

## Orange Journalism

Voices from Florida Newspapers

Julian M. Pleasants

University Press of Florida

Walt Disney World, the Kennedy Space Center, the 2000 presidential election and Hurricane Andrew. When you are working for a newspaper in Florida, there is never a shortage of things to write about. Known as the breeding ground of some of the world's best journalists, including 37 Pulitzer Prize winners, Florida is recognized throughout the industry for producing some of the most outstanding newspapers in the country.

"Florida probably has more good newspapers than any other state," says Julian Pleasants, director of the University of Florida's Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and author of *Orange Journalism*, a new book offering the inside scoop on the Florida newspaper business. Published last fall by University Press of Florida, the 339-page book is a compilation of interviews with newspaper publishers, editors, writers and editorial cartoonists discussing many issues and concerns of the 900 weeklies and 375 dailies printed in the state.

Comprised of interviews collected by the Oral History Program, the book is divided into 15 chapters, each including an introduction by Pleasants followed by



a transcript of an interview. The project was funded by the Florida Press Association, which gave the Oral History Program \$23,500 to interview as many Florida newspaper pioneers as possible.

Over the course of four years, a host of the state's leading print journalists were interviewed, including Al Neuharth, founder of *USA Today*, Carl Hiaasen of the *Miami Herald*, and Lucy Morgan of the *St. Petersburg Times*. Representatives from medium-sized papers such as the *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* were interviewed, as well as weekly papers like the *Polk County Democrat*. The minority press was

represented by the African American paper *Miami Times* and the Hispanic publication *Diario las Americas*.

Lively and engaging, the interviews offer insight about the status of women in a traditionally male profession, the impact of new technology on newspapers and management differences between large conglomerates and state papers.

One of Pleasants' favorite passages in *Orange Journalism* is included in the 19-page chapter on 1996 Pulitzer Prize winner Rick Bragg, a former *Miami Herald* reporter.

"A story is what it's really all about, and that's all I really care about," Bragg says. "The thought of running some small newspaper somewhere, of trying to put together the kind of newsroom where reporters are excited about their work — you know, the kind of place where they slap high fives when they come back from pinning the city councilman up against the wall with their question, or writing a lead so good they have to get up from their terminal and walk it off — that is very seductive."

"I love the way he says that because it talks about his love of journalism and his love of writing," Pleasants says. "To me, that kind of sums up what the newspaper business is all about."

*Buffy Lockette*

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