SWGS 201

Transcript of Interview with Henry McClurg at DeBakey VA Hospital in Houston, Texas at approximately 2pm on Saturday, March 17th, 2012

Henry McClurg was interviewed by Elizabeth Van Itallie, Kiara Aguirre, and Michael Paras

Henceforth these letters indicate the assigned person is speaking:

H, Henry McClurg
E, Elizabeth Van Itallie
K, Kiara Aguirre
M, Michael Paras

[H] Pardon me I am wiping my nose on camera.
[E] Its okay. We are editing. You are okay.

[E] Well thank you first off for having us here because we are really excited and we appreciate that you are spending some of your time talking to us.
[H] You’re welcome.
[M] So yeah if you don’t mind starting off by just telling us a little about where you’re from and how you came to start Contact.
[H] Oh the first paper.
[M] Yes.
[H] I think Contact started in 1972 or 1973, I always get it confused, I had just moved to Houston and I was a radio announcer, a radio newscaster, and um but I hung around the gay bars. Gene Howell and the Farmhouse and that was the big mega bar and then there were other smaller clubs. Montrose had not yet become the gay neighborhood. But there were
[E] Was there another neighborhood that was?
[H] Basically it was southwest Houston, everything was just spread out in southwest Houston. There was a bar called “The Round Table” around Montrose and Taft, I mean around Westheimer and Taft. That was probably the only gay bar in Montrose at the time. But I hung around all the gay bars. And there were about a dozen of them. And we had a little newspaper in Houston at the time called the Nuntius run by a guy who had two names, he called himself Phil Frank and also something Goff, I can remember what he called his first name but he had two different names and he was kind of a fly by night operator or something, he wasn’t quite right. But he did have a little uh like twelve page, sixteen page, tabloid newspaper much like you see today. But it was awful. So I new all the bar owners, it didn’t take me long to learn all the bar owners and I said well what if I started a paper? Would you advertise in it? Gene Howell said oh yeah Henry sure we will advertise in it. And everybody said oh yeah sure. So I took them up on it and I started a paper. And I was a salesman and I twisted their arms and they bought ads and so that is how Contact started. It started originally, I had moved here from New Orleans so it was a combination New Orleans and Houston paper, we had some New Orleans ads and some Houston ads, and then I decided to just let it grow. We added Dallas, and I don’t think we added San Antonio yet, but
we added Dallas. I went wherever I could get ads, revenues to support the publication. And it sold on the newsstand for seventy-five cents a copy. We used to have a big newsstand downtown called Big City News, huge newsstand, most famous for selling adult material but it was a real newsstand, so I was down there one day walking down the sidewalk and they had all of my issues of Contact spread out the whole length of the window and around the corner and I said hrm okay.

[E] And you published that under a different name, is that true?

[H] Well my name on the radio was John Parker, so I used the name Henry Parker, I just made a name up, people in radio and entertainement industry have psuedonyms and mine was John Parker it was a name I have always used on the air. So we started Contact and got the ads and after about the fourth issue I discovered a distribution company called Satellite News Corporation and they had adult bookstores throughout the South and they had somehow just had a tif with The Advocate and they threw all the advocates out so they needed something to replace it with. So all of a sudden I had great distribution all over the South, from Atlanta, Florida, Louisiana, every adult bookstore in the South had copies of my paper. So all of a sudden we had good distribution. So okay we are selling ads and we started getting national ads, well mainly bath houses and popers which were popular back in those days but there was revenue coming in and so it kept growing and growing and growing. I put out a total of seventeen issues of Contact, we came out every three weeks. We wanted to come out every two weeks but we never could get it together so we came out every three weeks. One day after I had just put out the seventeenth issues, I was broke. I picked up the phone and I called David Goodstein in San Matteo, California who was publishing The Advocate. By this time The Advocate had gotten its distribution back into Satellite News system and so we were both on the newsstand and by that time also we had expanded, we were in Californai too, so Contact was all over the place side-by-side with The Advocate, so they knew who I was. I said "David, this is Henry McClurg in Houston", he said "Who?", "oh its Henry Parker in the paper, Contact" and I said "David do you want to buy my newspaper?" and David says "Yeah I could be in Houston tomorrow". You know who David Goodstein was, he was a character in Milk the movie so the next day he was here and my lover Larry Watkins and I we took him to some Mexican restaurant and had dinner and the next day we signed a contract and I didn’t get much for Contact but I got a contract for a job with The Advocate, I would be there southern representative correspondent, ad salesman, everything, so that was good. I worked for them for about a year.

[E] So when you had Contact how large was your group that was publishing it? Was it like, did you employ?

[H] There were about four of us. That’s all. Coming out every three weeks you could do it with two people. We had four. I had a full-time editor and full-time something else, I don’t know, gopher.

[M] So you just kind of eventually dropped the pseudonyms for a reason or just?

[H] Well I decided to use my real name. I mean I was gradually going towards that direction when I dropped the John and used Henry and then finally I dropped the Parker and used my real last name, McClurg.

[M] Well how do you feel that your various papers have evolved over the years?

[H] Well they are more professional, make in the old days the Montrose Voice that you brought the sample of, and Contact, and even the Montrose Star, the paper that followed the Montrose Voice, the first Montrose Star it was done on a, well Contact was done on a IBM it wasn’t electric but it had justifying type, but it was basically a type writter that did justifying type. Later papers were on a
Chestergraph multigraph typesetting machine and now of course we are all on computers. The old days were cut and paste. That was very time consuming, but very educational.

[E] Do you think the purpose is still to consolidate information about the gay community and make it publically available?

[H] I have always wanted to do good. I figured my publications had a purpose, to do good, to educate people and to educate our community, let them know what is going on and be proud, you say, not be ashamed that you’re gay. That was really part of the whole idea of publishing a newspaper, lets put it in print, we’re not ashamed, we’re not hiding in a closet, here it is, around newsstands everywhere.

[E] You talked about how Montrose was not the gay center that is it now in the early years so as your publications evolved did Montrose become more condensed and have more of an identity?

[H] Yes. And I tell everybody this and they, nobody believes me, or they wink when I say it, but I named Montrose, Montrose, cause after I sold Contact to David Goodstein and worked for him for a year and then I was still in radio I decided to start another paper because I just wanted to so I started the Montrose Star, yeah first Montrose Star and then Montrose Voice, now there is Montrose Star again, which I started that one too, but the original Montrose Star was around 1975 I guess, or 76 or something and I forgot what your question was.

[E] The evolution of Montrose as a gay community in Houston...

[H] I named Montrose, Montrose. Cause I was looking for a name of the paper. And I was living um in what is today called Montrose, it was not called Montrose at the time, it was called Lower Westheimer. And there was this woman, a professor at U of H or something she was publishing a paper called Interview and she decided that she wanted to name this area Upper Westheimer which didn’t make any sense to me because if you go by block numbers we are the lower numbers, not the higher numbers, but she wanted to call it Upper Westheimer because it is closer to downtown and that made it upper but I decided, I had started a paper, and I named my paper Montrose Star, after the street, the boulevard Montrose because I had lived in Spain and the main street in Spain reminded me of Montrose boulevard, I liked it, so I was going to name my paper Montrose. And we became popular and we became full of gay stuff and people started referring to the neighborhood, not just the street, as Montrose, because I named the paper Montrose Star.

[E] Okay I am convinced.

[H] I wasn’t intending on renaming the neighborhood but it happened that way.

[E] Do you think that the role of these gay newspapers changed as the community was more centralized?

[H] Do I think that the role of the gay papers have changed? No. The gays papers serve gay people where ever they are. And Montrose is not really that much gayer than Meyerland or Bellaire really but the clubs are here. It is a little gayer but not that much more.

[M] Do you think there are unique responsibilites for gay journalism like pitfalls that another paper might not have had to deal with?

[H] Well there was always prejudice. Back in the day it was the idea of finding someone who would print the paper. That really was not a problem because we all printed at Ford Times which was a historic black newspaper in town and that’s wher the Nuntius printed. I found out where they were printing and I went over there and talked to Mrs., she recently died about two years ago, I can’t remember her name
now, but I talked to her and said “I want to publish a paper. Ya’ll print it?” And she said “sure”. It’s a homosexual newspaper and she said oh yeah that’s fine. Mrs. Carter that was her name.

[K] How do you feel that your newspapers have made an impact on Montrose besides naming the community Montrose?

[H] Well it was pretty significant giving it its name. Um just by being here. I have skipped years at times but I have pretty much almost continuously published a paper since 72 or 73. So just by being here, it made sense that Montrose would become the gay ghetto, they call it sometimes, because the property values were cheap. Anywhere were you have a big city with a neighborhood where property values are low, gay people are going to move in and open shops and store and Montrose just fit that criteria at that time. Its not that way anymore but in the 70s it was that way, and the 80s. You could you know find a storefront somewhere for a couple of hundred dollars a month, open up a boutique of somesort. Gay people like to do that, gay men do anyways for some reason.

[E] So have you been in radio as well the whole time?

[H] No I haven’t been in radio since I quite KULF to start to devote full time, I quit radio right after about the last three issues of Contact, we did seventeen issues all together, that’s when I quite KULF. I was working at KENR as an afternoon newscaster and then I went to KULF. This is back in the days before FM radio, AM radio was it, so I worked at KULF but I was working midnight to seven am shift at KULF as the overnight newscaster and I said you now I am making enough money with the paper and I am just going to quit radio. KULF, it was amazing, it was a wonderful company to work for. A year after I left I was still getting profit sharing checks from them.

[E] And KULF was in Houston?

[H] Yeah it was 790 AM, it now has different call letters. It was owned by a company called Southern Broadcasting, very, very,very, very fine company, uh about half of the employees were gay. But they had offices on top of the old central national bank building downtown. Beautiful studio, you would walk in, I would go to the top floor of the central national bank building and that was there studio and you would walk in and first of all you would be greeted by a huge chandelier and a spiral staircase and a receptionest down there and you would go up the spiral staircase and on the right they had a bar, a real bar in the radio station, and then down the hallway was the sales office and then down at the end was production and newscasters room and the DJ’s room. It was a very first class operation. They ended up being sold to somebody who was sold to somebody who is now owned by Rupert Murdoch.

[E] So in the 70s did you feel like Houston was big gay community in the South? Like where were the hot places?

[H] Well, Houston was up and coming. New Orleans was always, being a very liberal city, that is where I lived before I came here. It has always been a very gay accepting city. I’m from Mississippi but I moved to New Orleans to live where everything was out and open. In New Orleans its live and let live. They have gay bars you know. I arrived in New Orleans about the time that they allowed same-sex dancing. They had a bar called Peet’s. It was called Peets because it was Peet Fountain’s old club at 801 Bourbon and they called it Peet’s because on the sidewalk as you walked there were tiles that spelled out Pete’s because that stood for Pete Fountain but he moved farther down Bourbon to be with the bigger crowd but he still owned the bar and he made it a gay bar. Pete Fountain made it a gay bar. And it was a bar where you go in and dance but it had to be opposite sex couples dancing. And I was there one night and everyone got pissed off and were like the men are going to dance with the men and the girls are going
to dance with the girls and just did it. And the managers of the bar and everyone said screw you and
from there on, you can’t tell us who we can dance with.
[E] That’s crazy that there was a law. That’s wild.
[K] What big Houston events in the gay community do you remember during the 70s? Because I know
that the first pride march
[H] The first Pride March, and I think Ray Hills has written about this was downtown and I think Anise
Parker was in it, that first one. I was not in it but I was here. It was around Simpson’s Diner which is no
longer here. I vaguely remember it happening but I was not in it. I was not really an activist, I was a
business person, a newspaper person. I promoted activism in my words, but I was not out marching
carrying a flag.
[E] So in your early publications it says 100% gay newspaper. What is it like when you are making a gay
community in your business?
[H] I once sat a table with Senator John Tower, when I was a reporter for KULF, I’m going to make fun of
you here, and there were a bunch of us reporters having coffee, he was running for re-election as a US
senator and I asked him some question and he looked at me like what? And he didn’t understand what I
was trying to say so I don’t understand what you just said.
[E] So I guess what I am trying to say, in your newspapers it seems like you created, especially in the
early days, it was a gay community that was creating these newspapers and
[H] All over the country, San Francisco was ahead and New York was ahead. At one time we had three
national newspapers in this country in the 70s, I was one of them, The Advocate out of Los Angeles
where it was based at the time, a paper called Gay out of New York – it was a good paper – and Contact
out of Houston. Those were the three national gay papers. You could go into any gay and lesbian
bookstore, there weren’t any back then, but if there were, and mainly you could go to an adult
bookstore, but the general newstands would carry us too but the bulk of our sales were dirty old men
going to adult bookstores. That’s a fact.
[E] And you had subscribers as well.
[H] We had people that subscribed to individual copies which is what really David Goodstein wanted
when he bought my paper, he wanted by subscription list. He also wanted my distribution though,
because I had places that he did not have.
[E] And you had to be really careful about sending your publication so that no one would know that it
was a gay newspaper?
[H] No. We sent it in a brown envelope that said Contact. But that doesn’t tell you anything. 2110
Lexington Avenue, Houston, Texas, 77006 at the time, now its zipcode 98 but at the time 77006 was 19,
98, and 06. They broke it up because we got too populated.
[E] That’s what they say.
[M] Contact proclaimed itself as 100% gay
[H] Yes, we were 100% gay. Now when I started the Montrose Star it was gay but then I sold that to a
guy named Burt Hollister, who then got killed by a hustler he picked up, terrible, but he was, he was that
type of person, he picked up hustlers, and so the paper folded and I waited a respected six months and I
started the Montrose Voice. But I called it the Montrose Voice because by that time Montrose was very
identifiable as an ecclectic neighborhood, heavily gay, so the purpose of the Montrose Voice originally
was to be a neighborhood newspaper, covering gay issues extensively, but a neighborhood newspaper, but it was really a gay paper. We had a weather forecast on the front cover and everything.

[E] So is the Montrose Inn your establishment as well?

[H] I started the Montrose Inn when I sold the *Montrose Voice* to Dr. Crad Duran and his lover Tadd Nelson. Tadd has worked for me, and I wanted to sell the paper and move to San Francisco, and Tadd wanted to buy it and he was married to a rich doctor, well they bought the paper from me, and they ran it for a while, and I moved to San Francisco for about a month and then said well I don't know anybody here and then I came back to Houston. So I had all this money because they paid a good price for the *Montrose Voice*, which they changed the name to *Houston Voice*, and so I took that money and opened up the Montrose Inn, guest house, because I knew from New Orleans they had like 20 gay B&Bs in New Orleans and we had none here. So I decided that there was money to be made here.

[E] And how long was the Montrose Inn in existence?

[H] I keep losing count, but I think it actually lasted about 15 years. We are looking at property tomorrow, myself, and a friend, and two investors, we are looking at a property in Montrose on Hyde Park to do another gay B&B because now the Lovett Inn is no longer there it is an international hostel, which is not gay, the Love Inn was never really gay, but a lot of gay people stayed there. But the Montrose Inn, we were all gay, but anybody could stay there, but we were all gay. So now once again there is a market for that in Houston and just by coincidence that is my schedule for tomorrow. We got a realator going to walk us through it.

[E] So it sounds like you have all of these different publications and sold them and started new ones, do you enjoy the process of starting new papers and starting new businesses.

[H] Yeah, apparently I do. I start something and run it for a few years and get bored with it. Then I sell it to somebody and start something else.

[M] So is your having named the neighborhood related at all to you being referred to as the Mayor of Montrose?

[H] I name myself that. When I started *Montrose Gem*, that is another one that I started, I decided not in the beginning but later on to change the name of my column to Mayor of Montrose. I said people are going to laugh at that, but then after a few more cocktails, I said that is what I'm going to do, and if they don't like it, if they like it they like it. I'm going to do what I want to do it's my paper. That was my attitude.


[M] What was the response?

[H] Oh pretty good. People called me Mayor of Montrose. It works good in the club when you are trying to look available to handsome young men. Oh that's the Mayor of Montrose.

[E] So in our class it as very L-G-B-T and we talk a lot about the heterogeneity of the gay community, how has that affected, like even looking at your newer publications they talk more, it's less like gay men, like more broadly in the community.

[H] Gay originally meant everybody. Even the gay women in Houston and throughout the South didn't like the term lesbian, they were happy, one word covered everything. The rest of the country started to use the term lesbian to separate the men and the women. I do have an issue with the B in LGBT. There is no bisexual community. That has always been one of my opinions. There are lesbians, you can call them gay women or lesbians, that is a community, they have their own social networks, they have their
own clubs, and there is the gay male community that has its own stuff. There is no such thing as a bisexual community. Now there is a transgender community that they organize among themselves and have meetings and organizations. Can you name me a bisexual organization, or a bisexual club? No, there is no such thing, so I’ve always had an issue with the B in there.

But do you think that your papers have covered this transgender community as transgender issues have arisen.

Oh yeah I am all for covering that. I see no, I want to word this carefully, they are no different than gay or lesbian, they are people that are discriminated against, they have their orientation, and that’s what they are. When I did the Montrose News, we used to be in print with the Montrose News. We did four issues in print. Its still online. I still update it all the time except I haven’t in four days, we did – I’ve lost my train of thought again – oh yeah that one, we put out four issues of these. What is this, this is number three. I’m going to do it again. You haven’t asked me why I am in the hospital, but that kind of interrupted everything, plus I ran out of money and got broke, because I was sick that is why everything fell apart, but I am well now.

Good.

That’s why I am leaving Wednesday. I was supposed to have left Friday. I had not arranged a place to live yet but now I do have a place.

We’re online. We have paid advertising on there.

And you are trying to work with the Houston Voice to put it in print maybe?

Yes I have been meeting with them, we had a staff meeting a week ago tomorrow or was it two weeks ago, or was it a week ago six days ago. They have issues. I have issues as well. We are trying to work it out.

And they are online as well. And do you just think it is good for the gay and lesbian community to have a publication. There is Lauren and Angela’s Montrose Star, that is an entirely different story which I used to own. And yes there should be two papers, two papers in print. They are like five papers online now Houstini, it’s a stupid name, my current Montrose daily News Is all links also but I link to local stuff. It’s a stupid name, its owned by Robert Moore out of the Dallas Voice, its just online, and then there is the Houston Herald and he claims to be Houston’s source for LGBT news but he does not have anything local. I have desperately been trying to find a journalist to do original reporting and cover the neighborhood. But I have not found anybody yet. The Houston Voice, or the Houston Progressive Voice, they are online, but it is an online version of what is going to be in print. And then the Montrose Star has an online version which is just the front cover of their current issues, that is about all that they have on there. You can’t read the issue online at montrosestar.com actually montrose-dash start dot com, actually I own Montrosestartcom . They own motrose-stat.com.

An important distinction.

I figured and my logic on that is that montrosestar.com refers to the original Montrose Star which I own 100% of.

Can you talk about how at the beginning Contact was distributed around the south and it seemed like as other communities, like as these publications grew, and we have more local publications. Have you been involved in different people around the south starting local publications?

Yeah a week from now, March 264th what’s his name that owns the Philadelphia gay news is coming
her to seem me. I used to be Vice Present of the National Gay Newspaper guild for two terms and mark Siegel was the President so he always calls me “Mr. Vice President” and I call him “Mr. President”. But he’ll be here and were a going to talk business. But he will be here Saturday we are just going to talk old business. Originally I was going to have him meet with the Houston Voice people but now I am not sure if I can going to do this. But he is not coming here for that he is just coming to see me.

[E] And even when you weren’t Vice President of this organization were you involved in this. Yes I was involved in this. We would every a board meeting every three months which was great because we got to travel, San Diego, Universal Park in Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, everyone had to host one when the cycle came around. When my turn came to do it the first time I did it in New Orleans and then the second time I did it in Houston in the old Savoy Hotel which has since been demolished.

[E] So you talk about how originally there were just the three gay publications, was there a specific time when all of sudden there was an explosion of gay papers?

[H] Yeah, the explosion of gay prepares came in the later 70s. I was early with mine but mine wasn’t really a local paper. After three or four issues it became a national paper. Um but the true local papers started the late 70s, the 80s, Mark Siegel started the Philadelphia Gay News in about 1974, makes him the oldest continuous, no the BAR, the Bay Area Reporter, is the old papers currently published and then Mark with the Philadelphia Gay News is second oldest. However, if you don’t cant the lapses that I have had between publishing issues I am the senior publisher.

[E] Are most of the people in the gay journalism, are most of them men, is it a more exclusively male publishing community men?

[H] Yes and there is a reason for that at least in my opinion. It is my opinion that there is a special reason for that. The businesses are mainly owned my men who like men and advertise for men and that is just the way it is. There are women’s publications. But they are you know nothing compared to the you know, now the papers owned my men always have women in involved in them and circulate to women, but the revenue comes mainly from the male owned stores.

[E] So did you go into radio work right after you left the Navy?

[] Yes, I was in radio before the Navy. I had a lover in the Navy. This is before Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell. And everybody knew that Frank and I were lovers, nobody cared, Don’t Ask Don’t Tell screwed everything else because then we had Senator Sam Nunn poking his head in a submarine and saying ya’ll sleep together like this we need a law, you might touch each other.

[E] Were there other gay couples?

[H] Oh yeah. First of all, its an all male environment, although I has never on a ship, I was always land based, and I’m gay, and Frank was too. Frank is coming to se me this summer. I talk to him all the time. He was my first gay lover, that was 46 years ago.

[E] When you travelled to do different places like Spain did you get a sense of their gay community?

[H] They didn’t have a gay community. This was in the late 60s. But we travelled all over the place and were treated very hospitably.

[E] Do you follow local and national politics a lot?

[H] Yes I do. I follow national politics. I think it looks good for Obama because Santoram has no idea what he is doing and America sees that, and Romney if he had not had this primary fight all this time would have been okay but now everyone sees his true colors.

[M] So how did you get involved in radio as a whole whether it be radio or newspaper?
I was going to high school in Jackson, Mississippi. And there was radio station that I liked, WJXN and I went down there one night, 8 o'clock, and the door was unlocked so I just walked in, and Roger Earl was DJ-ing and he said what are you doing you can’t just walk in here. And I said oh I don’t know I Henry do need someone to answer the phones for you. And he said okay and I sat there and answered the phone and people would phone in and I would write down requests and then they let me do news casts, rip and read from the UPI wire, 5-minutes every wire. And then one day, Roger who just happened to be the son of the owner of the radio station, said okay Henry we are going to put you on the air. And I said sure, this is a rock-n-roll radio station. You start Monday night at 8pm. You are going to take over my shift, 8pm to midnight. Where are you going I asked? And he said of they are moving me up to the front office to do bookkeeping. But they need someone to take over the 8 to midnight and you can do it and I said alright, I’m going to be a rock-n-roll disk jockey. And so I got out of high school and I turned on the radio on and Hank Williams was on and then the next song was Patsy Kline or someone, and then it said this is new WKXM, your new country music stations. But I wasn’t going to call, I was told to come at 8pm for my shift. So I arrived at 7:30pm and I saw Bill the engineer, and I said what is going on Bil, I and he said Mrs. Onesby came in this morning and fired everybody, even the secretary. She kept me because FCC requires that you have an engineer., FCC requires it. And then were about 30 minutes when the radio just kept going “katchut katchut” and she told everyone get out and I’ll send you your last check. And then she had a whole new crew come in and start playing country music. She had it all prearranged of course. It turned out the old crew was stealing money from her. And so I said I guess I am fired too. And he said no you aren’t field Mrs. Onesby didn’t know you were working here. And you have your shift. And I said I don’t know anything about country music. And he said here are the stack of current hits and here are the stacks of oldies and you play two from here and one from here and don’t worry about commercials, we don’t have any commercials, and read five minutes of news every hour. And that is how I got into radio. And that is how I got into news. And I was more talented at news than being a disk jockey, they thought, I wanted to be a disk jockey.

And did you work in news casting in Jackson after you graduated from high school?

Yes I did for WJXN for a while. And then I decided, I really wanted to be a rock and roll disk jockey and so I moved to WDDDT in Greenville, Mississippi, and it was a powerful station that covered the whole Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas Delta and it was a rock and roll station, just what I wanted. And I got a job and worked there. And then a Navy recruiter was also one of the DJs a the station and he told me one day that he had gotten the list from the army and that I was being drafted and I said what, they haven’t told me, I am a recruiter so they tell me before they tell anybody else. And I says what do I do. And he said join the Navy. It was the Vietnam War the army was cannon fodder. Join the Navy, you will be safe on a ship.

So you enlisted before you were drafted.

Yes that is the way you do it. Of course there is no draft anymore but at the time that is what people did. The army would draft and you could find out if you were going to be drafted and then you would join the Navy or Airforce because otherwise you would be in Vietnam. If you were in the Airforce you might be in Vietnam but up in the air and if you were in the Navy you would be off shore.

But not in the jungle.

So you were born in Jackson, Mississippi?

Yes. 1946. I was very young when I was born.
[E] So do you have other aspirations for your post hospital life?
[H] Yes I have several things that I want to do. Get this B&B going. It is at 15 Hyde Park it is 6 blocks from the 6-11 which is on Hyde Park and it is behind the F Bar. Which is the brand new hot bar in town. And then Meteor is right near by. To be a successful gay B&B you have to be right near the bars. The people who want to go the museums they are not going to stay at gay B&B they stay somewhere else, they stay at a Holiday Inn or something. And the other thing I want to do, I want to get the Montrose Daily News get that back going in print but that is expensive. Electrons are free, newsprint costs money. But people do like to hold it in their hand.

[E] Is the challenge getting advertisers to pay for print advertising? Or finding people to subscribe to it?
[H] No, people don’t subscribe to it anymore, its free, you pick it up at the clubs, or the shops or the stores. Uh, in the old days we used to have a saying, you make money off of the BBBS. The bars, the boutiques, and the baths. That is where your revenue came from. And it was true. But that wasn’t an answer to your question. What was your question?

[E] About your aspirations?

[H] Start or get another newspapers going. Or expand the one online. Get real reporters covering the news instead of just me linking to this and that. But they expect to be paid so I have to make some money. But it’s a process and I’ve done it before.

[E] That is what it sounds like.

[K] So is it just you running it right now?

[H] Yes its just me. I wanted people to write for me but I can’t find anyone because I can’t pay them. We are selling ads now on the online addition. We got three or four paid ads. So like I said electrons are free, newsprint costs money, a lot of money. To print a 24 page paper with half of it in color is going to cost you 2000 dollars where as your web hosting service is going to cost you like 50 dollars year. So there is a pretty big difference.

[E] So it seems like you are very aware of the gay bar scene, have you ever had any business connections with them?

[H] I owned one gay bar, I owned a third of another gay bar, and I owned 5% of another gay bar. The one that owned %100 of was called Wonders which was at the corner of Montrose and Westheimer, if you are familiar with that intersection it is where that man has a furniture store, he always has a couch or something sitting out outside. That used to be called Wonders. It was a gay bar. And I owned it. And we were the first gay bar with a dance floor and disco lights and we were open, at one time we were open 24 hours.

[E] And what years?

[H] This was 75 maybe, 74. The rent was high, compared to today it would be cheep, but back then it was high. It was like 700 dollars a month. Uh but we had no parking but still it was a hit. I bought the whole bar, liquor license and all for 500 dollars. Cause the guy that owned it before owned me money for advertising, and he was tired of it for one thing, and so I said well I’ll take over the bar and I’ll write your 500 dollars off. So he gave me the keys and said it’s yours. Of course he was three months behind paying the landlord the rent but I told the landlord that I will pay you, you will get paid, but lets just stay open and make money. And then the electricity people showed up and turned the electricity off and we had to give them money and then a bunch of things. For some reason we folded it.

[E] And then the third of the gay bar that you owned?
Yes I acquired that with two friends of mine who were members of the Montrose soft ball league and myself and Dirty Sally’s which was on Westheimer also had a bar on Avondale called Adam’s Apple, I never like that name but that was the name of the bar, so and he wanted to get rid of the second bar and so we bought it from him and so these crazy Iranians owned it and this was during the Iranian Hostage Crisis and they were our landlords and anyways I dealt with them. The bar wasn’t that successful, we had no business at night. We had a little happy hour crowd and that was it. But it ended up being burned down and the FBI came to interview me and they said do you have any idea who might have burned it down and I said the landlords are these crazy Iranians and the FBI said alright okay, thank you Mr. McClurg. And I don’t know whether they burned it down or not but they were the ones to benefit from the insurance.

And then you owned 5% of a gay bar?

Yeah a little place called Payton Place, which is pretty much near where Wendy’s sits now I think, or right pretty close to there. A guy bought the bar, it was a straight bar but then he turned it into a gay bar and I said while I would like to invest that. And he said well I will give you 5% if you give me some ads. And I was publishing Contact at the time so I said okay I will give you some ads and in exchange I had 5% but I didn’t have any input in how to run it. Al right what’s next, what else?

I don’t know.

Ya’ll live around here? What parts of town do ya’ll live in?

I live on campus at Rice but I am from New Jersey originally.

I also live on campus. I am from Los Angeles.

I am from southwest Houston, born and raised right at where beltway 8 hits 59. And now my girlfriend has a little place in Montrose.

You should live in Montrose. Your girlfriend is smart.

Is there anything else you want to say, to get out on the record.

I can tell you about why I am here. I was diagnosed with stage IV pancreatic cancer which is terminal you have two months, maybe a year, but more likely two months, and I moved in almost seven months ago and I was feeling pretty good and after about five months I asked my doctor shouldn’t I be feeling bad about right now and he said yeah you have been here five months and you have stage IV pancreatic cancer you should be, I know what he is thinking, you really should be dead. And I said can you redo the tests? And he said yeah we will redo the tests. And we redid the tests and he came back, the same doctor that diagnosed me originally, he said we made a mistake, you don’t have cancer, in fact you are perfectly healthy. And you can leave anytime. And the VA is going to compensate me for all of this time and the misdiagnosis. That will take a while for me to get that money. I do have a broken leg. But that is an entirely different subject. I still use a wheelchair for long distances.

Are you involved with any other organizations in Houston?

Other than the national gay newspaper guild I really have shied away from being involved in what used to be called GPC or Human Rights, HRC, my time is devoted to publishing a newspaper, I don’t have time to be an activist, my time was spent reporting on the activists and the issues of concern.