

**Oral History Transcript**

**Interviewee: Mollie Finch-Belt**

**Interviewer: Jasmine Johnson, Kelcei Young, Amani Wells, Brianna Moore**

**Interview Date: November 5, 2018, Dallas, Texas**

Jasmine: So, first question is how long have you been publisher here?

Mollie: Since 1986.

Jasmine: 1986.

Mollie: My father started the newspaper in 1986. And um—he and my mother were murdered in their home. You may have read about that.

Jasmine: Yes ma'am.

Mollie: And so, I was the only child. So, the only heir, so I inherited the newspaper. He had just started it, probably just be—it has always been a weekly newspaper. But he had not printed that many issues when he and my mother were murdered. So, I've been publisher a long time.

Jasmine: And so, on our information sheet it said he'd only printed one issue. Do you know if that—

Mollie: That may be about right.

Jasmine: Okay.

Mollie: We can look when we go—there's a conference room upstairs and I have the very first edition of the paper in that frame. So, it might have been—I don't remember seeing a lot of issues. It probably was about one, because—did it say February?

Jasmine: It didn't say a date. It just said he'd only published one. And how old were you when you had to take over?

Mollie: Oh, I don't remember that. I'm 75 now. And it was in 1986. I was born in 1943. So, you can figure that out. And I was a career government employee. And I was working for the US Department of Health and Human Services, region five in Dallas. And I tried to—

Mollie: Well, after my parents were murdered, I took a leave—a year's leave of absence. And I worked at the paper because the paper had just started, you know, and we had to join a lot of organizations in order to get national news—in order to get advertising. Because at that time, and

still too, there are a lot of national companies that, you know, place ads in Black newspapers. And so basically, most of those associations, you had to print 52 weeks in order to—that was one of the eligibility requirements, you know? You just couldn't jump up and start a newspaper and five weeks later join the National Newspaper Publishers Association. So, I stayed there at the office, and I worked and did everything I could to, number one, publish a paper every week. That was very, very difficult to do. And doing whatever was required to be eligible to receive—at that time, we would get like, you know, a lot of the companies they would give us like—if they said—well, if they have leftover money from national buys, you know, they would give it to us because we had not printed 52 weeks. So, it was very difficult. And then branding yourself and getting to be known, you know, in the community and all that. It was very, very—when my parents were murdered, there was a lot of national publicity. He just started printing the paper. And so, because they were murdered, they didn't know why. And they said, "Well, maybe because at that time, he was printing 64,000 copies and having them mailed directly to homes in predominantly Black zip codes areas in southern Dallas." So, they didn't know why. They said, "Maybe because it has always been a hard newspaper." So, they didn't really know why. And so, they even had it written up in the *New York Times*. So, we did get some publicity, you know, that we existed

Jasmine: This is Kelcei.

Mollie: Hi Kelcei.

Jasmine: And so, was it hard for you to leave your career to become a publisher?

Mollie: It was because I really did enjoy what I was doing. I was a branch chief over investigations in the Office for Civil Rights. So, I managed a team of investigators. We investigated some of the first complaints—AIDS complaints—people living with HIV/AIDS. And we did, you know, I managed compliance reviews because they the state of Texas ordered the managed care process. So basically, I really enjoyed doing what I was doing, and, you know, the competition to, you know, really get the numbers and goals and all that--and then the challenges with working with the people who had directly supervised. I enjoyed it. But it was impossible to do that. Our office was in downtown Dallas, so, you know, it was very, very difficult. My son was in college. He would have to run up there, you know, to get me to sign checks and stuff. But we couldn't really move the paper forward with me trying to do both. We would have staff meetings at night, you know, and then my son went off to school and everybody was gone, you know, we were empty nesters. So, we go over to the paper at night and try to do things. It was just um—my husband's a lawyer. And so, it was very difficult. But I did, I took a leave of absence, because my doctor said all that—you know, it was just too much stress, trying to do that and my job. So, I took a—and I really intended to go back, and I never went back. It was just—at the end of the year, I took an early retirement. But I had worked there for a

little over 20 years. And before that, I managed (clears throat)—I was the assistant director of the Harris County Manpower program in Houston, Texas for three years. And then, before that (clears throat) excuse me, I was an employment counselor for Texas Employment Commission. So, I had all this government experience and no really, private, you know, industry experience at all.

Jasmine: And you mentioned you that had investigations on the AIDS complaints. Did that trickle over to—because I also read in your bio thing about—

Mollie: It did.

Mollie: Yeah, my husband had a radio show for a couple years called *Dallas Examiner Live* on KNON, and he basically—what he would do—it was a morning show. He'd talk about what was going to be in the paper—what was in the paper for that day, you know, to kind of incentivize people to, you know, pick the paper up. And sometimes he'd look at me and say, Mom—he called me mom. He'd say, "What? This looks like an AIDS paper." You know, because I do a lot with AIDS and health. But especially AIDS because, like I say, I supervised—I remember when the disease first, you know, came out. I remember when we had the first discrimination complaints against people living with HIV/AIDS. So that was just very familiar. And I'm very familiar with health, you know.

Jasmine: So, the bio says that you wanted to continue your father's dream, because it was your father's dream to start the paper?

Mollie: It was my father. Yeah, my father owned a third of *The Dallas Post Tribune*. And um, I said a third because he had two other owners. And when you own something with somebody else, and if you all don't have the same vision, it doesn't work. So, he was constantly fighting with them on you know, the paper what should be the content, blah, blah, blah. So, he started the *Dallas Examiner* right here in this office. This was his law office. And he started it here. When I say that—it took him about a year. He and Charles O'Neill—I never will forget—I wish I'd kept it—that little apple. First Apple computer, you know, and they joined the Associated Press, you know. And I used to say, you know, about my father's vision—and it was his vision. And then I started a youth newspaper *Future Speak*. And the lady—I kept you know—I'd go to Austin and I try to pitch it to people. They just couldn't conceive it at all. And finally, this one lady, her name is Mona Williams, and she was a real high up in AT&T. And she told me—she said, "You know what," she said, "I can get you foundation money, but it needs to go from AT&T to a foundation." And of course, we were were not. We're incorporated in the state of Texas as a for-profit corporation. So, she said, if you wanted to, you could partner with a sorority or some other nonprofit. But I didn't want to do that. So, I actually filled out the application everything and got my nonprofit. It's called Vision Team. And I still keep it. So, AT&T funded this youth

publication that was a tabloid insert in the *Dallas Examiner* every week until the recession came about. When the recession came about they had to cut, you know? Black people are always—we're always the first ones to get cut. So, funding was cut, and I never could really get the funding up to a level. Because I would pay high school journalism students stipends—it was like a part time job and they would actually—we were located then, in another office, and I had a whole back room that was a *Future Speak* room. And I had their furniture. I had um—they would come every day after school and they had a director and they publish that newspaper every week. So, when I was talking to her, she said, "You know the way you're talking so passionately about the paper and all, it's really your vision now." So, you know, it became my vision because basically, I sold the paper better than anybody else. My husband and I, we would go to New York to the ad agencies once a year in the fall, but everywhere I went, I could, you know, talk about the paper better than anybody else.

Jasmine: So, what would you say ultimately is your vision for the paper?

Mollie: The vision is the same as it was. To actually provide—to publish a quality newspaper that has news about African Americans and news that African Americans are interested in. There's a void in our community for our voices to be heard. Our voices, being African American. And, even though you have diversity in mainstream newspapers the editors cut out so much. And so, we need—a newspaper survives off of advertising revenue. So, we need—it's a constant struggle to get sufficient advertising revenue to hire full time reporters, provide benefits. My vision is really to have a reporter, like, who's grounded in Dallas City Hall—that's a full-time job, you know. One who's grounded in county government, one, certainly, who is grounded in Dallas Independent School District of education. And so, at one time I had full time reporters. But they were—we always attract the young, the inexperienced. It's like a training ground for reporters, you know, so I never had where I could have a reporter you know, in each one of those entities. And then somebody to do, you know, kind of like current events—what's going on. You get all this stuff that the mainstream paper does not publish about what organizations are doing [what]. And you know, stuff like that is important too. But in order to have a staff like that, you have to have money to pay them decent salaries. That's one reason why my father started the *Examiner*. He always had professional journalists working on staff. And so many of our newspapers, and I'm very active in the National Newspaper Publishers Association—so many of our newspapers do not have professional journalists working on staff. We still have professional journalists, but we don't have full time. They are contract. It took us—we moved in this building—my husband died three years ago, and I tried my best to lease this building to another lawyer, because it's really a law office. They all want to do work in a high rise, you know, and all that kind of stuff. So, his paralegal stayed here doing freelance work and finally, me and my production manager—because we were then, located in the Oak Cliff Tower, and that elevator would stop, and it was just you know—

Mollie: She said. “Mrs. Belt, why don't we just move over to the law office,” because I own the building. And so, I said “Well, that does make sense.” because if, you know, if you close a building like that, it just deteriorates, you know? We've got to have people in here to keep it alive. So, we moved here in November. It took us from November to about a month ago to get a copy editor

Kelcei: Really?

Mollie: Um-hm. And you all know what a copy editor does. And here again, she's freelance, and she's White. And most of our copy editors have been White. The production manager puts something on some journalism website, or something that she goes to, to get applicants for writers and, you know, editors. And she gives them a test, and this lady, you know, she did real well. I mean you have to have somebody—because you know, the copy editors who read the original stories, make sure that you don't get any liability problems. That the information is in there—because people will lie, and [tell] you that it's true, factual, and all that. And most Black papers don't have copy editors, but we have a copy editor. And so, she actually—like today, she's not here because she works from home, because, you know, the computers now, there's so much stuff you don't have to physically be in the building [to do]. So, the production manager is at home, so she'll email her stuff that she pulls, you know, and she would be—and the production manager will be here tomorrow. The copy editor will be here on-site Wednesday because she reads the articles that are on the page, because once you put it on the page sometimes errors occur, you know, the jumps are not right and all that

Mollie: But we had a hard time, because—you know what, I'm just gonna tell you, both of y'all are Black and I'm Black. Black people don't want to work hard and that's just like—investigative reporting is hard. They don't want to do that, they want to go do a feature story “Oh JC's in town, go down there and do a story,” you know? Feature stories, that's what they want to do. They don't want to do investigative reporting and they sure don't want to copy edit. We have had only White copy editors. I told my administrative assistant, I said, “I'm [going to] watch you hire a whole 'nother White person.” But she's Black, you know, but it's not like she's prejudice or anything. That's just who applies and that's who passes the test, because we do use Associated Press AP style, so they have to know AP style plus they have to—it's not a proofreader, it's a copy editor.

Mollie: I got off track, you asked me one question.

Jasmine: Well you answered a lot of questions.

Kelcei: Would you prefer if everyone on your staff was African?

Mollie: No, but it is important that they they are informed of the African American culture. Like this lady is from California. She lives here now she taught for—She came here to teach for Teach for America. She taught with them for two years then she started working full time as a teacher in Dallas Independent School District. And they told her to—then she was—they had this writing—you know how they have those aide teachers—she was one of the aide teachers. And, um (clears throat), she just, she she's not married but she has a significant other that she lives with, but you know she doesn't have any children. And it's kind of like she just put herself into the children. She says she found herself like working from seven to eight every day. She found herself taking the kids home, trying to really—she was teaching, what third grade?—

Mollie: Trying to make sure they could read. And she just—and she has—um—somewhat of that science. Anyway, she had to let the teaching go. It was just—and um, she started freelancing, you know, at home, magazine, you know, different stuff like that for people who need something read. So, she taught in predominantly Black schools. She is familiar with the Black culture and she's very, very interested in it. I mean she knows—she not like some White people, you know, you got to tell them everything. She's not like that at all. So, no, to answer your question, no. And we have had—I have had Hispanics. I had a Hispanic working once she finished UNT in marketing, you know. So, no, it doesn't. But it has to be somebody who's basically knowledgeable of the African American community because she just can't work at a Black newspaper and not be familiar, you know?

Mollie: And we, you know, we talk about stuff. With some things we just can't start educating from the elementary ground. You know you've got to know something. And then I'm [going to] tell you—I'm not sure if this is going to fall in—but we sponsor Monday Night Politics. Did you know about that? That's the political forums that we have been having for 10 years. We have them before primary elections and we have the forums at the African American Museum, and in the auditorium downstairs.

Mollie: And we invite the candidates for office. *The Dallas Examiner* does not endorse candidates. And the reason why we don't endorse can—there's a lot of money and a lot of papers you know they endorse and some of them make the—pay candidates give them, I don't know what all they do. The reason we don't endorse is because I don't have the resources. Like if I had somebody grounded in City Hall. Okay, city elections in Dallas are coming up in May. So, we'll have all these forums for the City Council people running for city council and the mayor because this time they elect a mayor. Well, in order to endorse somebody, like for Mayor we would have to have somebody grounded in city government so that, you know, it's not a matter of them just getting up there telling you what they've done, you know what they've done. And you know the kind of questions to ask in an editorial meeting, you know. “Why did you dismantle the Civil Rights Committee that was there?” When did you read that—you know what I'm saying, you

know. So, we don't have resources, so we have never endorsed. And we have about a 95 percent show rate of candidates whether they're Republican or Democrat who come.

Mollie: At our last primary we had Colin Allred, he came. We had the guy who's running for attorney general, he came. I mean they show up because it's a very intelligent audience. Because we have as sponsors, other nonprofit organizations in the Black community. We have all the sororities and fraternities, the panel and the council, the NAACP. We have the Urban League when it was here. Do you see what I'm saying? I protect their 501(c)(3). I'm not a 501(c)(3), but I don't let any moderator get up there and not be objective. And that's why everybody comes. And you know the other week, I'm just going to tell you this. This is what I'm talking about when I say editing. I was in DC at a meeting and I received a text from a reporter for the *New York Times*. And she knew my telephone number and I wasn't in a board meeting. And so, she text me she wanted to know what are the requirements to come and report on Monday Night Politics. And I told her it was open and there's a sign in sheet for media.

Mollie: Anyway, she wanted to come to the DA forum between Faith Johnson and John Creuzot. She came, and she didn't come up to me. I didn't get to meet her. But anyway, do you know she wrote a full-page *New York Times* story on Monday Night Politics. And she didn't put Monday Night Politics in there or *The Dallas Examiner's* name.

Kelcei and Jasmine: Wow.

Mollie: Now she might have put it in there and they took it out.

Kelcei: Oh ok.

Mollie: That's probably what happened. She knew, she knew me. She knew how to cont—I got her text right now. She said at a political forum at the African American Museum so that's something like that editor. It's a full page. I have a full-page article on that whole forum. That's the kind of stuff that we have to deal with: racism. And I say it's racism. It might not be racist. I mean, after all, that's another newspaper. But I, anyway, they left it out.

Mollie: But I'm gonna call to contact her and just talk to her. It's an excellent story. It really is. And I'm going to tell her, you know, it was really good. So why didn't you mention—because she knew *Dallas Examiner* and she knew Monday Night Politics. She may say I put it in there and they took it out. I don't know. But that's the kind of thing that we fight all the time in terms of getting respect and people appreciating what we do in the community.

Mollie: Because we are the only organization in Dallas that consistently—like I said, we've been

doing this for 10 years. When we first started out it was city council elections and we had as one of our sponsors the League of Women Voters.

Mollie: But we had to stop including them as a sponsor because the League of Women Voters has rules that they have to follow.

Mollie: And the *Dallas Examiner* does not have to follow those rules. I'll tell you one. The League of Women Voters if they have a forum, a debate—first of all, they call theirs debates and we call ours forums. So, if they have a debate and only one candidate shows up, they can't have it. Whereas we, with Monday Night Politics, if only one shows up we can still have it. That candidate—because ours is a forum and we always tell them even if the other candidates are there, you're not talking to them. You're not debating them. You are letting the audience know what is your platform, what are your qualifications and why should they vote for you for this office. You know what I'm saying? So, we can do it and so that's why I stopped partnering with them. We did it for about two three years with them. They have another—oh the other requirement they have is they cannot, uh, they can only do local elections. They can't do statewide and see—like we have statewide candidates who come. We even had gubernatorial candidates who came. See they can't have statewide; they have to have just a local. So that's why I don't partner. But they come some time to Monday Night Politics.

Jasmine: So, you kind of touched on this a little bit. What do you think is the importance of the Black press?

Mollie: The Black press is, our voice, being African American's voice—needs to be heard.

Mollie: And the Black press is very important to—it's an—what do you want to call it? I can't get the word now for that voice, okay.

Mollie: You all know the history of when mainstream papers started hiring Black reporters. Y'all know that during the Civil Rights Movement they couldn't get in to the meetings. And so, they had to hire Black folks so they could get in, find out what was happening and tell the story. So, (clears throat) the mainstream news was very integrated now. I don't know what the status of it is right now, but they went through a period, like, with the recession and the whole industry being in trouble and all that. Well a lot of people—they didn't hire as many African American reporters as they used to. I don't know if you all belong to NABJ. Do you?

Jasmine: My membership expired. I need to renew it.

Mollie: My reporters belong to it. And I got a national award from them when they had the Unity Conference in DC one year. It's out there on the case in the front. But their national president



came to visit with me about—I guess about three years ago because we were still in that tower. And he was talking about how, you know, the newsrooms were not as diverse as they had been. And so, you have a lot of Black journalists, you know, looking for jobs.

Mollie: So, um, the reporters, it's kind of like, if you work—I'll give you an example. Y'all are from Dallas. You know Norma Adams Wade? She writes, she's a columnist in the *Morning News*. She's been there for years and she writes a column. And I told you she's Black. She—oh I guess about seven to eight years ago—she wrote something about West Dallas. And her editor, who was much younger than she was at the time, just tore it up. Not tore it up, but you know scratched it.

Mollie: And so, Norma got mad and she threw the piece of paper at her. You know paper will cut you if it hits you right. So, the paper cut the lady. So they, as the reprimand, they gave her—put her on leave without pay for about a month or so. So some of the other Black journalists in town, they were really mad because they said she, you know—they shouldn't do her like that. "You've been there long enough, Norma. You oughta just retire and work for *The Examiner*, you know what I mean? You can make your mark—da, da, da, da, da." She been there too long. So anyway, she went back. But even though you have minority reporters working there, a lot of times when they get through with your article, it's not the same. So that's why you need the Black press to tell the story like it is.

Mollie: When President Obama was nominated by the Democratic Party to run for president, my husband and I went out to Las Vegas to the Democratic Convention. And our national association had a reception there. And I will never forget, Freddie Haynes. You know the Pastor Freddie Haynes? His wife was there, and she introduced me to a friend of hers. And this is the way she introduced me. She said, "her paper tells the truth." She said, "her paper tells the real story." That made me really feel good. You know what I'm saying? But we don't have to change stories here. If we change something, it's because it's a liability issue or something. But the news that you get, and the Black stories that are in mainstream newspapers are just not—they're slanted. I mean that because White people they, they can—you probably know Yvonne. She was a Black trustee at DISD years ago. She's deceased now. And she taught me at Lincoln High School. And I never will forget one day, she called me and she said she was talking about—it was some issue with education. And they have, like I say, a lot of committee meetings. And she said this reporter for the *Morning News*, the story that she wrote when she was in the committee meeting. She said—she said to herself, "was she in the same meeting I was in?" And that's just how bad it is a lot of times. So, because of the fact—in order to get our stories out you have to have the Black press. And it's very frustrating. Like I told you, we run around looking for reporters to call us here. There's so many issues in Dallas now, and things that need to be addressed. And you can't necessarily—because they don't necessarily tell things that are not true.

It's just what they leave out and what they don't cover. You know? Y'all know how you slant a story.

Jasmine: Would you say the role of the Black press has changed since it originally started to now?

Mollie: No, it's the same. We just don't have the support that we had before. Before we were stronger, because I guess, more Black people felt like they needed it. Because it was so much that they didn't have. And now Black people, so many feel like they've arrived and they don't really understand. Sometimes I'll spend time with people when people—call up here with these organizations and stuff and they want this in the paper. I say you know what, I would have a whole section dedicated to social life in Dallas if I had advertising to support it. I would. I said, “but you know what, we don't.” You can look at every *Examiner*, you will not see a grocery store ad.

Mollie: Grocery stores have to advertise their specials every week. You know why? Because they change specials every week. But they do not—when I say they don't, they don't. When Fiesta first moved to Dallas, they didn't know any better. They advertised in three of the main Black newspapers every week. And then I guess they realized, well nobody else is doing it so we don't have to do it. So, they stopped doing it. And this is nationally. We have very few newspapers that receive grocery ads every week. General Motors does not have to advertise in the paper every week. See the ads that we get from General Motors and Chevy and all that, those ads we get from Detroit. Those are branding ads. We don't even get the local car dealership ads. Where they have a car, most Black folks buy a car. But I had a salesman advertiser told me once, he said—the salesman came back and told me. He told me, he said “why should we advertise and pay? Black people are going to come in here and buy cars anyway.” That's just how we're taken for granted. And you know, it's really sad because really we could, you know—Black people could boycott one store and they'd all be in order. Just one. They'd all say, “oh no, we don't want that to happen to us.”

Jasmine: What would you say has been the highlight of your time at the *Dallas Examiner*?

Mollie: Oh, that's hard. I was thinking today when I drove over here, “I really do enjoy what I do.” Everybody doesn't enjoy the work that they do. And I really look forward to coming in the office. I looked forward to y'all coming today. I had it mixed up. I knew you were coming today, but the guy that I had for tomorrow, he came last Tuesday. But anyway, it's kind of like, you know, um—I don't know. I'll really have to think about that. I may have to email you that. I've had a lot of high moments you know that I really feel good about, you know.

Mollie: I feel like I'm able—you know with a newspaper and having control of it, I have the ability to control certain things.

Mollie: Yeah and you know, even though like I say I do not endorse, but I can make things happen. I went to the Democratic—I told you I wasn't—I don't endorse and I don't really feel affiliated with one political party. But I was invited to go to the Democratic convention to meet privately with with a small group of African American women with Beto. This was in June. And I went. And I got a chance to talk to him, you know. And you know, I told him I wanted him to meet the other Black publishers. And so his schedule was—but anyway, he came here. He sat right here in this room and he met with—one Sunday—and he met with the Black publishers. As a consequence of that, he ran a full-page ad once a month in every Black paper. But you know, I was able to get him to come. I guess it's the things that I use the paper to do. But it's so much more that I want to do. Like I said, if I had that good investigative reporters, you know, I could really do something, because I do know what the issues are. So much depends on that and because people—in order for this country—well let's just talk about Dallas County in order for it to be better, it's more than just electing officials, it's making them accountable to their constituents after they're elected. See we don't do a very good job of that and that's something that the Black press can do. If we have the resources to do it with, you know, you got to hold them accountable.

Jasmine: Have you ever thought about—you mentioned *Future Speak*, trying to start that back up with the schools? I know because I went to Desoto High School and now they have academies to where they have whole—so if you want to do journalism it's a whole like pathway from that from probably like seventh or eighth grade.

Mollie: I met with the DSD officials and then I met with the press. Because Lincoln High School is just about a block and a half down the street and they're willing to participate because those kids they can walk up here, you know? The problem is getting corporate sponsorship. It's getting the money. Yes, I have thought about it and I have done more than—think about it I have talked to some, you know, different people. I talked to them about it and what it can do because it was called *Future Speak* and it's like tomorrow's voices, today

Mollie: And I entered into a contest with the University of Texas. It was judged by the journalism department of University Texas at Austin and those kids won all kinds of awards. I mean the things that those people said about those articles is just because, you know, you have young people in the raw. And I took them to the, you know, the NABJ. They used to have—I guess they still do—they used to have that Unity Conference every three years or something. Well I took them to a Unity Conference in Seattle. I got funding from the Kellogg Foundation to take them. We flew up there, stayed in one of the college dorms, and they got to go to the

convention. They got to meet some national African American, you know, journalists who worked for some of the mainstream newspapers at that time. I can't think of that man's name he worked for *The Washington Post*. He was there. They met him. They were going around interviewing, you know—and reporting and stuff.

Mollie: Did yall know there's an African American man that's the executive editor of the *New York Times*?

Jasmine and Kelcei: I didn't know that.

Mollie: You need to look it up. I can never think of his name, but he was on The Axe Files of the month. I didn't know that either, he's from New Orleans. He doesn't—he's Creole, but he's Black. He tells you he's Black. And um—yeah, so.

Mollie: His name is—write this down. Dean Banquet. D-E-A-N. B-A-N-Q-U-E-T. He's from New Orleans. He went to Columbia University. He went to, you know, St. Augustine in New Orleans, that's a private boys school. He had never traveled out of New Orleans until he had a scholarship to go to college. He's the first Black American to serve as executive editor. There's so much stuff you don't know about him.

Jasmine: What would you say has been the greatest challenge as a publisher?

Mollie: Printing the paper every week for 52 weeks.

Kelcei: No off weeks?

Mollie: Uh-uh. Some papers don't print like, that week between Christmas and New Year's, but that week we print a paper called—uh what do we call it? It's like a recap.

Jasmine: Yearly review?

Mollie: Yep, but we call it something else.

Kelcei: Is there any time where you print two papers a week? Like when there's a lot of news or something going on?

Mollie: We print four or five supplements—we publish every year. Those supplements or tabloid newspapers and we insert them or have them inserted at the printer. Like we print a college guide every year. We've done that for 10 years. We send that college guide to 100 high schools in the state of Texas with majority Black population, student populations. And we get real good

reviews. We send them to the Counselor's Office. It will have like about three original stories in each one that talks about an African American who basically is whatever you want to call successful but basically, they have overcome challenges in their life and how they overcame those challenges. Just like the lady now I know you're probably heard of because she's the—what is she?—the president or whatever of the Mavericks. Cynt. She likes to be called Cynt. But her name is Cynthia Marshall. You heard of that Black lady? She she grew up in the projects. She's survived cancer. I mean she's got a heck of a story. We wrote about her for the guide. People like that that really have, you know—have kind of got, you know—that they've come on, you know—almost any Black person and they've been through things. But anyway, we do the college guide called *Putting the Pieces Together*, like a puzzle—pieces together. Then we do a Black history supplement every year. We concentrate on a different areas called *Dallas: Then and Now*. Like we do *Dallas Education: Then and Now*. This year we're doing *Sports: Then and Now*

Mollie: Then we have—we do, oh!—We do “battling AIDS in our community.” And then we have... We did a “back to school,” before you go back to school guide. And we do a health one too. We usually do that one on the year when we don't do the *Battling AIDS*. It's called balancing—*Healthy Balance* that's what we call it, *Healthy Balance*—you know exercise, eating right, medical care—and we stress—like last year we did *Mental Health*. It was so good—we did mental health two years ago, that churches used in their ministries. *Mental Health* will help ministries and they ask us to print them some copies. We do all kind of things, but we can't get advertising. We have very little advertising.

Mollie: Yep, it's a Black band executive. Dean Banquet. But if I had him come here and speak most people they wouldn't know who he was, you know, people wouldn't come here. I had a chance to bring—you know who Andrew Gillium is? Well you know who he is now. I had a chance to bring him here to the museum. He had a conflict—this is like five, six years ago—He's just a young person. I met him at the Congressional Black Caucus. And he was on a panel talking about things that people need to do. It was emerging leadership workshop and I went to it and I met him. So instead they sent this guy called, Dialo. People, you know, didn't know who he was. I mean, you know, it's just challenges. You know what I'm saying? Now if I bring Andrew Guillem here I have to have it at a big thing, because everybody knows who he is. But he was just as dynamic than as he is now.

Mollie: That's the one thing I like I get to meet a lot of people. I served on the Executive Committee of the National Newspaper called Association. I probably served about six years I got all the way up to second vice chair. I didn't want to be chair. I was Secretary, Second Vice Chair and now I'm on the Foundation Board, but I'm getting ready to get off of that. But we go to all the meetings and we meet a lot of people.

Jasmine: So where do you hope to see the paper in five years?

Mollie: Hm?

Jasmine: Where do you hope to see the paper in five years?

Mollie: Oh my goodness! In five years I'll be 80. I hope that it will be like I told you before, I would like to have those reporters. Full time, benefits, and really covering the issues that are so prevalent that are not covered. You know it hurts the whole city and you know like I try to get an understanding when I go to the state meetings and I talk about health issues. See if you have a healthy—if your people are healthy your communities are healthy. You know so why wouldn't you want to spend money on health issues? It doesn't make sense. There is so much institutional racism. They don't wanna you know.

Mollie: See and I used to write a lot of house editorials. I've written the last three, but I don't write them every week, It's just too much to write them every week. But I wrote one on—forgot what I called it, It's probably on the website—it's kind of like Black people tell White people what they want them to hear, you know? We have really assimilated and so in order to get ahead we have to act like they want us to act and also when they ask us something a lot of times we tell them what they want to hear. We don't tell them the truth and that is very very prevalent. And so White people think, 'oh yea I know Black people and they never told me that, and you know, it's not a matter of arguing with them it's just a matter of letting them know.

Mollie: Like I've got a lunch meeting Thursday with this lady. She's Black, she's the executive director of the Citizens Council. You know about the Citizen's Council?

Jasmine: Mhmm.

Mollie: And so much that they could do. You know? but they're not doing, because they don't... They don't really understand. And like I told them, every CEO in Dallas of every company in Dallas belongs to the Citizens Council. And they could go back, and they could change things overnight. Everything. Awarding contracts, hiring people, promoting people, the services, how they present the services -- It's so much stuff that is so crooked and people do it, you know, they get by with it. There's no accountability.

Jasmine: So, in 10 years do you have the same goal? Full time reporters, investigate...

Mollie: Oh, yea. It's really well known and respected. People know.

Mollie: See before you can get the reporters, you have to have advertising. You have to get over that revenue barrier, you know.

Jasmine: And do you think maybe, the lack of Black businesses is hurting advertising? Because you would think that those would be the business that want to advertise.

Mollie: Black businesses, as a general rule, they don't put in their budget advertising. That's why a lot of them, not all of them, but a lot of them don't survive. We used to have a really nice Black restaurant up there on Martin Luther King. What was that woman's name? Brantley. You wouldn't know her. She was a National Black Singer, and she lived over in South Boulevard. And she opened up a restaurant. It was a nice restaurant. It was nice to go there and eat. But she didn't advertise. People didn't know that it was there. But most Black businesses if you approach them about advertising, they don't have advertising in their budget and then they don't understand that I can't just printer theirs for free.

Mollie: You all familiar with the tariffs that the President just put on? tariffs? Anyway, there was a tariff put on newsprint. Newsprint is the paper that the paper it's printed on it's called newsprint and most of the newsprint comes from Canada. And so, the tariff went up, so they pass it on to the publishers of newspapers so while we're there every other week the print bill is going up, up, up. So, we had to fight to get them to, look, stop this. So, we got some of our Senators and Legislators. Anyway, to make a long story short. They ceased the tariffs; however the print companies have not gone down. So as I told my son—that's why I tell him, you know you can give away in ads. And you can't reduce them too much. Because we are paying big printing bills you know every week. So, if we don't have advertising to support it, you know you just giving it.

Mollie: So many times, you know, Black's say that's too much. Maybe \$10-15, you know, gave it to them. The Black businesses are a big, they advertise. You know like Roland Parish he owns about 20 something Kentucky chickens. He advertises every week. He sponsors a page, he likes sports.

Mollie: Then once they advertise, you got to collect the money. Now I say that which is negative about them, but the problem is they don't get the business. So, they don't have the money to advertise. Because people don't support their businesses. If Black business does one thing then unethical anymore, but the White man can do some wrong and people keep on going back and forgive them.

Mollie : So um—we don't have the Black businesses. And the Black business and we have do not have the money to advertise. It's unfortunate we don't have the advertising. Number one there's a lack of respect in our community. Umm, just like I told you about the car dealership man. He said why does he have to advertise? Black folks lined up coming in there buying cars. Same thang with groceries. Studies show to Black people go to the grocery store more times a

week than any other race. We spend money. Because see we don't go out and eat like White folks go out to eat. They go out to restaurants and eat. Black people don't go out and he like that. Maybe special occasion and stuff but they don't...

Mollie: A lot of restaurants here close cause black people. We used to have a restaurant on—it wasn't Black owed—Gumbo's, on McKinney, and it's right there by the Crescent, and it was a Creole restaurant. Where you know, they had seafood and stuff. But Black folks put them out of business, because they went in there to drink. It made it a club. They didn't go in there to sit down and eat a meal so closed.

Mollie: Now that's just one example. Black folks have done a lot of places. They go in there and young ladies they order one drink. And they'll sit there and sip on that drink all night. You know what I'm saying? It's a restaurant for food.

Mollie: I don't know if people don't have respect though. Like the grocery stores, that's my heart. Because they should have a full-page ad and everybody paper. As much as Black people spend my groceries. And you know it shop and cook. They look and see who got chickens on sale today.

Jasmine: My mom coupons every week.

Mollie: Every week! You see what they do now, they have a Red Plum. That's the way they do it. But, they won't put those in Black papers.

Mollie: I have tried to, you know I try something so hard until—and that's the hardest thing that we have is getting advertisements. I try so hard on Red Plum, I just finally—the last meeting I went to DC and the lady was there from the company of the office that does it. I say you know sometimes you reach a point this isn't worth my time. I need to move on to something that I can get money from. Because the paper will close if I spent all my time on this.

Mollie: And so many times what they do is they come up with all these obstacles. See, like one obstacle now he is on the bids and notices, you know legal bids and notices, we Black papers don't qualify for those because see you have to sell your paper. Now the Dallas examiner is combination, we are audited but we're combination paid and free. Because we deliver the paper it over 60 African American churches every sunday. And then we have sold in Walmart in Desoto, Duncanville, 7-Eleven. So, we are mixed. In order to, the state statute says you know that you have to advertise certain legal notices and bids. But in order to advertise those you have to put it in the paper that has a second glass pyramid is the antiquated search.



Mollie: And we've been trying to close representative Johnson. We went down their last session and testified and got it right on the sheet for them to vote on it, and those Tea Party republicans, they didn't vote on anything on the agenda that day in in the session closed. So, we got back this year and try again.

Mollie: So that's you know, it's all kinda, its an antiquated thing because you know, it came a time—when my father first started the paper he delivered it and his plan was to deliver the paper, people like the paper, and then they will subscribe to the paper. You know he never intended it to be a free paper. But I guess around 1987, 88 at the whole surge of free papers came out.

Mollie: So many free papers. And I remembering saying you know what we're gonna have to you know give it free. And then one time I had man at Walgreens came here, and he looked at us and he said this is too good a paper to give it away. That's when I tried to say, my husband said you ain't gonna be able to sell the paper. I focus on everything free, he said you're not gonna be able to sell the paper, especially since you've been given free.

Mollie: So, we still trying to increase sales. So right now, we have 50/50. And then you had the the internet thing. And we have a website with the paper on it. We don't post on the website until Monday, to give people a chance to get the hard copy.

Kelcei: But you post on it every week just like give you a for the?

Mollie: Umm Humm.

Kelcei: Would you, when you're talking about you want full time reporters, would you want a full-time person that was strictly for your internet?

Mollie: Because to in order to get enough hits on that internet you have stuff up there almost every 30 minutes. Something so people are constantly hitting it. You know what I'm saying? And it's enough going. But then it gets back to revenue.

Jasmine: I think you covered everything that I had. Anything else you wanted to share?

Mollie: No, I think I've covered everything I want to.

Jasmine: And if you do think of that highlight like, like one...

Mollie: That's gonna be hard, but I think about it. Because there have been many highlights.

Jasmine: Would you say the highs outweigh the lows?

Mollie: It's a struggle getting advertised. As publisher that's what I spend most amount of time doing. Coming up with ways to get people to advertise. Because that's the only way to keep the paper going. You have—your printing expenses, you have, you know staff expenses. you have you know operational, I mean got all kinds of expenses. And, you know, some people think that umm subscriptions, that's how, that's not. Subscriptions, the people that subscribe, they just cover the postage. That don't always cover postage, because you get a big paper, it costs more.

Mollie: I know that's the biggest struggle, getting advertising. You tell that's foremost on my mind. Getting advertising.

Mollie: We've gotten a lot of awards and things. And they are—it's important when you get something because it shows you that people appreciate what you're doing. You know? So, we get so many awards. We're finalists now for the Dallas Press Club awards.

Mollie: For our Monday Night Politics article. Probably won't get the award, but we are finalist, so I guess it'd be listed in the book as a finalist. But we're the only Black people.

Mollie: So that means something you know? I've got publisher of the year, but when I the publisher of the year I didn't even—my son was at the convention and he got it for me. I got a big statue that's out there. Out of 200 papers they like to me publisher of the year.

Mollie: My husband had pancreatic cancer, and so he was very sick. I didn't go to them to the meeting. But I had it, my son brought it home. So, I guess you could say that was a highlight. Winning publisher of the year. All your fellow publishers they elect you. It's an election process based on things that you have done for you know in the industry.