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Oral History Number: 465-020

Interviewee: Duncan "Scotty" Campbell

Interviewer: John Newhouse

Date of Interview: 1975

Project: Lee Newspapers in Montana Oral History Project

Note: Duncan "Scotty" Campbell began work at the Standard in 1947, assuming various positions until he was named publisher in 1967. He retired in 1979.

Duncan "Scotty" Campbell: I guess I'll just read through this a little bit because it's all here and it'll be faster. This was supposed to be a talk I gave one time at one of the Lee meetings, but the schedule was changed and I didn't get in.

Production of newspapers in Butte, Montana, since June 1876 has been at times a hectic, human, hostile, happy, horrendous, and very humbling history. Involving very human people with characteristics that were and are homespun and Homeric, hoodlum and highly honorable, harassing and even heroic. I really got carried away. [Laughs] With the accelerated avalanche of change, and we do our share of pushing, the whole mix bubbles constantly, but at least the boil has bubbled down to a slow simmer. The *Montana Standard* is the last and sole merged survivor of nearly two dozen newspaper publications that once flourished from time to time in our historic community.

When Lee Newspapers bought the Anaconda Company newspapers on June 1, 1959, the purchase included the *Montana Standard*, a seven-day morning publication, and the *Butte Daily Post*, a six-day evening sister newspaper, published out of the same plant, and the *Anaconda Standard*, which was an insert in the *Montana Standard* for Anaconda subscribers only. And that is the one that Walter Nelson was telling you about. The *Butte Daily Post* was merged with the *Montana Standard* July 23, 1961. The *Anaconda Standard* continued as a tabloid insert in the *Montana Standard* for Anaconda readers only and that was printed in Anaconda and stuffed here until it was discontinued June 20, 1970.

For the nuts and bolts, prior to June 1, 1959, the mechanical personnel in all our newspaper production departments totaled 85 people. The breakdown on this was 51 situations as printers, and one sub; we had eight pressmen, and a fly boy; we had five situations in stereotype with an apprentice and a metal man who was part time. We had four mailer situations and five part-time stuffers, and in Anaconda where we printed the insert, we had five situations as printers, one pressman and one part time, and one mailer situation, and the newsboys over there did their own stuffing. At the time of our conversion to offset, the *Montana Standard* total hot metal production crew added up to 65 bodies. Here is how that broke down.

By this time, we were down to 31 printer situations, five apprentices and two subs. We had four pressmen and one apprentice and one fly boy; we had four situations in stereotype with one

metal boy, and we had mailers, four situations plus one sub, and we had seven stuffers part time. In Anaconda, the city of Anaconda, the production staff had been reduced to one mailer. We had been printing the *Anaconda Standard* insert in our plant since 1967.

[Interruption from someone asking Campbell a question about a meeting.]

It was also necessary to hire three stuffers to insert the *Anaconda Standard* in the *Montana Standard* at their plant prior delivery to subscribers.

Now, bringing all this up to the present time, today our production force has been reduced to 32 people and that breaks down to 19 printer situations, seven press plate situations, three mailers and three stuffers.

John Newhouse: And that 32 contrasts with 85 before—

DC: —85 before. Compared to the days when Lee bought the *Standard*, and today, our production force has been cut from 85 to 32, and I just figured that out, that's a cut of 62.4 percent.

Some of the equipment we have now includes, and this is today, we have one Photon 560, that's to process advertising through the 1130 in Billings. We have two 4961 Compugraphics for straight news matter, we have one 2961 Compugraphic for straight news, we have one 7200 Compugraphic for captions and heads and 5 Starpart punchers. And then in the pressroom we have our five unit 40-page capacity Goss Urbanite press.

JN: Offset?

DC: Right. The offset camera plate-making room is directly below the composing room and adjacent to the pressroom. The paste-up grid pages are received on a page elevator from the composing room above and the master control light board in the composing room and in the newsroom as well, are connected to light boards in the press camera plate-making room. [That will] keep everyone advised of the immediate page production situation.

Now, in our equipment in the camera platemaking room is one Kemco Spartan II camera, one automatic Pako film processor and one NuArc plate burner. In fact, we have two; we have a back-up there. And then in the mail room where we are finally getting around to a little automation, we've got a brand-new Muller inserter and we have a [unintelligible] on order and it should be here in a couple of weeks. So now we're getting pretty well set to be getting into the VDTs [video display terminals] in the near future. So that is really what we have in production.

JN: The VDTs maybe coming in another six months?

DC: Well, Butte is going to be at the end of the line when Missoula, Billings, and Helena get under way, then we get our contract language that will permit us to do these things. And that starts, that contract is up September 30 and we will get into it soon after that.

JN: I was talking to Jeff Gibson and talking over some of the things you had done editorially that he seemed to think were really worthwhile, like one of them I gather is your defense of the Montana Tech, both in keeping it from becoming a community college, and also getting the library, and then the work you've done in getting some county commissioners here. [They] are not exactly what you would like—

DC: No, they are very poor and we have been fighting that, and he has come up with a lot of suggestions and length of term. We have gone so far as to suggest impeachment. We have been pretty active in that. There have been other recent things that we have done, one was the Highway 91 program that we supported, the interstate from Helena to Butte. We hit that pretty hard and it turned out to be a very successful campaign. Did he mention that?

JN: No, he didn't. That would be one of the things that wouldn't have probably been possible under Anaconda, I would gather.

DC: Oh, no. In those days most of the editorial page content was on national and international news and issues. They seldom touched local issues.

JN: Just have a peaceful town and forget the—

DC: Nothing that would upset the boat. I don't know what you got from Bert [Gaskill] and Jeff, but we have had a number of awards; did they bring those up?

JN: Well, the women, for instance, have been doing very well.

DC: Yes. They gave you Betty Raymond's, that she won the \$1,000 in the J.C. Penny. She got first place in the nation. Thousand-dollar award. [As to] editorial page support we provided civic leadership and assisted in achieving the following: the Port of Butte, the I-15 Boulder-Basin-Butte route approved for an interstate route. We campaigned pretty heavily editorially in removal and disposal of junk car bodies from the streets, lots and alleys within the city and county. We had quite a campaign on cleaning up Harrison Avenue, and that was successful. These were mostly 1973 accomplishments. Betty won that award, was first place winner in the J.C. Penney-Missouri competition, which annually names the top writers, editors, and photographers who work with women's and family sections. Her \$1,000 first prize award was presented to her at the University of Missouri on March 23, 1972.

JN: Why do they call that the J.C. Penney-Missouri?

DC: It's the Missouri School of Journalism in conjunction with J.C. Penney. We had a TNT Chamber of Commerce Civic Improvement campaign, and that TNT stands for "Trim, Neat and Tidy." It was part of an Operation Pride campaign, and this is continuing. It was started in 1972 and we have continued to hit hard on that and I think now about 70 percent of our projects we've accomplished in that area, but we have a lot more to do, an awful lot more to do.

In fact, that meeting I had at the Anaconda Company this morning was the mayor and I were going up to see a representative from the Chamber Improvement Committee. We were going up to see the Anaconda Company on that.

JN: Some things you accomplished were by going the editorial route, I gather.

DC: Yeah. This—I've got a position paper on it from the thoughts of the mayor's office and the Chamber and our own, which we initiated—just tied in their feelings so we are acting as a body. Packs a little more wallop. I don't know what you have got from the others, so I will just ramble and hit some of the high points. When we converted, we did a lot of new things that we hadn't done before. We've got a Montana Standard Safety and Health Committee and a very active committee and on every insurance investigation and one OSHA investigation we got off with 100 percent rating, no citations of any kind, and this is continuing so we're in real good shape. We put in, at that time, a new employee lunchroom; it is not pretentious, but it's serving the purpose.

Reporter Pam Swiger, who is a very top gal we've got, wrote a correspondent's manual and that has been very useful with our correspondents. And we have—once a year we'll have a session and bring all the correspondents in for a day and have a school and bring everybody up to date. She has been responsible for that, and led it, and she is now our swing editor. I think you got briefed on what all of the gals are doing on the Montana Press Woman; we have a lot of prizes every year. We have had crystal ball committees, we call them, on news content, circulation, plant relations, who have met regularly as study groups and they then make recommendations on suggested improvements to me and then we will go over it on timetables, acceptability and establish priorities if the ideas are good. And most of those we get are now. Sometimes it takes a year to work them in to a priority list and schedule but most of them have been inaugurated.

So, everybody's got a little input. I put out what I call a grapevine newsletter and try to keep communications open and tell all the employees in the whole plant, so they know what is going on. It is no definite time, just every couple months when anything is going on I put that out. Let's see, what we have done more recently than that—this is the plan book that we have. We did accomplish all of the action plans we had for '74 with very few exceptions but much of this deals with our plans for negotiations for rates, newsprint conservation. We're pretty strong on manpower planning and development programs here and we do cross-train everybody in all departments so that for the most part we don't even have to cover on vacation schedules. We just cover each other's desks and that is helpful.

We have had a number of different programs in the newsroom to have better, tighter writing and more efficient news coverage, even down to the level of wedding and news stories, how we cover them better and tighter. In circulation, we've got carrier of the month awards with trophies; we did pretty well there. And other programs to increase efficiency in the circulation operations and that gets involved in cost control and budgets. We hold everyone pretty well accountable. We've increased our vending machine installations and put in new equipment, which was needed, in addition to circulation contest incentives for the boys. As far as the building goes, we do keep a pretty good maintenance and upkeep program going every year, painting and roof repair and all of that is up to date.

I didn't mention equipment, but we received new equipment for the business office. One thing that we needed drastically that we got last year was a posting machine which ended a lot of our problems in that area. We have had very effective cost saving programs in the press room that have been money savers and our latest endeavor was to bring the mailing room into a better financial position. We did some personnel changes there, one of which was to make the pressroom foreman supervisor of the mailroom and that is another union, so it was a pretty slick deal and it's been working very well.

JN: You were talking yesterday about the strike that gave you all the real headaches, that was in 19—not the strike, the negotiations.

DC: Actually, that was in '67-'68, that was my first taste of negotiations and I was pretty naive. The actual negotiations were for a year but there was about six months prior to the negotiations that I was getting briefed by Lloyd [Schermer] and the whole thing was pretty educational when it was all over. That was when I first got my grey hair.

JN: Was Tom Williams in on that, too?

DC: Tom Williams came in on part of that.

JN: Was Morrison still around at that time?

DC: No, Dick had retired.

JN: Apparently Morrison came in, apparently there were two times that negotiations were pretty tough, once in the very early days when Morrison came in and again when you were coming in.

DC: Yeah, well, the change-over, I had no experience whatsoever outside of the advertising department and so it was kind of a crash educational program. Without Lloyd's help it would have floundered.

JN: Is that when Lloyd came in and said, Look! You had better put up with this guy because he is going to be here a long time. Was that the time?

DC: Yeah, he spelled it out and since then we have gotten along pretty well on our own, but Lloyd got us off on the right foot. We've done some things since, now with this new trend, production savings and less people in composing. We've started already to move the brighter young people from the composing room to different departments. For example, here in advertising we've got Mickey Ryan, who was probably one of the young smart guys; he was also one of the union activists. He is working out beautifully and just loves his job in the advertising department. We plan to try and place, if they have the ability—we're not going to do it just as a face-saving thing—but where they have the proven ability, why we are going to take care of our employees as much as we can.

JN: You said the population in Butte is now about...?

DC: Well, there are two things. Corporate population is listed in all of the census books figures at about 23,000 but because of the gerrymandering of the city limits, which was done in favor to take a tax advantage for the mining properties, that's a very drawn-in boundary and the city of Butte is actually now about 44,000.

JN: Not the corporate, but the built-up area.

DC: Within five miles of the city center. In 1900, I have tried to find authentic figures, but the more or less accepted figures are that Butte was around 100,000.

JN: What a change. And you said at one time that this was the biggest something or other, the biggest metropolis between Chicago and...?

DC: At one point in that era, between the Midwest and the coast, Butte was the largest city, at least in the northern tier states. I don't know if that would take in Denver, but at least in the northern country. John, I don't know what—I think you've got most of the other points.

[Break in audio. Another, unidentified person, enters the conversation.]

Unidentified Speaker: They went in for first-class staffs. They went back to Albany and that's why we got called the *Standard* because the *Albany Standard* was the *Standard*.

[End of Interview]