars and stripes, been in the journalism sequence, went to Chicago and was in advertising, and then he came back here under Ward Fanning, and then he eventually became advertising director, and he became co-publisher with Ward Fanning as Ward Fanning wound down his career.

JN: That was along about—

AG: Well, I'd have to look it up, John. Let's see, I've been editor nine years... I would say about seven and a half years ago, because I had Dick Morrison and Ward Fanning as my original bosses.

JN: Morrison was the man in charge of the Montana papers after Don Anderson more or less let go as president of the Montana Lee Newspapers. Dick Morrison took over that thing and it's partially at least not as strong as Don, but he was a resident and he was publisher of Butte and the top man in Lee of Montana at the time.

Of course, Lee of Montana was dissolved and integrated into the group rather than being a separate entity later on. And we have several advertising men who started out practically in boyhood that are still here and some of our older printers were under the Anaconda Company.

JN: But between yourself and Scotty, why you're at the top of the editorial side of it and you are old Anaconda people, really.

AG: Yes, of course many of these people that were in responsible positions under Anaconda Company were older people and they would have gone by attrition and many of them elected to leave for other jobs when the changes were made. Tom Wigal, a very competent city editor we had, had worked closely with the Anaconda Company and he elected to go with the Anaconda Company, and he has turned 65 and has retired in public relations.

JN: When it comes to the physical plant itself, what's happened since 1959?

AG: Well, in this building was opened at 25 W. Granite about August of 1958. The Anaconda Company built it and we were in an old livery stable in our former place and when they came up here, it was quite a thing except that we brought all the old furniture from the 1890s with us and had a brand new beautiful building and we didn't know quite why they were moving up here. One of our old printers lived in the house here as a boy, said that he'd lived here when it was on a fault, a mine fault where it sags and he said, why the Anaconda Company would want to put a place here I don't know. Their house had almost fallen down on this same site.

We have a large fault all through the building, there is one all the way through, but we have about 14-inch cement floors, they built it like they would a mine, so it holds together. But it was quite an improvement really for us after working in that livery stable which was a dirty, old filthy place, and they couldn't care less whether they had good facilities for printers, or working newsmen, or anybody else. No one had a nice office, and no one had anything, it was just a place to work and that was it. Of course, wages were terrible. But we didn't know why they build this new building about the same time they built a new plant in Helena. When the newspaper people started tramping through it was pretty obvious why. We were on the block; we were for sale.

I was fishing with the editor in the Big Hole basin and we stopped to rest, and I said to Law Risken, "When is Lee Newspapers taking over?"

He said, "Who?"

I said, "I hear Lee Newspapers bought us."

He said, "Is that right?" He said, "I haven't heard about it."

That's how Law Risken found out about it and I got it through the grapevine. And no other way, it's just strictly one of those things that you hear, and they always say the boss finds out last. I guess that's true. But then—

[Break in audio]

AG: Well, this is one of the things that Don Anderson wanted us to do when we first got here were just [use] tape recorders because we were very small staff and so forth, and we tried it but I don't even know where it is now, the one we bought. We don't use it.

JN: They're no damn good for spot news.

AG: I've had a couple of girl reporters in the years past that worked for me that took shorthand and they'd go to city council and come back and have to transcribe their shorthand notes before they could write a story.

JN: I couldn't possibly take the notes I have to take out here and get through here in the time I have.

AG: No, no this is the only way to get through it.

JN: Where it sticks in your mind and you got to listen to it again.

AG: Not only that these are people that you don't know, and you wouldn't associate them with the *Montana Standard* or you wouldn't associate them with anybody that you knew. Except when I mentioned Don Anderson. I was starting to tell you when Lee first took over, Don Anderson and Dave Gottlieb came in and they spent a few days, and I know they did it at all the papers and they met individually and with little groups and what can we do for you?

The Anaconda Company had not done a very good job on the physical property was—this was what you were asking about earlier—and we told them what the deficiencies were, and they promised to try to help and this is a flat roof and with the western exposure it was 93 here at

five o'clock and it was 93 here at 2 in the morning in letterpress days and we were getting out of here at 2 or 3 in the morning and it was horrible.

In the old Anaconda company days when Walter Nelson was the night editor, I use to take off my shirt and he'd say, "What if Mr. Dickey comes in?"

I'd say, "Maybe he'd find out that goddamn thing is hot."

Mr. Dickey was James H. Dickey, Jr. who was in charge of all Anaconda company subsidiaries.

JN: Right up in the Hennessey Building here?

AG: When I was a paperboy, his father lived in Dillon and I peddled to Butte maybe close to four years and Dickey's father would come out and shake his fist at me and say, you'd better get that on the porch, my son's the business manager of the *Post*. So like father like son, he was quite an autocratic old fellow, but he ran the lumber yard, the hardware companies, and the newspapers. When copper wasn't making money Jim Dickey made money for the Anaconda Company. [Unintelligible] expensive wages and conditions generally. But we began to get some improvements physically, and of course, the great transformation came with offset five years ago the first of June and at that time we did some and it's been a constant battle with the budget to upgrade the physical properties are we're certainly not the Taj Mahal of Billings, or even Missoula, but they have improved, very much so. We're using typewriters, but I spent last week looking at VDTs [video display terminals].

JN: What have you been doing here in town that you can be proud of?

AG: Well, we've had some very aggressive young reporters and one of them, Rick Foote, I assigned several years at the school board. We thought that was one of our worst problems as it is in many towns.

JN: Foot?

AG: Foote, with an e on the end. Rick had worked here as a summer intern for us and gone to Vietnam and came back and we had a vacancy of course, as we had many vacancies in those days because of Vietnam, and we assigned Rick to the school board in hopes that we could help straighten that situation out.

Through Rick's own vigorous actions and our support, we have gotten school board business out in the open, and it was secret as it has been in many communities and many places and we started it even before Rick Foote got here, but we didn't have the aggressive man that we did with him.

JN: Were the board meetings closed?

AG: Many of them were closed, or else they went into executive session and came out rubber stamped an action without discussion in order to conform with the law. Rick is now in the courthouse, we feel that's one of our biggest problems. We want the taxpayers to know where the dollars are going and how their elected officials are spending them, and we feel we're doing good public service in this area.

We've changed the personnel, of course, that made the paper sparkle in many areas where it never had anything because we were retaining old people on the payroll that were Anaconda company people that were drawing wages and that's about it. The women editor, for instance, is a national prize winner, Betty Ann Raymond, and our girls in the women's state press association just took top honors and Betty Raymond, for the third time, took the sweepstakes.

We have the best sport page Montana despite our size. We have two talented sports people, Hudson Willse, and Peter Chapin. Pete's new. However, prior to that, I mentioned that Roy Anderson had to retire. Bill Walter had been with Willse on sports and Bill became our city editor. I had moved him to the news side. I convinced him that was more future because we had such two good sports writers, they were both capable of being a sports editor of a large metro paper, they're that good. So, I convinced Bill take a promotion to the news side and he'd only been there a few months when Roy Anderson had to retire. And so and we have some other people that pitch in, that are sports oriented and we cover about 10 counties and dozens of high schools, two or three colleges in the area.

JN: Is your newsroom up numerically over '59?

AG: Let's see, over '59? I doubt it. I'd have to refer to my records to count it. There have been one or two times when we've gone down and one or two times when we've come up where I convinced them we needed a half of an employee.

I couldn't have gotten a full employee, but the gimmick of a half employee appealed to management and I got a half employee and that half employee became another half later on, and it became a full and we created, through my urging, we created a new position of Sunday editor, and we're proud of our Sunday paper. It's quite widely distributed in many places outside of Butte.

JN: What's your circulation?

AG: It's slipping, it's going with our bad economy and with the loss here, I'm not sure what the last figures, were—E&P would show it around 23,000. A few years ago, we were over 25,000.

JN: IN 1959, it was around, close to 24 or 25. 25,000 I would guess offhand, but then we've had several strikes in which every time you get in a strike, well, the Anaconda Company automates

a little more, and the eight-and-a-half-month strike of 1967 to '68, we lost about 1,800 jobs in Butte. 1,200-1,400 of those were Anaconda Company employees.

JN: City population is down—

AG: 1960 to 1970 population was almost exactly attributable that that; went down about 4,200. If you use a ratio of around 3-1, you're awful close to that. So, we are a one-industry town, and the newspapers vigorously supported such things the industrial park, the Port of Butte, to try to broaden our tax base.

JN: What do you mean the Port of Butte?

AG: We have an inland port where we bring products in from Japan and the Far East for redistribution. It comes to Seattle, mostly, by containerships, and then it comes by rail or truck from there to here. We were a satellite of Seattle, the port of Seattle, which is one of the world's largest, and we were the first and only inland port in the United States. However, Cheyenne and Wyoming, is getting one in about a month.

JN: Well, you weren't kidding then.

AG: No, we are; we're an inland port. It's still building, and we have great hopes for it. We've now come up with domestic distribution point where we bring furniture in from Michigan and we bring things in from all over the country at very favorable freight rates. One of the things we're doing now that I suggested, and Scotty liked and is following through—Scotty Campbell—is to bring all our newsprint from the northwest through Butte. The port of Butte is preparing a—they've been working for a long time on this, preparing this and getting the freight rates and everything. It will save us money and it will help the port of Butte.

JN: Is the paper instrumental in getting that designation here or...?

AG: Not really, no. We've supported it where support is badly needed. I myself was one of the model city board of directors in which when I go to those things, I don't represent the paper, I go there because Lee expects their management people to be involved in community affairs. Since I've been editor, I have in various things like that and we need public sentiment, of course, and we can help with that we think. We might not be able to change the vote at election time, but we can help with at least getting the facts forward so that people can intelligently discuss them and knew what's going on we think.

JN: How do you do on ecology things? You've got Montana Power here and you've got this Colstrip.

AG: Colstrip is far removed from us. That's been the *Billings Gazette's* whipping boy for many years. We have not taken a middle of the road approach; however, we take what we consider a

realistic approach. We are a one-industry town, copper mining, we do not live in a pretty town, it's an ugly scarred mining town, in the older section at least.

We know that the Anaconda Company is our principal livelihood, witness the figures I just recited in the loss of population and circulation. And consequently businesses, which are advertisers, the whole ball of wax. But we'll take the Anaconda Company to task when we think they're wrong, we'll take the Montana Power Company to task. They both have their headquarters here. We will be in meetings with these people where they downgrade us for our stand, but maybe the next day they'll call us and tell us we're being very fair about something, and we're trying to be fair about it.

One of the great things that we did after I became editor, it was not my institution, it was a Lee-wide thing, with readership surveys. 1966 in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, we all went out on readership surveys and beat the bushes, editors and publishers and advertising people and then we all had readership surveys. And we found although we had been an Anaconda Company property for all those years until 1959, and were suspect still as being an Anaconda property, many people didn't believe that we were, we went through the various union strikes and troubles involving unions in which we tried to do both sides fairly, and then in our readership survey we got a very good vote of confidence from the unions.

We have pretty good rapport with them now. On occasions, I suspect it's better than with the corporations, but that's only because we're trying to be fair. We'll get their message across as well as the company's. And under the Anaconda Company, there was many times that there was only one side of events, or it was ignored. You didn't write about it.

JN: I'm trying to think what it must have been like when the Lee people bought it, when you had the strike and the union people... well, as I recall, Scotty said somebody he phoned the unions and said, "Look, we want to know what you're doing; come on in and talk."

AG: Well, we've done this in the past, yes. We've got a strike on today, a wildcat strike, it's spring in Butte this happens. One of our warmest days yesterday so today we've got a strike; we'll have a series of them. Very strong union town and when you want to go fishing or something, well, you have a strike. The pickets are up today. Union's leadership says they don't know anything about it. They know there is a strike, but it's a wildcat strike. Some dissidents picketing and kept everybody from working, and if it follows the pattern, it'll probably be over this afternoon by 3 o'clock, or tomorrow afternoon, or the next day.

The serious strikes, God knows when they'll ever be over. Like the 8-and-a-half-month one was a terrible long strike. We've had depressed our economy terribly—1967 to '68 was the longest. We've had lots of them. We've had some since that have been into the months. Those are very crippling when you're a one-industry town.

I think probably among the best things, John, that we've done for the community is to make sure that we do cover the news on both sides of it and all sides of it, and we've continually beefed up our nightside reporting staff through shifts of personnel, not by extra personnel, to cover more and more meetings, go further afield on it, to—we try to do a good job by our area; however, the area has no trained newsmen as correspondents, and it's difficult to get it out of this small town, but we do, we get it and we send our own teams out to cover stories in the area.

JN: Do you have a photo, a photographer?

AG: We have a photographer now, and a part-time phototech, a high school boy who is excellent. He could be our photographer, he's that good. We did have a phototech, and we had an obit writer, and that was one I combined to get a permanent fulltime staffer. Assigned the photographer just do everything.

JN: You've got your own darkroom, you don't need an engraving plant.

AG: We have our own darkroom. We're in cold type, we have been for five years.

JN: So, you don't have to worry about an engraving plant.

AG: No. We have our own offset screening process.

When the Anaconda Company owned the papers, there were no photographers, there were no darkrooms, there were no cameras. After I became a reporter, we got a Polaroid one time and then there was an old one, an old 4x4 or some concoction. I don't remember what you called it, but I took pictures but didn't know how to use it or anything else, but they were usable, and we hired commercial photographers to take pictures for us. That, of course, was immediately changed under Lee, we bought a printer out here who had a photographic background to be our first photographer under Lee and he was a union man compositor, a linotype operator, but he voluntarily left there and held his card but he came into be our photographer and that was the start of our photo business.

JN: Scotty said there was a strike in the newspaper plant, or not a strike, I guess; it was negotiating that went on for a hell of a long time and that was where he picked up an ulcer.

AG: That must have been about, well, see, Scotty came—he was in the ad department here. Yes, he's been here since about 1947 or '48.

JN: He became publisher—?

AG: Roughly about 7-and-a-half years ago. He's done the negotiating since. I'm not too involved in negotiating.

JN: Tom Williams was here at that time too, wasn't he?

AG: Yes, Tom was our business manager. Came as production superintendent and—

JN: He apparently got a hunk of that strike too.

AG: Well, we didn't really have a strike. One night they held a chapel meeting that went on most of the night, out of the building, and they finally came back and we put out a four-page paper. That would be back in 1964 or '65 and we had a sport page and a front page and a comic page and an editorial page. Sports and vital statistics combined. The paper was put out four or five o'clock in the morning so we wouldn't miss an edition. There hasn't, under Lee, there has not been a strike per se, just a chapel meeting that extended and extended. There was a strike here in the '40's. The *Standard* had never missed an edition until Labor Day of 1973 and that's when all of Lee that did not publish that day to save newsprint. One day, that's the only edition we've missed in about 30 years.

JN: Was this paper originally owned by one of the Copper Kings?

AG: Yes, the *Anaconda Standard* was—I always have to look up the history—I've written it and written it so much. The *Anaconda Standard* was Marcus Daly of Anaconda. W.A. Clark, one of the other Copper Kings, was in Butte and that must have been the *Butte Daily Post*, I guess. There were various other papers, many of them, the *Free Press*, and things that lasted two or three years or two or three months or overnight. In 1928 they combined the *Anaconda Standard* and something else. Let me look at it. The *Montana Standard* itself started in 1928, I believe. [Flips through papers.]

As I say, I've written this for histories. We've done so much on it. All right, here it is. The Butte Miner was William A. Clark, the Copper King's paper. *Montana Standard* started as such Sept. 12, 1928, with the merger of the Butte Miner and the *Anaconda Standard*.

JN: The *Anaconda Standard* was Daly's.

AG: Yes, then the *Montana Standard* was Anaconda Company's. So, there is a long history. We date back to June 1, 1876. We're about to celebrate our 100th year, but this is in the succession of papers. The *Standard* itself is pretty young; it's about 47 years old is all.

JN: I'm still trying to figure out the relationship in the Anaconda days. One group of people will tell you the copper collar was tighter than hell and choked everybody to hell, but then you talk to somebody like yourself, or apparently you can bust it if you've got the guts, and Walter Nelson ran a pretty good paper in those days. Of course, he didn't have ecology, but nobody had ecology.

AG: We have less now than any paper in the state, but as I explained earlier, we know what it is and we have to be fair to both sides. But we don't take any back seats. When we know they're wrong, we holler. There were some men that worked for the papers that were involved with the Anaconda Company that did their bidding.

The longtime editor, the man that was editor longest in the paper was E.G. Leipheimer. Leipheimer definitely ran all the Montana papers for the Anaconda Company and it's a well-known fact he used to be on the phone and telling them what to put in and what not to put in. He did it from his office in the *Butte Daily Post-Montana Standard* as editor, and then it got to the point where the other papers did not publish anything until they saw the *Montana Standard*.

They would run a cycle late. It wasn't necessarily the calls; if it was something they thought might be offensive to the company, they just waited until the *Standard* showed up the next morning. In the days of good trains, the good transportation, good mail service, the paper was in Billings early in the morning of the next day, which is about 240 miles away. Now, you're lucky if you get it the same day. It was in Missoula, it was in Helena, it was there as a guide to what the Anaconda Company was thinking. I worked the desk under the Anaconda Company and I never really had any, very truthfully, never had any direct interference.

I did some tricks that they didn't like. One night, I had on the banner that there were 84 miners killed in West Virginia, some such figure, it was a horrendous big disaster and I had a modest banner line, probably a three-column banner line, and the editor at the time came by and said, "We don't use mine this and mine disasters on page one. I wouldn't blow that up so big."

And I says, "Well, god dammit, there were 84 people killed. What do you want to do, put it with the obituaries or ignore it?"

That didn't set too well. I was just a reporter working on the desk. So he said "Well, don't put her up there."

I said, "Ok."

So, we didn't have a banner line the next day, we had a two-column head at the top of page one on the right-hand side, which said there were 84 miners killed. It was a completely different makeup than we ever had. It wasn't a banner line, but it was the lead story in the paper. I defied some of these things and I got away with it, but I was lucky. I came here in a time of transition where they began to take hands off of politics and where they began to have some second thinking about—I say take hands off of politics, I mean, editorially. In the real early days, as I've said in a recent book on former Senator and Governor Joe Dixon, I said there were the days when you called a man a yellow-bellied skunk if you thought that was what he was, and if you wanted to be a little stronger, well, you said he was a goddamn yellow-bellied skunk. You said it in print. And they, for many years, went into Afghanistanism in the editorial

page instead of politics. You might get an editorial about some local citizen who died who was a civic leader or you might—we had a period when Joe McCarthy was red hot when our editorial writer every day had—was very strong on the American legion, he was on their Americanism committee and every day he was following the Joe McCarthy line. And we had a little feature on page 1 which says, Today's Weather, and which we use about four or five lines and key it into an inside page for the rest of the weather. Many papers do. I couldn't stomach Joe McCarthy. When I was on the desk, I had a companion feature called "Today's McCarthy," [in] which I carried about one paragraph about what he was ranting about today. People often wondered what was going on at the *Standard* when the

editorial page was so strong. At least we didn't—well, we took a little editorial license on the front page perhaps with "Today's McCarthy," but we weren't editorializing.

JN: Back in the days of Leipheimer, he would also have his finger either writing, he probably wrote the editorial himself.

AG: Yes, he did. And I shouldn't leave the impression that he wasn't a good editor. He had some excellent young man who went on to become good writers, good editors; he backed his men to the hilt when they were right. Senator James E. Murray came in one day to complain about Tom Wigal, the man whom I mentioned earlier as city editor, and he was ranting and raising hell about about Tom Wigal, and Tom was a young reporter just out of college and I don't remember what it was, but Tom had written a story, and Murray didn't appear very favorable to the story and came in to raise hell. Leip called Wigal in, and Wigal [he means Leipheimer] said, "Is that what he said?"

Wigal said, "Yes," and Leiphammer said, "You heard what he said, Senator, good day."

He was that kind of a man. There were times when Miles City's printer, 500 miles from here, they would take these top young reporters like Wigal and ship them over there to cover a major train wreck, and they were a state wide paper at the time, and they did a good job of hard news gathering. They had some very good newsmen.

JN: What were Leipheimer's years of influence around here?

AG: I never worked for Mr. Leipheimer, but I came here the summer of '47 for my first summer from journalism school. I was 24 years old when I started to college, hungry in the winter as well as the summer, so I think Leipheimer's title at the time was editor emeritus and Law Risken was the managing editor. It says he retired as editor in 1945, but his farewell party was held September 16, 1947, so he did retain some control from 1945 to 1947. He was 89 years old when he died September 20, 1969, but he was the editor from the inception of the *Montana Standard* in 1928 until this time—1945—and he had been at some of the other properties too.

If I last until I'm 65, I will be the longest in tenure as editor, I think, in this young newspaper, you know, the *Montana Standard*. [unintelligible]

JN: How do you get along with the younger crop of newspaper reporters?

AG: I get along good. I still get out and write a story and do something I'm not involved in for management sake and the Anaconda Company gives us a handout, well, I probably know the Anaconda Company as well as anyone here, and I'll write it and say what the news is rather than what the hand-out was. I think my young people respect me for it. I think if you show them your ability and your truthfulness, your young people will—at 52, I'm one of the old people here now. We have a young crew, a young vigorous crew, and we are very proud and happy with them.

JN: Do you get together as a group?

AG: Not normally, no, not socially. We still have the old Butte Press Club in which the 1st of June we will honor Roy Anderson and Bill Clark and Tom Wigal, who is still a member, on their retirement. We now have women in the Butte Press Club; in fact, our president is a woman, Pam Swiger and then once a year we have a combined men-women's party where you invite your spouses. That's really the only socializing the staff does. They don't have Christmas parties. When Lee took over, they started paying money instead of letting you drink on the job. We all used to be so drunk sometimes, we didn't know where we were when we worked for the Anaconda Company. I remember putting out a paper one night when I was so drunk I couldn't type and I couldn't write, so I dictated the heads to a young reporter. I was only four hours late to work, but we were out on time.

At Christmas when everybody brought you up the free booze, well, you sat around the office and you drank it, and you might be drinking it for two or three days. The wages were horrible, and they allowed that sort of thing to compensate for the lack of wages. Many of these people came here only for experience and to move on, and others came here or lived here, they were hometown products but there were many people that couldn't have left. Once you get a family and so forth, poor wages, there was no way you could leave. They had far from incompetents, they had good newsmen. It was a shame that the ownership wasn't different, John, so they could have [tape has a gap].

I think we keep a pretty good rein on it. Jeff Gibson, you might know a little more about that. Do you think we go for advocacy journalism?

Jeff Gibson: No, it might be that once in a while, but we watch it pretty carefully.

JN: Well, you've got people that are still of different generation that are here during the critical times when the paper's going out.

AG: If we don't, we have someone here that is very competent, I'll tell you. [We] will let people write a news analysis on occasion but we don't let them write editorials. We'll let them try to get across a point, perhaps, but we insist that it be somewhat balanced with remarks from both sides, and to me that is news analysis the way it ought to be. We still think that if it belongs on the editorial page, then it's Jeff Gibson and Scotty Campbell's business.

JN: Have you ever thought of what it would be like if Lee hadn't bought Anaconda and the newspaper had kept their same general policies, assuming they could have?

JG: They certainly wouldn't have kept the same policies, I don't think, because they had become pretty low key, really, throughout the state. There was a time, there is no doubt about it, when the Anaconda Company controlled the state legislature. There was a time when Montana Power did. If anyone controlled it in the last few years, it has been the farmers and ranchers, would you agree Jeff?

JG: Yeah, the farmers and ranchers and labor has a pretty good say.

AG: Yeah, the Anaconda Company has a strong lobbying staff, and they wine and dine people—still—but what big corporation with a big stake doesn't? The Montana Press Association and all the newspapers do lobbying, we have to.

There was a new libel repealer bill up this year, to repeal the good libel bill we think we got. Lloyd Schermer likes to take credit for this. I don't know whether it's his bill or not but he takes credit for the one that's in now, which requires that—it's a good libel bill if you make an honest mistake, it's a damn good one. It gives you a chance to make a retraction before they can file a libel suit, and there haven't been very many libel suits. There hasn't been one probably against the *Montana Standard* since I've been here. I'm not sure that Don Anderson would like that.

One of the first things he told me when Lee took over in 1959 was that if you didn't have a good libel suit or two going against you, then you weren't much of a newspaper.

JN: Well, he had one going and he was a pretty—well, I know he worried a little, and he worried quite a bit the day that the thing was finally won. He didn't quite come cartwheeling through the newsroom, but it was damn close.

AG: I have a file full of threats and complaints.

JG: John, I'll see you after lunch. I've got production stuff going. [Small talk about when he might be interviewed follows.]

AG: [Duncan "Scotty" Campbell has come into the room and Gaskill addresses him.] Scotty, the question came up about advocacy journalism and I told John that I didn't think that we had any, that we had, on some occasions, allowed an interpretive and news analysis.

DC: And we label it when we do.

JN: And it's on the editorial page too.

DC: Well, it's positioned sometimes right in the regular news columns. And it's labeled.

JN: What do you call it?

AG: We call it the *Montana Standard News Analysis*. But we have very few of them. We can usually do it down the middle with both sides involved so that we don't have to become analytical. If we tell both sides and leave it up to the public to make up their minds is what we try to do. As I say, Scotty and Jeff handle the editorial policy and that's where we intend to keep it. As long as I'm the editor, it isn't going to be in the news column. We guard against it very much. We don't have any people now that are of that bent. Many of them when they came to us have been, but one of the first questions you ask them is, "Can you take discipline, and will you do what we say?" If they can't, well you don't hire them. Part of that is writing a fair story and everybody comes full cycle in a few years. Even if their hair is a little longer now days, they don't write like long hairs.

JN: As long as you can't tell it, or it shows up in the paper.

DC: On the top news stories, Jeff usually picks up and comments on it. We try to get more local on the editorial page.

JN: How long have you had a full-time man on the editorial staff?

AG: Walter Nelson, when I became editor in 1966, executive editor, Walter retained the title of editor. I was in charge, and Walter was full-time editorial from then on, and we had full-time editorial writers before then. We had Louis Poole, we had—

DC: Well it didn't last. There were short periods.

AG: Well, under the Anaconda Company, Glenn Moon was a full-time editorial writer for the *Post*, and Law Risken handled the editorial for the *Standard*.

DC: Didn't Moon do the hiring then, too?

AG: No, he never had anything to do it from the time I came here in 1947, he never came out of his room.

DC: We always had the opinion that Moon would do some of the hiring on the *Post*.

AG: George Washington McVey was full-time editorial and nothing else from the time I came here in 1947. It was only under well, let's see, when the Anaconda Company bought the paper George McVey was still doing them and then when Risken became editor, well, he was editor at that time, when Mooney became the editor, McVey retired and Mooney started doing the editorials and then Nelson and Nelson did that as editor, he did the editorials. There was only a short time which we really had them, either under both the Anaconda since 1947 at least.

JN: We were talking about who runs the state now that Anaconda isn't running it and Montana Power isn't running it and the answer I got was that it is the ranchers and farmers and the—how do the newspapers fit into this thing? Are you doing any running?

DC: I think we have an effect sometimes. We have an impact in there, sure.

AG: You say are we doing any running?

JN: Are you running the state? What's the effect or the impact?

AG: I think we can give them some facts to make their decisions on. I think that's what the function of the news—we do endorse candidates and maybe some that everybody isn't too happy with, but you try to pick the best man. It's not very often under Lee that we have ever backed off from anything, only when we thought that one was as bad as the other.

JN: What do you do then? Not endorse?

AG: I think once or twice we didn't endorse, but normally we do endorse.

DC: I think in the past elections we have gotten to the point we do endorse on most of the more important races where one candidate is clearly better than the other.

AG: Montana's Lee papers have never been or had a consensus, they have always been opposite in their endorsements. Rarely do we ever endorse the same slate, and that includes presidential and Congressional.

DC: Jeff's got a running battle with Billings, Missoula, and Helena. Of course, we encourage that a little bit too. But sometimes it gets a little more than friendly.

AG: Helena and Billings and Missoula like to poke at Butte. We have the reputation as being the only city in the state entirely surrounded by land, only island in the state and that has nothing to do with the Port of Butte. It's a Democratic stronghold and I think the editorial page generally reflects the community and we try to reflect the community but that is Scotty's business, not mine.

JN: But on such items as the new state Constitution or pure water, strip mining reclamation—I forget the name of it—I would guess that all the papers would pretty much have a united front.

AG: No, they're not. Oh no, not at all united. *Billings Gazette* has used Colstrip as a whipping boy, and I think it is more controversy than logic, to be truthful. I just think they like to be controversial.

DC: [Unintelligible] has come to a screeching halt in the past few months and I don't think they've mentioned one word about it. I wonder if the new editor will.

AG: Oh, no, I doubt it because he's an out-of-stater. Annual sessions we supported, editorially, a variation of it in which we would have a long session for general business and a short session for money business and this is the latest version that came up, exactly our thinking, maybe perhaps not originally our thinking, but what we espoused editorially was the last bill that came in and it missed by one vote of getting back on the ballot. The state defeated annual sessions in a referendum. The Constitution we supported, and the Constitution won. We were vehemently anti-sales tax editorially, and I'm not too sure that all the papers were in the Lee group. Do you remember, Scotty?

DC: I don't know. The *Gazette* supported a modified sales tax.

AG: It was resoundingly defeated. We are one of the few in the country to reject a sales tax. We get a chance to talk about freedom of the press, of course, we do that quite often. Closed hearings.

JN: I noticed your editorial this morning, you don't seem to be modest. When you turn civil rights table on the civil righters, it gets to be a little amusing.

AG: We might endorse in a future campaign or a past campaign, we might endorse a top candidate and the top office holder or the top two or three, the next day we may be taking a poke at them editorially, and what's this? We supported a controversial attorney general, but we have also poked at him for some of his actions, at various times his inactions.

JN: You haven't heard from the Anaconda Company saying they are too busy this afternoon?

DC: No yet, no.

AG: Who you going to meet with there, Scotty?

DC: John's going over to talk to [Robert] Corbett, [Anaconda Company vice president], and Corbett asked that Alec Hansen be present.

JN: Am I going to get anything out of that?

DC: I don't know.

AG: Alec is brand new. Alec worked for us as a reporter for a few months at one time. Now he is a public relations. He just succeeded Tom Wigal.

JN: But the person I'm talking to is Corbett?

AG: He is the number two man.

JN: But if he wants to say something can he say it? He knows what's going on, what has?

DC: He told me that's he's got permission to do the interview, so he's already checked in.

AG: I suspect he'll say, down the middle. Anaconda attempted to have some public relations meetings last year and I went to the first one, first time I had ever been on the sixth floor of the Hennessey Building in my 28 years in Butte; that's where the Anaconda Headquarters are. I went to their board room and I don't want to go there anymore, and I won't go anymore.

JN: Why not?

AG: They were not public relations sessions; they were trying to cram their ideas down your throat. Scotty and I differ on this. Scotty thinks it was an honest effort; I don't. I worked for them for about 12 years and I was loyal to them while I worked for them, but I think I am fair to them now.

JN: What would you ask the Anaconda Company if you were me, or I or whatever the hell is correct?

AG: I would ask them if they think you will ever have the authority to speak locally for the Anaconda Company and what's going on in Butte. And they will tell you that they have it now. And I'll say they don't and that they won't. They've got to clear with Tucson or New York or both before they can give you an answer.

And when one of their men try to give you a fair answer and give you something and it doesn't square with their policy, the next day that guy will either say he was misquoted or misunderstood. We had one example recently and we had another one about three years ago in which we finally got some answers to a local question that was controversial.

In both cases, the next day the man repudiated it. He didn't take—this is credit to the man himself—he didn't take offense to the newspaper itself or say he was misquoted; he said he

was misunderstood, which to the public, doesn't help the newspaper's credibility any. They have some creditability gaps themselves.

JN: What kind of things would you ask them of a controversial nature? What did you ask them then?

AG: Three or four years ago the question was about some land deals that they had in the area of a fairly new housing development and a large junior high school. This was just before you came here, I think. We thought there were some things going on between the school board and the Anaconda Company which became public business, because the school board was there and it was taxpayers' money and we finally got a statement out which essentially confirmed what we thought was going on. It was repudiated the next day.

The man who answered probably answered to the best of his ability and he answered truthfully. Well, the land deal in question never came off, whether public sentiment had anything to do with it or not. I was personally involved outside of the office in one of these controversies where I insisted that a reporter come. The time they were going to put a new mine in my front yard of a new home in an area with 120 houses.

Head man Frank Monninger of the Anaconda Company called to say that our editorial was very fair that day on something or other, I don't remember what it was.

I said, "Thanks, Frank, I will pass that along to Jeff and Scotty," but, I said, "As long as I've got you on here, you know what my situation is in Hillcrest. I says I'm going to fight you in my neighborhood; we'll be fair up here." Well, public sentiment has changed this thing. We haven't got a mine.

JN: That was the mine entrance?

AG: They were going to have an open pit mine within a half a mile of 120 houses, average value has to be 38 or 40 thousand dollars and no one in Butte had ever stood up to these people before. This community of residents did. And they are beginning to reflect some public sentiment, don't you think, Jeff?

JG: Yeah, a little bit.

AG: They're easing. Just as I say in the later years that I worked for them, things eased. At a time when the way you treated politicians you didn't like was that you didn't give them any publicity.

Before the Anaconda let go, what you did you gave them equal publicity, you gave them each a one column, 30-point head in the same position on the front page and you gave them almost line for line for the same amount. Well this is certainly an Afghanistan approach, as their

editorial pages reflected at the time. This is when they were getting out of politics and were considering getting out of newspapers. They have mellowed, and they have changed, but they still retain strong top leadership, where everybody in the lower echelons knows it.

DC: Bert likes to point out that he subscribes to Forbes magazine so he can find out what's going to happen in Butte. They get the word before we do.

AG: I have chided them by saying that we learn things in Forbes that we don't learn from our own Anaconda Company people in Butte, that concern Butte and the mines.

That was Jay Parkinson, the former president and chief executive officer of Anaconda, who was doing most of the talking to Forbes and John B.M. Place, the new man [who is] from Chase Manhattan, he still talks to Forbes. They are on the same wavelength, but he doesn't talk as much as Jay Parkinson did, so we don't find out as much.

JN: How important is the Butte operation or the Montana operation to total operation in New York or wherever their headquarters are. Your 5 percent of the thing or 90 percent—?

AG: Percentage-wise, I don't know. It's among their best-known proven reserves. When they get kicked out of Chile, for instance, they know they've got copper here if they can justify the expense cost ratio by automation or other means they can mine here. They have some large properties in Nevada and Arizona that are bigger. Butte has a great proven reserve of minerals and copper. It's just a matter of how they are going to do it now so they can afford it. Right now, they're cutting back, they're laying off people, by attrition they are not filling the ranks and were down several hundred miners and associated mining jobs since last September.

JN: You would think however that somebody like a reporter shows up at the sixth floor Hennessey Building and says look, what's your stand on this thing and if you haven't got the answer today, the guy could very well say, give me six hours and I'll get it for you.

AG: You may never get the answer.

DC: Tom Wigal had always promised to call in and see if he could find out but—

AG: He was a good newspaper man, an excellent newspaper man, but he worked for the Company and he couldn't say anything without their approval. What the hell good is a PR outfit if you aren't using it to your own advantage?

JN: He is the one who left here and went to Anaconda.

AG: Yeah. He was an excellent newspaper man and when he could, he gave us all the help he could.

JN: Is he still there?

AG: No. He is retired now.

JN: Seems kind of dumb on the part of the company. Seems they should have some kind of a system set up so that with long distance calls, that in a couple of hours you should be able to—

AG: On the surface they do, they're giving lip service to it but they don't have to answer—it's the old school—they don't have to tell anybody anything unless—

JN: It's just like Madison Power—

AG: I used to tell people that I worked for the world's most secret organization, and they said, "Who was that?"

I said, "Anaconda Company," and they would say, "What do you do?"

And I would say, "I am a newspaper man."

DC: Along those lines, Bert had trouble getting Wigal to announce that Hansen would be his successor.

AG: I said, "When are you going to announce that Alec Hansen is taking over your job?"

And he said "Well, I don't know that he is."

I said, "Horseshit."

Alec Hansen's brother is a vice president and he got him the job. I don't why he wouldn't know. He was also Wigal's boss.

JN: Well, I've taken up a lot of your time.

AG: Well, I've enjoyed talking to you. I've got 10 minutes before I have to leave for my two-hour luncheon. It's an aeronautics meeting. I'm involved with the Chamber and the airport.

[End of Interview]