

ILOHI Interview with William H. Vobach

Tuesday September 4, 2018

Skype/Phone Interview between Indianapolis, IN and Centennial, CO

Interview by Dr. Michella M. Marino

Transcribed by Dagny Villegas

MP3 file, Sony

William Vobach=WV

Michella Marino=MM

Copyright ILOHI/Indiana State Library

[0:00:00]

MM: How I wanted to start was and just get this on record here. Um...I mailed you a packet of information a week or so ago and one was a narrator information sheet and it had a voluntary consent form.

WV: We mailed that [inaudible].

MM: You mailed it back?

WV: I signed it. I signed it and mailed it back.

MM: Okay great. I just haven't received it yet so I'm just going to get on the record then that you're okay with doing this interview and you consent to that.

WV: I consent and I'm very, I'm very pleased to be able to help.

MM: Good. Great. I'm glad. Um...and then we can talk about the release form at the end of the interview but hopefully we should be fine with that as well. So, um...if you're, if you're ready to go we'll just get talking then.

WV: Alright.

MM: Okay. Um...well I just want to state for the record then that my name is Michella Marino and I'm interviewing William Vobach. Is that how you say your last name? [0:01:03]

WV: Yes, I do.

MM: Okay and um, today is Tuesday, September 4th, 2018 and we are doing an interview via both Skype and the telephone so, and William is in Colorado and I am in Indiana. So, I'll start with some easy questions of when and where were you born?

WV: I was born in Chicago, Illinois on December 25th, 1929. It was not, not what some people would consider a very good present.

MM: (Chuckles) No. I bet not and what were your parent's names?

WV: My father was Arnold C. Vobach and he was an engineer, a chemical engineer for Sinclair Refining Company in East Chicago, Indiana at that time [0:02:03] and my mother was Ethel

Vobach. She was a housewife, a retired school, high school teacher and taught particularly Spanish and French so, but she was retired at that time. I was the first-born child.

MM: Okay. And how many siblings did you have?

WV: Later, I had—three years later I had a younger brother Arnold Raleigh Vobach who is since gone but was ended his career as a mathematics professor down at Louisiana State University.

MM: Wow. And so where, where is your family from or how did they get to Indiana then?

WV: Well my mother her family, some of them date back to the American Revolution. They worked their way out [0:03:00]. My grandfathers on my mother's side was from the Mennonites in Pennsylvania, Ohio and then Indiana. In fact, one of the ancestors there fought in the American Revolution and violated all of the pacifist requirements of the religion and my mother's family were from Virginia and then came to Indiana and then my father and mother met when at a boarding house when she was teaching high school in Whiting, Indiana. He was eating there and working at the Sinclair Refinery next door in East Chicago, Indiana.

MM: Oh wow. Okay.

WV: Lengthy story.

MM: (Chuckles) No. That's good. Well how would you describe your childhood?

WV: I grew up in a suburb of Hammond, Indiana and went to high school in fact, in the building at that time [0:04:03], I went all the way from kindergarten through the end of high school in one building.

MM: Wow

WV: George Rogers Clark High School of Hammond, Indiana and um...although our address and our telephone number were through the neighboring town of Whiting, Indiana where we had our big football rival and where my mother had also taught school. And um, the other thing I could say is we really considered ourselves suburbanite Chicagoans because Hammond is very—is right on the state line and I could walk from my home, where I could take a straight line through a lake, I could walk to Chicago in 30 minutes.

MM: Wow, that must have been neat.

WV: [Inaudible] state line.

MM: Mm-hmm. Well who were the most...oh go ahead.

WV: You wanted to know about my high school [0:05:02]. Well, I went to high school. I was the valedictorian of my high school class. We had a very good speech teacher and as a result we were the Indiana State Champions of the National Forensic League in debating and I was the state champion in a couple of things, original oratory and extemporaneous speaking and then I competed in the national contest my junior year and of the NFL and came in third in the nation and up at Northwestern University Law School they had the contest.

MM: Wow.

WV: So, I was, I was kind of predisposed toward public speaking from high school on.

MM: Now did you get that from your family or, or what kind of drew you to be interested in that?

WV: [0:06:00] Well, as a kid I wanted to be an archaeologist so (chuckles) that doesn't do much for that. But my, my speech teacher was—later he was going to law school and I think he kind of interested me in possibly getting into law as I went on.

MM: Mm-hmm

WV: But I don't really know that I wanted to be a lawyer as I started out...but I finished high school in 1947 and then I went on to college in Ohio. Oberlin College. And there I majored in Economics. I got an, a um...honorary degree in Economics there and graduated in 1951 and then I went to University of Michigan Law School starting in the fall of 1951 and graduated in the Spring of 1954 [0:07:02] and I am a member of both the Indiana and Michigan State Bar exams.

MM: Okay. Well, to jump back to high school here for just a minute and even junior high did World War II sort of effect your, your education experience or your hometown or...

WV: I remember in 6th grade—well, I remember the Sunday, that we had, we hadn't, we had not been listening to the radio in those days or very much. On Sunday we had to go pick up my grandmother who was coming up for a visit so we did not hear about Pearl Harbor until we turned on the radio the evening of December 7th and the next morning in, I was in 6th grade I believe it was, we had all gathered around a radio in one of the rooms of the teacher [0:08:05] and we listened to President Roosevelt describe the Day of Infamy. I remember that phrase very well. So, I was too young really to go in World War II. One of my neighbors next door was killed on the second day of the invasion of Europe. Frank [inaudible].

MM: Wow

WV: But um...yeah, I did not participate there.

MM: Mm-hmm. Did it change your family life at all in terms of your parents' employment or anything like that?

WV: Oh, yes. My father was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin in Chemical Engineering but he became head of the research laboratory at Harvey, Illinois for the Sinclair Refining Company. He had five patents in his name for making synthetic rubber out of petroleum because of the shortage of rubber in World War II [0:09:10]. He was a very good engineer and scientist. So that's really probably the only way we were affected by the war. Of course there was rationing and that sort of thing and I remember we owned a cottage down at Bass Lake, Indiana which is near Knox, Indiana and because of gasoline shortages he would take us down and we'd stay during the summer part-time in the um...in the cottage and he'd only have time to come—guests to come down every other weekend or so, *if*.

The other thing I remember about my childhood is my mother was from a farm family near Sheridan, Indiana which is just north of Indianapolis, there [0:10:04]. She was one of ten children in a, in a farm family, and so all of my uncles—she had seven brothers, and they all had farms or farm businesses. My one uncle was—ran a lumber yard but I had got to spend the summers down there on the farm when I was a, a young boy, helping make hay and do all of the good stuff and I enjoyed that very much. I think very fondly of that even now.

MM: Yeah. Well as a child growing up what were your views, if any, about the state of Indiana or being a Hoosier?

WV: Well, (clears throat) my mother went to Chicago to have me as a baby but like the joke old Herb Shriner used to say, you know the comedian from, that came to Indiana, said that he heard about it. [0:11:06]

MM: (Chuckles)

WV: We were, we um...I was back in Hoosier land when I was five days old and of course very fond of the state as a result. Although my mother was a Indiana University graduate and my father was a Wisconsin graduate so at football time they weren't—there wasn't that much agreement.

MM: (Chuckles) I bet.

WV: In fact, I didn't, I am an ardent Michigan, University of Michigan fan as a result of my law school days but that was a switch over after I grew up.

MM: Yeah. Well how then—well I guess a couple more questions about your sort of growing up in college. In what ways did your awareness of politics evolve as you matured? [0:12:01] Is that anything your family talked about growing up? Were they a political family?

WV: They were both (clears throat) they were both interested in politics. My dad was a Democrat and my mother was a Republican. And uh...my dad was in favor of Roosevelt because he brought beer back!

MM: (Laughter) Yeah. It's true.

WV: But um...then we were, we were what you would consider an isolationist family partly due to the fact that I have a German background. We did not favor—later in the going on my father became a Republican because we felt President Roosevelt was leading us towards World War II. We were not in favor of that. In those days, you know, you didn't know anything about the Nazi Concentration Camps or the Holocaust or any of that. [0:13:00]

MM: Mm-hmm.

WV: So we were not in favor of but we did follow—I was—I can tell you as a six year old I began taking an interest in the Spanish Civil War which was going on in those years. So, I've been interested in international affairs for a long, long time.

MM: Mm-hmm. Now what—you know you said you were in public speaking and in other activities like that but what sort of drove you to then actually apply to law school and pursue law as a career?

WV: (Clears throat) Well, (clears throat) excuse me. I'm not sure why. I applied at Harvard and Michigan. Those were the only two I applied and I was admitted both places but Harvard didn't give me a scholarship and Michigan did.

MM: (Chuckles) Yeah.

WV: So that's, that's when I went there. And then surprisingly about two years after I was in law school, in college over in Ohio, [0:14:05] my father retired from Sinclair and decided he was going to be a fruit farmer, (chuckles) which was a big mistake because he couldn't buy the—he didn't buy the acreage. You can't make money as a fruit farmer unless you got 300 acres of fruit and he, he didn't have that and so he moved to southern Michigan in a little town called Watervliet, Michigan. Just down there in Benton, near Benton Harbor and so that's where the last years of law school—so I was actually a native of Michigan there for a little while there.

MM: Mm-hmm. And I should have asked this earlier but what lead you to Oberlin College?

WV: Um...I'd never heard of the place and then my—[0:15:01] in the junior year in, in high school, Paul Wilkinson, who was our physics teacher, had been over to a YMCA. I belonged to the High Y club which was a, one of the clubs that were in the high schools and he was our advisor. He went over there and was very impressed with his experience one weekend, told us about it so I applied to go there. I applied also at Harvard, where I was admitted, and at DePauw University in Greencastle and I—a friend of, a high school friend of mine named Frank Long and I went to Oberlin one weekend in the fall and it was a beautiful experience. A beautiful time of the year [0:16:01]. (Chuckles) Oberlin gets a winter that will kill us, kill anybody. But we didn't know about that, see? So, I went there.

Oberlin in those days and I don't—they don't seem to give the ratings anymore but in those days they and Swarthmore College were considered the two best small colleges around. And so, and they're very good ones everywhere but those were. So I decided and I had a couple of friends when I went down to DePauw who were very, very rivalry oriented towards their fellow, towards their friends, their former friends in different fraternities and I decided I didn't want to get involved in the fraternity rivalry thing and Oberlin didn't have those. It has no—in those days, didn't have any cars, either. [0:17:02] You had to ride a bicycle. So that was, that was the um...that was why I went to Oberlin.

MM: Okay.

WV: And I had a wonderful experience there. My major professor in Economics, Ben Lewis had been the top American advisor over, sent over to London by the OPA Price Administration to coordinate with the British.

MM: Wow.

WV: And he was a, he was a real outstanding economist around the country, and he may have been one of the—he was a University of Michigan grad. He may have influenced my, (chuckles) partly my thinking [inaudible] law school too but that's—I have very fond memories of the days at Oberlin.

Oberlin by the way if you've not heard of them [0:18:00] was the first, first institution in the United States to admit black people. The first place in the United States to admit women.

MM: I had heard of that. That's, that's the main thing I've heard of is studying history you, you hear those types of things.

WV: Yeah, and when I went to Oberlin I was a socialist (chuckles). Things have changed, obviously.

MM: Yeah (chuckles). So, what, what makes you say that how did you...

WV: [Inaudible] things will begin to change.

MM: Say that again?

WV: Say, when you get a mortgage things begin to change.

MM: (Laughs) Turns out. Well how did you sort of dabble in socialism or how did you come to learn more about that?

WV: Well, when I was over there there was a—he was a wonderful guy. He was a Norman Thomas was his name and he came and talked and [0:19:00] I, I was impressed. He was a very, very good man. Of course, as he told us, he said, "I don't dare get elected president because we don't have enough people to staff the country."

MM: (Laughs) That's funny. Well we'll come back to that later, I'm sure. So, what did, what type of law did you want to get into or what did you practice as soon as you were out at grad school?

WV: Well, (clears throat) because of my speaking experience and I—I participated in all the case clubs and trial stuff like that in law school. I came in and we had a competition called The Campbell Competition for appellate competition and I came in the um—the guy that beat me for the finals became the Dean of Michigan Law School later so I don't, just saying that for him, I don't feel I was too bad. [0:20:03]

MM: Yeah.

WV: But anyway, I've been wandering I think the question related to how did I get started as a, as a lawyer?

MM: Mm-hmm.

WV: I was interested in trial law. Not, not the corporate or tax or any of that stuff. So I went with a law firm first, was one of the two most outstanding law firms in Indianapolis at that time, was Baker and Daniels and I quickly learned there that they had too many people ahead of me in line

to ever get into trial practice. One of the men there wanted to make me an abstract examiner. Well that, that's a killer. I mean, you got have to have more interest in following little lines than I did. So, I quickly, after about six months there, [0:21:02] hired in with a firm called Slaymaker, Locke, and Reynolds and they were the top insurance defense law firm in Indianapolis and I spent the rest of my career with that firm. They changed names several times. When I left the practice it was called Locke, Reynolds, Boyd, and Weisell but it was—I stayed with them the rest of my forty years in law practice.

MM: Wow.

WV: [inaudible] about that but I'll tell you, if you want to [inaudible] sometime.

MM: Yeah. Okay. Well, when then did you get married?

WV: When I was in graduate school. The story [inaudible]. This will sound corny. The second, second year I was in law school once a guy said, "Let's go over to the graduate center for the dance in the fall," [0:22:02] [inaudible] crop over and they had all these girls there that were entering grad school. So, we're standing in back and things were already going on and this one girl kept dancing by and smiling at me! And so, I cut in on her and the rest is history and we were married and have been together ever since. Her name is Isabella. We call her Isy. She's the one that you've been dealing with trying to make this thing work.

MM: (Laughs) Yes. Well she was very helpful.

WV: Very helpful. She's, she's a math major. She got her master's degree in math, which is good because she corrects my checkbook.

MM: That's important. So, was she from Indiana as well then?

WV: No. Well we're both Chicago people so to speak. She was from the, she was from the wealthy side of Chicago, Lake Forest. [0:23:03] I was from the industrial side, Hammond.

MM: Yeah, and did you have children?

WV: We have three children. Our oldest is Elizabeth. She's married. Oh, I might tell you this. All three of my kids are law, law graduates and members of a bar some place or other. And so Betsy was sent out to California after she went to law school at Wisconsin and she's lived out in California ever since. She's married and retired and then the middle daughter is Marian and she is married to a hotel man. She's also a lawyer. She's passed more bar exams—she's passed five bar exams but never practiced law [0:24:06]. She, she lives in London.

MM: Wow.

WV: Where her husband has his—he's a consultant for hotel chains.

MM: Okay.

WV: They were for a long time—he was wanting to be—he was the vice president for Four Seasons Hotels but they were bought out by somebody and that was the end of that [inaudible].

MM: Yeah.

WV: He's a consultant there. And then my third child is our son, William. William F. He's the one you were trying to find, find me through.

MM: And you're William H., right? William Herman?

WV: And he's William Frederick.

MM: Okay.

WV: And so he, he's got a degree in a Bachelor of Arts from Oberlin and then a Bachelor of Science from Washington University in St. Louis in electronics, electrical engineering [0:25:01] and he's a patent lawyer. He's a graduate of...Danbury Law School.

MM: Okay.

WV: And you know when you get to be my age you need somebody to look after the old fossils, so we moved out here to be near him. He has a practice out here.

MM: Okay. See.

WV: [Inaudible] retired.

MM: Well how did your family influence your law career?

WV: How did they do what?

MM: How did they influence your law career at all? Did, did that—did raising a family affect your practice or anything like that?

WV: I don't think so. I mean I obviously inadvertently have affected all three of my children's futures but I, I always counseled them never to be a lawyer.

MM: They didn't listen very well did they?

WV: No they—you know they are smarter than to listen. But anyway, [0:26:00] I really can't say that I can point to anything that—we never had any other member of the family that was a lawyer. I think the only, only inspiration may have been this civics teacher, Joseph Griffin in high school who was going to be a lawyer studying up in Chicago while I was there and I stayed in touch with him for a while after, after he left and went to practice but really, no. Why?

MM: Okay. Well how did you start to become more seriously involved in politics?

WV: (Chuckles) I was off to a rocky start. When, when we moved—the first time we moved out to the suburbs, my wife and I, there was a crusty old Republican Precinct Committeeman [0:27:00] named Gaskins and Gaskins talked me and my neighbor into working on the election board and I was the chairman of the election board and it was at his behest and there was a school board fight that was also on the ballot and several people who were voting they were very concerned about the school board vote and evidently some of the ballots were mismarked. It was very clear who wanted, they wanted. Well, Gaskins decided that, that it would help the political

situation if we turned all those votes down. Extremely incredible choice. And my friend and I, the other man that he put on the board, refused to do that. We let them count the votes anyway. Oh, did that make him mad. He told me "I'll make sure you never have another job in politics." And I didn't for a long time [inaudible].

But it's all connected. Years later we lived out in a beautiful area east of Indianapolis in the country on a pretty little creek with—I lived on five acres with big beautiful old, old trees. The Indianapolis Water Company decided to build a reservoir and run us all out.

MM: Oh no.

WV: It was a very bad choice and I became interested in—the only thing President Obama and I can say we have in common is we both were neighborhood organizers.

MM: (Chuckles) Well, there you go.

WV: So, I organized the neighborhood and for eight years we resisted and we, we prevailed. They did not build this bad reservoir [0:29:00]. And I won't go into that because I have some—I get along fine with the water company now but I didn't then.

MM: Mm-hmm.

WV: And so that's what started me in—so then the political people came to me and said, "You know how would you like to be a Precinct Committeeman? [inaudible] Gaskins." You know? I mean. Foiled again.

MM: Yeah.

WV: So, I, so I became a Ward Chairman and I was a Republican Ward Chairman then for thirteen years and then from that they decided that I ought to run for Senate. So, I ran for the Senate.

MM: So, I didn't quite catch that. So, Gaskins sort of blocked your election there too? Is that what you said or was he out of politics at the time?

WV: Was who out of politics? This other man?

MM: Gaskins.

WV: Well, yeah Gaskins was long gone.

MM: He was gone by then. [0:30:00]

WV: And I lived a different—he wasn't anywhere near where I lived. The county organization of Republicans decided that since I was well known in this neighborhood situation that they would make me a Precinct, as it turned out a Ward not a Committeeman. I ended up—first job I had was Ward Chairman. I had seven precincts to manage.

MM: Well how did you get from your bout with Socialism to Republicanism?

WV: It must have been a big transition! I don't know. I, when I got, when we got down to Indianapolis it seemed to me that most of the people that I admired were, were more Republican than they were Democrat [0:31:00] and so you just sort of drift that way. It never was any ideological issue. When I was in the Legislature I was very, very compatible to helping Democrats when they had good stuff which [inaudible] was not popular with some of my ardent Republican colleges. But you know I, I've never been a—I'm a centrist and you know it's more the issues than it is the politics. Which means I never would be very good as a political [inaudible].

MM: (Chuckles) Well, who, who at the time when you started getting more into politics, who were your national political heroes?

WV: Well, let's see. I liked the first George Bush very much. I was an admirer of him [0:32:00]. I liked John McCain. I liked John McCain very much. And of the—I can't, I can't say I was ever as ardently a Reagan supporter as a lot of people but I liked the man. He was a likeable man.

MM: Were there, were there local or state politicians, you know governors in Indiana or other Legislators that you really looked up to before you joined the Legislature?

WV: I really was not that well informed. I had, I had known Whitcomb, Governor Whitcomb for a while but not really in that context so much. Of course, he wasn't around. Robert Orr was governor when I first went in the Legislature. I didn't know Governor Orr. [0:33:01] He was from Evansville and I didn't know him personally. He was very nice to me, though.

MM: Okay. Well you, you touched on this a little bit but what finally made you decide to run for state government and when did that occur?

WV: What year did I first go in the Legislature?

MM: Was it 83 or 82?

WV: Yeah, 82. Well um...what was that? Out in—I was out in Lawrence Township which is northeast Marion County and the fella that was in charge of things out there was Russel Brown. Rus Brown and Rus Brown came to me and said that he needed somebody to run for the Senate [0:34:00] and he knew of my leadership in this matter of the—I had been a Precinct Committeeman of course for a long time, or I mean a Ward Chairman for a long time and he said we are having this [inaudible] with a couple of other people out there and we think we'd like you to do it. Well, I talked to my firm and they were, they were for public service but they were not really happy with the idea spending a whole lot of time in it and you know it interfering with work. But they agreed to let me go do it and so that's when I decided to talk to a couple of other folks that were active out there. Douglass Wade who was a good friend of mine became my Finance Chairman and I had a couple of other people. Um...trying to think of his name. One of the people I had was a cousin of the movie star, Jimmy Stewart. They used to play in—they played in the attic together in, in Pennsylvania.

MM: Wow.

WV: But um...I can't come up with his name right now. There were two or three people that said, "Yes. Go for it," that I knew who were Precinct Committeeman. So that's when I decided to give it a shot.

MM: Now did you have to campaign a lot or did you have a strategy for trying to win the election?

WV: I don't—I had a safe district. Let's face it. The voters all there were predisposed to vote for whoever was the Republican. So that was not a big issue [0:36:00]. I do remember that there was a group. I think they were really the ones that had bothered some of these other people in [inaudible] me. Who tried to pull up some of my yard signs and stuff like that. But generally, it was a pretty, it was a pretty easy thing to get elected. I will say that the second time I ran I got an even bigger vote than I got the first time which pleased me.

MM: Yeah. Yeah. I'll bet. Did you know who the Democratic opponent was at the time?

WV: I may be mixing the two up. One time I was running against a very nice elderly farmer man who had been a native out there for a long, long time. The other time ran against a real nice guy. He was, he was also a lawyer [0:37:00]. He had the distinction in World War II of being the only blimp captain who was shot down by a Nazi submarine.

MM: Wow! (Chuckles)

WV: (Chuckles) But anyway he was a real nice guy. I, I never had any animosity towards my opponents. I had a little trouble with maybe one of the primary people but...

MM: Yeah.

WV: ...never, never...

MM: Okay. What was most important to you as a candidate?

WV: I was, I—as a trial lawyer and I—I was explaining to you that I tried all these civil cases not criminal cases. I know nothing about criminal law in the practical sense but I felt that the plaintiff's bar was beginning to tamper with the system unfairly. And um...oh, I'll give you an illustration. One of the bills that I tried to pass which did not evidently pass from the record I looked at [0:38:09]. I went to a trial where in the audience, it was a wrongful death case and we were defending and the plaintiff, was this grieving widow who had remarried very quickly after she had lost her husband and he was sitting out there. You could almost see him visibly counting the money they were going to make in the trial and we could not get—oh and then the plaintiff's lawyer got up and gave this sad, sad story about her lonely nights at home [inaudible]. You know?

MM: Yeah.

WV: It went on and on like that. And we could not get the judge to identify the replacement [0:39:00]. She wasn't having any—and so I think there was a verdict and it probably included money under false pretenses or questionable pretenses. So that was, that was one of the things that was annoying me at the time I went in. So I had a—but the other thing was in those days if

you're familiar with the old practice—in negligence practice when I went into the law in Indiana, the defense of a lawsuit was that if there was contributory negligence in the slightest bit by the plaintiff, *any bit at all*, he could not recover. Now I don't think that's fair even though I'm defending the defendant. So one of the things that I did accomplish while I was in the Legislature was to bring in the concept of comparative fault [0:40:01] so the jury has the right to consider in the whole issue the balance between the wrongs on each side and put that into the mix and decide how much if any the plaintiff [inaudible].

MM: Interesting.

WV: Yeah. Really, really contrary to my best interest but I thought it was fair, you know?

MM: Mm-hmm. So did you feel like your, your law background and your practicing as a lawyer affected or influenced rather the type of legislation that you wanted to put forth?

WV: Yes. Definitely. And my experience with the neighborhood struggle to save this beautiful valley where we lived made me an environmentalist. So, if you will notice in all the stuff that, that I ended up doing [0:41:01] there is an awful lot of environmental law that, that I was pushing.

MM: Yeah.

WV: So, I would think that my two major focuses as I look at the record would have been in the fields of Jurisprudence and in the field of Environmental Law.

MM: Well how did you get that message out to the public or did you feel like you needed to do that? They could look at your, your legislation or your voting or...

WV: Well the funny thing is um...once you're in the Legislature the, the messages that you—it's not quite the same as what people these days are dealing with federal agencies and federal office and they, and they have to talk about national issues all the time in order to get elected [0:42:01]. We didn't do a lot of that. And so, what I was, what I was trying to influence was my fellow Senators to vote for this stuff and it wasn't particularly getting out into the issues in the community. Although some of these issues in the community was what I had the legislation that I was proposing.

MM: Okay. What was your first election day like?

WV: I must tell you—that was one of the things that I wanted to tell you is a sort of a [inaudible]. In those days, and I don't know if it's still true, but the first rookie Senator that gets up—are you familiar with the Indiana Senate board where they have this big board with everybody's name and a red light and a green light?

MM: Mm-hmm.

WV: The trick is when that guy gets up and gives his impassioned first speech, and I was the first one that had a bill up, they all vote red. [0:43:02]

MM: Oh no!

WV: But then the thing stays that way for a while and then some of them vote—change it and vote green and so I got my first bill passed but you know they're all sitting there watching your faces.

MM: (Laughs) So they're messing with you essentially.

WV: It doesn't fool the rest of—the rest of the rookies find out what's going on. It's only the first guy with a bill that gets [inaudible] that way.

MM: Oh, that's funny.

WV: So that was my first, first story that I was going to tell you.

MM: Yeah, that's, that's funny. Um...

WV: Do they still do that, do you know?

MM: I don't know if they still do that but I will certainly ask. (Chuckles)

WV: Yeah, yeah.

MM: Yeah.

WV: Yeah. It's just [inaudible] hazing.

MM: Yeah, right. Legislative hazing. That's funny. Well you won two elections, right? [0:44:00]

WV: Yes. I did.

MM: Okay. Did, did your feelings change from your service in, in sort of in the first election, or your what am I trying to say here? Did you change sort of your strategies or how you approached being a Legislator from your first term to your second term?

WV: I, (clears throat) I wonder as I think back on it if I wouldn't have been much more effective had I spent more time off Senate hours fraternizing with a lot of the, the out of Marion County people. I would have gotten more votes on the basis of personal friendships that, that—the guys that did well spent a lot of their personal time hanging around with the rest of the gang [0:45:00]. And there's a lot of cronyism that builds up as you get a—if you're likeable and you spend your time working on that you can get support that I didn't ever really seek or understand.

MM: Mm-hmm

WV: Because the minute I got done with my Legislature I was back at the office trying to make my, my billable hours...

MM: Right, right.

WV: ...with the firm. Keep them happy.

MM: Yeah. Right. So, you weren't able to—you know I've heard, I would hear that a lot of other former Legislators would go to like the Columbia Club and other places and...

WV: [Inaudible] A lot of them stayed at the Columbia Club and would eat breakfast together. Now I've been to some of those breakfasts and I—that's where I realized a lot of camaraderie develops there. If you can spend the time after hours and before things start it makes a difference [0:46:00]. I think I would have been—I was—I'm quite happy that I got some things done. But I'm [inaudible] if I could have done more.

MM: Sure.

WV: I don't—in my day the Legislature wasn't as concerned about the environment as it is and should have been then.

MM: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Well you shared the funny story about the first time you passed, or tried to pass a bill but what were you thinking literally as you walked into the State House that first day?

WV: I have no memory.

MM: Yeah.

WV: I don't know.

MM: You don't know. Okay. Well how did you learn the ins and outs of state politics?

WV: I should explain. My father-in-law died the day I was elected to the Senate.

MM: Oh, my goodness!

WV: My wife didn't even tell me [0:47:01] until the next week because she didn't want to. So, I had to go to the funeral and I on the opening day of the Legislature I was not there. I was out. I and one of the Democrat newly elected were two days late getting into the, the building.

MM: Wow.

WV: But no memory of that.

MM: That's interesting. Well, so how then, especially because you came late, how did you learn the ins and outs of state government? Did you have a mentor or?

WV: You understand that there's the Marion County Group Caucus. They will meet in a meeting room before every day or every session. I'm sure that's where they, they explained to me where my seat was, [0:48:00] which was in the absolute back of the group of course and that sort of thing. Yeah. No. And for a while there you're just sitting. You have already been told that you can submit bills. So, had already prepared a whole bunch of ideas and submitted them to the Legislative Services Agency which then works them in, you know? Puts them in form for your bills.

MM: Sure. Okay.

WV: Yeah but um.

MM: Well, you kind of already answered this a little bit but I think it's worth asking. How did you communicate or interact with your constituents?

MM: Well, you're invited to every parade, every meeting, every this and that you can think of and you try to go when you can [0:49:01] with your wife and usually a little prize for them to hand out at the meeting and that sort of thing. You know? And once in a while they would ask you give a talk. I, for a while I was the president of Lawrence Township Republican Club while I was in the Senate and so forth but I don't know how. I'm not sure I can characterize how much time I spent in the outside political connection. I'm not sure I can tell you that.

MM: Well I guess...

WV: I went to everything they called for.

MM: Yeah. I guess the question really, or what I'm trying to get at was there a lot of interaction between your constituents and you? Did people call you? Did they send you letters?

WV: Surprisingly little. Although there were some people [0:50:00] who had the idea that it was like a Congressman that you had the staff who could take care of their state problems. You know? "Go over to the State House and fix this or do that for me", and I had to call and tell them we don't have, we don't have that kind of support. I can't do that for you. Well one was, he, he just couldn't believe that you know that I wasn't willing to help him fix some kind of a licensing problem he had. I couldn't. It's just we didn't have the staff and I couldn't spare the time.

MM: Mm-hmm.

WV: They don't—I was interested—some Michigan State Legislators came down to visit us and they were astounded to see the spartan desk we had. They all had state cars given to them. They each had their own secretary [0:51:01]. We in the Senate we shared—four of us shared a secretary for letters and stuff and we all had our own desks and crowded desks upstairs. Indiana gets by a lot better from the standpoint of expense, or did, than some of the other states. And the other thing is, you know we were not full-time. Some of those states they meet right around the clock all year. Though it really came down to that because we'd have summer study groups where you'd have to spend part of that time.

MM: Yeah. Okay.

WV: It was much more spartan than other states.

MM: Sure. Sure. Well you mentioned the first bill you sponsored because you sort of got hazed with it but do you remember what the topic was and why you chose that to be your first bill?

[0:52:00]

WV: Must be Freudian repression. I don't remember.

MM: (Chuckles) Yeah. Well, I'm sure the hazing part sticks out more than anything else.

WV: Sure did. Yeah.

MM: Well can you describe the regular interaction among the assembly members?

WV: I think we got along relatively well. Nobody, as I recall, was ever rude to anyone else and um...there were, there were already beginning to be strings of extreme partisanship and you know I will tell you this. I had not realized that—we mentioned the matter of personal comradery. There is also as you go along, you develop a sense of... [0:53:00] how to describe it. If you don't have any strong feelings one way or another about something, you're more likely to vote in support of some fellow whose support you want to get you know as sort of a tit for tat...

MM: Yeah.

WV: ...later. That, that develops and it's maybe not good but it's very practical because on so many things you don't really have a strong commitment one way or the other and you're not really, really sure what the merits are one way or the other. Now it's not frequent but once in a while the factor that comes in is you know, "I'll do it for this guy because I want him to be liking me to do it for that.",

MM: Yeah. Yeah. That makes sense. Did that go across party lines even? [0:54:00]

WV: To some degree, yeah. A very, very small degree. Now in my day, um, maybe still, if you expected to get a bill passed out of committee and brought on to the floor the prevailing party, whatever one it was, needed somebody from that party to be on listed as a sponsor, a co—sponsor. Maybe not the lead sponsor but a fellow sponsor and so I was, I was probably not as popular with some of my partisan colleagues because I would, for instance on environmental affairs there was a lady named Viola Simpson who was a Senator from Bloomington and she had some pretty good environmental bills. So, I would go on with her on one of her bills so she could get it [0:55:00] considered.

MM: Mm-hmm.

WV: I did that some for some of them. But it was always something that I felt that I wanted too. It was a good idea.

MM: Were there differences between members of the House and Senate?

WV: We, we always thought that the House was a bunch of rowdies having a good time. You know? They, they spent an awful lot of the session having fun and doing [inaudible] stuff where that would not go in the Senate. You know?

MM: Yeah. So, was that—were you looking down on them or was it more jealousy? (Chuckles)

WV: A false sense of superiority.

MM: (Laughter) Okay. Well put. Okay. I was curious, [0:56:00] well I noticed when looking through the seating charts that you changed seats a lot in your time and I was wondering what was going on with that?

WV: I have no idea [inaudible]. The top guys picked us but there is this, that as your seniority improved you moved forward in some degree...

MM: Okay.

WV: ...and I was always, well I was very fond of two of the people that I sat with some Ed Pease whom I hope you will get a hold of. Very, very, very capable man. Last I heard he was a uh, he got elected to Congress for one session from Brazil, Indiana and then later, I understand, he was a lobbyist in Washington for Rolls Royce. I don't know what's happened to him since. I'm sure he was younger so he is probably still alive [0:57:02]. And then I was...well let's see. The other person I liked sitting with because she was originally from my home county of Lake County, Lake County, Indiana. Sue Landske and I believe you told me Sue has passed away?

MM: I believe so, yes.

WV: Ah. I liked them and I, I was very, very impressed, very great guy. Our leader was Garton, Senator Garton from Columbus. As an old marine corps officer and he had a very gentle way of [inaudible] but he got things done and he was always very nice to me. I liked that man very much.

MM: And he served a long time, so.

WV: Well, and you said maybe he is still alive? [0:58:00]

MM: He is. I've talked to him on the phone. Yes. So.

WV: If you get a chance say, "Hello" for me, will you?

MM: I will. I will certainly pass that along.

WV: He was a great man and I liked him.

MM: Good.

WV: I was thinking about the other people I could tell you about. I knew Louie Mayhurn, the Democrat from Marion County. He was a friend of mine and um...anyone else? Well I wanted to tell you another story. Morris Mills from south Indianapolis, he's a Quaker and at home it turns out they use the Old English, thees and thous. One time he came in and he tells a story. He came in and his wife—he told our caucus he says, "and my wife said to me as I went out the door, 'Morris if thee votes for that bill [0:59:01] than thee need not come home tonight.'" "

MM: (Laughs) That's funny.

WV: [Inaudible]

MM: (Chuckles) Wow.

WV: And another guy. My first session, I was looking at that list, and I'm not sure but I think maybe, I think his name was Elmer McDonald he was from the Fort Wayne area, big tall fella, older man. He had been a professional baseball player but he had a sense of humor and the first year—have you ever wondered for instance why Indiana is on Eastern Standard time? We should be on Central.

MM: Yeah.

WV: No, no question. Well, the big political boss in Fort Wayne, and he was, wanted them to go on Eastern Time and be in line with New York City [1:00:00] and so Elmer was given the job of selling the Senate on voting for Eastern Standard Time for the state. So he got up and he gave this very mock serious speech listing all the reasons why we should go to Eastern Standard time and the top reason was because when the cattle were milked in the morning their farmers should have warm hands. And [inaudible] the later time would permit them to have warmer hands.

MM: (Chuckles) I get...

WV: I make fun of the House of Representatives and then we have stuff like that happen and it was [inaudible]. It was [inaudible]. They got a big laugh.

MM: Oh I bet. I bet. That's funny.

WV: And we, we got stuck with Eastern time.

MM: There you go. You've talked— [1:01:01] you've touched a little bit on this but how is legislative business conducted outside of formal votes and the committee meetings? You've mentioned the caucus and the breakfasts and things like that but...

WV: Well, (clears throat) you know you, you have time at your desk and they permit people to come up, lobbyists to come up and consult with you and you have the right to tell the desk, "I will not receive such and such person anymore" or not. I tried to let even the ones that I thought were bogus promoters talk to me because every once in a while you learn something that you didn't know or you could trace down and see if it's right.

MM: Sure.

WV: And then they change your, your thinking. That factor is there and I'm sure it's not powerful enough to be like D.C. [1:02:00] where you know it's the swap or as they say it is but you know it was a factor. Yeah. I never let um—a nice man who, this is an illustration. One of the lobbyist for the beer distributors was—in fact he was a friend of mine from the University of Michigan Club. He had the job of trying to keep a favorite, a favoritist status for um...his business as opposed to—I forget now it was that we could vote to let various distributors have chances and I told him I was sorry. Even though he was making a contribution and all, [1:03:00] I could not vote for what I didn't think was the best way. He took it well. I said, "you've always been very good to me. Let me tell you some people you might, in the Legislature who might help you." So I steered him to some of the other people but I felt I could do that.

MM: Yeah.

WV: I was not going to vote for what—and he was a contributor. He [inaudible].

MM: Well along those same lines did you have a sense of how people would vote prior to the actual voting?

WV: Well you knew pretty much...you knew pretty much there were some people that weren't going to listen to anything you had to say because well, they either didn't like you or they had never, never been on that quite of— [1:04:02] they weren't sympathetic for instance with

environmental concerns or they weren't—there was another thing and I will tell you it's probably still true. The Plaintiff's Lawyer Bar has a big influence on the Indiana State Legislature. They give an awful lot of money to the Legislature and of course they knew that I was not in their pocket and so they did what they could every—both elections they gave to try to unseat me and there were a couple of fellas in the Legislature a fella named Jim, good lawyer from Fort Wayne or up the Fort Wayne area. No that's not right he wasn't from Fort Wayne but anyway he was always leading the plaintiff oriented votes against anything I thought was appropriate [1:05:02] but I was, I was very supportive of the judges pay raises. A couple of them liked me afterwards (laughter) but and I was supportive of the probate study commission and the various you know —oh, I should tell you if you, if you want to get in, if ever want to get in to some the things that I'm proudest of that happened I can say that one of them was the Model Administrative Code which I got passed. I don't find it here in these papers that I've got but I did get a code passed for the state agencies, not just environmental but all of them that lead to a compliment being paid to us [1:06:00] by the American Law Institute...

MM: Wow.

WV:...who have the model code and they were very impressed with the code that I developed and we passed a in Indiana. They sent word to that effect.

MM: Yeah.

WV: So that was nice. Yeah.

MM: I'll have to look into that. Do you remember what about year or towards the end of your service or beginning?

WV: I remember that it was Ed Pease who told me this so it would have been either the second or third session. Second, third, it was not the first session.

MM: Okay.

WV: Probably not even the—either the third or more likely the fourth session of the Legislature I was there.

MM: Okay. Well during your tenure what roles did party leadership play?

WV: Well the party leadership could [1:07:00] pretty well decide what committees you were in charge of or where you were put on a committee. That's important and then they could, they could decide what seats you had in the Legislature. That was important and they could um...well and of course they could influence whether you were supported for reelection or not. When the next time came along. You had to consider all of that as a factor of importance to everybody.

MM: Yeah.

WV: And I would say that I didn't ever feel that the Bob Garton ever try to pressure me into doing anything. He was very kind and supportive. When I went to him with something I believed in [1:08:00] he would kind of help me get a hearing on it. But um...and you must understand too, in my day the Marion County, we called it the "Organization". The Democrats called it the

“Republican Machine” but it was, it was kind of that way. John Sweazy was the chairman of the county. He sort of gently but firmly lead. I never had any problem at all with John. He was always kind to me and um...but you knew when you had a caucus meeting that if something was needed in Marion County it was going to be, it was going to be discussed there and we had, we had what five or six people in the Legislature as Senators who had a piece of Marion County and therefore met in in our caucus [1:09:01] and so that was—and one of the early people I knew was Charlie Bozma and I was a good friend of his son Brian who later—I backed Brian to take my seat but the powers that be didn’t agree to that so Brian made his name as a House of Reps. speaker and everything else from here on.

MM: Yeah.

WV: Are you ever, are you ever in touch with him?

MM: Not yet since he’s still serving, since the son is still serving. I’m trying to wait until people are out of office before I do interviews.

WV: Yeah. Well he’s a great guy.

MM: Yeah. Well what does the public not know about the Indiana General Assembly and how it operates?

WV: Well I think for one thing they don’t know how different we are from Congress [1:10:03] and I mentioned already this idea that you have a staff that can run around and fix things and take care of agency problems and so. We haven’t got any of that. So there—that’s a big misunderstanding if it’s important that they, they should take note of. The other thing I suppose is that there is so much that we need to do that—does the Indiana Legislature still meet only in a long session and a short session in opposing pairs? See there’s almost an—there was just not understanding that we weren’t there all the time if something came up in the summer or something, you know? That, “why can’t you just go over and do it?” [1:11:00] You know? Not a lot of that but some.

MM: Some.

WV: I can’t think of anything that they would, they would—I don’t think they probably feel in Indiana about the Legislature like they maybe feel about Congress. I’ve not been there you know for years but I...

MM: Yeah. Well did your legislative service effect your family life at all?

WV: Well, (clears throat) I, I probably would have had a lot more time to be home with my kids than I—I would stay late after, after the Legislature was over and go over to the law office, which was you know just a few blocks away and try to put in some billable hours on my law practice. So I, I wasn’t home as much as I would like to have been. [1:12:00]

MM: Well how old were your kids when you were serving?

WV: So I really can't even say that I was deprived of—because the two kids, the two older girls were out of school already and the son was in college when I was in the Legislature. We had summer sessions and stuff that [inaudible].

MM: Sure. Well what was the most controversial legislative issues during your time in the assembly?

WV: Boy. I'm, I'm not sure that I—I can tell you what the stuff that I did that had you know where there was a quarrel...

MM: Sure.

WV: ...but I don't know about some of the rest of the stuff. I made a list of the things that I considered were accomplishments if you want to know about that. [1:13:00]

MM: Yeah. I have that question lined up so let's move on to that.

WV: Well, I mentioned that I brought in comparative negligence. I'm very proud of the fact that I got Indiana to adopt a close model of the federal rules of civil procedure which made Indiana's discovery procedures for instance much better. Should I wait? Do you got a phone call?

MM: Well no. I keep hearing a beeping but I'm not sure if it's on my end or yours. Okay. I just want to make sure that it wasn't something of mine. It's totally fine.

WV: It's the, it's the microwave beeping [inaudible].

MM: Okay. Okay.

WV: Then I got the—I got certain juveniles classified as adults for certain criminal trials. I introduced a bill which did not go through, I guess [1:14:03] that did away with the electric chair in favor of the other, you know?

MM: Lethal injection or pills?

WV: Yep. I thought I got that passed but evidently it didn't. I don't know. I had—one of the things that I got and I don't see it here in the list. As a trial lawyer I discovered that a plaintiff lawyer has a big advantage over the defense. If his doctor is can be the one that says, "Well I've treated the patient and I know what I'm talking about and the defense doctor who said I was wrong is only seen that by court order for an hour". So I got passed and I'm not sure it's still the law but anyway, that in medical malpractice cases, nurses, doctors, hospitals [1:15:01] if there is a medical issue then the court appoints a panel of the opposing council to select from a series of doctors which the court lists. One doctor who can then make his own independent examination of the plaintiff so that the court can draw upon that and read that to the jury or have that expert come and set the story straight if it needs, or for that matter help the plaintiff if that's what, you know?

MM: Sure.

WV: If that's what, you know? And I think that was a very good balancing issue. Straightened that out a bit.

MM: Yeah.

WV: Then I, I mentioned the independent—the Administrative Procedure Act. I mentioned the [1:16:00] judges pay. I passed a bill to get the judges to appoint masters to assist them. The Probate Commission, the air pollution control. Then I was very proud of the legislation I won solid—oh! I consider—I'm the father of Indiana garbage management.

MM: Hmm (chuckles). That's quite a title.

WV: Garbage management because I was the guy—you know there was always this argument that's one of the big ones, "Not in my back yard." You know? "We're not going to put this dump in my county." And you had to solve that in some way because we were beginning to get some serious problems. So I got the Legislature—it was the result of a summer study [1:17:00] but I got legislation that sets up regional disposal areas. You know so that somebody's back yard is going to have it, you know? But the least undesirable location is where it should go.

MM: Sure.

WV: So that was something I did. Oh, I don't know about this one. I saw it there. It gives the right to a parent to recover from the wrongful death of a child. Now I thought that was a law before I came in but evidently we needed something on that.

MM: Yeah.

WV: Um...what else? My son says he saw an, he was researching, and he saw an article that where I had been interviewed by the newspaper to amend the [1:18:00] death penalty for children up from twelve up to eighteen.

MM: Wow. Yeah.

WV: I don't think they do it—we still, I guess, I looked the other night, we still have a death penalty probably hasn't been used for years but anyway it did seem to me that it was pretty hard on the kid, only ten or twelve. No matter how bad he was. You know?

MM: Right. Right.

WV: So I had that and my frustrations then as I say were—Oh! One thing I kept trying, I see in all these years. I kept trying to get the right to photograph trials so the appellate court could have not only the written but the photo evidence of how was it was presented. How did—how believable were these guys that were making these points, you know?

MM: Yeah.

WV: [1:19:00] Never got through. Never got through. I don't know. Do they permit it now?

MM: I don't know. I don't know.

WV: [Inaudible] popular. I know that a lot of lawyers don't like that. Makes them nervous. And did I mention I had an awful lot of good environmental bills that probably were passed later but...

MM: Yeah.

WV: They just weren't ready.

MM: Mm-hmm. At the time. Well I know you served on several different committees. Did you recall how you got on to those particular committees?

WV: Leadership puts you on a committee and then as you, as you've served for a while you're more likely to become the chairmen yourself. I ended up on the, on the, in charge of the, Environmental and Consumer Affairs Committee and as a result of that [1:20:00]. Bob Garten appointed me to be chairman of the Indiana State—oh what was it called? The Environmental Policy Commission of the state of Indiana in 1988 or 1989. It was an honor.

MM: Yeah.

WV: Fact is, I can tell you I retired. Years later while I was living in Tennessee at that point. In the mail here comes the Environmental—The Indiana Environmental Impact Award!

MM: Oh.

WV: From the Department of Environmental Management. June 20th, 1996. I'm very proud of that.

MM: Yeah, I bet. After working hard on those issues for so long.

WV: Yeah. I became a friend of the lady that was in charge of the environmental group under Governor Bayh [1:21:07] was named Kathy Prosser and Kathy just before she had been that, she had been the administrative assistant to Senator John Glenn of Ohio, the astronaut.

MM: Wow.

WV: And she's quite a—I looked her up on the, the other, just last night. She's retired and living in North Carolina.

MM: Wow. That's interesting.

WV: [inaudible]. I liked her. We got along fine. I kept trying to get the salaries of their experts to be increased and it just didn't work. I think that's a very important thing to have good qualified experts there.

MM: Absolutely. Well I saw that you also were on, correct me if these are wrong, but the Consumer, or Commerce and Consumer Affairs Committee [1:22:02], the Judiciary Committee, Legislative Apportionment and Elections, Insurance and Financial Institutions, and the environmental one you mentioned, and the Commerce Public...Commerce and Public Policy Committees. Did you like any one of those better than another one or?

WV: My natural disposition was to the judiciary but I think I liked—we had good, we had good chairmen for all of those committees. Good people. Yeah. One of them I was surprised on, I think it was the last years I was there I was on the Public Policy Committee. I don't remember ever, ever being on that one.

MM: Yeah. I think you were on a subcommittee too, like the Public Safety Subcommittee or something.

WV: Oh, [inaudible]. I don't remember. [1:23:00]

MM: Well, what in your opinion is the most important work of the General Assembly?

WV: I'm not of the opinion that some people have. Let me start with a backwards approach. I'm not of the opinion that the General Assembly is there to keep bad things happening in government from happening. I think there should be the positive approach to the use of legislative power. I...I don't think that the Indiana system of—yeah I'm torn on the issue of whether we have enough [1:24:01] days in session or not. They worked us pretty hard and a lot of the time didn't count it because they called it, "summer study" but it really was legislating. So I, in terms of function, and I'm a great believer too that so much of the things that currently are viewed as federal issues really could be returned to the states for regional differences of point of view. Now I realize that that causes all sorts of problems about interstate commerce and a lot of other things but there does seem to me to be a certain emphasis that state people aren't near as important as federal people [1:25:00]. I think, for instance, our Indiana State Police, as I have known them, were wonderful compared to some of the state police. I, for instance, was involved in a couple of cases with Illinois State Police where they actually were kind of looking for a little bit of a handout as they were assisting me which shocked me because we would never, never in Indiana have had that happen not with our state police.

MM: That's interesting. Well, when did you leave the Senate?

WV: Well, let's see. What? I'm so bad with my numbers anymore. Was? The last year I was there would have been in—what else was this? I had all this written down. I hope I'm not wasting your time. [1:26:02]

MM: No. Not at all.

WV: Second session of the 106th General Assembly it was probably about June 30th or so of that year, of um...

MM: I think was that 1990 probably?

WV: 1990, yeah. Probably around the end of June of '90.

MM: Okay. Now did you just...oh go ahead.

WV: I don't really remember how that compared with what was going on in the rest of the world or [inaudible].

MM: Do you, did you not decide to run for reelection or did you get defeated?

WV: I decided. I could of—I'd be there yet if I wanted to be. No. I decided not to run. I had a very, very safe district. Very safe.

MM: Well what made you decide not to run? [1:27:00]

WV: Well, I was getting a little tired of all the stuff and I was getting pressure from my firm. You know? Because our firm did not, did not try to get money out of people because we were on the Legislature. Paul Mannweiler who was in my firm was in the House of Representatives and was a speaker for a while. And so—but we did not play it for money so and they were after me—they didn't seem to understand that I was coming back and doing the billable hours anyway. Yeah. “You weren't there at the office”, you know and so? I was there at night when they weren't.

MM: Yeah. Right. Well how would you summarize your time in the Indiana General Assembly or as a State Legislator? [1:28:00]

WV: I feel I served a constructive part. I feel I was a centrist who worked with the Democrats when they had good stuff. I feel that—oh, Evan Bayh was the governor when I was last there. He wanted to make me a Sagamore of the Wabash but I already was one. So I didn't do that but you know I feel like it was something I never thought as I, growing up as a kid that I would ever be or ever do and I made some good friends there and uh...but it sort of dropped out of my life since. I wish I knew—I could remember more [1:29:02] about some [inaudible]. It's a—and the other thing is you know when you move away from Indiana then you lose a lot of touch. May I do a little bit about what I'm doing since?

MM: Yeah.

WV: Well, I have written books.

MM: That's exciting.

WV: I've painted pictures. I brought a couple pictures along to show you. Would you like to see [inaudible]?

MM: Yes. Definitely.

WV: This is a picture.

MM: Well hold it up just a little bit. Oh wow. That's really good!

WV: This is one.

MM: I'm impressed!

WV: Here's a cute one.

MM: Here, hold it back towards you. I can't see all of it. Wow. [1:30:00]

WV: Then I wrote a book. My 40 years as a trial lawyer.

MM: Wow! I bet that's interesting reading.

WV: It was for kids and family [inaudible] that. I tried to sell this one. When we retired I moved down to the lake in Tennessee and if you're a Yankee and you move to the South you'd better know your Civil War.

MM: Yeah. I bet.

WV: I became a semi-expert on the Civil War. So I have written a book, see? I can't seem to find anybody who wants to buy it! They're a dime a dozen.

MM: (Chuckles) Yeah. Civil War stuff. People are really cranking that out but....

WV: [inaudible]

MM: So have you always been...or I'm sorry go ahead.

WV: Your question is what?

MM: Well, I was going to say have you always been interested in history or just because you moved...

WV: [inaudible] I love history [1:31:00] and particularly military history and I think I started to tell you I could never get into service because I had a heart murmur. I've always been a military history buff. So this Civil War book is a pretty good book, really, in my opinion. I write some of my friends to say they think it's good, too.

MM: Well of course.

WV: And then the other thing that I do—I never as a kid was in theatrics but here at the retirement center I'm in charge of the play, play group. We do radio plays. We're called the "Thespians". Anyways, so I write radio plays.

MM: What fun!

WV: Here is my radio play book.

MM: (Chuckles) I love it. So it sounds like you're keeping busy certainly?

WV: Yeah. There's, there's lots of fun after retirement. [1:32:02]

MM: Yeah.

WV: I recommend it.

MM: Well how did you decide to go to Tennessee then from Indiana?

WV: My college roommate was a, a heart surgeon in Cincinnati but he had discovered this community on a lake in Tennessee, the eastern part of Tennessee. You always think of the Allegheny Mountains but before the Alleghenies were there there was an earlier group of mountains that were worn away that became what is known as the Cumberland Highlands. I may have even called them the Cumberland Mountains I don't know but anyway there's a lake down there and a retirement area where Dave, my high school, my college roommate had a home and he's the one that promoted the idea that we ought to go down there and settle [1:33:01]. So he retired from Indianapolis down there and then as I say, after 14 years down there it was time to get near a kid.

MM: Yeah. (chuckles)

WV: Keep you from doing dumb stuff.

MM: (chuckles) Right.

WV: Up to Colorado.

MM: Okay.

WV: I will tell you that you folks in Indiana think that it must be very, very horrible out here in winter because we have snow in April. Our winters are so much nicer than Hoosier weather you wouldn't—we have, you won't believe we have blue sky in winter.

MM: Really?

WV: And it doesn't get as cold as it does in Indiana.

MM: Yeah. Yeah. And I know when we...oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

WV: It's good here. Yeah.

MM: Well when we were in Nebraska it maybe didn't snow as much but the wind was so bad there. It was hard to explain to people in Indiana about the wind [1:34:00] but you're probably blocked from most of that with the mountains.

WV: No we aren't. We get the mountain wind.

MM: Oh. Yeah.

WV: We've got wind 30, 60 miles an hour and the thing is we're short of water. We...this is our worry. We're not, we need the water. Everybody's moving here from California and Texas and we don't have the water for them.

MM: Yeah. Well, a couple final questions if you're okay with it. I'm curious about—you know I know you've lived in Indiana for most of your adult life. How did the state change over the course of your lifetime?

WV: Well, you see I can't—it's hard for me to characterize Indiana since I lived in specialized areas. I lived in the industrial north [1:35:00]. I was exposed to the farming center of the state by visiting my relatives down there and we very—we never got much down to southern Indiana to the pretty part of the state, though and in terms of—I would say I'm just not really sure that I, I have any sense of change in the way things are. I'm just really not sure.

MM: Sure. Well what about with the General Assembly? Do you think the Assembly changed during your 8,9 years or even in the you know decades after? I don't know how well you've kept up with it but.

WV: I've not kept up with it for instance this Vice President we have, Pence. I've never heard of him you know but he was in politics there probably [1:36:01] [inaudible] but in terms of—I would suppose we had a—when I was growing up there was a sort of a—of course the Roosevelt

administration was popular nationally and to some degree that carried over to Indiana. There was a very popular Democrat governor named Schricker, Governor Schricker who got elected several times during my youth but then there was a period there while I was around where the Republicans, at least the first four years were, was conservative and there was beginning to be a split between the very conservative and the middle conservatives [1:37:02] and the last years I was there the Democrats were doing well. I don't know what it's like now so I'm really not qualified to give you any help on that.

MM: Sure. Well my final question is what if any enduring qualities do Hoosiers have?

WV: Well, I love that expression, "You can take a Hoosier out of Indiana but you can never take Indiana out of a Hoosier and when I die I'm coming back to be buried in Crown Hill. So you know to me it's still the greatest state around by far. I'm very and I'm very fond of, I'm very fond of Tennessee. [1:38:00] They're nice people, very nice people in Tennessee and I went to school in Ohio. I liked Ohioans. I liked the Michigan folks. I'm happy everywhere.

MM: Yeah.

WV: My a...being near Chicago, I think Chicago is still my favorite big city but I feel sorry for those guys now. Things really changed there. It wasn't unsafe when I was near Chicago. Now they—of course that might be politically, that might be just a bunch of baloney but I think they may have a problem.

MM: Yeah. Well I...

WV: Is it fairly safe in Indianapolis now or is there a problem there?

MM: I'm sorry. I didn't catch the beginning of that.

WV: Is it fairly safe in Indianapolis?

MM: (Sigh) I mean, I think, this is just me from what I've seen on the news and things like that that there are pockets of Indianapolis where crime is certainly going up [1:39:04] and I think that that is gun violence in particular is something the Mayor is targeting. I've heard some news stories about that but I think you know it kind of goes neighborhood by neighborhood. For instance, the neighborhood that I live in now which is near Crown Hill was pretty bad a few years ago from what I gather in terms of violence but the neighborhood took back control and said, you know, "We don't want that in our neighborhood. We don't want to live like that," and so they've had different sort of community action groups or coalitions that have come through and cleaned up the neighborhood and I feel very safe in our neighborhood. We really like it here but crime has sort of moved to other areas so I know that is something the city is working on and trying to rebuild certain parts of the city but you know it's complicated and you know I don't think Indianapolis has the same reputation that Chicago does or anything like that but [1:40:02] I know it's something that they're trying to deal with.

WV: Yeah. The um...I would say gun control was not a big issue when I was in the Legislature. I would admit right now were I in the Legislature I probably would not, I would not be in line with the standard Republican point of view that the Second Amendment is sacrosanct. I, I really think

that there's limits of good gun control or limits on guns in gun control. Yeah, so I was always a bit of a maverick. I was trying to calculate what my success record was of how many bills of how many things I've passed. I think I probably hit about [1:41:02] 1/3 or something like that.

MM: That's pretty good.

WV: [inaudible]

MM: Yeah. Well and I suspect there may have been other legislation that maybe you weren't the primary sponsor of that didn't sort of pull up in what I photocopied so there may be more out there too that you know was successful.

WV: I couldn't understand why my, why my, for instance my bill on the Administrative Procedure Act was not listed as...it was enacted and the Solid Waste Management that I handled was enacted. I'm pretty sure.

MM: I'll look into those and see what I can find out for you.

WV: Well that will be helpful.

MM: Yeah. So.

WV: Apropos of our conversation I may sit down and write, write up what I can remember about—in fact I'll send you a copy if I...

MM: Please do! [1:42:00] That would be very helpful to our project as well and I would love to read it so. Well, I think I've gone through all of the questions that I wanted to ask but is there anything that we haven't talked about yet that you wanted to make note of or that we haven't addressed?

WV: I'm sure there, I'm sure there's something that I'm too—it's buzzing as people are trying to call either you or me. We're on the phone that's why we're getting that. (clears throat) I don't know. It's been pretty much what I had in mind we should talk about. My regrets I guess were that the plaintiff's lawyer bar in the Legislature didn't enact a lot of my corrective—my motivation for going into the [inaudible] was I was going to try to straighten out some of the stuff that they were pulling [1:43:06] and there just weren't the votes there because they were—a lot of [inaudible] in Indiana if you're a plaintiff lawyer and you're not very good at it you run for judge. Then you get to be the judge and then your sympathies are always pro plaintiff and I, I was troubled by that. If you're a defense lawyer you've got a good steady job, you never get as rich as a really good plaintiff lawyer but it's always there so you never run for judge. You know?

MM: Right.

WV: I tried to offset some of that factor but didn't get a lot of it done. I'm very glad I was a Senator, however. [1:44:00] I'm very glad that I had that chance but I'll tell you this, as I always tell people, you know there's being an Indiana Senator was worth that and five dollars for a cup of coffee. You know? (chuckles) There's not much to it afterwards. People they can defer that way.

MM: Yeah. That's funny. Okay. Well if you think of anything else you know over the next few days or if you start to jot down your own ideas and there's something that you felt like you just forgot today and want to get on the record please give me a call and I can touch base with you again in the future as well.

WV: I'm happy if I can. I was just trying to think of little vignettes of various other Legislators and I wish I could come up with some things [1:45:00]. I—very, very pleasant memories of Senator Miller from um...that was my colleague, well he was my colleague from east Indianapolis and Virginia Blankenbaker who was a very good Senator and as I mentioned my high regard for Ed Pease. One fellow that was a little bit—he was, when he was my seat mate but I never thought he would, he would—he didn't approve of me being so friendly with the Democrats he was an Airforce Colonel before he—what was his name? But he was always nice to me but he never voted for any of my bills. [1:46:00]

MM: I'm trying to think, Air Force?

WV: He was from Seymore. Joe, first name Joe I think. Somebody's trying to [inaudible] one of us.

MM: Yeah. Let's see. Was that Zakas? No.

WV: No. Oh, yeah Joe Zakas was a friend of mine. He was elected the same time I was. He was from South Bend which was a risky town for a Republican.

MM: Yeah. He's still in the Legislator, Legislator.

WV: He is?

MM: Yeah.

WV: Even now?

MM: Yep.

WV: [inaudible] By now he must be fairly well up the ladder.

MM: Yeah I would imagine so.

WV: Well I can't seem to find the name.

MM: [1:47:00] Yeah. I'm sure it will come to you later probably.

WV: But Joe is still there? How 'bout that? A good job to be able to hold onto South Bend—hardened Democrat. Oh another guy I liked was Frank O'Bannon the Democrat. Later I think he ran for what was it governor?

MM: Yeah, he did in the late 90's.

WV: And another one I liked was Joe O'Day from Evansville. He was [inaudible]. The guy that always was for the plaintiff lawyers was Jim Butcher from [inaudible]. He was, he always

opposed my bills because he was for the plaintiffs. [1:48:00] Well, I'm not finding it. I'm not finding that name. Well he was my seat mate later.

MM: Well, I saw later on while you were there. Let me look at the chart towards the end here. Not Corcoran?

WV: Yeah. Corcoran. Corcoran, yeah. Very conservative. Very conservative. Yeah but always pleasant until it came time for a vote and he thought I was too favorable to [inaudible] Watson's projects.

MM: Yeah. That's funny. Well, it's been a pleasure talking with you Bill. I really appreciate you taking the time out of your day and I'm sorry that we couldn't get the Skype thing to work out quite the way but we rigged it ourselves and I think we've got a good interview here.

WV: And I certainly appreciate the work you're doing [1:49:00] and enjoyed talking to you and would like a copy of whatever you come with and if I write, if I write up something I'll mail you a copy.

MM: Please do and I'll make sure to send you a copy of the transcripts as well when I get those done.

WV: And you should get that authorization in the mail [inaudible].

MM: Okay. Okay that sounds good. I'll keep my eye open for that and I'll make sure to check in the mail so.

WV: Okay.

MM: Okay.

WV: Nice to know you.

MM: You too and please be in touch if anything comes up and take care.

WV: Okay. Bye, bye.

MM: Bye.