ILOHI Interview with Charlie Brown
Friday, January 24, 2020
Gary, Indiana
Interview by Dr. Michella M. Marino and Ben Baumann
Transcribed by Indianapolis Transcription
WAV file, Tascam
Charlie Brown=CB
Michella Marino=MM
Ben Baumann=BB

[00:00:00]

MM: And that's recording there. Okay. Well, I will just state for the record then so that we have it on the recording that my name is Michella Marino and this is Ben Baumann. And we are sitting down with Charlie Brown. And today's date is Friday, January 24th…

CB: Forth, yeah.

MM: Yes, 2020. And we are at his home in Gary, Indiana. I just wanted to start by asking when and where were you born?

CB: I was born in Williston, South Carolina. Let's see, my parents left there when I was two years old. So, I have no recollection of my hometown. I was raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. That's where I spent, I used to say a majority of my life, but the majority of my life has now been in Gary, Indiana.

MM: And how come they relocated?

[00:01:00]

CB: It was just something that…all the movies, the historical movies, tell you that most African Americans left the south because of the horrible treatment in the south and one relative, obviously, had migrated to the northern states and would always say, "Oh, y'all come up. There's employment, good accommodations, etc." So, that was the reason my parents left following, I think, my mother's sister at that time.

MM: Okay. And what were you parents' names?

CB: Charlie Brown and Ruth Brown.

MM: Okay. And what was her maiden name?

CB: Hickson. That is the more historical name. Hickson. All of my relatives, most of the still living ones, are in the south in August, Georgia.

MM: Okay. Is that H-I-C…

CB: H-I-C-K-S-O-N. Hickson.

MM: Okay.

[00:02:00]

MM: Had both of your parents grown up in South Carolina then?

CB: In Georgia.

MM: In Georgia.

CB: Yes.

MM: And then they came to South Carolina.

CB: Yes.

MM: What were your parents' occupations?

CB: My mother was a homemaker. My father was in the cleaning business, cleaning clothes business. In fact, he left. I didn't grow up with a father. It was just my mother and my sister and I. And my father left Philadelphia when I was eight or nine years old. He moved to Los Angeles, California where he started his own business, a clothes cleaning business.

MM: Okay. And so, you mentioned a sister. Was that the only sibling you had?

CB: Yes, just the two of us.

MM: Is she older than you?

CB: She's a year and eight months, she was a year and eight months. She's gone on now.

MM: And what was her name?

CB: Jean, Anna Jean.

[00:03:00]

CB: Her married name Anna Jean Butcher.

MM: Okay. How would you describe your childhood?

CB: I would think it was very normal. Growing up in Philadelphia and that far back, I'm 81 now, close to 82, there were no issues about children in the neighborhood. The neighborhood was a rallying cry. We didn't have the issues of being afraid to go outside

and play. It was just like some of the commercials. You better be home when that streetlight comes on. We'd go outside and play all day long.

MM: So, it was like a close-knit neighborhood?

CB: Oh yes. A neighbor would probably pop you on the head or spank you doing something wrong and also tell your parents. It was like a double whammy.

MM: Yeah, okay. Who were the most influential people in your childhood?

[00:04:00]

CB: My uncle. My mother's younger brother, Isaac Hickson. In fact, my mother, her brother Isaac Hickson and her sister, Rebecca Prior, all lived on the same block on the street in Philadelphia. Everybody was so close-knit at that time. So, Isaac Hickson was like a father to me.

MM: Did you have cousins and things growing up next to you?

CB: Yes.

MM: What understanding, if any, did you have about your family's politics or political beliefs as a young kid?

CB: None, in fact. Except for one. President Roosevelt died and I was still very young, and I walked into my mother's bedroom and she was crying. And that was why. She was sad **[00:05:00]** over the death of President Roosevelt. That was all…it's another commercial similar to this. Then there wasn't a television in the house, let alone every room like it is now. And so, your entertainment and news were through the radio. And it was nothing unusual for everyone to gather around the radio to get the news or to listen to one of the myriads of stories that was on at that time.

MM: Correct me if I'm wrong, I'm not sure if I caught this at the beginning, but you said you were born in South Carolina, but did you say, what was your birthdate?

CB: 3-8-38, March 8th, 1938.

MM: Do you have any early memories of World War II? I mean, you mentioned Roosevelt, but as a young child?

CB: We were far removed from war at that time. I remember Pearl Harbor. **[00:06:00]** I remember because that was a very explosive period of time. And then you would hear of soldiers coming home, occasionally seeing a soldier on the streets in their uniforms. That was probably about the extent of engagement in war.

MM: Sure. Okay.

BB: Well, moving towards your educational background, what schools did you attend as a child and as a teenager?

CB: My elementary school, we lived right across the street from my elementary school. I remember so vividly; I'm going into kindergarten. I was up and my mother dressed me. I'm totally oblivious of school at that point. And she dressed me, and we went to the corner, crossed over and went into the school. And I was excited to be in there with all these kids. But she wanted to leave me there. I thought that we **[00:07:00]** were just in the building to do something. And boy did I cry. I remember my classmates were on the floor painting and they had newspapers on the floor so the paint wouldn't get on the floor. And she started to leave and leave me there, and I ran across some of that and fell and slipped. And I remember having paint all over my clothing and my body because I was not to be left in that school.

BB: Yeah. And what about middle school? Was the adjustment easier shifting towards a…

CB: Well, middle school was farther away. That's another interesting thing. I walked to middle school, and it was quite a distance from where I lived. But nonetheless, there was no issue of going through various neighborhoods or streets during those years. When I went on to high school, **[00:08:00]** I did have to catch the bus because there weren't many neighborhood schools other than the elementary schools. And I said I had to walk a distance to middle, we called it junior high school.

BB: Right.

CB: But in the case of high school, there was no if you lived in this area you were designated to go to this school. You made a choice as to which school you want to, and you had to get there. So, my choice was to go to this all-boys school, Northeast High School, which was quite a ways away. In fact, I had to catch two trollies or buses, I think, in order to get there.

MM: Were the schools integrated in your area?

CB: Oh, yes. Oh, very much so. In fact, the elementary school was not. The middle school was not. But high schools, all of the high schools I think were well integrated **[00:09:00]** at that time.

MM: And what was the name of your high school?

CB: Northeast High School.

BB: So, why did you choose to go to an all-boys school?

CB: Now, that is…I don't know. Yeah, you know, you look like you'd want to be around the girls at that time. Oh, I know why. Northeast High was known for its athletic prowess at that time.

BB: Sure. So, how would you describe your educational experiences throughout your school career?

CB: It was very, very challenging. Mainly because I wasn't that much into geometry and trigonometry. First of all, backing up to junior high school, I was unaware that I was excelling in junior high school.

BB: Right.

CB: When I got to high school, **[00:10:00]** everybody is in this auditorium, freshmen. And they were calling out names and sending you to whatever class you were going to be in. I looked around and there were very few of us left in the auditorium because they had it designated, the one section was the boys that had excelled, and we were in the kind of accelerated group. And at that point, there were only two of us African Americans who were going into this accelerated freshman class.

BB: Ah, okay.

CB: Which kind of frightened me to see that everybody, most of the boys in the auditorium had gone on to their class. In fact, I even asked. I said, "What about me?" And he said, "Well, **[00:11:00]** you'll find out in a minute." And we went on to this group and boy, it was different. Mainly because we had trigonometry and algebra advanced. So, we were kind of different than the other ones.

BB: Yeah, okay. Did you have any favorite subjects in school?

CB: Math.

BB: Math?

CB: Yeah.

BB: Okay.

CB: I always enjoyed math.

BB: Nice. What about extracurriculars? What did you do?

CB: Basketball.

BB: Basketball?

CB: Basketball. I just loved, loved basketball.

BB: What position did you play?

CB: Center.

BB: Center?

CB: And now, you rarely will find a guard my height.

BB: Right. Exactly.

CB: But I was tall by comparison then. I played center. That was a different experience too **[00:12:00]** because even though the school was majority white, African Americans probably dominated the sports at the time. I mean, were always on the starting team.

BB: Right.

CB: Put it that way.

BB: Yeah, I can.

MM: Did you guys have a good program, a good basketball career in high school?

CB: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In fact, there were rivalries out of this world. And really interesting that there were some top athletes that came out. I don't know if the name Herb Adderley means anything to you all. He played football. He excelled in basketball, football and track. And he went on, he chose football and he played for the Green Bay Packers.

[00:13:00]

BB: Oh, wow.

CB: In fact, I remember when they retired his jersey from the Green Bay Packers. And then there was Guy Rodgers, professional basketball. And he played for the Philadelphia 76ers and the Golden State Warriors. Here's the most interesting story of all. Ed Bradley, who recently died, he was on "60 Minutes". We went to college together. Am I getting too far?

MM: No, go ahead.

BB: No, that's good. Yeah.

CB: We went to college together, Cheyney State Teacher's College. Now, we are the oldest institution of higher learning for African Americans in the entire United States even though Howard gets credit for that, Howard University in D.C. **[00:14:00]** That's because Cheyney, C-H-E-Y-N-E-Y, was not in the historical black college because it was a part of the state's higher ed group. It was there because of the 13 colleges in the Pennsylvania groups. Cheyney was the one that was predominately for African Americans.

And at the time that I was in college, you only had three choices. Elementary ed, industrial arts or home economics. So, that meant that my major was elementary ed. But one of the students there was Ed Bradley who recently passed. I think he's been gone now about eight to ten years. And interesting story about him. As I stated, **[00:15:00]** we were elementary ed majors. But he volunteered from Cheyney to go out when they were having some kind of riots in Philadelphia. He volunteered to go out and interview people. And from that he then went to being disc jockey on the radio and then sports. He

covered sports for CBS. He would come out this way many a day. And ultimately winding up on "60 Minutes".

And, you know, there are probably hundreds or more of my classmates or my fellow Cheyneyites that were at this very small teacher's college but branched out to all kinds of professions. Ed Bradley stands out simply because **[00:16:00]** trained as an elementary ed teacher, winds up on "60 Minutes", a national television show.

MM: Wow. That's really neat.

BB: Wow. So…no, go ahead.

CB: And then college, I'm about to graduate now from Cheyney in 1961. Right before graduation, there are some recruiters from the Gary School System, the Gary Community School Corporation, on the eastern shore recruiting elementary ed teachers. Well, I had two real close buddies. The three of us were always together. I was the captain of the basketball team, the other one captain of the football team, the other one captain of the track team.

BB: Wow.

CB: And we were just buddies. We joined the same fraternity. Now, the recruiters are tehre and the dean of men stopped us. We were on our way **[00:17:00]** to dinner one night and he says, "When you all finish dinner come on back down to the lounge. There are some recruiters here trying to get teachers." I didn't pay much attention to that because it was unheard of for someone to think of packing up and moving from your home to mid-America. So, we went down and they introduced themselves. Two assistant superintendents from the Gary School System. And they interviewed us. And we, at least I, **bloused** through the interview because I had no…yeah, I'll listen to you and I'll answer your questions and so forth.

They wanted us to sign contracts on the spot. I said, "Hold up." I said, "This takes a lot of thinking." It was the farthest thing from my mine to think about leaving Philadelphia and moving to a place **[00:18:00]** I had never heard of, Gary, Indiana. I don't even think…I don't know if the Music Man was out then. That was the only reference I had to Gary, Indiana.

MM: Sure.

CB: So, all three of us had the contracts that they wanted us to sign. They said, "Take your time. Talk to your parents. Then mail us the contracts." And all three of us had basically the same thoughts. I'm not thinking about leaving Philadelphia. The hook was the fraternity that we were members of was founded at Indiana University. And in 1961, it was celebrating its 50th anniversary. So, that was kind of a big thing. We wanted to come out for the 50th year celebration.

So, then it clicked. We want to go to Bloomington to the Kappa celebration. We could **[00:19:00]** then go on to Gary, Indiana which can't be…we don't have a sense of geography, Gary can't be that far away. We then could go on to Gary and teach for a

year then come on back home. That was the master plan in 1961. I still have to shake my head when thinking about how young folk rationalize things. So, we came here.

MM: All three of you came?

CB: All...wait, there's another hook in here. Two of us were elementary ed. The other one was industrial arts major. The recruiters didn't want, weren't interested.

MM: Yeah.

CB: So, when they kept calling regularly, and now here we are bartering with them. We said, "Well, you know, you offered two of us jobs. But there's our friend, the third one. You didn't offer him a job in industrial arts." **[00:20:00]** I'm really cutting it short. Hold on. We'll find something. They call back in a couple of days. He has an offer also. So, send all three contracts. They found a job for him.

BB: Oh, my gosh.

CB: Yes. And he's a very, very interesting thing unbeknownst to us at the time; '61 was our first year and I taught through '68. Through that period of seven years, Gary was the highest paying school system in the entire United States.

MM: Wow.

CB: At that point, I think Philadelphia was paying $49,000 for a first-year teacher.

MM: They don't even make that today.

CB: Gary was paying $5,050, which was the highest salary **[00:21:00]** for a first-year teacher. So, we all agreed. One of them who is still here with me, Eugene Johnson, who is retired from the school system, had an old beat up car that we packed up and drove to Bloomington. The other interesting thing was the school system had set up through homeowners or from people that had apartments for rent. All we had to do was show up. They had found us an apartment. All we had to do was go in there and hang up our clothes and get ready to go to work. Which was really intriguing to me.

I don't know if that happened across the country at that time. And for certain I don't even know if it happens today with anyone. But we came in here and that first year we were having fun. It was like an extension of college life. We were the big three on campus. **[00:22:00]** We come here and the word spread in Gary, Indiana. There are three young men from Philadelphia that are just…you got to see them. We'd even see cars driving down our street and pointing up. That's where they live, up there.

BB: Wow.

CB: That first year went by. We were having so much fun. We said, "Maybe we need to stay another year." Because that first year, it was summertime, we were supposed to be going back home. We were just having fun. It hadn't even crossed our minds that the year is up. One year turned into two, then two into three and so forth. Finally, 1967, the

end of the school year, I said for certain, I'm out of here. I had brought my college sweetheart out here. And she didn't much like the small-town living **[00:23:00]** compared to Philadelphia.

The spring break of 1967 we had made arrangements to go back to Philadelphia and we applied for teaching jobs there. The only thing that threw that out of whack was I was active in the teacher's union. In fact, I was the building representative, and also one of the officers of the teacher's union here in Gary. Richard Hatcher decided to run for mayor in 1967. One of his campaign managers was also a teacher. He came to me and asked since I was in the union to try to organize teachers to support Hatcher for mayor. And at that point, teachers were kind of standoffish **[00:24:00]** in politics. It was beneath them to be involved in politics. But the little small organization I pulled together; we were very successful in getting a considerable number of teachers to support him for mayor. He won.

He was about to take office in January of 1968. I'm planning on leaving April of '67 to go back to Philadelphia to find a job. Right before the spring break I get a call from his office asking me to come down to city hall on my lunch break. I'm thinking, well, they want us to try to keep that teachers group together since, you know, it's not a one-time deal. I get down there and he offers me a job with his administration. I said, "Wow. **[00:25:00]** What do I do?" I'm shocked in fact. Mainly because I'm thinking about getting out of here. I'm going back home to Philadelphia. I offered a lot of excuses. I said, "Wow. I don't know anything about municipal government."

Well, Gary was an urban laboratory at that point. The first African American mayor of a major city. I mean, there were just all kinds of technical assistance available. You could walk into his office and there were grants laying all around, you know, where people were offering assistance to make sure that he was successful. They said, "That's not a problem. We can get you the technical assistance." I said, "Well, I'm under contract for the school system." The mayor picked up the phone and called a school board member **[00:26:00]** and said, "Can a teacher get a leave of absence?" And ultimately the answer was yes. I ran out of excuses or trying to roadblock to get away from this. I said, "Well, let me talk this over with my wife." I told her what had happened, and she said, "Well, if you want to try, we can stay."

And boy, that was the beginning of the end for me in terms of an education that was not formal like getting a college degree. I knew as a teacher we had a lesson plan book. Monday through Friday from eight until three or whatever the time was, you knew hour by hour for those five days exactly what you were going to do. Totally different in municipal government. I mean, it was just helter-skelter. **[00:27:00]** And it was not eight to three. It was working until the work was done. And boy, it was like baptismal fire there in terms of my experience. It was the most unique experience that I will never ever forget. It also creates hardships on families too. I was three-four years in and I was divorced from my first wife because it was not bringing her along with what's all going on in your new life. Because both of us are teachers and knew about the structure of that, but this, my goodness.

So, I'm now divorced. I must have had two or three jobs in Hatcher's administration. Each one of them was very similar, but it was a different grant each time. **[00:28:00]**

From the mayor's assistant on youth programs to the youth services bureau to risk manager. All of those things over his period in office from '68 through…the whole 20 years that he's in office, I'm a part of his administration.

MM: Did you find that you could take skills that you had as a teacher into this new work or how did you feel about…

CB: Trying to do that structure of okay, hour by hour here's what I need to try to accomplish in this new job. But that was the extent of it. You just had to fly by the seat of your pants in municipal government.

BB: Wow.

CB: And so, now, I'm down to **[00:29:00]** 1982, '81. I'm saying I'm definitely going back home. I'm getting out of here and going back to Philadelphia. All of a sudden, it comes up Charlie Brown would be an excellent choice to run for state representative for the 3rd district because the guy that was in there wasn't…uh, he and the mayor didn't get along too well. I said, "Oh, no. Not me." I love politics. I was always engaged in politics, but behind the scenes. I never even viewed myself as an elected official. I didn't like certain ties. I was always viewed as a rebel because I carried a big shoulder bag. I just wasn't doing the normal things. I always had support from some of the mayor's top assistants because he said, "Well, he's working in youth programs. He shouldn't be in a certain tie **[00:30:00]** all the time." I said, "Lord, thank you on that."

So, I got pressure then for go ahead and run for the state reps seat. We will support you financially, whatever. I said, "That just is not me." And they kept going on. I said, "Okay." I did it more as a dare. I didn't think that I could win. You know, not being suited for that. Suited meaning…but I won. I did it as a dare and I won. I said, now, I'm thinking about going home. Home. Back to Philadelphia. And here is a second time I get a challenge that I accept, and it permits me from going back. I said, "Boy, I guess it just was not meant for me to get back home to Philadelphia."

MM: What shaped your political outlook? Like as you're starting to get into elected positions **[00:31:00]** and obviously being a part of Mayor Hatcher's administration, what was your political outlook at the time?

CB: It was mainly…that's interesting because I hadn't even thought about then what would be my concentration as a state representative. But somehow, I had served on the Gary Community Mental Health Center. In fact, where's that picture? I thought there was a picture up there of me and Hatcher and Rosalyn Carter.

MM: Oh, it's back here, I think.

CB: Yeah. Mental health in the early '80's I guess was being driven because there were major, major mental health issues. We started out in a **[00:32:00]** store front with this mental health agency. And Rosalyn Carter driving that issue, the feds dumped a lot of money into this whole issue. In fact, that was a groundbreaking for the Gary Community Mental Health Center that was built here in Gary. And so, I just got into health and that

was my foundation in the general assembly from my beginnings to the time I walked out the door. I had a keen interest in improving the quality of health in the state of Indiana.

MM: Well, I was jumping around a little bit. You can jump back.

BB: Sure. I guess you talked about how when you first moved to Gary, Indiana you sort of had heard of Gary a little bit. What about Indiana as a state in general? Did you know much about Indiana or Hoosiers?

[00:33:00]

CB: No. In fact, it took a long time before the three of us…and by the way, not just the three of us came. There were 13 of us that came from Cheyney State Teacher's College at that point that accepted the challenge of coming hallway across the country. And we were all teaser about our kind of eastern accents. That was a long way from how the people talked here. They kind of viewed us as kind of snooty simply because of the way we talked. I kind of lost my eastern accent now.

MM: Well, you've been here long enough.

CB: Yes.

BB: So…

CB: But no. I knew absolutely nothing about Indiana at that point.

BB: So, before you got to Indiana and you were in college, **[00:34:00]** you mentioned that you played basketball in college as well?

CB: Yes.

BB: And were you a part of any other clubs or organizations in college?

CB: Nothing other than the fraternity. Very active in the fraternity.

MM: And what was the name of the fraternity? You said Kappa, right?

CB: Kappa Alpha Psi.

MM: Okay. Did you have another one?

BB: I guess just talk more about your college experiences. Big picture, did you really enjoy college? What was your take-away from it?

CB: Integral part of my life. When you think about a very small state teacher's college, 99.9% of the students are African American, knowing full well that **[00:35:00]** all of the teachers drove us to how important teachers are. It's still hard to understand how it is that teachers are so very, very low on the totem pole in terms of compensation. Yet teachers teach lawyers, teachers teach doctors. All of the other professions that are

compensated much higher than teachers. That was the major focus. You're the foundation of life for all of those little kids that are going to grow up. So, you have to make sure that you are the cream of the crop in terms of teaching.

BB: What about in college, did you start developing any political ideas?

CB: No. None whatsoever.

BB: No interests in that.

[00:36:00]

MM: I know you said there were sort of limited options in terms of what you could do once you got to Cheyney State.

CB: Yes.

MM: But what made you decide to be a teacher to being with?

CB: When I graduated, college was not in my background, in my family's background. In fact, I think I was one of the first ones to go to college. I graduated and I immediately found a job in the US Postal System in terms of mail carrier, sorting the mail for the guys going to deliver it out on the street. And I was content with that except that another friend of mine who graduated a year after I did who had a different background, he had six or seven brothers and sisters and all of them had gone to college. He was the youngest, so it was kind of engrained in him that you also are going to go to college.

He was going out to Cheyney **[00:37:00]** to register and he asked me to go along with him. I was off from work that Saturday, I guess, and so I went out there and saw that campus. I said, "Wow. This is something I would like to do as well." I went back home that day and told my mother I want to go to college. It was that kind of basically. Simply seeing that. It was a very small college as I stated. All of the classrooms and the dorms were on a quadrangle. It was just breathtaking to me. I said, "Now I've got to go." College was not that expensive back then, in the 50's, when I went in '57. I graduated in '56 and I spent a year in the post office.

So, even though **[00:38:00]** there wasn't much money in the house between my mother…I wasn't saving much in my first year in the postal system. We scraped together and got the money together for me to register there and **____ the door.** That was really…those four years were very, very…are very, very valuable to me now. The relationships. I still every week, once a week, even as we speak, there are three of my friends that I went to school with at Cheyney that we're on the telephone talking to one another. And the one that is still here. So, between the four of them, there's some kind of communication on a weekly basis between us.

MM: That's amazing.

BB: That's great.

CB: My wife marvels **[00:39:00]** at the fact that there's that kind of relationship after all these years.

MM: Yeah, for sure. Well, you mentioned you married your first wife and she was from Cheyney State too and she was a teacher. Did you have children?

CB: Yes. One daughter. My precious daughter. I didn't have a son, so I named her—we named her, I got half of my name in there, Charlisa. She went through the school systems here and then she went to Spelman College in Georgia. Then she came back here and went to IU Med School. And this is something I will be forever angry with IU Med, they kind of catered to me **[00:40:00]** because I was chair of the public health committee and all of their wants had to come through my committee. But my daughter went through the three years of the classroom and even did her rotations, but she had difficulty passing the…what's that test that the doctors have to do?

BB: MCATs?

CB: No, the MCAT prepares you, I think. Whatever that exam is that they have to get to be licensed, she had difficulty with that. So, she was eligible to graduate but just like lawyers, you know, you can't practice law until you pass the law exam. But Indiana had a policy of their own that you don't even graduate unless you have passed the MCAT or whatever.

[00:41:00]

MM: Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

CB: And so, she did all of the classroom work but never ever completed so that she could practice medicine. So, she messed around…not messed around. She worked for a couple of the pharmaceutical companies. How did she get to Dallas? I think she met this guy and they moved to Dallas because that's where he was from. And now I have two grandsons.

Her husband died about five or six years ago. All that time she was just a fulltime mom. And not to downplay the fact that that is a job. That is a job. **[00:42:00]** But other than the two or three years that she was working for pharmaceutical companies, she never practiced medicine.

In fact, her years at med school served her well because she knows symptoms and whatever to do when those boys were growing up. They are now 14 and 15. She has done a magnificent job as a mother, a single mother, a fulltime mother with those two boys. I've often tried to encourage her to move back here to be closer.

That's another irritant of mine. Most kids that grew up here and go away to school and are successful do not want to come back here. And it's mainly because even many of us here realize there are limited **[00:43:00]** opportunities here in Gary. Gary has a very negative reputation that most of the kids who grew up here are aware of now. When I

talk to them one on one or in groups I say, "But you could be the future of Gary. You could turn all of that around, all those negative things that are directed at Gary, Indiana."

MM: Sure. So, your daughter was with your first wife?

CB: Yes.

MM: But you said you got divorced. Then you got remarried?

CB: Yes.

MM: When did you get remarried?

CB: Nineteen-ninety…

MM: Put you on the spot here.

CB: Yeah. I have it memorized sometimes. We just celebrated our 28th anniversary.

MM: Oh, wow. Congratulations. Well, okay. So, we're jumping around a little bit.

[00:44:00]

CB: Yes.

MM: Back into sort of political outlook and you were starting to talk about issues you were getting involved with in the Hatcher administration and then in your early career as a legislator. And you mentioned healthcare, but were there other issues like education or other things that once you were getting into office or into politics that you really wanted to champion?

CB: Yes. And education was one of those. And then just municipal government, you know, many, many cities were struggling because it was the up and down with the federal administration as to whether they were going to provide resources to struggling cities. But, yes, those three mainly. Municipal government, how to improve that, and especially the quality of life of people in struggling cities.

And then education **[00:45:00]** since I came here and was involved in education for the beginning of my adult life. In fact, I introduced the bill in the general assembly for Gary to change from an appointed school board to an elected school board. I think at that point there were only about a dozen school corporations that had appointed school boards. It was mainly done to, once more, involve and engage the citizenry more in the education process. If I'm an elected school board member, I'm here to try to improve the education of young people.

MM: Did you have any national political heroes or state or local as you were entering the political scene?

CB: My number one hero actually is Mayor Hatcher who just left us **[00:46:00]** about three weeks ago. My biggest hero is Nelson Mandela. I was in his presence once. There was an organization called NBCSL, National Black Caucus of State Legislators. And ironically again, there's a Philadelphia connection. Reverend Leon Sullivan in Philadelphia who was a very, very innovative minister, he was a preacher, but he started OIC, Opportunities Industrial Corporation that would get folk to not only do things in the United States but to partner with other countries, and mainly African countries for African American legislators.

And we went to **[00:47:00]** South Africa once to visit and to establish a brotherhood of state government there versus the various state governments here in the United States. And now, Nelson Mandela is out of prison and back as the president. I don't even know how we finagled an audience with him. There wasn't a chance for comradery or shaking hands or whatever. In fact, they encouraged us please do not try to have a conversation or whatever. But just that aura when he walked into the room was just something unbelievable. It was like, I guess, the same feeling as if Jesus Christ walked into this room. There was a chill. I'm just starstruck with the fact that I'm in the same room. **[00:48:00]** And there were 100 other legislators from around the country. But that I will never ever forget.

Then we move down to modern times of Barack Obama. Once more, saying that that's unheard of that we're going to have an African American president. And then a young man, as young as he was, and then not a national name, had only been in the Senate one term or one and a half…one term. No, he was into his second term. But the fact that he had that kind of charisma and that groundswell of support that you have to say he's someone very, very special.

BB: I guess coming to sort of when you first got involved in state government. **[00:49:00]** Did you have a particular campaign strategy at all when you first were running? I know you said you ran partly on a dare, but was there any strategy involved?

CB: Yeah, my name alone. Granted, I had a lot of naysayers. I never had a general…another thing about this end of the state and mainly the city of Gary, we have not had a person that is a republican as an office holder for a long, long time. So, our struggle was always in the primary.

BB: Right.

CB: I guess a fellow democrat. And most years I had one or more opponents. But the name was magic. And back when I first started, I would always approach the children **[00:50:00]** and tell them, "Go tell your mother to vote for Charlie Brown." And really, that's what got me over in most cases, the younger kids that were fascinated by the name would encourage their parents to at least say, "There's a Charlie Brown running?"

Interestingly enough, I was at a conference in California and one of the speakers, a panelist, was an attorney. His name escapes me. But he was the attorney for Charles Schulz. So, I asked—I mean, it was almost like begging—I said, "I'm here for only a couple of days. I certainly would like to meet." I think at that point Charles Schulz had died and his wife was still alive. I said I would like to meet her mainly to **[00:51:00]**

make that kind of connection. I was older than the cartoon Charlie Brown, so I said, "You all used my name rather than the other way around." And there were some communications. He sent me a letter. He told me about how Schulz extended his garage and made a little studio and he personally did all of the cartoons himself there in his garage right there on his property.

MM: Well, speaking of your name real quick, is your legal name Charlie Brown or is it Charles Brown or do you have a middle name?

CB: No, it is. My birth certificate says Charlie Brown the third. My grandfather, my father and me. Yeah, it is Charlie Brown.

MM: That's great.

CB: Which I used to always ask my mother, why would you give me such a silly name as Charlie Brown? Because it was a teasing point for all the kids**, [00:52:00]** all of my peers back then. But I would kiss her all the time. I said, "Never question the wisdom of mothers." Because that name was worth a million bucks when I first ran for public office.

MM: Sure, I'm sure it was.

BB: And who was your main opponent when you first ran for office?

CB: My main opponent?

BB: Yeah.

CB: A guy who was elected two terms before me. Rayfield Fisher. And I never did get…I guess he didn't consider doing what the mayor of the city wanted as much as the mayor wanted him to consider.

BB: Right.

CB: So, they had a falling out. And in between my winning in '82 another guy did a half a term **[00:53:00]** who beat Rayfield Fisher, the original representative. There was a guy, Jules Blake Taylor. In fact, I think he still lives in Indianapolis. But he only lasted a half a term and not even a half a term as I think of it. Because there was some dispute about his mother and father were divorced. One lived in the district, within the 3rd House District, one did not. He must have been living with whichever parent did not live in the district but used the address of the other.

So, the House of Representatives established a select committee to investigate the whole issue. Their findings were that his legal residence was outside of the district. Therefore, they unseated him. **[00:54:00]** And they put Rayfield Fisher, the gentleman that he beat, back in to fill that unexpired term. And so, then came me the next election around. And I defeated Rayfield Fisher in '82 and also in '84 when he came back and tried to reclaim his seat.

BB: Wow. And what did it feel like when you first found out that you were getting elected?

CB: Well, he told me I had to shave my beard. Well, some of the folks. You know, there were kind of establishment types who were saying that you have to shave your beard. You have to tamp down your outspokenness. All of that. That was not the case. I kept my beard and I came in with a roar and a thunder.

[00:55:00]

BB: Yeah.

CB: One of my firsts, I picked up the mantel for trying to establish a Martin Luther King holiday bill in Indiana. Resistance personified. It just was not to be done. I mean, there was just so much hatred. I don't know if it was all directed at him as a person, it's just the name, something after an African American in Indiana was just foreign. Three or four years, over and over again, I would introduce the bill. Then about the fourth year it passed out of the House, but then it ran into that blockade over in the Senate.

I'll have to give you all a copy of the chapter out of Hurley Goodall's book. Hurley Goodall was a legislator from Muncie. This particular year, he and his---Hurley Goodall and his senator **[00:56:00]…**I'm blanking on his name, had identical legislation. And the senate version had passed, so there was no need for the house version…no, I'm sorry. It was the reverse. The house version had passed, so there was no need for the senate version. So, we had this process, strip and insert, that you had a bill that was moving through one of the houses and you wanted to make some changes, you could get the permission of the author and a sponsor and say I want to put some other language…I want to take all of the current language out and put new language in. And that's what we did in that senate bill, stripped out the fireman's language that was in the original bill and put in the Martin Luther King language.

Boy or boy. The Senate went bonkers **[00:57:00]** over the fact that we used the process that they had been using for years. They walked out. They stayed off the floor for up to two weeks, I think it was, saying that this will not occur. I don't know which brought on the anger the most, the fact that we used the process that they were using or the fact that we used the Martin Luther King holiday as the vehicle. The compromise came down to we will make it a non-code holiday. That meant just for that one year. And then it would have to start all over again in the next session.

They relented and they made it Senate Bill 1 and made Senator Virginia Blankenbaker the author of the bill because they were so angry with me **[00:58:00]** for circumventing what was the normal process. And that's the history of us getting…ironically, it's not talked about much, but the national holiday was done by a Gary resident, Katie Hall. And then I carried the—the national holiday only impacted federal workers in the District of Columbia. It was so worded that after that, every state had to enact their own legislation to make it a legal holiday.

MM: Now, did yours in Indiana then…let me rephrase that. Had your portion of the bill, was that before the federal one? Before Katie Hall and the federal one? Or was that after that?

CB: I think the federal one went in first **[00:59:00]**, but that only affected federal workers.

MM: Right.

CB: And very few people realize that. They look at the national holiday as Dr. King's birthday. But in fact, who was the last state? I think it was Arizona or there's still a holdout, I think, from making it a holiday in two states.

BB: So, after each time that you were reelected to the general assembly, did you have any changes in your thoughts about what it felt like to be a part of general assembly? Or did you just kind of get used to it after a while?

CB: Well, I guess the changes came about when we first took over the majority. I mean, you can achieve a lot more with the majority than you can in the minority. I don't know exactly—I think we did that flip-flop a couple of times while I was there. **[01:00:00]** But I never ever gave much thought to am I going to just stay here and run every two years or what? It just became routine.

And I look back on why didn't I try to have in my head or in a notebook the history of every year or every session, every two-year period, what was attempted and what was accomplished and other little vignettes that occurred along the way. That's the one thing I really, really regret that I did not take the time to keep up with. In that packet of information that you sent me, it indicates the basics of what I introduced, but then there's nothing--the real foundation and the guts of that is not down in writing.

[01:01:00]

BB: Right. Did you change campaign strategies at all or anything?

CB: No. Even though I had opposition most of the time, none of it was really, really serious and that I felt threatened by any of it.

BB: Sure.

CB: I still had to outwardly, I couldn't be so arrogant or cocky and say I'm not going to buy buttons or yard signs or anything. But only I think one time when I knew city hall was going to send someone after me that I had to really hustle. But other than that, once you get entrenched, it is…and seniority means a lot. Most folk that are dep into politics know, **[01:02:00]** why would you change? When you send somebody new, they have to learn the whole process. It takes them a year to even know where the toilet is. So, why would you change if you have a senior person who is up there in seniority, has committee assignments that are very, very important to us.

MM: Sure. For that very first election, after you won, what did you think as you were walking into the Statehouse?

CB: You know what? When I walked in and when I walked out, I still had the same one thing in common. I never knew which end led to the parking lot. I always had to go to the center and look both ways to know because it was so confusing. Now, keeping in mind I'm catching this elevator down, so that means I've got to go to my right versus to my left. But that is **[01:03:00]** a magnificent building.

Several times we attempted to kick out the Supreme Court and some others to get more space for the legislators. I mean, it's ridiculous. Every person that has ever come down to visit during the session or whatever and I take them to my office, they say, "What? This is your office?" We're all cramped up. You know, when you think about having to find space for 100 people and their staff. So, that was all. And we came so close a couple of times of looking at building a building for the Supreme Court and all of the other treasurer and auditor and all of that so we could at least spread out and have room for constituents who came down to visit.

MM: Yeah, tight quarters in there. Well, how did you **[01:04:00]** learn the ins and outs of state politics or of the general assembly?

CB: It was once more, flying by the seat of your pants. Most importantly, the group that is key to what we do that the general public is not aware of is LSA. There's no way. You give them a concept and they run with it. And it's unreal. Let's say I want to introduce legislation that says that Gary will no longer have a school board appointed by the mayor. That we will have—there are six **councilmatic** districts in Gary and we will have…you have to live in each of the districts in order to be a representative on the school board.

They said, "Well, you can't have an even number because **[01:05:00]** they may wind up in a tie." I said, "Okay, then we will have one person run at-large and have a seven-person district." And it took a while to get that concept through because some thought it was a matter of my wanting to get at whoever was in the mayor's office at that time as opposed to there's a large segment of the community that was saying at the same time that the school board doesn't answer to the mayor who appoints them. It doesn't answer to the parents. It doesn't answer to anyone, so we need to appoint them to let them know that we can remove you. And in doing that I had to rely heavily on legislative services to craft and get that legislation together.

MM: Who were your political mentors in those early years?

CB: Chet Dobis, who is now **[01:06:00],** I think he spends most of his time in Florida. Bill Crawford for sure. Bill Crawford was my buddy. Boy, Bill Crawford, interesting man. No college training, but he had the wisdom of Zeus. Just plain old common sense. And Hurley Goodall. I cannot leave Hurley Goodall out who was a fireman from Muncie, Indiana. But you're talking about the PhD in just wisdom of the process of the legislature. And so folksy, you know? When Hurley spoke, everybody listened.

Julia Carson was there, but that was another interesting thing. The only time we came together was when we had the **[01:07:00]** Indiana Black Legislator Caucuses come together to map out what we wanted to all make sure we were on the same page on. But from House to Senate, it was like never the twain shall meet. Except if you were fortunate enough to get a bill out of the House. You had to send it to someone over there. Do you put your fellow African American on the bill first or second? Because the Senate was like hell.

I mean, they would not even hear a piece of legislation unless a republican was the first sponsor on the bill. And they, Lord have mercy, to think about how they rule with an iron fist, I compare it to the US Senate. McConnell, even though he's got some real **[01:08:00]** fences to mend in terms of this impeachment process…well, obviously, he has a reputation of ruling with an iron fist over there.

MM: Well, how did you know the needs and wants of your constituents? How did you interact with them?

CB: It is a foregone conclusion that in the off season, or even while we are in session, to have public forums that you at least invite…there are many, many constituents that are astute enough to know what's going on down there. And also, we have those surveys that we send out and say what are your main interests in seeing legislation pass? Others will call or write you and say, "I want you to support A, B, C."

But mainly, through public forums on a Saturday, **[01:09:00]** at least two times during the year, we would invite folk in and have them voice publicly or to us directly what they feel should or should not be done. We rely heavily on mailing out to every household in the district a form listing some questions and then leaving space for them to put their own comments on. And then that is complied by the staff and then it shows us the issues that are most important to the constituents back home.

MM: Do you remember what was the first bill that you sponsored or at least maybe the first important piece of legislation?

CB: Yes. In fact, I had it framed. It was…it's interesting that you raised this **[01:10:00]** because it came through my best friend who is here and that I told you just retired. He was at a shopping mall and the police…I don't know…somehow, the police in that community gave him a ticket or it may have been someone hit his car and the police could not ticket him because the mall in this parking lot was considered private property and the police had no jurisdiction on that in terms of ticketing someone. And that was my first piece of legislation. It says that the municipal police or the county police could do that, ticket someone for a violation or hitting or damaging someone's car on a **[01:11:00]** mall parking lot.

MM: So, that just came about because your buddy…

CB: Yes.

MM: You had known that that had happened. That's interesting.

CB: Absolutely.

MM: Well, you've eluded to this a little bit, but can you describe the regular interaction amongst assembly members, whether that was formal or informal? How did you treat each other at least in the House?

CB: Well, when you are in the majority, interestingly enough, and a republican has a bill, you want to talk about a health issue and I'm the chair of the public health committee, they would come and talk about it. Well, some would oppose to just filing the bill and waiting to see what's going to happen. They're saying this is very, very important to me, whether it's a democrat or republican, could you give this bill a hearing? And vice versa. When I have a bill and we're not in the majority, I would go to that health committee **[01:12:00]** or that committee chair, whatever it was, and say would you consider hearing my bill because…and give them the reasons why this is very important to my district.

So, there was that interaction. And then like I said, within the Black Caucus, if all of us solidify around a subject matter then we knew we stood a very good chance of getting that through. Especially when there were eight of us in one chamber and five in the other that were supportive of this. And if it was a very narrow margin between democrats and republicans then we knew that we could really get our point across because they knew we needed that—they needed that block of votes to get that subject matter of legislation through.

But there weren't many occasions other than, you know, **[01:13:00]** the money issues were always a big issue of trying to get our point across in terms of getting more money in the budget for a given subject matter. The difference in night and day if you are in the majority or in the minority. That's when there were some big, big struggles in terms of getting money for things that were very, very important to the African American community.

MM: Well, can you elaborate a little bit on that? Because, I mean, throughout your 30 years you've been in both the majority and then the last few years there was a republican majority. Just walk us through that a little bit about what that looked like and felt like to have been in the majority but then in the minority as well.

CB: Yeah. The minority is not **[01:14:00]** a very comfortable seat. It's like sitting on briar patch. But you find we should not throw a blanket over a party because in many instances there are goodhearted republicans. Even though they're few in number, but nonetheless, there are some goodhearted ones that if you get their attention on an issue that they can relate to or really accept the fact that this is harming or would be helpful to a large segment of the Hoosiers, then you can get that point across.

I'm trying to think of something specific. I can't think of something. But it's all about **[01:15:00]** personal relationships too. Rarely did I have ill feelings or create ill feelings coming the other way from my republican colleagues. There was a point, it's just over the last six years, that what you see at the federal level was at the local level here. It used to be that we'd fuss and fight on the floor or in committee, but then go out and have a drink or have dinner together. That changed drastically over the last six or eight years. It

was a total separation and isolation of the parties as it is at the federal level. I don't know what brought that on. We just do not have that comradery any longer.

MM: Do you think there was a recognition of that when that was happening? **[01:16:00]** Or is that something you've reflected upon or could you feel it when you were still in office?

CB: I think it was hardening positions and when the guys who came in that were "extremist", in my opinion, extremists in terms of being to the right. They just felt that that's it. We're in the majority and just run this thing on through here. And I think the greatest one was that whole issue of abortion and abortion rights and the gun issue. Now, interestingly enough, the gun issue was not a democrat-republican issue because there are as many democrats in the south and some up here in the north that believe in this whole issue of guns.

So, that was not a division on party lines, but philosophical lines. **[01:17:00]** That whole issue of everybody should be able to have a gun because it's in the constitution that they are armed. But in the urban areas you've got to understand and appreciate that you're not going to hunting with an AK-47 or whatever it is. And I don't think it's that true that the NRA has a stranglehold on those folks that are into the gun issue. It's just that they are saying we can't let them have an inch because then it's going to move on down the line. So, that's why they're so hardnosed on absolutely nothing dealing with guns. You don't find that in any chamber that you're going to be able to impact the gun issue.

And as I stated, the abortion issue and the **[01:18:00]** religious stuff now, that's what I firmly believe that Governor Pence knew that he was not going to get a second term because of that crazy issue of the far-right conservative religious group that he ran that legislation through about religious rights. And it backfired on him. And then he probably—he's a very fortunate man that, I don't know how, Donald Trump decided that he would select him as his running mate, but it was a savior for Pence to get that offer from Donald Trump that he wouldn't have that embarrassment of losing his second term. I don't think that has happened here in Indiana that a governor did not get his two terms in office.

[01:19:00]

MM: Now, do you think because that was his stance with the religious freedom act and then also I know there were a lot of educational things going on at the time, so you felt like he was losing support here. Is that what I hear you saying?

CB: Yes. Very much so. Because it was an ongoing battle and that's why they ultimately made the decision that they would no longer elect the superintendent of public education. Which makes a lot of sense because education is usually a major plank in the governor's platform. But yet it may be contrary to what's coming from the elected person that's over education.

And a couple of times, and we go way back to Negley—I remember that name. He was elected the superintendent of public instruction. I think—I don't know whether it was a money issue or what, both parties decided that **[01:20:00]** we need to eliminate the

superintendent of public instruction and let the governor select that because that's always a major plank. That failed, trying to eliminate the office back I the 70's. And now we've finally looped around. They finally have done that. And they waited until it was a person of the same party because they tried it with the prior superintendent who was a democrat, but they knew that that would just create total chaos trying to eliminate an office when it simply will appear as though it's because it's a person of the opposite party.

MM: Well, to jump back and forth, since you mentioned Pence, what was it like to work with him or under him as governor when you were in the general assembly? Because we've read a few articles **[01:21:00]** where you talked about that he was pretty active with the general assembly or that you had had some positive interactions with him. So, what was your relationship with him like?

CB: I mean, he was a very easygoing governor by contrast to the one before him, Mitch Daniels. I got into a lot of trouble because I don't even remember what the subject matter was, but I just blurted out, "Lord Shorty need to come on back here and take care of this issue." It was something that was impacting the state. And one reporter caught on to that Lord Shorty issue and that became the talk of the whole statehouse and around the state about my referring to him as Lord Shorty. He made much more sense in terms of getting his agenda **[01:22:00]** through even though it was not always fair to both parties. But at least he had control of both houses.

MM: You mean Daniels?

CB: Daniels. But in the case of Pence, I don't know whether he tried or just did not have that same influence as Daniels did in terms of getting both chambers that were ruled by his party to go along with his platform.

MM: Interesting. Well, jumping back here in the relationship between the House and the Senate. What differences, if any, were there between members of the House and the Senate?

CB: In terms of the entire chamber or the democrats and republicans of the Senate and the democrats and republicans of the House?

MM: Just between each chamber in general. Was there a different feel or different vibe between each one?

CB: Very much so. **[01:23:00]** Well, mainly because the numbers. The numbers alone mean that it's going to be more rancor. Because you've got 100 opinions versus 50, at least that's cut in half. And also, the leadership of each chamber, how they rule. But in the House, there's always the chatter. It was just like night and day when you walk into one chamber or the other because of what everybody may be wanting to talk about or get their issue across at that time.

But there are many, many occasions where democrats in the House could not even get along with or couldn't get their fellow colleagues, democrats in the Senate, to agree with them. And it was mainly because they morphed into **[01:24:00]** the republicans aren't

going--if I do this, I will not be able to get my bills heard over here. That's how that chamber, the Senate chamber, ruled with an iron fist in terms of keeping even the democrats in line versus you may want to club me over the head, but you can't do it but once. I'm going to get my point across even though I may not be able to get that piece of legislation heard or not.

MM: Interesting. Can you walk me through the process of generating a bill and then how you garnered support for that bill? What did that look like?

CB: Mainly, it's a matter of maybe a person from Evansville is chair of a given committee and here I am from the other end of the **[01:25:00]** state. How do I get him to understand and appreciate that? And he's from a very small community in the southern end of the state versus I'm from an urban area. I think that's mainly the distinction between not just the parties but also between legislators. You don't have the same issues that I have because I'm from an urban area that suffers for lack of revenue and resources versus, you're from a very small rural area that doesn't have those same issues. So, how do I get you to understand and appreciate that in the case of money for education I need to have money for security. I may need to have those special programs for kids that may be falling behind versus, those same issues do not **[01:26:00]** exist.

It's a matter of saying, hey, I want you to come visit. I want you to actually see what I'm talking about. And that has been very helpful. At one point, for years, and this is back in the 80's and maybe the early 90's, we had legislator weekends in which one area would host all the legislators. And that's a captive audience that you would put them on buses and take them to see. See these roads? How beat up they are? I need this. Look at this school corporation where the buildings are falling apart. I need more money. And at the same time, we would socialize in the evening. But I always viewed those as very, very helpful to get everybody who had an interest in participating in that weekend to see what the needs are of another part of the state.

[01:27:00]

MM: That's really interesting. Did that happen often?

CB: Like I said, during the 80's, yes, and maybe into the 90's. It would flip-flop every year. I think we did it every other year and then it would be in some northern area versus a southern area.

MM: Interesting.

CB: And it was referred to as the Legislative Weekend.

MM: How was legislative business conducted outside of formal votes and committee meetings? I mean, it sounds like some of it was done on these trips, but on the daily, what did that look like?

CB: On a daily basis?

MM: Yeah, how was business conducted when you weren't on the floor voting, for instance?

CB: Well, the nuts and bolts of all the legislation is in the committees. The committee process drives the legislature. The important thing is to get the ear of the chair that he will hear **[01:28:00]** a given piece of legislature and then to have folks other than…well, the lobbyists are important, but it's always important to have an actual constituent there so that it's a real live issue and interest versus those hired guns, the lobbyists there. So, that has been another driving point.

You really see the difference in legislators when they hear from a person that has experienced this versus just hearing it from a lobbyist. And I think that is key. But it's also a matter of I can't have a committee chair say we're going to hear your bill tomorrow and I've got someone back here that can't pick up and get that 150 miles with less than a days' notice. **[01:29:00]** So, that's another thing. Can you schedule this—if you have this relationship with this committee person—if you're going to hear my bill, give me advanced notice so I can have an actual person down here to testify.

MM: Sure. Did you…maybe even after the bill is moving through committee and then voting on it too, did you have a sense of how people would vote prior to the actual voting or what people's responses were? Or was it more of a surprise when you got down to the end?

CB: No. When we have caucus meetings, the democrat caucus versus the republican, that's where you get a sense for where your colleagues are that are not on that committee that may have some hesitations or additional questions to clarify all of that prior to the actual vote on the floor.

[01:30:00]

MM: Well, you mentioned leadership, both in the Senate but then also in the House, multiple times. But what roles did party leadership play?

CB: Not out front unless it's a statewide subject matter. Party leadership rarely had an occasion or appearance in the caucus meetings. They may meet with the leadership of the caucus and say, you know, make sure this one goes on through or whatever. But rarely did we have visits from the state party apparatus come into the caucus to express the interest for or against a piece of legislation.

MM: Well, can you speak a little bit about House leadership or caucus leadership too? Like how influential in your opinion is the Speaker of the House or also **[01:31:00]** the head of the caucus? How did they help guide things, I guess?

CB: Well, if the speaker happens to be a democrat then it's rare that a party member would sway away from voting the way the speaker requests you to do. And the same thing with the caucus. Unless there's a big divide in the caucus on a subject matter, like the guns—like I said, that is not a democrat versus republican issue. That is just an issue that is just crazy that I will never ever fathom. But when we have a democratic speaker, we usually…we would know in advance as to whether it's going to be a straight party

line vote on that. IN that instance, then we would support **[01:32:00]** wholeheartedly the speaker and the democratic issue there.

And as I pointed out, rarely are there instances that we would have a split within the caucus on a given issue.

MM: Sure. You've again eluded to this a couple different times, but do you think it's important to work with the other side? Was that done frequently?

CB: Without a doubt. Without a doubt it's important. Granted, we have philosophical differences, but the fact still remains that whatever is going to happen is going to have an impact on the entire state. So, it's a matter of using the amended—I don't mind if we amend this to soften the bill some because you are contrary to the bill itself. It's always a matter of those partnerships that are **[01:33:00]** absolutely…and that's why it's so important to have a person of the opposite party co-signing or co-authoring or co-sponsoring a bill. Then at least all caucuses, both caucuses will know that there is an interest in this issue from both sides of the chamber.

MM: Sure. What does the public not know about how the general assembly operates?

CB: Everything. That's always so intriguing. Well, why couldn't you get this bill through? This is what I wanted to see happen. And it's difficult to understand the mechanics of the operations of the legislature to the average person. Mainly, they cannot and do not understand the process of something that **[01:34:00]** can—if I introduce the bill, it may show up. The speaker may put it on the calendar, but then he may assign it to a committee. They don't match. The bill and the subject matter and the committee that it's assigned to.

And that's a clear indication that that bill will die right away. And that's one thing that the general public does not understand. And even if the bill is heard and the chairman has done it because this person he may need later on, but the bill may not get a vote because both caucuses have caucused on this and said, no, this shouldn't go any farther than this because of A, B, C. And that's something that's very, very difficult for the general public to understand that **[01:35:00]** these caucuses have big influence on whether the other bill has been heard. It's come out of committee, but now the entire body has to vote.

And the fact that no public can discuss the bill after it leaves the committee process. I think the average person is why can't I come in? No, no, this is now in the hands of the 100 members of the general assembly. And all of your input had to have been at the introductory level or at the committee level.

MM: How did your legislative service affect your family life?

CB: Well, I was divorced. That's one thing. No, the divorce was first. My wife, my current wife, this is the…36 years I've been in the general assembly. **[01:36:00]** We've been married for 27 years. This is the first year that we have spent the entire year together now that I'm no longer in the general assembly. Because every January through March or January through April I'm gone and she's here. She enjoyed that. I thought it

would be more of an adjustment for her that I'm here now 12 months out of the year. So, in our case it wasn't that rancorous. I've heard others talk about the fact that my wife wants to kick me out of the house because I'm now here for the full 12 months versus the kind of freedom. And some it's the opposite. The person retiring now has a major adjustment of not being away from their normal family life for those three or four months.

[01:37:00]

MM: Did you wife every come down to Indianapolis with you in session?

CB: Yes. But it was a rare occasion that she'd maybe come down once every other year. But it wasn't like some spouses that camp in down there. They were regulars sitting on the bench on the side. That was always intriguing to me how those mainly wives, I don't think there was an occasion…I can't even think of one where a husband whose wife was in the general assembly would come and be in the chamber for a large portion of the day.

BB: Well, moving towards some of your specific legislation that you worked on, your committee work, what would you say was the most controversial legislative issue that you ever worked on or one during your time in the assembly?

[01:38:00]

CB: The casino. Yeah, because Indiana is viewed as being very, very conservative, so gaming just wasn't on the radar screen. And it took four or five years to finally get even the riverboat language through. And I think it mainly was they were talking about mafia influence because they feel that the mafia would be having control of the operations of boats. Down to even that we had the boats. All the boats were on the water, but they had to have a schedule of going out into the body of water. I mean, it's like they thought the mafia couldn't swim.

Gradually, **[01:39:00]** there were amendments over the years. Like a Lake Michigan, you couldn't possibly schedule. Yeah, you have a schedule, but you can't follow that schedule because that water is very choppy and unruly at times. So, ultimately, we changed that to yes, the boats are in the water, but you no longer have this boarding schedule. That was always chaotic from the very beginning that people were rushing. There were several accidents because people know that the boat leaves at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and they had waited until 2:30 to try to get there. Then they have to get there and park. And then there's this cutoff point. Nope, it's 3 o'clock. You'll have to wait until the next scheduled time. I mean, we finally chipped away at many of those things that were really, really ridiculous in terms of the mechanics of operation.

And then, naturally, **[01:40:00]** the Martin Luther King bill was probably the most controversial bill. The one that I'm most proud of is the bill that me and Senator ___ championed. And that was the tobacco settlement money. It was founded by the federal government that most of the tobacco companies lied about the impact of tobacco, so they then had to repay all of the states X number of dollars. There was a formula for the illnesses caused by the people using tobacco products. And then we got billions of dollars from that settlement, the state of Indiana.

BB: Sure.

CB: And then Senator **Boris** and I--which was rare, he's a **[01:41:00]** staunch republican, very conservative—we agreed on a bill that says that all the money that we received from the tobacco settlement will be used in health and health related activities. We were the only state in the United States that did that. Because everybody had various needs. I need to improve my roads. I don't have enough money for that. I need to put money in education. All of ours went into health and health related activities.

MM: Well, if I could jump back real quick to the casino issue. I mean, because that was a big issue up here in Gary in particular. I know there were other boats throughout the state too, but how much were you involved in trying to bring, or were you involved at all in terms of trying to bring casinos to Gary?

CB: Yes. In fact, it started out with **[01:42:00]** with I think…there were efforts made…our first endeavor in Gary was the one that championed the cause of casinos. Then there was a moving around, I think…ultimately, I was in the House. Back then, in the 80's, revenue-generating legislation had to start in the House. So, that meant then that yes, Senator Rodgers currently and Senator Mosby before her, when they were in the House, they carried the legislation. Both of them ultimately at different periods, moved to the Senate. Still, it was a matter of it had **[01:43:00]** originate in the House. Then still it was a big fight and struggle because many of our colleagues did not want to talk about gambling at all because it was just taboo in the state of Indiana. I'm losing track of what was the original question.

MM: Well, I just asked what role you had played in helping the casinos in Gary.

CB: After Senator Rodgers left the House and went to the Senate, then I carried the legislation for the two or three years. And then ultimately, it passed out of the House, went over to the Senate and ran into a roadblock. And I think we passed it in a special session. We finally came to a compromise during a special session as to what would be our final crafting of legislation on gaming. And I think most of it was centered around who all is going to get a piece of the pie. **[01:44:00]**

Initially, nobody wanted it, but then when they saw all of the revenue that would be generated and left there in the local communities, they came up with I think 13 various communities that received the license or designation for having a riverboat. And I think back to how Indiana, this is something that's not very well known, when it came down to the interviewing--the legislation has passed--the interviews for who will be the license holders.

Gary, having two licenses, was the only community that had the two licenses because we A-started the whole movement, B-had the greatest need. Somehow, **[01:45:00]** the state, we selected two, Barton and another license holder, but the state says no, you've got two. You're going to need a big name in order to be successful. And they kind of forced Donald Trump on us. But unbeknownst to everyone, by the virtue of Donald Trump getting that license for an Indiana riverboat kind of saved him. I think he was going under big time. So, he was able to parlay that license to all of the finance, the banks and

so forth and say, see, I'm halfway solving, so loan me some more money. Biggest mistake the state of Indiana ever made, giving him a license.

MM: That didn't pan out in the long run, right? Or did the other one go under?

CB: No. He wanted to get out **[01:46:00]** after X number of years. So, he sold his license to the guy that owned the first license. Barton had both licenses.

MM: Okay.

BB: In terms of legislation, which piece would you say you worked hardest on?

CB: I would say the Martin Luther King.

BB: Yeah.

CB: The one that I spent the most time on and a number of years it took to get it finally through. And the manner in which it finally went through, that was the one.

BB: Right. Sure. Could you go through and list the committees that you served on?

CB: Public health…over the years or…

[01:47:00]

MM: We have a list of those, but what would you say is the most…I think you chaired some, right? I guess, what most meaningful work came out of those or which were most important to you?

CB: By far the health committee. By far. And then I think second would be insurance because most of the health…the health committee was second to ways and means in terms of the kinds of legislation that was introduced and the number of bills that were assigned to the health committee. We were always jumping because we had ways and means, health and public policy were the three heavy committees that the speaker's office was assigned the most bills to.

BB: And how did you first get involved with the health committee?

CB: Mainly through when I went in…was it called public health? **[01:48:00]** I don't know. I'd have to look at that. But I just had a natural inclination to gravitate to that because I was leaving. At that time, I was a CEO of the Gary Community Mental Health Center, so I had a natural interest in health. That was my first choice of a committee.

BB: Okay. And so, you already talked about your fight against smoking in the state of Indiana. What made you so passionate about trying to combat smoking?

CB: Being on the health committee and seeing the negative impact of smoking directly through people smoking and then the secondhand smoke was the biggest detriment. And the fact that being educated on the drastic impact that secondhand smoke had on folks.

And still today, **[01:49:00]** I don't think many folks realize that the secondhand smoke is just as bad as you being a direct puffer. And then now, this crazy, crazy thing about we got hooked into this vaping thing. That was the best thing for getting folks off of smoking and now we find out that it has as much of a negative impact on people's lungs as smoking.

BB: And that was something you also fought, right?

CB: Yes.

BB: Another big health initiative you took part in was the Healthy Indiana Plan. Could you describe the general idea of the Healthy Indiana Plan?

CB: Once more, it was an effort to make sure that as many people as possible that currently did not have health insurance could have some kind of health coverage. And right before that was the CHIP program, **[01:50:00]** the children's health program. Once more, Senator Miller, God bless her and I have not talked to Pat Miller in a while…I mean, here we are opposite polars. I'm African American from an urban area and poor. Versus her republican living in luxury in Indianapolis. But not a single piece of legislation that came through our committee did partisanship get involved in it at all. None.

That's something else that is truly an untold story about how is it that the two of us could not, there was no partisanship at all in the whole health issue while we were respective chairs of the committee. **[01:51:00]** The biggest struggle we had was the name of Healthy Indiana Plan. We struggled with that. That was the first time we had partisanship come in, and that was secondary to the actual bill and the content of the bill. It just was what would be the name of it.

BB: Sure. Another health legislative issue, can you tell me about Medicaid expansion and your role in that?

CB: Once more, it was a matter of trying to make sure that folk that did not have coverage received coverage and whether that would increase the areas of coverage. And it was a struggle mainly because whether the feds were going to approve it. How do we get around all of the roadblocks **[01:52:00]** of the federal government in terms of expanding Medicaid? Most things were centered around dollars. How do you pay for it?

BB: Sure.

CB: And I proposed increasing the cigarette tax to pay for it and even gasoline tax. Whatever to make sure that we can get insurance for as many people as possible. I just thought about some of this. Somewhere down there in my garage, early in the 70's, I introduced a legislation that said we will have single payer. Everybody will have insurance coverage. It didn't bear well, but at least I got it down to there will be an interim study committee and we produced a big old loose-leaf notebook on the hows and whys of single payer system. And then **[01:53:00]** here loop around 20 years later and that's the major discussion point now.

BB: Yeah. Why do you think those proposals failed?

CB: People just would not educate themselves. Of the 100, how many have a keen interest in health? Maybe 20. But they are so far removed from what all is involved and the impact that not having health coverage has directly on you and then indirectly on you as an individual.

BB: Right.

CB: So, it's very difficult to educate everyone that is not directly involved. And I'm speaking now of the House of Representatives. We got 13 or 15 members **[01:54:00]** on the health committee. You still have 85 who are not, and they all are over here struggling with their issues, be it the ways and means or whatever committee. And then on top of that are the issues and the pressure from their direct constituents about a different subject matter. So, that's taking them all the way from really looking at studying and getting educated on health in the state of Indiana. And it takes years to nurture and get all of that into the minds and psyche of our colleagues about how important this issue is. And I wouldn't limit it to just health. There are other areas in which somebody else may have been struggling for years to get it through and yet is having difficulty in educating those that are not directly involved.

[01:55:00]

BB: Right. Well, moving a bit away from health legislation, we noticed in 2011 you were part of the big walk out in the legislature due to the controversy over the power of unions in Indiana. Could you explain what was going on and your role in that?

CB: Unions were an integral part. We, in the Democratic Party, felt that unions are part of our life blood because they support us with revenue and bodies. So, we championed their cause. Still the jury is out on whether we took that step too far in walking out and leaving the state in order to make sure that state police did not come after us to bring us back to the chamber to pass the legislation. And I think this was over the **[01:56:00]**—it was a specific issue that was there that year. It wasn't collective bargaining.

BB: The Right to Work legislation.

CB: Right to Work. Our leadership felt that strongly about the fact that we need to do whatever is necessary to try to prevent this Right to Work legislation from passing. There were times when we stayed in caucus for days, but that didn't fare too well. And so, finally it was this concept of get out of the state of Indiana. We went to Urbana.

[01:57:00]

CB: This is the result of that.

BB: Oh, my gosh.

MM: That is really funny.

BB: Wow. That is amazing.

CB: That's Pat Bauer. That's Win Moses. I don't know how he selected the three of us to harpoon us like that. But that was all centered around us leaving over the Right to Work legislation.

MM: That's great.

BB: So, do you remember the specific person that mentioned the idea of walking out of there?

CB: I don't know which union rep. It was always a matter of them talking to Speaker Bauer about this whole issue. I don't know which ones finally got his ear of if in fact we can't stop it from being voted on, you need to get out**.** **[01:58:00]** Because you can break quorum.

BB: Right.

CB: Now, today with the numbers, any piece of legislation like this would zoom through both houses because of the numbers that they have, the super majority.

BB: Sure. Let's see. Moving on to another legislative topic, it appeared that, as you've already mentioned, you're against a lot of pro-gun legislation. Could you talk about the debates surrounding guns in the general assembly and your role in those debates?

CB: Most of the debates have centered around just the 2nd Amendment, and we have a right to bear arms.

BB: Right.

CB: But the forefathers did not…yeah, they say you need to be able to protect your home and your family, but back then they had single-shot muskets. It wasn't a matter of you could then **[01:59:00]** have a weapon such as the AK-47 that you're not going to use for hunting or protecting your family. That's the big issue.

There is a segment of the community that firmly believes that we should not change anything about that 2nd Amendment right. Even though in their heads, in their individual heads, they know that there should not be the availability of military weapons and so forth that you see many guys carrying. Some states have been thoroughly convinced by the NRA that you need to take that a step farther that you should be able to carry a weapon and don't have to conceal it. You can carry a machine gun or a rifle and strap it to your back and walk down the street. You can even carry it in a church.

And now, I mean, that incident **[02:00:00]** in…I don't know what state it was in…they had the video on television just recently about a guy walking into a house of worship and he was shot and killed by parishioners that had their guns with them in church.

MM: It was Texas.

CB: What?

MM: I think it was Texas.

CB: Yeah. So, that strengthens their argument that we should be able to carry guns. We shouldn't have to go through the gun permit process. We should just be able to carry our weapons wherever we want to. We had the big issue of even school buildings and school property at one point.

Then we had another example of why that shouldn't happen because right up here in northwest Indiana somewhere, a guy was at work and he was angry about something and went out to the trunk of his car and pulled out a gun and shot and killed some folk, **[02:01:00]** some of his coworkers.

So, it appears as though sometimes it makes sense, but other times it does not make sense. And especially the arguments when it came down to being able to carry a weapon to the workplace. He's saying I want to go hunting right after work, so why shouldn't I be able to have my weapon in the trunk of my car? In fact, there was an exclusion at one point for these electronic plants and many government facilities that were saying no, you can't have that weapon in the parking lot. Even though you have it locked in the trunk of your car, it should not be on our property.

And all those have been shot down--no pun intended—by virtue of the stranglehold that the NRA and other gun groups **[02:02:00]** have on not just the various state legislatures, but on the federal government as well on this whole issue of guns and where and how they can be handled.

BB: And would you say that compared to when you first entered the general assembly, has that strength for the gun lobby increased or decreased or stayed the same?

CB: Oh, increased because now Indiana has passed a law that says that you can carry them into houses of worship. I don't think we've…have we done the one about you can walk down the street with it exposed, strapped to your hip? No, I don't think we've done that. But it's coming. It's just a matter of time.

BB: Let's see…also from researching your legislative career it seems that racial equality was a subject you were working on a lot and you were not shy about bringing up the issues in legislature**.** **[02:03:00]** Could you tell me about what was going on throughout your career and how you were trying to bring awareness to those issues?

CB: I guess it goes back to the whole Martin Luther King issue of getting folks to understand even though he had been demonized by J. Edgar Hoover as being a socialist and a communist and all that jazz, the man was trying to—and his, he was African American, but his appeal was for all people that were of lesser statute or the ability to afford some of the things that were just basic human rights to be able to feed their families and so forth. So, those kinds of things stay with you forever and a day. I grew up very poor, and I know of the struggles of just making it **[02:04:00]** through daily life. All of those things were an integral part of my life and were very important in terms of

me saying that everyone should have equal opportunity to live a very fruitful and quality life.

BB: Sure. Did you notice a change in racial attitudes from the start of your career to the finish of it?

CB: Well, yes, there have been changes, but there's still a long way to go. Very long way to go as is witnessed by the president ripped the scab off. It is still amazing to me. Most of the followers of Donald Trump today seem to be the very poor and disenfranchised white folks that are struggling **[02:05:00]** in life. But they had been forced to be very quiet about the fact that I'm scared that African Americans or Mexicans are going to be the majority and going to take over. They may take my job from me. That had been kind of submerged.

But now, they feel that they now have that opportunity. They should be able to voice that freely that I don't think—back to the segregation days—I don't want him living next door to me. I don't want them to have an opportunity to work next to me. And all of that Donald Trump is exacerbating and making them feel that they should be able to voice their opinions in any way they want to. Such as the Richmond situation the other day and Charlottesville situation. All of that is **[02:06:00]** coming up more and more because of the rhetoric that our president throws out there.

Granted, other than those public forums, he has kind of softened his position when he opened up with, we're going to close the gate on Mexicans coming into the United States. At least some of that has—I guess, within his heart it's still there, but he doesn't verbalize it as much as he had been before. Except when he gets that platform. I think he just goes wild. It's like a drug to him. He is an addict and he gets that boost shouting when he's before all those folks that marvel at him. I got kind of carried off with the subject. How did his fore folk feel that this man who says he is a billionaire **[02:07:00]** can have something in common with them?

It's not the matter that he's concerned about whether they have a job or can make ends meet. It's a matter of the fact that I don't think he has much respect for minorities, all kinds. And now, he's now opened up the channels for hundreds and thousands of more to come out and voice your choice because you have me as the leader of all this and you can feel free to express those opinions that you have submerged.

BB: Sure. So, how have you seen the national movement affect things on the state level in Indiana or while you were in the general assembly? How have you seen this evolution **[02:08:00]** of changes play out?

CB: Oh, without a doubt, the salvation for racial minorities is still kind of under the surface. The fact that right now, based upon if we were to get a correct census count, we would probably see that people of color are the majority in the United States today. And that's what the whole white race is afraid of. That we will no longer be the majority and someone else will be in charge. What's wrong with that? If that is the way that the figures are, why not that?

I can halfway understand that. I wouldn't want to be in the minority if I had been in the majority all this time. But you got to go with the flow. **[02:09:00]** If that's what happens, so be it. When you look on television, when you look in any boardroom, when you look at any place, what is the hierarchy of that place? It's going to be white males.

Now, women are also raising hell. I was shocked at Obama's comments the other day about if women ruled government, we'd be in much better shape than we are right now. Now, he did not elaborate on that, but at least the point is there that women have been left out of so many opportunities and places. And also, have other racial minorities. And that's turning around now, **[02:10:00]** slowly but surely. And it's not acceptable to those folks that were at one point the majority. And that is white males just cannot accept the fact that in this major boardroom there's going to be some women. In this boardroom there's going to be some men. How long then will it take for them to be the majority in that boardroom?

Same thing in the workplace. He's going to take my job. He's just getting the same opportunity that you got years ago, that your forefathers received years ago. And that's a hard thing to get across to the average Joe.

MM: Well, you mentioned earlier too, and of course the Black Caucus has been around for a long time in Indiana politics, and I know that you had numbers, you said, **[02:11:00]** where you could move legislation or prevent it going through.

CB: Yes.

MM: But throughout your tenure, did you ever feel like you had been discriminated against in the general assembly based on race?

CB: No, not on race, but on the issues that I raised, which I guess is maybe the same thing. They don't want to support this Martin Luther King legislation that happens to be introduced by an African American because of what they feel. They feel threatened by that subject matter. I have never felt personally that he's not going to speak to me because I am an African American. Or they don't want to be on this committee because I'm the chair of the committee.

BB: Well, looking at the Democratic Party and the changes that have happened over time, **[02:12:00]** we read that in 1992 you were pretty disappointed with the Clinton administration regarding the relationship with the African American community. You were considering at one voting for Ross Perot for example. What do you think of the state of the Democratic Party today both on the national level as well as in the state of Indiana?

CB: Very disappointed on the national level by virtue of this. And I guess, once more, it's partly our fault, African Americans and Hispanics. The fact that all of the African Americans and Hispanics running for president have been drummed out by virtue of the set of rules that we were there at the table, maybe in a smaller minority, but had an opportunity then to say—not knowing—by virtue of my voting for these rules it's going to impact us **[02:13:00]** farther down the line that will force us out because we can't meet all of these criteria.

And still, I don't know the full background on why this set of rules was set up that you had to meet these certain thresholds, or you could not be on the debate stage. I didn't even realize that some of those…it's sad that nationally, if I don't know, what about John Q citizens on the street that does not know that Bennett is still in the race, that several others that are not on the stage are still out there campaigning. And yet, will they get an equal opportunity to get back on the stage or even get some votes? It's no longer in the public's purview that there are other folks of the 20, many of them are still there. And yet, you just do not hear---they're not household **[02:14:00]** names anymore.

BB: Sure. And what about in the state of Indiana?

CB: The same thing. How did Barack Obama win the state of Indiana? It's a very, very conservative state. So, that meant that for that one occasion, did X number of republicans say I'm not going to follow the republican doctrine, I'm going to be an individual and vote for him because I think he will make a good president? Or what? Or is it that they're not just changing for that one time for Barack Obama but now they're going to be more to the center in terms of their thinking?

I think Indiana will be one of the real test cases **[02:15:00]** in the presidential election as to is the turnout going to be there and will the majority of the turnout be for Donald Trump or will it be for a native Hoosier, Pete Buttigieg?

Coincidentally, if the election were tomorrow, I'd vote for Pete Buttigieg. Which is another interesting question that needs to be researched. How long ago or how did it happen that those marketing firms surveyed the average citizen and said do you accept a commercial on TV that has an interracial couple on it? Will you accept a commercial on TV that has a gay couple on it? I mean, it just seemed to come out of the blue that now **[02:16:00]** when you're watching television, it's commonplace to see a commercial with an interracial couple or a gay couple. How did they determine that?

And obviously, their survey results showed that, and it has been sustained because you don't see folks not buying those products. I guess those companies haven't complained that I need to snatch that commercial because my product being purchased is going down. And then you move on to the Chicago situation. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that the mayor would win because she was openly gay. Yet the third largest city in the country has accepted a gay woman as mayor. And you find now that obviously, there are lots **[02:17:00]** and lots of gay people that were in the closet that were just going about their life and not letting folks know about their personal choices that are now coming out. And I look at that genius young man over there in South Bend. I'm telling you that I think he stands a very, very good chance of being the nominee for president of the United States.

BB: Interesting.

CB: You've heard most of the talking heads say, "He can't make it because he won't get past South Carolina." Because in South Carolina the majority of the Primary voters are democrats and African Americans. I don't believe that. I know they want to hang their hat on whatever this mysterious incident that occurred when he first ran for mayor and he

fired the police chief, **[02:18:00]** a black police chief, over some incident. And that mushrooms and morphs into a national sentiment over whether in fact he can be president. I am presently surprised and happy over this whole issue of accepting a person for who they are rather than that is something that is unacceptable because the Bible says Adam and Eve, not Adam and Adam.

So, Buttigieg is going to be a pest. He's not going to go away even if he doesn't become president. He and Lori Lightfoot, is it Lightfoot?

MM: Lightfoot, um-hm.

CB: Has opened the door. And the fact that they have such a following, it's going to be intriguing as to what happens. **[02:19:00]** And it's going to filter on down to think about all the kids that are bullied in school because they are gay and don't want it to be out there. They're just bullied because their classmates kind of have an inkling of this or whatever. But the world is changing, and this is one change that I am pleasantly happy and surprised about.

BB: So, the next topic I want to touch upon was about the…it appears that in 1995 you wanted to abolish the death penalty. What was going on at the time in the legislature about that topic?

CB: Two episodes right here in Gary. A little girl, even though that was just over the top, the little girl **[02:20:00]** stabbed the lady who opened up her house to them. And then another case of a guy, who I have regular contact now with, who killed a police officer in a bank robbery. But why should we make a decision about taking a life for a life? That to me just does not sit well that we should make those kinds of decisions.

And then mainly from the standpoint it was so lopsided that they were mostly African Americans and racial minorities on death row. That was my major, major interest. And then the fact that also right at that time it was a matter of several groups were finding out that they were not the guilty party, or they did not get a fair trial before getting on death row. Even though in contrary to our county prosecutor, the highest officer holder here, **[02:21:00]** he's in favor of the death penalty. And he's an African American. That's his choice. But I am opposed to the death penalty. I was then in '95 and I'm still opposed to it.

BB: Yeah.

CB: The question has often been raised with me, well, what if it were your daughter or your loved one or a close friend of yours that was shot and killed or harmed by someone? Would you still have that position? Yes. I don't think that we should take someone's life because of something that they've done.

BB: The last topic I want to discuss is you had legislation for teen suicide prevention. Can you tell me about how that legislation came about and perhaps its impact it has had on the state?

CB: At one point, there was a period where there was **[02:22:00]** an exorbitant number of teen suicides or attempted suicide. Most of it centered around self-respect and bullying. The kids were just not feeling good about themselves and were making serious efforts to take their own lives. I felt at that point, and still feel today, that we need to provide more services and more revenue to educate and direct kids to the point where they have more self-respect and then that they should be able to—especially the bulliers—the bulliers should be the ones that are getting more attention as to the hows and whys of you make the decision to bully. They don't feel good about themselves. **[02:23:00]**

It's a matter of the same way it is with the racism. Most of the people that want to look down on a class of people, a race of people, it's because they don't feel good about themselves. Everybody wants to be able to have their foot on somebody else's neck. And the same thing with the kids that are bullying. They don't feel good about themselves. They are doing that because it takes the attention away from them and whatever their shortcomings may be. So, why not provide some services or some training or some other things that are needed to get rid of that feeling of no self-respect.

BB: And I know this was in 2010 when you sponsored this legislation, did you notice sort of an uptick in the problems going on with teen suicide at that time? **[02:24:00]** Or was it always pretty persistent?

CB: I think it was consistent all across the board. It's just that we said now is the time to at least let's get more attention to this.

BB: Right. Sure. I guess one other question, what do you think was the biggest hurdle you had to overcome while you were in office?

CB: The ups and downs, the peaks and valleys of being in the majority and out of the majority. That's one of the reasons why I left this time. I said, "Boy, after 36 years and we keep going up and down, and now it appears as though the super majority is a thing now. And you know, you cannot even legitimately or at least equally debate or talk about a subject matter because it's like you're not even there. **[02:25:00]**

You know, they're going to have to---don't have to---they don't pay attention to you at all because they've got the numbers. They may get a couple of peel offs, just like the whole debate on whether the US Senate is going to support these impeachment particles. Many of them within know that that is something that needs their attention and their vote. But then they want to go along to get along. And it doesn't make any sense anymore. There should be another vehicle for us making decisions right here in Indiana and avoid having issues like this super majority. That just means it's just one side, nothing else.

MM: You just said you sort of decided not to run again in the last election. Was that a hard decision for you? Is that something you had been thinking about for a while? What was your thought process there?

[02:26:00]

CB: Well, two things. I'm getting up there in age, and that 150-mile trek every week was weighing on me. And the age thing is just mine personally. I don't think that a person should be removed or not considered for office because of their age. You have to think about all of the experience that you're losing by virtue of saying this person should not be considered or shouldn't be able to run again because of their age. But the main issue is there comes a time where you need to…there needs to be a training ground.

I regret the fact that I did not have a mentee that I could bring along to this point **[02:27:00]** of saying that, okay, now you have seen what I have done. You have heard what I want to do. Now, if that is your desire to do this, understand and appreciate all the pros and cons of that and the good and bad that comes out of it. But I just felt that it was my time. I think about 36 years, and there were only…I think maybe there were five that had more time. I know both Bill Crawford and the guy that was ways and means that left a couple years ago right after Bill. I can't think of his name. You don't find folks serving that number of years anymore. Either by choice or the fact that they lose to someone else for whatever reason. But 36 years **[02:28:00]** is a long time in one place.

MM: How would you summarize your time overall as a state legislator?

CB: It was an enjoyable experience, be it in the minority or the majority. The fact that you impact lives in the manner in which you do as an individual state legislator, and the fact that many, many people are aware of that and they voice their pleasure or displeasure at what you may have done, may do or have done in that period of time. I enjoy the comradery over the years. I miss the people there. But the process, I just felt it was time to give that up.

MM: Do you have a favorite story or anecdote **[02:29:00]** during your time as a legislator?

CB: Favorite story. Senator Larry Borst and I, it was the last night of the general assembly and we were debating. It was a debate on the tobacco settlement issue. Sometime during the committee process, everyone…are you familiar with the name Larry Borst?

MM: Um-hm, yeah.

CB: He was iron pants. I mean, he was very smart. He was a veterinarian. But he knew the numbers. He was always the chair of the senate finance committee. When we were meeting on the tobacco settlement committee, and that was my first encounter directly. **[02:30:00]** I had always known the name and heard the name Larry Borst. And one day we were having a discussion in the committee about the issue. And I said, "Larry, before this is all over, I'm going to have you wearing an earring with a beard." And I've always referred to him as my brother.

At the vote, the final vote, I think it was the last bill, right before midnight on the last day and Larry was up presenting the bill to the senate. And if you're not familiar with the state senate, you'd know that it's a very stuffy chamber over there. They don't go off the record on anything. And Larry stopped midsentence and said, "Oh, I see my brother has entered the chamber." **[02:31:00]** And he continued to present the bill. One of the

senators, I don't know whether it was Vi Simpson or **Rose ___** at that point, walked up to him and gave him an earring. And he clipped it on his ear. Now, that was unheard of in the stuffy senate to have that kind of joviality going on in the middle of all of it. I still can't believe that none of the still cameras or the stations captured that moment. I have not been able to find any of that. But that to me was a cameo moment. I mean, that was a moment to capture forever and a day.

MM: That's funny. Good story. What lessons, if any, did you learn?

CB: That everybody is an individual, and that I may be angry as hell at **[02:32:00]** John because he did not or would not support my legislation and vice versa, he bring up something like the gun issue and it's very distasteful to me. But the point is that somewhere there's something that we have in common. There's no such thing as permanent enemies, just permanent interests.

MM: You mentioned this at a couple different points, but do you have any specific regrets as a legislator in terms of legislation or just in general?

CB: Regrets about what? A piece of legislature?

MM: Yeah, or something maybe you weren't able to do or something that happened?

CB: Yes. All the years of fighting for no smoking in Indiana, finally being able to get it through that you cannot smoke in a public place. I still, **[02:33:00]** as I was walking out the door, was still trying to get all places that's no smoking in Indiana. And that's the one thing I regret not being able to get through. Now, we're backing up because I see now the whole thing of vaping. But I sure wish we could, or someone would pick up the mantel on this whole issue of in bars and restaurants and in the casinos that you still, there should not be any smoking.

Even though I was an integral part of the riverboat legislation, I have never gone for the purpose of gaming because of the smoke. I walk through or have meetings there or in the case of the Horseshoe up here you have to go through the venue if you're going to go to the concert hall. **[02:34:00]** But it's still a trip to me to walk out of that place and your clothes are reeking with that smell. You have to leave them in the garage and not immediately hang them back up in your closet because of that smell of smoke. That is one of my biggest regrets, not being able to say that Indiana is totally smoke-free.

MM: What in your opinion is the most important work of the Indiana general assembly?

CB: Making sure that every citizen, we improve the quality of life for all Hoosiers. That we do no harm, and that we absolutely make sure that there are laws that can stand the test of time.

MM: What advice would you give to future legislators or even current legislators in office?

[02:35:00]

CB: Hold on to what your beliefs are. Make sure that you understand and appreciate the fact that there are going to be disagreements and that you're not going to get 100% on it. Accept the fact that we all are there to represent our constituency and that whatever you are doing, it is what the majority of your constituents want done.

MM: We have just a few questions here left because we've been at it for a while. But how would you say the state of Indiana has changed over the course of your lifetime or at least since you've been here in the 60's?

CB: As it relates to the general assembly or outside of it?

MM: Just the state in general.

CB: Well, you don't see the **[02:36:00]** outward hostilities between groups. There was a period of time when I would not dare think of going to…where is Foley from? What was that community that was noted for African Americans better not go through? Wherever Ralph Foley was a state representative. It was a running joke that, you know, African Americans…but obviously there's been a softening of views there. I still maintain that we need to accept each individual as an individual human being. And don't just look at the color of my skin. Look at what's inside of me.

MM: How would you say the general assembly has changed?

CB: Outside of having a super majority…**[02:37:00]** There have been many rule changes that make things more palatable in terms of the whole process. I still maintain that we should be like other states, not trying to cram everything into that three and a half months. Spread it out. Many of my colleagues don't want to be full-time legislators and mainly because concern about what it would cost us. But it makes much more sense to me to say that we work year-round to improve lives and issues for people rather than rushing through things, especially in this short session. It's impossible for you to do a thorough and good job when you know that you only have two and a half months to do it. So, why not become a full-time **[02:38:00]** like congress does, like many of our neighboring states do. We work at these things year-round.

MM: What, if any, enduring qualities do Hoosiers still have or hold dear?

CB: Where did the name Hoosier come from? That's a major question.

MM: Yeah. No one still has the full answer there.

CB: Granted, each state is different. I mean, outside of the interwork, each county people have different views. Every state has different views. And I think Indiana has held on to the fact that we are Midwest and that we are different from Ohio and Illinois and Kentucky. We are **[02:39:00]** still people that believe that we should be protected of our basic rights and beliefs. And that we have come a long way in terms of getting the negative things like the home of the Ku Klux Klan and made those folks that have those extreme views, we had them kind of submerge those feelings.

Even though that may not be relevant trying to get them out of those, we forced them into a smaller setting where they're not as vociferous with those views and points of view that they may have. But they are resurfacing I think, and it's mainly because of our president. There's a feel that they are unleashed again and they can do and say whatever they want to.

[02:40:00]

MM: What do you want Hoosiers to know about their role in relation to the function of the general assembly?

CB: That they have as much power as they want to have. That individual vote means a lot. And that they should feel free to have contact with their individual senator or representative on something that is very important and valued to them. I often tell folks you don't know how powerful you are.

While I'm sitting there in the general assembly and my staff comes to me with a stack of phone messages and all of them are centered around, most of them centered around one subject matter, something that I had not been giving much attention, I said, "Boy, I better find out more about this." All of my constituents are saying yay or nay **[02:41:00]** on this particular subject matter.

I think that those that are outside of the donut of Indianapolis really don't pay much attention to the general working, only when it's something that will impact their pocketbook or their health. And yet still, if I'm back here and I have a form and say I need all of your to place these calls or at least vote on this issue, they still don't realize the importance of that because they're so far removed, distance wise, from Indianapolis. They don't realize that still you have as much impact as that person that lives right there in Indianapolis. You just need to take advantage of it and use that power.

MM: That was really the end of my questions, **[02:42:00]** or our questions rather. But I wanted to ask you earlier, you mentioned an early memory about politics of your mother crying when FDR had passed away, and then of course of Mayor Hatcher asking you to join his administration. But when did you decide to be a member of the Democratic Party? When did you come into that specifically?

CB: That's an interesting question. Of late, you hear more about decades ago the Republican Party was the one where African Americans were members of. And I haven't researched, when did that change occur that we left the Republican Party and joined the Democratic Party? And what were the issues then that were so germane to us that we were in the Republican Party? And what happened that flipped us over? I haven't a clue about what brought all that on.

It's just now, **[02:43:00]** it's like Hatfields and McCoys. We seem to clash on what will bring us closer together that we no longer rely on party labels to determine what's good for the whole state or for the United States of America. And it's something that we all need to work on. Why do we have two parties, and mainly two parties, some states have three or four, but we basically have two parties that seemly clash rather than sitting down

and saying what is it that we can do to bring us closer together? What is the compromise? What is that middle ground for the two of us?

MM: Ben, did you have any more specific questions that we…

BB: No, none right off the cuff, no.

MM: Well, we've asked you a whole lot of things. Is there anything we haven't covered that you want to talk on or elaborate on at all?

CB: No, I think we've covered the waterfront.

[02:44:00]

MM: Okay. Well, a couple of things; 1-if you are comfortable now, signing the consent and release form.

CB: Yes.

MM: I don't think there's anything that you said you wanted to cut out, but if there is, please make note of it or we can come back to that later as well.

CB: No, I can't think of anything that I would want to.

MM: Here, do you need a pen?

CB: Oh, here's where I left it. What time is it?

MM: That's a good question.

CB: What about my taking you out for lunch?

MM: Well, we certainly do need to eat, and we probably need to be on the road in about an hour. But if you have recommendations or want to go with us, that would be totally fine as well.

[02:45:00]

CB: Now, the top line is where my signature is going?

MM: Well, the signature is actually on the back here. And I can even fill…this one is just your name there printed.

CB: Printed, okay.

MM: And then I can put your address underneath it. And then you would just check there, no restrictions, if you're fine with that. And then on the back is where we get a signature. Signature right up there.

CB: Up here?

MM: Yeah.

CB: And the date here?

MM: Date that, yeah.

CB: 1-24. Now, here the first month of the new decade is out the window almost.

MM: I know. And then printed name below that.

[02:46:00]

MM: And we will both sign that as well. And if you want it copied to keep for yourself, there's a second copy there too.

CB: That's it.

MM: Yep. That's it. Ben and I will sign that one. But if you want to fill that out for your record too, we can also sign that one.

CB: Okay. When did you say you did Earline Rogers?

MM: She was last year. I want to say it was about December of **[02:47:00]** 2018. That seems about right, I think. But what I also wanted to tell you was we interviewed Pat Miller on Tuesday and she told us to tell you that she is trying to lose some weight so she can fit into her bikini. We were supposed to pass that message along.

CB: Oh, Patricia.

MM: We'll sign this one and leave this one for you too.

CB: Yeah, poor her. When she retired, I said I need to give her some gag gifts. I gave her a bikini. Because she was always…well, you talk about someone that was very, very rigid, it was difficult for anyone around the statehouse to understand the relationship between me and Pat Miller. In fact, one time, it was during the summer and we…**[02:48:00]** she was in Larry Borst's office and she called me over there. No, no, it was Larry was ill and he was at home. She called him on the phone and told him that the two of us were having a meeting. And he said, "Charlie, what is this? You and Pat got a thing going on?" Something like that in his very, very, very dry humor.

MM: Uh-huh. Do you have that other paper?

CB: Did you have an encounter with…did you ever meet Larry Borst before he…

MM: No, not before he passed away. I have read his book though, which was really interesting. And that gave a lot of insight. Because he was a horse guy, right?

CB: Veterinarian.

MM: He wanted the pari-mutuel betting.

CB: Yes, yes.

MM: So, that was an interesting book to read.

CB: In fact, in his book he did a chapter **[02:49:00]** on our big…the issue of the tobacco settlement.

MM: Yeah. There was a lot of really interesting information in that.

CB: Have you glanced through Hurley Goodall's book?

MM: I have. And I had wanted…I talked with…you know, I think he's sick.

CB: Very.

MM: And I talked with his caregiver several times. And this was back very early on, a year and a half or so ago. He had thought that he might be able to do an interview and then he kind of decided against it. Which, you know, that's fair. I understand that. But I've read his book, and I was really hoping to talk with him too.

CB: He had a whole chapter on our struggle on the Martin Luther King bill.

MM: Yeah.

CB: Apparently, he's a good writer too. And once in a while I'm angry with him for him not telling me that initially. You need to jot down exceptional encounters and moments and so forth to prepare for **[02:50:00]** writing a book.

MM: Yeah. I was hoping to talk with him but wasn't able to.

CB: Yeah, that's really sad too that his dementia is really bad. Even though I've talked to him on the phone a couple times, he doesn't really know who I am.

MM: Right. Well, I'll go ahead and turn these off then, and we can pack up here.

[02:50:27]

IHB/pti:kb