INTERVIEW WITH JOHN TROAN

Interviewed by Ford Risley

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John Troan Interview

Risley: This is an interview with John Troan at his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on August 18, 2005. I guess we'll get started at the beginning. Tell me when and where you were born.

Troan: Well, I was born in the little coal mining town near Scranton, Pennsylvania, called Jessup. And according to the state's vital statistics bureau, I was born on August 23, 1918, even though my mother insisted it was 1919.

Risley: Why did she insist it was 1919?

Troan: She said I was not born until after World War I had ended. And that was her recollection. But the midwife who delivered me signed the certificate saying 1918, so I accept that.

Risley: Tell me a little bit about your parents.

Troan: Well, they were immigrants, from what was then Austria—Hungary, and is now a part of Slovakia. They came into the United States in 1908—same year Bob Hope came in. He came in from England. His friends had preceded him and they told him there were a lot of opportunities in coal mining and steel making. So he elected to come and go into the coal mines—anthracite coal mines in and near Scranton. And then he sent for my mother—told her if the opportunity arose, and he had a job, he would bring her in and he did—brought my mother and my two older sisters here. They were all born over in Slovakia, and they came that same year. My mother was illiterate. My father learned to speak broken English, but he was pretty fluent in five other languages and could read both Roman and Cyrillic alphabet. However, he didn't want any of his two sons to follow him into the coal mines because he said coal mining was only for two kinds of animals: four-legged mules and two-legged jackasses. So he tried to steer us out. He had no trouble steering me out. My brother, ten years older, wanted to be a coal miner but he lasted only about three days.

Risley: So your parents had four children?

Troan: They had ten children but only four survived infancy. I was the tenth. In those days there was whooping cough, scarlet fever, diphtheria. She lost quite a few of them over in Slovakia before they came.

Risley: And tell me about your family name.

Troan: The family name was Troanovitch. And everybody in the family continued to use that name and I did, too. When I got a job in Pittsburgh with the *Pittsburgh Press* and finally that was amputated by my city editor. Should I tell the story?

Ford Risley: Sure.

John Troan: I was on the rewrite desk my first month or so with the *Pittsburgh Press* as a reporter working the rewrite desk. And the ritual there was the reporter would call in, the telephone operator would get his call and she'd yell to the city editor, "Klein calling." Klein was the police reporter, and then he would get a briefing from the reporter and he would yell, "Klein to Troanovitch" or "Klein to Sample (the other rewrite man)," or "Klein to Anderson," or whatever. And one day I was uptight. I didn't want to miss a signal and I noticed him (the city editor) talking on the phone and he finally slammed the phone and I thought he said Troanovitch. So I picked it up. What he had said—he was disturbed by the caller—was "son of a bitch." And he said, "That does it. I have been worried what they might do with your name up at the composing room." So he chopped it in half, made it Troan. That was my first byline. He didn't tell me he was going to chop it in half until I got my first byline.

Risley: Did you change your name legally or is it legally Troanovitch?

Troan: Legally Troan. I got into difficulties with that. I would write, for instance the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* asked me to do a story, a feature on something that I had written about at the Press. So I sent it to them and I got a check for $25 made out to John Troan. So I took it to the Mellon Bank here in Pittsburgh and the teller told me, "You've got to sign this twice. You have to sign it John Troan and you have to sign it John Troanovitch to put it into your account." Well after a couple of those affairs I just said I'm going to cut it and a lawyer friend told me there's no problem. I'll just put

an ad in your own *Pittsburgh Press* and if nobody protests, we'll make it. So that was it. From there on it was Troan. My father had passed away when I was still in high school. My mother was a little disturbed by this. And I said, "Mom, you always said it isn't the name that counts. It's what the person does and what the person is." And "-ovitch" just meant son of Troan anyway. So that's it. And everybody accepted it. They're all happy with it. Certainly the children were. They don't have to write that long.

Risley: Good. Well, tell me about your education and how it prepared you to become a journalist.

Troan: Well, I was always eager to find out what things were. What's going on. I did get into school. I was promoted from first grade to second grade right after Christmas holiday and then skipped third grade. Well, went to third grade the next year and then skipped to fifth the following year. But I was always interested in what's going on in the world. Selling cloverine salve and ointment earned me a subscription to the *Saturday Evening Post*. And I started reading some of the stories there and I thought, "Gee, I could write one of these stories." So I sent them my first story, fiction, and got back my first rejection slip. They told me it did not in every way meet their requirements. I still don't know what they meant by "in every way." I think it was just terrible. But I saved the rejection slip; I've since lost it however. Anyway that was the whole thing and when I got into high school in my sophomore year I started what I called a newspaper. I called it *The Parrot.* I was just repeating everything I heard and it was a big hit because we had no high school newspaper.

Jessup was a distressed district. Teachers often were not paid until the end of the year. They worked on hope and would get paid in June for nine months work. We had a very small library and some vandals had destroyed everything in the chemistry labs so we never had a hands-on lab experiment. But I ran the paper through a typewriter that I got from Santa Claus. That was my "passport to adventure" as I later labeled it. I would put in a slip of paper 8 ½ by 11 into the typewriter, fold it in half so that I had a double page there, and also slip in the carbon copy and

would have two four-page newsletters once a week or once a month. I can't quite recall now. *The Parrot* was devoted to sports and chit chat and we had about 200 students. So I warned them to pass it along and don't destroy it and that's how it got there. When I became manager of athletics in the high school—I was too small to participate in scholastic sports so I became the manager: football manager, baseball manager—I would then write up a story and take it to the *Scranton Republican*, hand it into the sports editor, and he liked it and he kept encouraging me to do this. So, I got a job there at the end of my freshman year in high school in the sports department. But then he also had them steer me into going into the suburban fire halls and getting stories about what was going on in Dunmore and in Olyphant and the different suburbs of Scranton.

Risley: So you began writing for the *Scranton Republican* in high school?

Troan: Correct, part time. Well, summer intern.

Risley: Okay.

Troan: They never called them interns—summer job. When I was offered the job, I thought it was just for experience. I was surprised when at the end of the summer, Joe Polakoff, who was then sports editor of the *Scranton Republican*, said to me, "Mr. Powell, the managing editor, wants to see you before you leave to go to college." And so I went in and he said, "Johnny, you did a good job here and we'd just like you to know much we appreciate it." And he handed me a check for $150. It floored me because the tuition at Penn State was only something like $75 for the semester. I made $180 the next summer. But that was the start of the whole thing. And it was just a desire to write constantly. And tell everybody, "I found this out. You should know it, too."

Risley: Well, tell me about going to Penn State. How did you decide to go to school at Penn State?

Troan: At that time Penn Sate invited parents of prospective students (to visit the school). This was the Great Depression then, 1935. In May of 1935 I said, "Gee, I'd like to look at Penn State." So my brother drove my mother and me to Penn State and that was it. I was sold on Penn State immediately.

My mother wanted me to go to what was St. Thomas College, now the University of Scranton. Stay at home, ride the train in and so on. I said, "Gee, I'd rather go to Penn State." Now she had saved up enough money to get me through probably a year and a half or two years of school. Then I said, well I could earn some extra money I think. By then the sports editor of the *Scranton Republican* introduced me to the president of a semi-pro (baseball) league called the Northeastern Pennsylvania League, NEP, which had some professional prospects and also some retirees from the major leagues playing there. And he knew that I was interested in being a sports writer. So he hired me to be secretary. And I said, "What would I do?" He said, "You can keep the statistics. Make sure you do what I tell you, where to assign the umpires and so on. And you just do the secretarial work. I think we can pay you $150 for that." So that was another $150, great. And then when I went to Penn State, the sports editor said to me if you write any features I'm sure Mr. Powell will give you at least $10 for each feature about local people in sports. So I found four or six, I forget now, and rather than wrapping them up in one story, I made each one an individual story and that helped. We kept going like that each summer and it worked.

When I applied for entrance to Penn State, there here was no problem—got right in because there was no surplus of college applications in the Great Depression. I had to send a transcript—there were no SATs then. The principal in high school looked at it and he was astounded. He said, "You have a D on this transcript. You wound up number one among your class for your freshman year, sophomore year, and your junior year. What happened in the senior year?" I said, "I really can't explain it." He said, "The D is in English; who's your teacher." So I told him. And he said, "Does she have anything against you?" I said, "No, but the rumors are that she doesn't like anybody to waste time in any extra curriculur activity. And I'm on the debating team and I've been producing this little newspaper as I called it. And I don't know whether it's because of that that she gave me the D or not." He said, "I'll go and see her." So he

clanked down on his wooden leg as we called it. Went through the hall, came back. He said, "I talked to her and I convinced her she should raise it to a C. I don't think you'll have any trouble being accepted by Penn State." And so that was how I got into Penn State.

Risley: So, tell me how did you become the editor of *The Daily Collegian* and what were some of your memorable experiences there?

Troan: Well at that time, you had to start working as a freshman at a circulation job at *The Collegian* to qualify later for editorial or advertising staff. And so that's what I did in my second semester as a freshman. I was out trying to get subscriptions to the Collegian for the next year because *The Collegian* had to go on its own. There was no subsidy from the college. And so we would sign up subscribers. They would pick up the paper at the student union desk in Old Main or could even get home delivery. I forget what it was $1.50 a year or $2.50 or so. That's what I did as a freshman. Then as a sophomore, you'd get assignments. You'd go and interview a professor on a particular story or get to cover a minor sport as a sophomore—track or wrestling. No, wrestling was a major sport then. Track, cross country. Anyway, that's what I would do as a sophomore. The junior staff would then elect eight or ten people to the editorial staff to the junior staff and so on. The same thing with the advertising staff. I worked my way onto the junior staff and then the senior staff would elect the next senior staff from the juniors.

There were eight of us left on the junior class staff. And by the time the seniors were electing people to the senior staff to succeed them there were only four. Some had disappeared. One dropped out. One went into the Army and we've never found out whatever happened to him. But there were four people left: Chuck Wheeler, Jerry Weinstein, Woody Bierly, and Francis Shimshock. And I knew what was going on. Wheeler and Weinstein made no secret that they wanted Herb Cahan to be the editor and Shimshock and Bierly wanted me to be the editor. And so it went on for weeks that way and finally Herb Cahan lsaid to me, "You

know how it was resolved?" I said, "No, Herb, I don't. I know it was resolved to make me the editor." He said, "Well, I went over to Jerry and Chuck and I said, 'Look I don't really want to be editor. I want to be sports editor. But if you elect Troanovitch the editor and make me number two, that by tradition would make me managing editor, and I don't want to be managing editor. I want the number three job: sports editor.'" So what they did was compromise. They named me as editor and Herb as sports editor and made sure he got what he wanted to do. And that's how I became the editor. And the editor's job was full of hell raising.

Risley: What do you mean? Were you in trouble with the administration?

Troan: Well, I thought I was. We had a lot of building going on, and Governor James at that time didn't push through an appropriation to equip the buildings, so we had these shells going up. And we had a state senator from Pittsburgh who recommended two or four students for senatorial scholarships, and Penn State said sorry we don't have any room for them. Well, the senator hit the ceiling and he was denouncing Penn State. So I hit the ceiling with an editorial saying this teaches you a lesson down there in Harrisburg. If you don't make room for students, you can't find room even for the ones you want. Well, a day or so later I got a call from Dr. Hetzel's administrative assistant—Hetzel was the president at that time—and the guy said to me, "John, prexy wants to see you." And I thought, "Oh boy. This is either the end of my editorship or maybe even the end as a student." So I walked in and saw Dr. Hetzel and he said, "Have a seat." He said, "John, you know some people think you're a Communist." I said, "Yes, I know, I hear that." He said, "Well let me tell you a story. When I was at the University of Wisconsin, I too was a student editor. I was editor of *the Daily Cardinal* and people thought I was a Communist five times a week. They only think you're a Communist twice a week because you're a semi weekly publication."

So he said, "People in Harrisburg think that the administration runs *The Collegian* and I would not have anything to do with that. It should be in

student hands. You should be able to say whatever you wish. But you know, I think it would be helpful if we could get together one day a week just for a half-hour or so to discuss problems. I could tell you what the administration is concerned about. You could tell me what the students are concerned about. Matter of fact, I think we should have Mr. Ulerich, (who was a professor at the staff and also the owner of The *Centre Daily Times*), I think we should have him join us and he can tell us what the townspeople are concerned about." He said, "Would a Monday morning be good for you?" I said, "Yes, sure." And so each Monday morning for about a half hour Bill Ulerich, and I, and the prexy would meet and we'd just discuss things and we were free to go and say what we want, but we'd be more aware of each other's viewpoint, and why for instance we were pushing for Penn State to become a university. And he said, "I'm more interested in getting the appropriation. And if we make a big push right now to change the college to a university all those legislators who are married to the University of Pennsylvania will be worried that the appropriation for Penn will be reduced because we will now be elevated." He said "I'd rather have the money and not the label." And so we stopped pushing. But a little later they did it themselves. It became Penn State University.

We also had a big campaign on against the hat societies, these honorary societies on campus. They became just political fobs. The people would be awarded this on the basis of how many can be elected to junior government, or sophomore government, and so on. And so I started a campaign to "Justify your existence." Let's do more than that. And it stirred them up. I even got a threatening letter they were going to tar and feather me where the railroad from Bellefonte came into State College. But Dean Warnock, the dean of men, said to me, "Good going John. You get them going." And so we got them to do things like ushering at football games and ushering at different places and volunteering to help out students who needed some tutoring. That worked out well. And we

finally got them to justify their existence. So it was a pretty good campaign. We also got the town council to accept a non-voting student representative on the town council. We had some problems there every now and then—once in a while they'd jail a student. I knew one student, and he said, "You know you have to sleep on an iron cot [in the jail]." So a couple of us went there at 11 o'clock one night and we insisted we wanted to see the jail. It was terrible. So that's how we got council to say to the police, "Come on. You've got to do better than this." And we also had a town-wide survey of housing and discovered that there were very few rooms available for students, so they could jack up the price. And we insisted we needed more housing and we began getting student housing. And we started a campaign for the student union building. We also started a campaign for a student bookstore because the merchants in town would cream the students. They would give you very little for a returned book and then charge you a lot for a used book. So that ended when Penn State got the bookstore on campus.

Risley: You had a busy year.

Troan: Also, we established the All College Government. It used to be the women ran their own [government] and the men ran their own. The women had no vote in the men's government, which really had more influence than the women. And we gave women equal rights voting. We also protested when Duke Ellington had a problem. Duke Ellington was hired to play for our senior ball and he came in with his group. He had no trouble getting housing at the State College Hotel downtown. But when he and a few cohorts went to the Nittany Lion Inn, they would not serve them lunch because they were black. So I raised hell in an editorial about it and mentioned it to the prexy at one of these meetings and he said, "You know, the Nittany Lion Inn is on college property but we don't exercise any control about what they do. They're run as a separate autonomous operation." I said, "Well, we still think it's a bad mark on Penn State." And pretty soon after that, this discrimination ended. But Duke did not want to make a big deal about it; he just played. I forget

what we paid them—s omething like $1,000 I guess for the appearance or maybe $500. We even made a profit on it. It was $3.50 for a couple to go dance to Duke Ellington.

Risley: So, did you major in journalism?

Troan: I majored in journalism, yeah. It was in liberal arts.

Risley: Right, the College of Liberal Arts. Were you prepared well for what you wanted to do?

Troan: I was but I had the advantage of hands-on experience before I even entered college. I remember one course: headline writing. They would give me ten stories and say bring it back three days later. I said, "Wow, in my summer job I have to do it in ten minutes." So I said to the professor one day, "You know this is training for a weekly." And he said, "Well, yeah, maybe we should make you do it right in class." But this was the way it was then, very slow-paced. But yes, we had some good training. We had Lou Bell, one of the best professors. He later became head of public information for the Penn State University. Lou had worked for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and he would send us, he would take us to a courtroom in Hollidaysburg, where we'd go through and come back and write stories for the next day or he would have some reporter in one room in Old Main. He'd give him a bunch of facts and he would call to another room where you're the rewrite man and you would have to take the thing and write the story in half an hour or 20 minutes or whatever. And so Lou gave us real basic training there. That was very good.
I eventually got off this pitch about being a sports writer. I got interested in social studies, economics, history, political science. And I thought, "Gee, there's a lot of stuff out there to write about." And so I wound up with more credits in the social sciences than in journalism. But I thought, this is good training. I don't think you have to just concentrate on the technical aspect. You do need that, but a well-rounded education is a lot better. Later on when I became a science writer I thought, gee whiz, when I got to Penn State I took the one required course in chemistry, one in physics, one in math, one in botany, one in zoology and I said, "Deliver

me from this evil." And how I wished I had had more training in that when I became a science writer. I competed then with a fellow like Earl Ubell from the *New York Herald Tribune* who was a graduate in physics. And I said, "Geez, Earl, you've got an advantage over us." He said, "You guys have the advantage. You ask such dumb questions you get some clear answers for the common reader." I said, "Okay, thank you."

Risley: Well, tell me how you got your first newspaper job and what you did?

Troan: Well, the *Scranton Tribune* by then had changed its name from *Republican* to *Tribune* when Frank Schrothof *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* bought the paper and decided to gain more readers in Scranton. You did not call yourself a Republican because everybody was a Democrat. So he changed it to *Tribune*. But then I got a call one day in, I think around March or so, in my junior year from Joe Polakoff the sports editor and he said, "Mr. Powell, the managing editor, asked me to call you and offer you a job." I said, "Well, I have one year to go. I have just been elected editor of the college paper and I think I can manage with whatever I make as editor (because we shared in the proceeds then."" He said, "Talk to your mother and see what she has to say. Don't give me a quick answer." And so I talked to my mother and I said, "I think I should really finish and get the degree." And she agreed. So I called Mr. Polakoff and I told him. He said, "I'm glad you decided that way but I'm sure there will be a job for you when you graduate." So I just assumed there would be a job at *The Scranton Tribune*. I didn't pay attention to writing to anybody else.

One day a fellow on *The Collegian* junior staff, Brad Owens from Scranton, came to me and he said, "Do you know Ed Leech?" I said, "Should I?" He said, "Well, Ed Leech is the editor of *The Pittsburgh Press* and you have changed the look of the *Collegian* to look like *The Pittsburgh Press* because you like their format and their type fonts and so on." He said, "His son, Ed Jr., is in my fraternity. And he said he was home for Easter vacation and his father said, 'You know I like to hire one or two newly minted journalism students to put fresh blood into the system each year.' And he asked me if I knew anybody from Penn State who might be a good one

for *The Press* to hire." And Brad said, "John Troanovitch is the editor of *The Collegian*." And Ed Jr. said, "Oh he's in one of my political science classes; he's a great debater." So he said, "Tell him to write my dad and ask for an appointment." And so I wrote to Ed Leech and told him that I understood he was in the market for one or two newly minted journalism graduates and that I would appreciate the chance to be interviewed. And so he wrote right back and said come in any time.

Well, we arranged for me to come in on a certain day, Saturday at 1 o'clock. I had a 1931 Chevy at my disposal. Everybody in the family had outgrown it. I mean they were away from home; I was the only kid left at home. So I started out and Route 22 was terrible at that time—two lanes, get behind a truck you can't move. I finally had to stop at a telephone and called and called the editor. His secretary, Louise Leachman, answered. I said, "I don't think I'm going to make that 1 o'clock appointment. There's too much traffic here. It's taking me much longer. Should I just cancel or is it okay if I come in later?" And so she came back and said Mr. Leech is a great fan of the Pittsburgh Pirates. He likes to see them play on Saturday afternoon when they're in town and they have a game today. He said if you come in by 1 o'clock he'll be here to interview you. But don't worry if he's not here. Mr. Fagan, the city editor, will interview you. So I made it by 1 p.m.., and they talked to me about my experience on *The Collegian*. Leech said, "Troanovitch. What ethnic background is that?" I said, "Well it's Carpatho—Russian. My folks came from Czechoslovakia. It was Austria—Hungary when they left and he said but you're an American citizen. I said, "Oh yes, I was born here." He said, "Okay, I've got to go and see the game." And he left and Fagan said to me, "When do you graduate?" I said, "June 12." That was 1939. He said, "Cayou join us the following Monday on the 19th." I said, "Sure, I guess so, right." So I got back to school and I called my mother and she started to weep: "Oh, I've hardly seen you all summer. You work those night shifts at *The Scranton Tribune*. You go down at 3 in the afternoon. You get home at 2 in the morning. Why don't you get a job in Scranton?" I said, "Well, really

there would be a greater opportunity. *The Pittsburgh Press* is part of a big chain and they own about 15 to 20 other newspapers, so there's a lot more opportunity in the future than there would be at *The Scranton Tribune* because it's the only paper that they own. I think by then *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* had gone under. But anyway, I said, "Let me see if I can get another week." So I wrote a long letter to Mr. Leech asking if it's all right if I show up on June 26. I got back a postcard just saying, "Whenever you're ready, let Mr. Fagan know." That taught me brevity. So that's when I showed up, on June 26, 1939.

Risley: Just so we're clear: *The Pittsburgh Press* was owned by Scripps--Howard.

Troan: Scripps—Howard Newspapers.

Risley: It was one of the first newspaper chains.

Troan: Yes.

Risley: And one of the largest.

Troan: Well, Hearst was bigger perhaps.

Risley: Well, tell me what you did at *The Press* and what were some of the most memorable stories you covered as a young reporter?

Troan: I was a general reporter and covered crime stories, fire stories and so on. My first byline was a gypsy funeral. We got a tip that a gypsy violinist had died just about a week before his marriage and he wanted the procedure to go on. The would-be bride showed up in her bridal gown and was marching down the street to church with all these violinists and all. So we raced I raced out with a photographer and followed them through. They had one gap in the violin line for the dead person and she marched behind that gap as the bride-to-be who wouldn't be and it was just very moving. So I wrote that and came back in and ran the story and they never changed a word and it came out: By John Troan. And so, Mr. Fagan, the city editor, came to me. He said, "You mind the name in the byline?" I said, no as long as I get paid that's all right. And he said, "Okay, that's what we'll be using." The very next byline was "Tron." So I went up kiddingly and I said, "Isn't this carrying it a little too far?" He said, "Oh, my God. That's a typographical error." He called and stopped

the press. The only time I stopped the press. He made them change it to Troan. I said, "Okay. That's great. I'll never stop the press again."
And then World War II came on. Selective Service became a law and I thought you can't just be a generalist in this field. You should be a specialist in something, so I foresaw that selective service was going to affect every young man all the way up to age 45 or so. People are going to be drafted or not drafted. And I decided I should get in on the ground floor. So I wrote a letter to General Hershey, the head of selective service, and told him that if possible I would like to get on the same mailing list as the draft boards so I could follow the changes in regulations. And I was surprised he did it. And if I needed interpretation I would call the legal counsel with the state selective service office in Harrisburg. I got to know George Hafer, one of the top attorneys in Harrisburg, and George would explain in English what the gobbledy gook meant in the regulation. And it got to a point where the draft boards were calling me for explanations instead of my calling them for an explanation. This went on and my draft number came up and the *Press* said we can't let you go so they applied for a six-month deferment and got it. And then they applied for another six-month deferment. So I managed to stay out of war for a year there. And finally they said, "No more deferments for anybody under 26. You've got to train a replacement." So I warned *The Press*: You've got to train somebody to take this over. I've got to go. And I said I'm going to volunteer ahead so that I have a chance to get into the Navy rather than the Army because I want a clean bed every night. I wound up in the Navy.

Risley: So you covered the draft.

Troan: I covered the draft all the way through. I covered the blackouts we had in Pittsburgh and how the deferments worked and how people could get in. Some people wanted to get in a hurry, and I would smooth the way as to how they could get in, just explaining the technicalities. And then I got myself in and I decided, okay I'm going to go in and apply for a commission now. So I went in—I knew the fellows in the office of Naval

Officer procurement—and they said, "Okay, John take your glasses off and read the sign. I said, Oh, my God, the first letter is E." The second line I was a little fuzzy and I said "I can't." I said, "You should have told me this so I would keep my glasses off for a week or so." He said, "It wouldn't work, John. You've got to read all the way to that bottom line. We can't give you a commission." I said, "Okay, I'm still going to try to get in as a noncommissioned."

Risley: What did you do in the Navy?

Troan: Well, they were going to make me a yeoman. And first the classification officer said, "I think you'd make a good pharmacist mate." I said, "Oh I can't stand the smell of medicine." I couldn't at that time. Ether was the anesthetic of choice and the stuff made me sick, nauseated." He said, "Well you might make a yeoman." I said, "What's a yeoman?" He said, "It's a kind of Navy word for clerk." I said, "Okay." He said, "By the looks of things here you worked for a newspaper. So you can type?" I said, Yes, I can type." He said, "Well if you can pass a typing test, we can make you a third class petty officer right now." This was at the end of my boot training—six weeks of boot training. He said, "We can give you the test right here." And they had the room. I said, "Okay, I'll take the test. So he gave me a test for about five minutes. I typed on a typewriter; he watched me. He looked at it. He said, "This is incredible." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You average about 60 words a minute and you only made about three errors." He had told me in advance that if I managed 23 or 25 words a minutes and made fewer than five errors I could be a third class petty officer. So I said, "So, I'm a yeoman?" He said, "No, you only use two fingers." I said, "What difference does that make whether I use two fingers or ten toes? He said, "Navy regs say you have to use the ten-finger touch-type method." I said, "I can't believe this. Okay, I'm still a seaman second class." And he said, "But we'll send you to Great Lakes training station where they'll teach you the touch-type method."

But in the meantime somebody let me know that the second regiment was looking for a striker, which meant hands-on training. You don't have to go to Great Lakes so you would be just trained there to be a yeoman. And he said, "Do you have anything against the second regiment?" I said, "No, it's the Negro regiment, right?" Yes. That's where they train all the stewards' mates. These guys are going to be valets and cooks and so on for the officers. You live with them. I said, "That's no problem." So I got over there. Found this poor little black boy was making my bed, cleaning my room. I couldn't believe I was being treated like an officer because he's being trained how to do this. One night he came to me and said, "Sir, how early would you wish to be awakened." I said, Well I've got to report for duty at 8. I guess 7 o'clock would be fine." And here he had drawn the face of a clock on a piece of paper for everyone that he was responsible for and he said would you mind drawing 7 o'clock on there so I don't miss it. And I thought, poor kid was about 18, how could he ever even pass the test for the Navy? But he was right on time.

But that's where finally I got the yeoman rating. I had to take a test at the end and I mentioned to the chief petty officer that I was not going to pass this test. He said, "Why not? You've done a great job. You do good typing." I said, "But I only use two fingers and Navy regs say I have to use ten." He said, "I never noticed that." Next day he came in and said, "I'll show you. This is the examination room—the test room. There are seven rows of typewriters and the monitor hasn't got room to go between the rows. He monitors from the entry aisle. Now you get in there real early and take the aisle all the way next to the windows farthest from the monitor. You use two fingers and keep all ten flying." The monitor never noticed it and he never did. So I became a yeoman third class. And about two weeks later I was called in along with everybody else. They found out IBM had these punch cards then—no computerized stuff. But through the IBM system they called in everybody at the boot camp who had worked in any capacity for any newspaper and named them Navy enlisted correspondents and sent us off to sea to do battle. I said to the

guy, "What happened?" He said, "The Marines are getting all this good publicity, and the Navy thinks that we should get in on this great publicity. I said, "Hey, the Marines are getting it because they are crazy. They go in first." He said, "Nevertheless you're going on to the Pacific." So that's how I wound up on a carrier.

Risley: What carrier did you serve on?

Troan: I was on the Bon Homme Richard, one of the last of that class.

Risley: How long were you in the Navy?

Troan: Nineteen months.

Risley: Did you serve until the end of the war?

Troan: I served until the end of the war because people with more points who were married or had kids got out sooner and served longer. We became then the magic carpet fleet and we would go to Guam and Saipan and bring back [soldiers]. The hangar deck became a bunk deck, four bunks high. We'd pile up thousands of these soldiers and Marines who were due for release discharge, bring them back to San Francisco, and then go back to the Pacific and bring some more. That took about three months.

Risley: And did you go back to the *Press* right after the Navy and what did you do after that?

Troan: Well, yes. I came back to the *Press,* but I told them I did not want to come back. When it happened I told my wife save all these little checks that the Navy sends you every month and when it's over, we'll spend it all for the longest vacation I'll have until I retire. She was working at the *Press* and had become executive secretary to the editor, Mr. Leech. When we started dating we were violating the office rule that you were not supposed to date anyone on staff. But by then they were relaxing a bit when war came on. They were just happy to keep anybody they could and so we married just before I went off to the Navy and they kept her. I wanted to make sure they wouldn't fire her and Mr. Leech said, "John, we'll keep Varcey on the staff here She's privileged to all this payroll information and everything else. We know you won't ask her for any secrets and we know if you did she'd tell you go to hell." So I said, "Okay, we won't." But we

were married, then off I went to the Navy, came back and she quit her job. And we went for six weeks, traveled through the south, went to the Mardi Gras in February of 1946. And came back—came back to the *Press*. One of the first things the city editor said to me: "You know we used to put out once a year a health magazine, a health guide, an insert, but the man who did this has left. His family has something to do with *The Oil City Derrick*, the newspaper there, and so when he left the Marines he went there to work on the family paper. Would you like to do the first one?" I agreed.

So he said, "We're going to do this. It will be about 36 pages. You can do that separate and we'll pay you $150." I said, "Oh, sounds good. I was making $75 a week I think, so I took the health guide—ran the whole thing. And the morning it came out, the city editor looked at it and he started waving to me. "Come over here." I came over. He said, "You know you got at least four page-one stories in this thing?" I said, "Well you told me do a good job." He said, "Not that good. These things are throwaways. We just put them out to get advertising." At that time hospitals did not advertise, so you'd get hospitals advertising, pharmacies advertising. I said, "But that shows you how many good stories there are in medicine out there at the university." He said, "You want to cover them?" I said, "That would be good." So he told me, "Okay. You'll be the medical writer."

[Tape turned over]

Risley: So that's how you became the medical writer for *The Press*?

Troan: That's right.

Risley: Well, tell me about why medicine is an important beat and how did the beat change during your career?

Troan: Well, I always said that the two subjects most people talk about are God's weather and man's health. And so there's a ready audience for medicine. Not ready at that time for hard science but for medicine, yes. Everybody wants to know about every symptom and I suffered every symptom I wrote about. At one time I said, "This is just too much." My wife said,

"Why don't you quit? Why don't you tell them to give you a different assignment?" I said, "It's too late. I already know all the symptoms." And so I managed to get through it. I lucked into the most satisfying story of my career—the development of the Salk polio vaccine that was right about seven years after I began writing medical stories. I would go on my own in the evenings to medical meetings—medical society meetings, specialists meeting and so on. Pick up stories that way and write them. And nobody else was bothering with this. I used to have a great friend at the University of Pittsburgh, Assistant Dean Dr. Campbell Moses. Dr. Moses was aware of everything going on there and so every Friday afternoon at the end of my weekly deal at the Press I would go there and just chat with him and he'd tell me about stories. One Friday he said, "I can't give you a story every week John." I said, "I know, Cam, but you know what's going on and good tips I can follow through." And he said, "Why don't you go see Jonas Salk." I said, "Who's Jonas Salk?" He said, "Oh he's a young whiz from the University of Michigan that Dean McEllroy brought in here. Told him to set up a virus research lab and that's what he's doing. Go over there and tell him Moses sent you."
I went over and I introduced myself to a woman I would later get to know very well, Lorraine Freidman, his administrative assistant. I said Moses sent me and she began to laugh. So she checked with Dr. Salk and he said, "Okay, come in." I began talking to him about what he was up to. I had no idea; he had been there for over a year and they never made an announcement about bringing him in and setting up this lab or anything. And so he's telling me he's working primarily on an influenza vaccine. In fact, he had been working on this during World War II because the Army was afraid that we may get another pandemic after World War II as we did after World War I. And we needed a vaccine to be better prepared than the time we lost about 20 million people around the world in the pandemic after World War I. Anyway, he told me he was going to put mineral oil in with the vaccine and it would be sort of a long-range deep hole. It would hold the vaccine at the point of injection and just keep

feeding the immune-inducing serum so that it would give longer immunity and perhaps give a wider margin of protection because the influenza vaccine is notorious for changing its complexion. And he was going to go to Ft. Dix, New Jersey, that night to inoculate 15,000 soldiers with this experimental influenza vaccine. And oh yes, he was also involved in a typing program on polio virus. There was the long range idea about a vaccine to prevent polio but to do that you had to know exactly how many types there were so that all types are represented in the vaccine. Three or four universities were involved in this typing for the National Foundation of Infantile Paralysis.

That was worth about a paragraph in my story. The rest of the story was about the influenza vaccine. But he said, "Do you mind if I get a look at it before you print it?" Well to tell the truth, when I started in this, I often would call back the source of the story, a doctor, to check the technical accuracy because I didn't want to make a fool of myself in public, and I wanted to be sure it was accurate. But I said, "I won't to have time to do that. You're leaving tonight. I'm going in the morning to write it for the Sunday *Press*." I said, "I tell you what. You've explained it well enough. I think I've got a good grasp of it. I'm going to write the story for *The Sunday Press* and if you don't like it you don't have to talk to me again." Well, if I knew he was going to hit the jackpot, I never would have offered that. I went in and wrote the story. On Sunday evening my office called and said, "You have a telegram here." I said, "Well open it up and see what it is all about." It said: "Dear John, you did a splendid job. Jonas E. Salk." I said, "Oh, my God." He had left Ft. Dix, New Jersey, went to the Boardwalk in Atlantic City where *The Press* would send Sunday copies because so many Pittsburghers would be spending vacations in Atlantic City. He picked up one of the papers there. The story was on something like page four or fourteen or whatever. And he read it and he was satisfied and he sent this telegram. But true to the reputation Western Union had at that time it was not addressed to John Troan. It was addressed to Joan Troan. I still have a copy of it. Anyway, he was

confident then that he could trust me with things, and I just followed the absolute play-by-play development for five years of that polio vaccine. It was the most satisfying story (of my career) to just know it works. It works. Millions of kids and elderly people have been saved from polio since.

Risley: And it was such a big story during that time.

Troan: Oh yes, because up to 50,000 people were being crippled each year. And even though the ordained ministers of science, as I called them, insisted that you had to have a live virus in the vaccine to give long-term immunity. And Salk insisted you could do it with a killed virus and fake the body into thinking it's a real virus and it will produce the antibodies, the protective substances, and he proved to be right. He beat Dr. Sabin, who then came with the live virus vaccine. And Sabin took over. Sabin's is still useful in epidemics because it works faster and but there's concern now about three, four years ago, five years ago, I think the public health service finally told doctors please use Salk first for basic immunity and then you can use Sabin because one of the viruses that are in the Sabin vaccine had a tendency to infect people rather than protect them. And we were getting maybe 18 cases a year or 30 or whatever we're getting, were are all due to either kids who got the Sabin vaccine or parents like the mother changing the diaper who had excreted the virus and the mother wasn't immune and she got infected with polio. So they decided to stop that. But in big things like now in India and in Africa where they are trying to wipe out polio for good, they're using the Sabin vaccine because you don't have to use needles. In those areas, you don't have enough needles; you don't have enough sterilizing equipment in those areas; you don't have enough nurses to give it. So anybody can give you a little sugar cube with the Sabin vaccine on it and give it to anyone. And if in doing that one out of a million happens to be infected rather than protected, that's a good price to pay by protecting 999,000 or so on, so you do that. But in the United States doctors are being told to use two

doses of Salk to begin with and then either a third Salk or give them one of Sabin.

Risley: Now you went on to become science writer for Scripps—Howard.

Troan: Scripps—Howard newspapers.

Risley: How did that happen?

Troan: Well, I was "sputniked" into the job. I began covering not only medicine but also science for *The Press* and when the Russians sent up Sputnik, the first satellite, it was quite a shock to everyone including Scripps—Howard. And editors were calling wanting to know how come if everything that goes up is supposed to come down, why does this thing keep going 'round and 'round and doesn't come down? Can Troan explain this? And so I would be explaining it out of Pittsburgh. And then what do we do next? And then when the Russians put the second one up, I was writing more space stories. I would call my contacts in Washington, write the story in Pittsburgh, teletype it myself—that was the means of communication—teletype to the Scripps Howard office in Washington. They would distribute it to all the papers including back to my own paper in Pittsburgh. One day my editor, Wally Forster, said to me, "Mr. Walker Stone (the editor-in-chief of Scripps-Howard) wants to talk to you in Washington." You were always saying Scripps—Howard should have a science writer in Washington. Maybe that's what he wants to talk to you about." I said, "Well, that's interesting. I was not trying to promote myself out of Pittsburgh but I think a newspaper organization as big as Scripps Howard should have a science editor in Washington. "So I got down there and talked to Mr. Stone and he said, "We would like you to come down and cover science."

Risley: What year was that?

Troan: Nineteen fifty-seven, around Thanksgiving of '57 when they called me down. I went there in January of 1958 to become science writer—everything from A to Z: astronomy to zoology. I said, "Well I'll tell you. *The New York Times* has at least three guys covering this—maybe five. I'll be the only loner. There won't be a time I will not be scooped, but there

will also, I can tell you, there won't be a day that I won't be able to give you a story. I think there's a lot of stuff out there." And I was by then monitoring about 60 medical and science journals—just going through them and picking out stories and calling people to follow up on them. And so that's what I did and got to see. That became one of the most exciting parts of my career, getting introduced to the first astronauts, following them on their flights. The most tense moment I can recall was waiting for Alan Shepard to be launched as the first American into space.

Risley: Okay, tell me about a couple of the bigger stories that you did as science writer for Scripps Howard.

Troan: Well that would be covering space and finding out who would be the first man in space. They [NASA] were trying to hide it; they said it would be either Shepard or Glenn, and/or Grissom. They were trying to hide it. And I got that by sheer luck. A friend of mine in Pittsburgh called me and said, "An old friend of mine from the National Guard, he's down there. He's working at the Cape; call him up have dinner with him." So I called him up one day and he said, "Okay, let's have dinner." So we went to a good beef restaurant and I said, "Who do you work with?" He said, "Bell Aerosystems." I said, "Oh, they make those little engines that steer the capsule after it goes into space. The little jets." I said, "So you work on the base at the Cape? He said, "Oh yes. I'm at the right at the launch pad." I said, "You get to look into the capsule?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, whose custom-built couch is in there?" He said, "Well the name is on it is Shepard." I said, "Oh, thanks." That's how I got to say Alan Sheppard in all probability would be the first man in orbit and then AP followed up the next morning and so on. But stories like that are luck. The other one was the public health services report on the dangers on smoking cigarette. This was to come out on a Saturday at 10 o'clock Saturday morning. We were all to report to the public health service offices and they would hand us this big text with all the details about how bad smoking is or whatever it produces or whatever it's tied to. And then we'd spend two hours just going over it. And then we could ask

questions and then we'd be released to write the story. Well unfortunately, not every Scripps Howard paper published Sundays. We had Pittsburgh; we had Denver, Knoxville. We did not have a Sunday paper in Cleveland. We did not have a Sunday paper in New York. They were anxious to get this story ahead of time. Could we do it? I said, "Well I'll try to find out what's in it." So I began calling associates. I knew that the people on the panel would not talk. They were bound to secrecy. First I called a friend at the public health service, a fellow named Stewart . . . the name escapes me. Hunter, J. Stewart Hunter. Stu used to be a teacher of journalism at University of Pittsburgh, but he was then PR chief for the public health service. I said, "Stu, I know you won't tell me what's in this but…" He said, "John it's so secret it's being published by the Government Printing Office section that handles the CIA reports. So you won't be able to get to it." I said okay, so then I started calling friends of panelists, and they gave me a few bits and all. Finally I hit. There's a guy named George Moore, at that time at the Roswell Park Institute in Buffalo—a cancer researcher. I called him up and I said, "George do you know anything?" Oh he not only knew most the highlights. He already had a public relations release about how you quit smoking and so on, really. So I encapsulated what he told me. Then I called Stu Hunter back. I said, "Stu, all right, you can't tell me what's in the report. But let me read this to you. And then let me know if I send this story out whether I'll be left hanging out on a limb." And he listened. He was quiet for a while. He said, "I'd say you are hugging the trunk." So I went off with the story and then for 72 hours nobody was confirming it. Everybody who would report on it would credit me with the scoop. And one day I came in and walked into the National Press Club bar and there was Chuck vonFremd from CBS. And Walter Cronkite was on a noon show and he mentioned that, according to me, this is what the report said. And I said, "Geez, tell Cronkite I appreciate that mention." He said oh he's only giving you credit because if it blows up, he wants you to get the blame." I said, "Oh come on." But that's the way it worked. They finally got it. And 90

percent of it proved correct what I did. I said that was a pretty good guess for a scoop.

Risley: So you covered a variety of stories but space was certainly one of the…

Troan: Space was the highlight—the most exciting. But transplants were coming into vogue then. I remember doing a story on spare parts for humans—a whole series. I got involved in doing quite a few series. The first series, the one of man in space, I traveled something like 6,000 miles bouncing around to do different space labs and so on. A story about how it would feel to go into space and things of this sort—what the dangers were. And then a whole series on the birth control pill; that was new. Changing cholesterol was introduced; I mean people began talking about cholesterol after I became a medical writer; I had never heard about it. And a great story I have on cholesterol was a fellow named Ancel Keys of the University of Minnesota. The father of the K-ration. He was so upset the diets people were following. He said cholesterol was bad for you, bad for the heart. And so somebody said in a press conference, "Doctor, what do you eat at home?" He said, "I'll tell you what we don't eat at home: We don't eat fatty foods; we don't eat homogenized milk; we don't eat butter; we don't eat marbleized steaks."

At that time, the head of the Cleveland Clinic said, "Ancel, I don't know if that's going to make you live longer, but it's sure as hell going to seem longer." The Cleveland Clinic man was always against these stringent diets that the doctors would propose for heart patients after a heart attack. He said, "You guys should use them first and test them. You'd know how bad these diets are." But both of these—Keys just died in his 90s and I think the Cleveland Clinic man is still alive up at Woods Hole in retirement and he's in his 90s. So either diet worked.

Risley: What do you think makes a good science and medical writer?

Troan: Well, I loved trying to simplify the language and being clear in it. I tried not to scare everybody by giving them too many symptoms because I know I had that experience. I knew too many symptoms, and I always try to give a little bit of an up touch there. You know it isn't as bad as it

sounds. There is always hope and this would be on medicine's side. I even wrote an upbeat on atomic bombing, about you won't wipe out all of Pittsburgh with one bomb, and how it would work and so on. I would say, "I know this may sound like a dumb question." But usually I got a smart answer and I would just keep driving down (for simplicity). I mean when they got into sub-atomic physics, I said to one physicist, "Now you have split the atom and we keep talking about that. Would it be all right to say you are now splintering the atom?" It took a little while, about five minutes, for him to buy the term. "Yeah. That sounds right." Some catch phrases like that. But primarily I tried to write about what people wanted to know about. Their own health and how they can help themselves and what's in the offing about new hearts and the new knees. The first transplant I think was the kidney. Fortunately, we have two of them so somebody could give a kidney to someone.

Risley: Well, shifting gears here. How did you become editor of *The Press*?

Troan: Well, I had been asked by Scripps Howard one time, "You think you'd like to be an editor some day?" I said, "No, I'm having too much fun as a reporter. And Earl Richert then was the editor of the news bureau in Washington and Earl said, "Well whenever you think you might want to change your mind, let me know." So about a year later it seemed like I was rewriting myself on some of these stories. So I said to Earl, "You want to talk. I think maybe I might consider moving on to be an editor." I was hoping they wouldn't send me to El Paso, that's way out in the sticks. And I don't want to go to New York because that's harem-scarem business there, the newspapers. So the next day, the editor-in-chief came and said, "Why don't you call Wally Forster, the editor of *The Pittsburgh Press*." And I thought, "Wow, don't tell me they're going send me back home? That would be great." So I called Wally. He said, "Why don't you come over? I want to talk to you." So I went and talked with him. He said, "I told Walker I was getting ready to retire and he thought that I should talk to you. So would you be interested in coming back? I can't

promise you the editorship but would you like to come back here as just my assistant or whatever. So I went in as associate editor.

Risley: So you went back to *The Press*?

Troan: As an associate editor

Risley: And what year was that?

Troan: In '66, 1966. I went back there and in 1967, about let's see, sixteen months later, I was called into Wally Forster's office and Jack Howard was there. He was the Scripps-Howard chief in charge of newspapers. Charles Scripps was the overall big boss for Scripps Howard Foundation and Scripps Howard Company, but Jack ran the radios and newspapers. So they were sitting there and Jack said, "Wally is going to be retiring in a month or so. And we're here trying to figure out who we should name to take over. And we're sort of inclined to name you as editor but we also like Leo Koeberlein." Leo was the managing editor and he really had kept *The Press* together because Wally had emphysema and he was struggling in his last year. And Leo was running the show. And he said we thought of co-editors, and I said, "That doesn't even work in college." They said, "We agree." And he said, "But we do want to do something for Leo." I said, "Well, why don't you name him executive editor, and if you want name me editor." Oh that sounds great. We'll name you editor and then you name Leo executive editor. I said to Jack Howard, "You know it would be much more impressive if you named me editor and named him executive editor rather than I do." "All right, we'll do that," he said. So that's what they did. And then a whole week later Wally Forster called me into his office. He said, "You know I just can't get up to telling Leo about this decision." I said, "Do you want me to tell him?" And he said would you do that. I said, "Well, sooner or later somebody's got to tell him and we're going to have to work together." I said, "We came to *The Press* the same year; we know each other. We worked together and then I went to Washington and came back." So I went to Leo and I told him. He said, "John if it were anyone else I'd be disappointed." Because but he

said, "What's an executive editor supposed to do" "I said, Well I don't know. We'll work it out and figure it out. And we did."

Risley: How did you all split up the duties?

Troan: Well I said, "I'll take care of the editorial policy. I'll be the final man on hiring and firing. But you do most of the screening. I'll be the liaison with the community. I'll go make speeches and visit places and so on. And I'll handle the budget and I'll do liaison with Scripps Howard in Washington and in New York and deal with them. You take over as the front-line officer. You handle the composing room, engravers, the stereotypers and so on. You handle the features department, sports department. You coordinate them so they don't overlap and things of that sort—the day-to-day operation—and I'll do the other. And it worked like that. When he retired fifteen years later—he left a year before me—he said, You know, I can't believe that we never had a disagreement in all those years."

Risley: Really?

Troan: I said, "Well, there was one time when I second guessed you but before I brought it up, I decided you were right." He said, "Okay." And that's the way it worked. Yeah.

Risley: So you were the editor during what years?

Troan: From 1967 until 1983. I retired in August of 1983; that was mandatory. Well, I could've taken another year or two but I was one of the proponents of retirement at 65 for editors and business managers.

Risley: Well, what was the competition like between *The Press* and *Post Gazette*?

Troan: Oh, we had fierce competition. But by the time I came back, *The Post Gazette* and *The Press* were already in a joint operating agreement that had been approved by Robert Kennedy. And when I got there our business manager said to me, "Do you want to see the contract?" I said, "No, because Congress in now investigating these joint operating things, and I don't want to know any of the details because if I get subpoenaed I don't want to use the Fifth Amendment. I'm just going to tell them I don't know." I never saw the contract; I never did. I didn't want to know what split *The Post Gazette* was getting from the profits. But they had their

editorial staff. We had our own editorial policy. They had their own. We had the same advertising staff and so on. The only thing we had to worry about was the integrity of the editorial operation the news operation. They had one guy at *The Post Gazette* that we discovered was snooping up in the composing room about 6 o'clock in the evening to see what we had set for the next afternoon and tried to steal it for *The Post Gazette*. So if we had a real exclusive story we wouldn't set it in type until 10 o'clock at night. *The Post Gazette* would be out with its bulldog edition and and this guy wouldn't be around anymore to watch.

Risley: *The Press* was the morning paper and *The Post Gazette* was the evening paper.

Troan: The *Post Gazette* was the morning paper.

Risley: That's right; *Post Gazette* was morning and *Press* was afternoon.

Troan: Yeah, we were the only large city where the afternoon paper had a higher circulation. But when I joined *The Press,* we were number two daily because we had to compete with Hearst's *Sun Telegraph*. So we were number one afternoon against *Hearst*. But we were number two daily because *The Post* as we said had the whole morning alone. And on Sunday we were number two. *Hearst* had the big circulation on Sunday thanks to the comics they ran. They had the most popular comics and in those days the [Sunday] newspaper was sold wrapped in comics. People just picked up the comics. I used to protest: "We got this big story on page one. Nobody knows that buying the comics." It didn't change for years until they began putting the comics underneath page one. That was a big change. I said it just doesn't make sense but it did because people bought it for the comics. But one reason I think *The Press* became number one was that Larry Fagan, the city editor at that time, said, "I want this paper to be prepared in such a manner that when the parents lay it on the coffee table they will have no compunction about their children picking it up and reading it." And I must tell you we were real Victorian as medical writers. I could not use the word "pregnant," I could not use the word "rape." I mean, we used "expecting" if you were pregnant, and so on. I

said okay and it's amazing. I look at some of these clippings. You couldn't mistake what the story was about. And rape was "criminal assault." We had this copy editor and she would say, "Help I'm being criminally assaulted." Oh my. But now we've gone to the other extreme. We get so gross in some of the descriptions of murder and of sexual attack.

Risley: Well, what was it like to be editor in a newspaper chain like Scripps Howard? Did that change during your career?

Troan: It didn't change during my career. It may have changed later when they went public.

Risley: Scripps Howard was still family owned.

Troan: They didn't hit the stock market until after I had left. They let the editor run it at will and seldom said anything about it. Once I got a note from Jack Howard saying, "You're joining too many social clubs." I had accepted chairmanship of this and chairmanship of that—not chairman but serving on the board of directors of the children's hospital and all. So I just got off; I got off the symphony. They were being threatened with a strike. And they wanted me to stay on the board. I said I will not stay on the board because if I have an editorial against the strike they'll say, "What do you expect? He's on the board." If I have an editorial in favor of the strikers, you'll say, "I'm a traitor." Anyway, at Scripps Howard we had an editorial policy on national issues; it was set at an editorial meeting of all the editors. Every editor had one vote. So my vote equaled Jack Howard's or Charles Scripps or Ted Scripps or Bob Scripps, and every editor had one vote. Small paper like Stuart, Florida, at that time or Fullerton, California: [got] one vote. *Pittsburgh Press*, one vote. *New York Word Telegram*, one vote. And we would vote by consensus and that would establish the national policy on the issue. Those editorials would be written by the editorial writers in Washington. Now if I in Pittsburgh, did not agree with it, I did not have to run it. But if I wanted to write something different I'd have to do it myself. They were not going to write me an anti-editorial except on endorsing a presidential candidate. We had

to run the original endorsement. Now on state issues, local issues, we did those ourselves.

Risley: Interesting.

Troan: One of the things was abortion. I would not buy the Scripps Howard editorial policy of abortion-on-demand, which I say is really abortion on request. But this was my thing was abortion: There must be justifiable abortion as there is justifiable homicide but it's not homicide on request or homicide on demand. And if the woman is in danger, if you get a second opinion from a doctor saying do this, allow that, that would be okay. But I just don't think you can walk in and say I want to get rid of this fetus. And they never complained about that. That was my heartfelt feeling and that's what I did. I keep thinking I was number ten in my mother's belly and if she had decided to abort me I never would have had all this fun.

Risley: That's right. What do you consider to be some of the most important things you did as editor of *The Press*?

Troan: That's so difficult to tell. One of the things I sometimes regret was that I pushed so much for the right of public employees to strike. That was sold to me by Chuck Douds, distinguished alumnus of Penn State who at that time was Secretary of the Bureau of Mediation. He called me one day in Pittsburgh, had lunch. He said, "You know we're going to have these teacher strikes all the time. We solved the problem on police and firemen, because they have to go to compulsory arbitration. But with teachers and highway workers and garbage collectors, there is no such mandate for arbitration so they're going to strike anyway. We should have some system where they are allowed to strike but if it endangers the public heath or welfare you get an injunction to stop them, and they have to go back to work. For instance refuse workers: If they want to strike in January, you can probably let them go for a month. That litter out there the garbage is not going to infect anybody. If they strike in August, we go for an injunction immediately. Teachers, you can let them strike in the summer. Then if they go on strike during the school term, you can wait

and if you see that they're going on too long, the school board should go in and ask for an injunction and the court should issue the injunction and force the teachers to come in. Probably not jail them because there wouldn't be enough cells. But you put a fine on the union per day and pretty soon they're going to be back in the classroom." Well, it sounded right. We resurrected a report that had been written by an attorney named Hickman in Pittsburgh and we printed it over a three-day span and began campaigning for the right public employees to strike. The legislature took it up; they approved it. But it [the law] doesn't work that way. The school board is reluctant to ask for an injunction; the court is reluctant to grant it. The court has never fined anyone or jailed anyone. And the only thing is that teachers have to give them 180 days of schooling so the poor kids lose a summer job because they have to go to the end of June or something like that. I've sometimes regretted [the paper's stance.] I think I was responsible for stirring this up.

Risley: What were some of the other big stories that happened during your career?

Troan: Big stories?

Risley: At the local level, national level.

Troan: I'm trying to think. Well, Vietnam. We supported the war but only to the point of it giving the Vietnamese a chance to train themselves and defend themselves and take over their own job. We took it over for them, which was a bad idea. I'm afraid we may be winding up like this in Iraq. But I don't know how we can get out of that one; I mean we can't just leave it. It would be manslaughter if we left right now. We talk about the Sudan and so on for which the government there is responsible. Foreign people want us to go and do something to help them. What would we do in Iraq if we left now?

Risley: So what about the local stories?

Troan: Local level stories. Let's see. . .

Risley: Sports?

Troan: Yeah, well, sports were great. The Steelers went to four Super Bowls during my time. I remember writing a column about the people who cheered when Terry Bradshaw was hurt one day early in his career. They were all cheering and I said, "This is awful for people to be cheering when a man is hurt. I mean you can boo him when he throws an interception or something but the poor guy is hurt." The Pirates, let's see what else was going on; I'm trying to think. We had a local mayoralty. Peter Flaherty came in as "nobody's boy." There was a proposal for a sky bus which would be a high-speed line from the airport to town. And Pete killed that, which was bad. We campaigned for it; we thought we should do it. We thought we should have a larger convention center and now they've enlarged the one they did build. And we were against what we called "small dreams." I said what this mayor is talking about is—and then in agate type wrote—"small dreams." And we campaigned against what we called the "sick tax." The city of Pittsburgh was going to tax hospitals. And we said, you know what the hospital will do is just pass it in the bill to the sick person. So we called it a "sick tax" and we defeated that proposal. And one of the big deals we had was payjackers. That's up again now in Harrisburg where the legislators increased their own pay under some mock circumstance. But we had that back in the 70s, twice. Once they increased their own salary and we raised so much hell the governor called the legislature back to repeal it. So they repealed it and then they set up a Commonwealth Compensation Commission, which would recommend pay raises which would go into effect after the man had been reelected. We said, "That's okay." We bought that for the time being. Well, then they did this in the commonwealth. They appointed legislators to the compensation commission. And so they got themselves a raise that way. Well, we raised hell again and this time we kept up the campaign and of eight of the incumbents who had opposition in the primary back in '76, I think six, were defeated" one in Fayette County, one in Crawford County, two in Philadelphia where I think *The Daily*

News picked up the gauntlet. So ten of the incumbents were knocked out in the primary.

We said in many cases you have to eliminate the incumbent in the primary because in some districts if you're a Democrat, you're going to win. If you're a Republican, you're going to win. So you've got to defeat the incumbent in the primary if you want to get rid of him. Sometimes you want to keep him. And among those that we got rid of in '76 was a stalwart of the Senate, a senator named Tom Nolan, who was a big labor leader in Allegheny County and one of the big movers in the state senate. Then the biggest one was what we called the "noble lords" in Congress. The noble lords just before Christmas sneaked in an amendment to give themselves a tax-exempt expense account. And we discovered that, somebody at Scripps Howard in Washington discovered it. I picked it up. I got hold of the Congressional Record and found out who voted which way and we began naming them. So we printed a blank form in the paper and said you address this to the Internal Revenue Service. You send it to us and we'll put it in the mailbag for them. We got 13,000 letters; the Scripps-Howard paper in Cincinnati joined in. They got some more. We had a gay time with that. We got 34,000 letters. We had to get a van to take ours down there and present them to the IRS. And the IRS said, "This is not acceptable. They [senators] can't be tax exempt." The expense account, they have to pay tax on it. So Congress finally voted it out. But that was what we thought a real successful campaign.

Risley: Did you write a regular column while you were editor or did you write editorials?

Troan: I wrote some editorials. I looked at every editorial that went in. I would change a word or two now and then or so on. I thought the editorial cartoon on the editorial page had to reflect editorial policy. If it was against the policy, you could put it on the op-ed page but not on the editorial page. And I think newspapers should do that because you confuse the reader. And then I would try to write every Sunday a personal column—it was just personal about family or a vacation that I

took. One was a column to a seven-year-old asking why are the bus drivers striking? So I wrote it to the seven-year-old like, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus." I thought I did a pretty good job explaining to the seven-year-old that they want more pay. You can't blame them, but then in order to do that, you have to raise the fare and your daddy is going to have to pay more to ride the bus. That seemed to tie us in with the community. We gave good display for letters, pro and con. I said, "When we get a letter that's pro count it as ten because you don't usually write when you're happy with something. But the [cons] you only count one as one."

When I was editor we started suburban editions. Everybody in the country was trying to find the answer [to reach readers in the suburbs]. Detroit would re-plate for east and west and so on. We decided, let's see what the market is for advertising in a limited area. I mean merchants in the suburbs can't afford the main rate. So maybe if we chop this up: eastern suburbs, western suburbs, south, north. And so we sent out the advertising people and they said we can get enough advertising revenue in the south to do it. We can get enough in the east and the north but not in the west. So we started that. And we put in six- man staffs. I was in the business of hiring people not firing; that was great. We would put a six-man staff usually what five reporters and a photographer or maybe four and two, although we could always get help off the main staff also. So we did that for the south. We did it for the north. We did it once a week. We did it on a Thursday, I think, or a Wednesday. I forget what day it was but that would be slipped into the southern subscribers.

Risley: What are known as zone editions.

Troan: Zone editions.

Risley: You all started that?

Troan: Right. And they all worked well. And if it was a truly good story, we'd pull out to page one of the main editions. And sometimes, there would be a spin off. The main edition would have something and we'd say for

further detail and in the south we'd tell them go there. But that worked out very well.

Risley: That was a big development in the newspaper business.

Troan: Right, yeah. There was no other way to do it. You had to zone them but re-plating was too expensive and too hectic. You know you're in the middle of your main delivery around noon or so and you're going to replate before two o'clock and something else happens.

Risley: Well looking back, how did the newspaper business change during your career? What were some of the biggest changes?

Troan: Well it began to get computerized. The typewriter went out of existence and we got computerized.

[Tape ended; next tape starts.]

Risley: We're resuming the interview with John Troan on August 18, 2005, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Okay, you wanted to add something about your time as editor.

Troan: Yes, one of the things during my editorship was we promoted community wide polio vaccination with the Salk vaccine. Got everybody in the county—adult and child—vaccinated against polio, and we were nominated—I don't know who it was, perhaps the Scripps-Howard office—nominated *The Pittsburgh Press* for the Pulitzer Prize. And Dr. Salk sent in a supporting recommendation. I can't quite recall fully what he said but it went something like this: "Every year the Pulitzer Prize is awarded, almost every year, to somebody for exposing some evil. I think it's time for you to award the Pulitzer Prize for some newspaper that did something good." But it didn't work. I think they gave it to some newspaper on the west coast that exposed a prostitution ring. So that was it. Also, we raised millions of dollars through *The Pittsburgh Press*' Old Newsboy Fund for charity cases.

Risley: Do you think that's it is important that the newspaper take a role in the community like that?

Troan: Oh yes, yes.

Risley: Why is that?

Troan: Well I think you should. . . let me read you something here.

Risley: Sure.

Troan: A great man in Scripps-Howard history was a fellow named John Sorrels. John wrote this: "A newspaper gives cohesion and direction and purpose to community life. It agitates. It creates, demands. It establishes and preserves standards of public morals. It is the community's physician, fatherconfessor, and advocate." And during my 16-year stewardship I tried to follow this guy's philosophy. And that was why we would help raise funds for the children's hospital. That was already established before I even got here but we expanded more funding more avenues to raise funds. And I don't know, in my 16 years raised $19.5 million, something like that. It's a fantastic amount.

Risley: I should add that Mr. Troan was reading an excerpt from his book.

Troan: *Passport to Adventure*.

Risley: Okay, we were talking a bit about how the newspaper business changed during your career.

Troan: Well, I think computerization of course eliminated our compositors and our stereotypers. Some took early retirement. And we offered some retraining and some of the printers and stereos got jobs as advertising salesmen. But nobody made it as a reporter. I think one person tried. It didn't quite work out writing. Well it shrank the composing room staff; it eliminated stereotyping altogether. And engraving, they're gone now too. So in that effect it was heartbreaking to see people who had given 30, 40 years of their life to something and then it goes on. But that's what happened to the foundry workers when the automobile came in. It's just a difficult thing.

What else happened was we began losing influence as a newspaper because so many people began taking up television, especially the younger generation. And then the tabloids began taking over. We became less careful about truth and accuracy. When I first started in the newspaper business if some newspaper had a story, the first thing was to check it and see if it's accurate, and then we can take it over. And in a day

or two nobody would know who scored the scoop. But nowadays somebody reports something and you immediately say, "according to the so and so," without checking to see whether so and so was accurate and truthful. That began falling apart with the tabs and with TV. And these days, I don't understand how newspapers scoop themselves. You go on the Internet and they tell you they have this story and the reader who's paying for it won't get it until tomorrow morning. But you're already being told that *The New York Times* or *Washington Post* said so and so. And it seems like it's a game of "I-can-scoop-you-and-screw the reader. That's what was happening there. Because of television influences, *The Pittsburgh Press* began a TV magazine and that was quite successful. The chief of the *TV Guide* in Pittsburgh lived one block away from me. And he said, "You know, this is the only city where the local paper is more depended upon for TV programs than the *TV Guide*." I said, "Well okay Ed, we'll try to keep you happy." So and our boys did good on the *TV Guide*. It is getting more to be an electronic age.

Risley: How about the role of women in newspapers? Did you see that change?

Troan: Oh sure, yes. When our science writer left the press, we named a woman as science writer. When the book editor died, we named a woman as book editor. When the travel editor died, we named a woman as travel editor. When, well we had an assistant managing editor as a woman. We began promoting women as copy editors. We sent one to copy editor to the American Press Institute. And we began promoting women. The press was integrated under my editorship. We didn't have any blacks on the staff. And unfortunately we had trouble keeping them. We would train them and they would get a better opportunity and off they went. And we had one good kid. His father was head of *Jet* magazine. His father was killed in a plane crash I think. So *Jet* magazine hired the son right away and off he went.

Risley: But you said the first black reporters started at the *Press* when you were the editor.

Troan: Yes, actually the first thing we did immediately was the copy boys; they were all white. So we started [hiring blacks] and we got copy girls too. But we no longer yelled "boy" or "girl". We just yelled "copy." But that was disturbing to me even when I was in Washington, that this large paper was not doing that. The *Post Gazette* did. They had a city editor who was, an assistant city editor who was black.

Risley: So the *Press* was a bit behind the *Post Gazette*?

Troan: Yes, yes, yes. *The Post Gazette* was really more liberal in its views and remained so, although some times you get mixed up about what's liberal and what's conservative.

Risley: In terms of journalism, do you think there were watershed moments during your career that you believed changed people's attitudes toward the press?

Troan: I think it's more like a yo-yo. Sometimes people love the newspapers for doing something and then they hate them for doing something. And Watergate was perhaps the watershed there where they said, "Oh, after all, we wrecked a president or the media did." I don't think the Pentagon Papers had that much influence. In Vietnam I think the newspaper coverage but primarily television coverage of the havoc over there made the people tire of the Vietnam War and end it. And so it wasn't so much as the media there not just necessarily newsprint or newspapers. But there are times when you are being applauded for doing a great job for something and then you're hated because you're doing something that they don't particularly like. Part of it is, I think, a shrinkage of the number of papers. It used to be that every viewpoint had its own paper. And now you are kind of constricted and so the liberals don't have a paper that is absolutely liberal. It will have something that turns its readers off.
You can't follow one line all the way through anymore. You try to appeal to a larger audience and then you always get some mad. And the talk shows, I think began having an effect on newspapers while I was an editor. You get these people coming up with any kind of accusation. You don't know who they are. They're anonymous voices on the air on radio

talk shows and even television talk shows. You don't know who's presenting what argument and whether it's true or not. People will start demanding that some coach be fired and it could even be the enemy of the coach whose saying that he's no good. It's impossible. We never ran a letter until we verified the writer. We would not run just some simple name and run the letter. I said, "We can't do that."

Risley: What were some of the biggest changes you witnessed in terms of how reporters operated or how editors operated at a newspaper like the *Press*?

Troan: Well, I think more team reporting occurred. There were investigative reporters, investigative panels and so on. I used to say everybody's an investigative reporter because that's your job as a reporter. But we would have a certain project that we would assign two or three people to it. That wasn't being done before. We also at *The Press* used to depend on the photographers being the chauffeur. Every time a reporter had to go somewhere he would jump in with a photographer. Well then, we let the photographer get some cars and they would go and cover a story on their own. We got into more in-depth series, too. I did not believe in stories that ran over three pages and so on. Jump once first, but if it goes into a third, second jump, you lose the reader. Rather than that I said, "Let's have a series, say five [stories]. Start it on Sunday when we have about 50 percent more readers and tell them the next story is Monday, Tuesday. Maybe we can sneak them in and pick up more circulation that way." One year we wound up in the top ten in Sunday circulation up ahead of the *Boston Globe*. I thought that was great. But the daily was doing pretty good. But the population of Pittsburgh has gone down and so it's impossible to sustain that.

Risley: What about in terms of how editors work and operate? How did that change?

Troan: Well, I think it depends on the individual really. There are some editors who want to run the whole show personally. I believed in the Eisenhower principle of delegating. I know Scripps Howard would sometimes come in and say, "You mean you don't sit in on a meeting before the first

edition goes out?" I said, "No, I have a news editor. I have a city editor. And I have a managing editor. You want to give me their pay, I'll sit in on it and tell them stay home." I said, "I've got to be comfortable with the people doing my delegated authority. And if I am, I'm not going to be jumping on them every day. I said if I come in and I do see a story that I think should be out on page one, all I have to do is pick up the phone and say Fred we got something on 14 there. Find a space for it on one and dump something else."

Now in some cases the executive editor is number one. I explained to you earlier we split this editor and executive editor. I remember the executive editor came to me one day. We had a student applying for a job and he sent a resume and gave an essay and so on. The editor said, "I don't know about this kid. He's got answers to problems we're not aware of." I said, "That's the way we teach; I thought that too when I left college." But now I think editorial style is a personal thing. And as you noticed with the *New York Times,* somebody was pushing his own agenda and got in trouble. And one of the concerns I had there is so much effort to win a prize. I served on a Pulitzer Prize jury one year and I read some of these letters from editors sponsoring someone for a prize and I thought, "Geez, I can't believe what the editor is saying in this about how great a job they did. So that guy did a good job. Yeah, but this is what we usually do." And they over emphasize and overstate in order to get the prize. I remember the vice president of Knight Ridder newspapers, Knight Newspapers at that time, gave a speech and he said, "Don't worry about all your Pulitzer Prizes that you don't win. The graveyards of journalism are filled with newspapers that won awards but lost readers." And then he started naming some of them, big names. I said, "Oh my." What a great statement. We kept saying just satisfy the reader. Let's get the readers and don't worry about judges. In fact, when I served on the jury, I said, "You know some of these stories have been read only by the guy who wrote them, the copy editor who had to edit them, and his mother." They run so long I don't think you'd get anybody to read them.

Risley: Well, what was it like to see the *Press* after the strike be sold and then closed?

Troan: I was surprised that Scripps-Howard would throw the towel in on that but they were getting nowhere in their negotiations with the Teamsters. The teamsters were always tough to deal with. But when I was editor the business manager handled the labor negotiation. We had eleven unions at the *Pittsburgh Press*. One man belonged to two unions. He painted our signs, so he had a bond with the painters union and then he posted them on the truck, so he had to belong to the billboard union. But the editor was responsible in Scripps-Howard for editorial, composing, and engraving. That's it. I forfeited composing and engraving to the business manager because we were in a joint operation, and I convinced him that whatever deal is made he should make it because he's the one who has to make peace with the *Post Gazette* on how much they're going to pay out of this. I said, "I would rather just keep editorial." Of course we didn't have an editorial union, so I managed to keep it that way with an open-door policy. People could come in any time at all to complain about anything. A lot of times I wound up writing my editorial after the Friday night symphony. I would be there scratching on paper at the symphony hall and my wife said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm just jotting notes for my column I'm going to write when we get home because I didn't have time." She said, "You should shut the door." Anyway, I've lost my thought here.

Risley: We were talking about the *Press* closing.

Troan: Oh yes, right. Well, finally people were telling me the *Press* is trying to push *The Post Gazette* into bankruptcy and get rid of them. I said I don't know what they're trying to do but that doesn't make sense because it's a joint operating agreement under which *The Post Gazette* is guaranteed a certain amount of the profit. If it was going to be good through 1999, why would you want to do that for seven more years paying a profit for doing nothing? That doesn't make sense. Well then they just had it. They couldn't reach an agreement and Scripps-Howard just said get rid of it.

But as a matter of fact, Scripps Howard has gone down that way now. They're pulling out; they're taking small-town newspapers like Gannett does and primarily cable television. They own the House and Garden TV, Food TV. That's where they're making their best money. And they even gave up on Denver which was a good income producer. So I suspect right now Knoxville and Memphis are the two big producers newspapers-wise. But it's just a whole new ball of wax.

Risley: So what did you do as a journalist during your career that you think made you most proud?

Troan: I don't know. As I mentioned, I think getting everybody vaccinated against polio. Raising money for the children's hospital. Making the people feel convinced that we were a fair advocate of their concerns and that we did give people a fair break in our news columns. That we were trying to safeguard their interests. That we were trying to promote the community. I would go out and talk to people and explain what we're doing and so on. And the other thing is I'm happy that even at this time everybody that ever worked with me is till likes me. We just had a reunion of sixty-five former *Press* people. We meet three or four times a year. I invite them to a "Dog Day" lunch.

Risley: A what day?

Troan: A dog day lunch in August.

Risley: What does that mean?

Troan: Dog Day.

Risley: Oh, like "Dog Days of August."

Troan: Dog day lunch. We had an Oktoberfest—a Mocktober fest, excuse me. We had a Tankfest before Thanksgiving. At various times of the year, we try to get together and everybody still does that. I think though the whole idea is *The Press* was pretty well beloved by the community and I thought that we had done a pretty good job of following that philosophy I quoted.

Risley: This may be another tough question, but looking back which did you enjoy more: reporting or editing?

Troan: Reporting. That's where the action is.

Risley: Why? Why did you enjoy that more?

Troan: It's exciting. You go and watch a guy being shot up into the sky. Watch heart surgery. Watching the doctors working on a patient. All of that. That's where the action is. In editorial, you're opinionating. There are a lot of advantages of being editor. You get to meet the presidents and as editor I met every president since Eisenhower through Reagan. But actually, I met seven presidents in my lifetime including one ex-president—Herbert Hoover. But you get to meet, rub elbows with the pockets of power and you feel like, "Oh my! I might be able to get my voice in here."

Risley: But reporting is more fun?

Troan: Yes, yes. It's hard work, sometimes because you're racing around the clock and all, but that's it. When you finally nail something down and say, "Oh I got it here." I was wearing out after 16 years as editor, which was considered a pretty long time. I don't know that people survive that much in editorships now, with the bottom line being money, money, money, rather than just putting out a good product and making enough to more than break even.

Risley: Tell me again when you retired as editor of the*Press*?

Troan: In August of 1983.

Risley: Okay, and that was, in part, because of mandatory retirement.

Troan: At one point when I was still working in Washington at the Scripps Howard news bureau I was approached by the editor-in-chief who said what would you think about a mandatory retirement age of 65 for editors and business managers. I was in my 40s. I said, "That's good, make room at the top." And he said, no seriously. They were concerned about one of the editors in Scripps Howard who was losing his marbles, turning senile. He would write editorials that sometimes didn't make sense but nobody had the courage to change it, or if they tried to change it the editor would slap him down and they didn't want to fire him. So I said, "Well I know Mayo Clinic has started this and I know the guy in the PR division there. Let me talk to them to find out how they're doing."

So I called him up. He said, "It's working very well." I said, "Now wait a minute. You've got a guy, a doctor named Walter Alvarez. Walter Alvarez was a practicing physician on the Mayo staff. You forced him to retire. He's 77 years old and he runs around faster than any of us in his 40s. He writes a medical column. He does a great job. And you've lost him." And he said, "But for every Alvarez that we lose, we also manage to drop a few others who are missing the beat." And he said, "As long as we tell them in advance that this is going to happen, they can prepare for it. And actually it helps them because they don't have to explain to any friends that they were fired because their skills are going bad. But they have to leave because of this mandatory age. And that's what they would do." And so I told that to the Scripps Howard people. They said, "All right. From now on we'll say that everybody—editors and business managers—will have to retire at age 70, the following year 69." We lowered it until we got to 65. However at the 65-level you could still ask for a year and even after that for another year. And so when I was 64 they said to me, "What do you think?" I said, "I'm ready to leave at 65." You sure you don't want another year? I said, "No I'm burning out. I'm looking forward to just retiring."

Risley: So what have you been doing since you retired?

Troan: Well, we did a lot.

Risley: You wrote a book.

Troan: I wrote a book, but that only took one year a half a year or so. We started traveling. My wife and I managed to reach my goal of [visiting] every state in the union: 50 states and 43 countries. And then we just ran out of steam. I didn't so much as my wife. She's having problems—medical problems, but we're satisfied. We're going to stay inside the country now. I'll be 87 next week. She'll be 85 in October, and so we're concerned about if something happened, we want to be handy to U.S. medical care.

Risley: Eighty-seven, that's terrific. Well, is there anything you'd like to add that we didn't discuss?

Troan: No, if I think of it, I'll let you know.

Risley: Okay.

[End of interview.]