

Ewart Ball III

Side 1:

[10] He was interested in going to music school but, since the family couldn't afford it, he joined the Air Force. After four years' service he was ready to put in his application for law enforcement, when his father, age 47, died suddenly.

[26] Because of the long hours and poor pay, his father had discouraged him from becoming a photographer, just as his grandfather had tried to dissuade his father. He was offered a job at the newspaper to take his father's place. He considered this a real honor and didn't know how much he didn't know about the field though he had worked with his father as a child.

[36] His father, along with working for the paper full time, had a dark room in the front bedroom of the house Ball now lives in and had assignments from the Chamber of Commerce along with weddings and other accounts.

[55] The newspaper is better than it has ever been when, in the '40's and 60's, there were more shots of garden clubs, society and ribbon cuttings. Today there is more "hard news" but he misses the activities of the earlier days.

[76] After the war there were only 2 or 3 photographers, today there are 5 in a separate department with a lab, dark room, computer, and new equipment. The outlying areas are covered by "stringers" who can plug their pictures into a machine, which cuts down on the need to travel so far. [Debbie Chase-Jennings, John Coutlakis, Gary Fields, Steve Dixon, H. S. Lindsey] [2002 update by Ewart Ball III: Chase-Jennings, Coutlakis, Dixon, and John Fletcher]

[98] Ball has a Harley-Davidson motorcycle which he uses for pleasure. He just got a 4-wheel drive, which helps him get in and out of steep, narrow roads with loose gravel (see photos). His father traveled more before the stringers and would often be called at 2, 3, or 4 A.M. to cover a fire or a wreck. Ball often got up and joined him.

[122] One has to have an eye to recognize a good picture. He has tried to train people but feels it is a natural-born talent.

[137] Since a photographer seldom generates a story and simply receives an assignment without knowing the emphasis to be stressed, one has to quickly get the "feel."

[150] Sometimes he thinks of angles that would be strikingly different but the publishers and editors are worried about public opinion. They also don't want "grips and grins" and the paper also doesn't want to be put in the position of having to cover all check passing and ribbon cutting - (you did it for them, so do it for us). The paper tries to go down the middle of the road on homosexual and racial issues.

[187] The newspaper prefers shots with people in them but published the 3 deer he photographed on the way to take a picture of a house (enclosed). The red wolves (enclosed) were for the Nature

Center and the buffalo shots, which appeared in the Sunday Business Section, were for the business editor (enclosed). [story written by Carole Currie]. The protestors (enclosed) were not paying any attention to him; they wanted publicity. He has gone to great length to get photographs - climbed trees, waited outside courtrooms, and been pushed by bullies, even spat on. One time, he used his camera as a weapon, and when a man put his hand in front of the camera, he hit him in the nose. When he backed away bleeding, he got his shot. [Tim Reed]

[265] He especially enjoys photographing scenery, animals, and flowers. He takes shots of special friends and special occasions but, aside from this, he would be happy never to have to photograph another person.

[286] Regarding the picture of the woman who put up bars to protect her jewelry store (4/24/96 enclosed) he asked her how she felt - she said "madder than hell" and then he shot. He tried to get back to the reason for the picture to get a natural look. He shoots 4-5 pictures rapidly to get a relaxed expression. Everyone is vain.

[316] One reason for the serious rigid look in old photographs is the need to stay still for the camera. A special stool with a bar on the back with a headrest was often used. He had one in his shop but took the back off it to use as a drum stool.

[334] He has been collecting music since high school and in the 60's and 70's played in combos around town to make extra money. He found that carrying his drum equipment around was cumbersome.

[344] He has found that it is a good idea to carry more than one camera with him so that he will not have to change lenses for long shots.

[354] John Toms told me that he helped during the filming of "Being There" at the Biltmore Estate when the main camera jammed. He fixed the sprocket in the snow.

[365] In the late 60's he took correspondence courses out of NY for two years. However, most of his knowledge came on the job at the paper.

[374] He ran his own business for 4-5 years in Biltmore Village where the art studio is now. His motto was "anywhere, any place, any time." Advertisement in the yellow pages brought most customers, mostly commercial. [John Cram]

[410] Most of the work he did when he had his office was commercial - house organs, news releases, magazines, American Enka, Southern Bell, aerial shots for plants. (His grandfather shot weekly photos of the Enka plant when it was under construction.) He photographed Ivey's when the Asheville Mall was being constructed by Coleman. He documented the building of the newspaper plant on Sardis Road and the development of Pack Place. However, he found help very hard to get and unreliable. He shot all day and processed all night and had to give it up. [Ewart Ball Sr., R. L. Coleman]

[459] Bad weather proved no handicap. He put a plastic cover over his camera. The paper is interested in weather.

[476] While filming in Sylva he fell off a wall, broke a heel, and was out of work for 90 days.

[494] He started photographing the Botanical Gardens when it was being developed and has used shots for albums and book covers.

[514] He is considered a "utilitarian" photographer - not the best, not the worst. He tries to please but is not interested in photographing for pleasure or personal collecting. He has put on shows and placed shots in a "Stock House" (Black Star is the most important) but never sold anything that way. There are, however, photographers who make a living through selling through a stock house - which shows work and collects a commission.

Side 2:

In the 60's a plant for a new press was built on Sardis Road. Storage and facilities for carriers and mailing is also handled there. This eliminates the crowding and traffic in the city building.

[2/15] The paper covers all of Western North Carolina and residents receive daily delivery - 50,000 to 70,000 papers are printed and delivered daily.

[2/27] Papers are delivered by private contractors who buy the paper and resell. Some have been doing this for 20-30 years and he did it with his bike as a child. There is about a 60% turn over and he feels that hiring full-time deliverers and furnishing 4-wheel drive cars would be a better system.

[2/34] The Sardis plant prints pages that have been put together on full size sheets and placed on a full-sized fax machine and faxed from the city office at 14 O'Henry Ave.

[2/70] Up to 6-10 years ago there were two paper deliveries a day. The morning for the "hard news" and "hometown" or "folksie" news in the afternoon.

[2/81] TV has had an effect on news coverage. The editors constantly watch to see what is on TV and won't start covering until WLOS gets there (see Edith Overby tape)

[2/88] In time, news will go on the internet and, with a home computer, will be printed.

[2/99] When he had his own studio he did a lot of photography for the paper advertisers. Money can be saved through coupons and the advertising department is very active.

[2/108] In order to get the shot of the 4/19/96 Ingles donation to Habitat with action and not the "grip and grin," they went to the Black Mountain Market.

[2/132] The fashion show shot (Neighbors, April 23) was, in his opinion a bad crop. He had photographed the models at the end of a long flower bed. Design layouts are done by an artist

who also runs drawings of her own rather than some of the photos submitted. He has worked for the paper 30 years and has rarely had his pictures used properly. [Martha Strand]

[2/189] He only uses color film in his cameras. While color is used only on the front sections (except for ads which are already paid for), this may change now that the paper is owned by Gannett.

[2/207] Even if the paper cost \$10 an issue it wouldn't pay for the cost of printing. Papers are financed by the ads.

[2/210] He was advised not to have any business contacts with the GreenLine (now called Mountain Xpress) because they are liberal. (See Lewis Green, Porge Buck and Jeff Fobes tapes) Green, who had offices in the basement of the Jackson building and now lives in Black Mountain, prints a radical paper [The Independent Torch]. He has had no contact with Asheville African-American Newspaper Shoppers Guide. [Lewis Green]

[2/244] The paper was taken over by Gannett in January (see Bernard Smith talk under History Club - 1995-1996 meetings in storage box and write-up in note book). Changes have already taken place. Several department heads were asked to take early retirement and replaced by minorities (black and women). White males are not "show cased." Julie Martin is the first women editor (enclosed) [Alfred Whitesides Jr. was invited to be on the Editorial Board Community Representative Committee - see his tape].

[2/272] Once a day Ewart meets with the editorial staff and brings information back to the photographers. I ask about the photo of a series of high school graduates dancing - a number are mixed Afro-Americans and whites. He said that suits the new owners and has been going on for some time. [Gary Fields]

[2/312] A cross-town freeway has been named for Billy Graham and he mentioned that there have been a number of letters to the editor about this.

[2/319] He skims the paper every day and knows he will be shooting the filming of "My Fellow Americans" (enclosed).

[2/334] In the 60's and 70's he used to be bothered by the way the paper used his pictures. That was one reason why he left and worked on his own. He thinks the paper is hard to please.

[2/352] He thinks the paper insert title should be changed to Asheville Today rather than USA Today. Circulation is up all the time. He doesn't know what effect TV will have on the paper.

[2/367] When the studio was sold after the war, he father brought home a collection of photographs and started numbering and naming them. Some were from previous owners (see Masa enclosed). He knew his work, being new, would have no current value but would in time. [George Masa, Ignatius Brock]

[2/401] When his father died, his uncle called and wanted to market the photographs. He ran off some prints, but they did not sell. The collection, many on glass plates, was deteriorating and he was persuaded by Lou Harshaw (see her tape) and Bruce Greenawalt to donate them to the Ramsey Library where they could be kept in acid free containers under temperature control. [Ervin Ball, Lou Harshaw, Bruce Greenawalt]

[2/453] Ervin Ball was not a photographer - he had Ewart do some work for him. He started a store selling gifts and silverware, later adding a line of cameras. In the 50's he had 4 stores, Ewart ran one for him in Knoxville. He sent 5 children to college. [Ervin Ball]

[2/477] Ewart's son lives in Swannanoa, works at Beacon Manufacturing Company and is interested in music. [Ewart Ball IV] [2002 update by Ewart Ball III: Ewart Ball IV lives in North Asheville, is manager of Pizza Hut and plays drums and sings in a heavy metal rock band.]

[2/496] In 10 years he would like to see himself retired, riding his '83 Full Dress Touring machine (Harley-Davidson). He likes the heavy sound and the temperature changes and smell changes as he goes up and down the mountains.

[2/541] He always carries a camera with him and, when he was in high school, his teacher learned from him, as he went to his father for answers. The new cameras do everything now - all one needs is to get along with the public and find, or create, the most interesting composition.

[2/575] His career has been easy and fun - always something new. He is glad he did it.