

## **ILOHI Interview with Calvin Didier**

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Interview by Ben Baumann

Transcribed by Mary Kelley

MP3 file Sony

Calvin Didier=CD

Ben Baumann=BB

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[0:00.00]

BB: Ok, so before we begin I would just like to state for the record that today is April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020, and my name is Ben Baumann and I'm here in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I'm speaking via phone with Calvin Didier, who is in Minnesota, I believe...

CD: Yes, Uh huh.

BB: ...and we are doing an interview for the Indiana oral history initiative. Uh, so, starting off when and where were you born?

CD: In in Detroit Michigan, uh, in Ferndale it's called, Detroit Michigan.

BB: Ok. And uh what were your parents' names?

CD: [stuttering] Ralph Henri Didier and uh uh let's see, uh uh Elizabeth uh [0:01:00] Elizabeth uh Ferguson Didier. Yeah, we pronounce it Di-de-a.

BB: Di-de-a.

CD: D I D I E R is Di-de-a. It doesn't matter how you write it down just so you understand what I'm saying.

BB: Yeah, no, that's good, that's that's important. Calvin Di-de-a. Alright.

CD: Um hmm.

BB: Perfect. Um and where was your family from originally? Were you g...Was your family from the Michigan area before...?

CD: No, my father was born in Michigan, A little Pinconning, Michigan up a little north. My mother was born in uh in uh Scotland and uh she was raised until she was about eighth grade and then her father who was a minister moved over to uh many Scottish families in Canada and United States so she has been in this country since she was about eight years old.

BB: Oh, ok, wow. Very interesting. And how did you end up in Indiana? [0:02:00]

CD: Uh uh uh, I was a student at the University of Michigan and then after that in graduate school I went on then and went into a seminary at uh, a Presbyterian seminary in Chicago, McCormick and out of that I got a uh a student ministry while I was preparing, you know, in the seminary. So that was

happened I was led to a parish where the minister had not done so well and so they were willing to take a student, so I was there for three years in a place called Ligonier, Indiana.

BB: Wow, ok. And what years were you there?

CD: What year? Well, let's see, that would be in the early 50s... I haven't got the things right before me... I graduated in '54 so it must have been '51, '52 and '53, 'bout that time.

BB: Oh, ok. Very interesting. And uh, so growing up what were your parents' occupations?

CD: Well, my father had been in the uh dairy... he was um, [0:03:00] uh a CPA and then he was in the dairy but he had his own business in Detroit. His business there, his dairy business and then a big one in Flint. So it was that, then we travelled about the state as he assumed leadership of a group of dairies and uh, then he had a offer to go into a major outfit in Detroit but because of the influence of Grandfather Ferguson who was from Scotland that was a minister my father decided that he also would go into the ministry so he did that.

BB: Wow!

CD: And his first assignment was in or he developed a congregation in Flint, Michigan.

BB: Ok, wow. Very interesting. Um, let's see, did you have any siblings growing up?

CD: There there were seven of us. Uh huh. Three boys and four girls.

BB: Ok.

CD: So that makes, [0:04:00] it makes seven yeah, (chuckles) well anyway...

BB: Yeah (laughs)

CD: ...I was the third in the family.

BB: Oh, ok, excellent. Alright. And how would you describe your childhood?

CD: Well, it was, it was interesting. Uh, for a while I worked for my father at the dairy and then uh, that was very interesting learning the whole game there and uh then uh when he decided to go to the uh ministry he developed first what we call a Sunday School. And so, it wasn't a real organized church it was just children who needed training and so on. So, then I helped in that. And then he also developed a place in Saginaw, Michigan so I helped in that. And by the time I was fourteen, I hate to tell you this, but by the time I was fourteen I was already having to give sermons because I had been talked so much by Grandfather various by my father that it was imposed on me to help [0:05:00] wherever I could. So, it started out just helping Sunday School and pretty soon the people there not having too much education they were asking me to talk to them. So, by the time I was fourteen I was practically speaking...

BB: Oh my gosh

CD: ... a preacher. Then things got worse in one sense in the war. So I'm in a little church at Clifford, Michigan, um called me in to be their minister which I couldn't of course at my age, only seventeen, but I functioned as such because they didn't have anybody, So then I uh was preaching every Sunday and visiting them like my fathers were. It started out that way. And then finally I finished that and got back to the University of Michigan to finish up my uh graduate degrees.

BB: Wow! That's that's fascinating. So, you you really started your career, I guess, as a minister at a very young age then basically.

CD: Yes, uh yes uh yes just, you know, as a necessity, the little churches that didn't have anybody and they wanted them to speak and by that time I had heard [0:06:00] so many sermons and felt so much that I could speak the language and so, fine for a, you know ,fourteen, fifteen, sixteen year old. They just wanted somebody.

BB: Right. Sure. Ok. Um, so who would you say was the most influential person in your childhood?

CD: Ummm, well, on the, on the, this is to be focused on these various kind of church activities and also his dairies I was [unintelligible] the deep influence in me other than promoting me to do these jobs emotionally and in every other way was mother.

BB: Ok. Interesting, ok. Um, what understanding, if any, [0:07:00] did you have about your family's political beliefs as a child?

CD: Well, when I was growing up dad was running his business there in northern Michigan to various cities where he had dairies. Uh, he was, I got the impression as I look back on it, he was Republican...

BB: Uh hmm.

CD: ...and uh uh, that meant a lot of different things, not very much to me at that time of course. But that was where he stood from the standpoint as I understand it. He was not very politically minded in terms of involved in that, but his, you know, but his position over the radio and so on.

BB: Right, ok. Um, what schools did you attend as a child and as a teenager?

CD: What school you say?

BB: Yes. What schools.

CD: Well, I did schools in Pierce and Flint and Flint Northern and then I graduated from Flint Northern and ended up being the uh, sen... uh, the whole schools', [0:08:00] what do you say it, the president of the council, yeah,...

BB: Oh, ok.

CD: ...and also, I was the drum major of the band. And I also I played in the orchestra. Those kinds of things. Very active that way. So, um, that was between the work on the Sunday School and churches on the weekends the rest of the time I was in school being active as the band leader and head of the student council so on. That kind of thing.

BB: Wow! Ok, um, and so did you enjoy school a lot then? Growing up?

CD: I didn't hear...say that again, please?

BB: Did you enjoy school a lot growing up?

CD: I uh think I did... the thing that bothered me was that I couldn't go into athletics. That was uh, against the rules. In fact, in junior high school, with Grandfather Ferguson, being a Scottish thing, they were so they were so fussy, they didn't even want me be gym class. They didn't want me to take showers with the other ones so I was the [0:09:00] champion for ba...for sitting, you know, while somebody was holding the uh making the number trying to do it that way but I couldn't join the athletic program which was big in those days and so I had to do other things like I say, be the drum major and be the head of the council and so on. So, I was kind of a restricted, not not deeply religious life but very spiritual life and having to work on weekends.

BB: Ok. Interesting. Um, and during school did you have any favorite subjects at all?

CD: Oh, I uh I think the favorite subject was English in many ways that I used to try to write stories and poems and so on. I uh then I elected to take after school mathematics for the math program wasn't very good and I was not getting much out of it. So that's how I had to learn to do equations and so on but I had to do that later after school. [0:10:00]

BB: Right, ok. And, so now skipping ahead a bit when you were in college you went to uh college to become a minister, correct?

CD: (stuttering) I, I, I excuse me I uh I did what I uh after I went to college University of Michigan. And then I graduated there and then I went out and taught school a year at Owosso, Michigan after that...

BB: Ok.

CD: ...and then went back to college to finish a masters' degree and from there I went on to seminary in Chicago that that for the ministry.

BB: Got it. And when you were at Michigan what did you major in?

CD: I majored in English. Was on a special thing, I was one of seven students in the big liberal arts thing about five, five-six thousand of them, anyway there were seven of us picked out to be in a specialized class with the professors. There were a handful of professors, like four or five of them, who conducted us [0:11:00] in special things. So, I graduated with special honors in English with just the seven of us did.

BB: Ok.

CD: And then at the meantime I supported myself because I got a job on the University of Michigan not their thing but the commercial station in Ann Arbor. I applied for and got a job as an announcer, so I supported myself by being a regular commercial announcer.

BB: Wow, ok. That's interesting. Um, so when you got your English major and you graduated did you ever think that you'd become a minister? Was that the plan? Or did you have other...

CD: No, no, it wasn't the plan. I don't know how it worked out. I didn't get drafted and did never could understand. I was 1A all the time, but I never applied for any uh anything off I just didn't get called. It was toward the end of that war and so on, but uh...

BB: Right.

CD ...beside the point, [0:12:00] I didn't apply for anything I just simply waited for with the number tentative to call. But when that didn't come, I took off for Chicago and there I got a job on a radio station, a Chicago radio station which supported me pretty well and I wrote some scripts for them. So, it went in that direction. But then, and then when I finished, I went to teach in Owosso, Michigan, old Tom Dewey's hometown. But anyway, there I was on the radio again as an announcer supporting myself that way along with teaching school. So that was it.

BB: Ok. Yeah, that's, that's really interesting. And when you were in college did you enjoy college, or...?

CD: Well, it was awful hard work for me. I usually would have to be hitchhiking every weekend to get a ride to where I was assigned to either lead one of these churches or one of the Sunday schools or something. It was hard work to do.

BB: Yeah.

CD: But anyway, that's what was necessary. So, I was about [0:13:00] oh 60, 70 miles from my family in Flint, Michigan, so I'd hitchhike there then take off one of their cars or something for the assignment that particular weekend.

BB: Wow, ok. Yeah, and...

CD: It was a hardworking family (chuckles).

BB: Yeah, sounds like it. That's pretty intense.

CD: Physically my father was a very hard worker and he was...he should have gone on in legal work but he was tied up with because he took the classes, you know, he was just a boy from the farm country but he did pretty well for himself but anyway he got, by Grandfather Ferguson, he got into the religious business. That Scottish grandfather that influenced us all.

BB: Yeah, sounds like it (chuckles).

CD: Yeah.

BB: That's interesting. Ok, cool. Um, did you have any any more thoughts about politics and stuff when you were in college?

CD: No, but I was [0:14:00] on the debating team, the captain of the debating team.

BB: Ok.

CD: So that was natural for us to speak that way. So, that was uh, you know, then in a different way that was much more political in the debate topics and so on.

BB: Sure, yeah. Ok.

CD: You know, should the should the federal government own and operate the railroads, themes like that you know.

BB: Right, ok. And so, you already mentioned that you were never drafted for World War II but what was it like just living in that time?

CD: Well, it was always, it was always a problem. I said to my family when I waited around and waited around and waited around and I was interviewed and so on. I had been, you know, waiting to be drafted and I was given some of the ... the YMCA asked for about four or five of us to get three months deferment while we finished the, uh, camps. [0:15:00] So, we took that but a lot of us went our different ways and there was nothing to that. But I just didn't get...so all I could do was say well, I'm going to go to Chicago, I have to report within ten days so, for goodness sake call me immediately so I'll know...

BB: Right.

CD: ...So, but nothing happened about so I stayed in Chicago.

BB: Ok, yeah, wow.

CD: And I had a good job there in the radio, that helped me, supported me all the way, so, and that was always in public and I was always on the public scenes.

BB: Right.

CD: In fact I can remember the excitement of the day when I was announced the end of the war, the atomic bomb and that kind of thing.

BB: Oh, ok, sure, yeah, interesting.

CD: So, I was in the politics of it all the time and because I was a news announcer at Chicago.

BB: Yeah, that must have been, that must have been a very interesting thing. So, were you often then giving updates on the war to the public? [0:16:00]

CD: Was I active, no I never had any comments on the war, I mean, it seemed to me it was a, it was, you know, the thing, I didn't have any any adverse or rah rah things I just endured like anybody else. That's just what it was.

BB: Yeah.

CD: The radio gave me terrific exposure on the teletype all the time of what was going on and so on. So, I was very aware of it, but I wasn't involved in even commenting on the war or taking a position...

BB: Right.

CD: ...or being object or anything, just went along, wait till things happen and suddenly it was over.

BB: Ok, but you were, you were reporting on the war a lot in terms of just like telling the public what was happening.

CD: Yeah, I had three of four daily newscasts, and uh, so, uh, you know, I was the...the newscasts were always about the war [0:17:00] and so on.

BB: Right, of course. And uh when did you, when did you start reporting on the war? Was it from the very beginning of it or was it a little bit later?

CD: Oh no. This was, you see, because I was too young in that...

BB: Right. That's what I thought.

CD: Yeah, I just actually mostly the last year of it while I was on the radio and so on. I don't know exact time but that was the ...

BB: Sure.

CD: ... big news of course coming in on the teletype.

BB: Right, ok. Interesting. Um, let's see. Are you married at all or did you ever get married?

CD: I'm married. Yes, I married. (chuckles) Yes, I came... this is beside the point I but was on the radio, a eight o'clock news scene and my former, my roommate from across [unintelligible] said come, come you gotta get down here, you gotta see this girl downstairs.

BB: (laughs)

CD: So, I came down and saw this girl, and she was a very beautiful girl, and so I went back up and finished my news and so on. And the girl was there again near that school which was nearby again apparently, [0:18:00] she was a girl from out of state, Wisconsin, and she was there again. Well I had to get back to Michigan and get my classes pretty soon but I braved after a couple seeing her there to tell her I was going, and could I have a date with her so she said ok. And she was from Wisconsin and I took her to Jose Guy, the big restaurant there, which was pretty big for me, but I had enough money to...

BB: (Laughs)

CD: ...So I took her there, this was like only the third time meeting, but you know she lived with a family there not far from that in their house. So, I took her home and said now, you know, I'm not going to be here tomorrow, I'll be in Michigan. So, from then I conducted after just one date and after seeing her several times by the school I conducted a writing connection for the next three months before I could

get back to Chicago. But of course, that's the that girl that I married. I never had any other girlfriend, not serious and so [0:19:00] I can't imagine how it happened. I look at it over now, I, it's one of those things that happened, hell, she was there, and caught my attention and I just went for her and It took us three years beyond that to get married...

BB: Right.

CD: ...and then incidentally being short with school I was short of money and my sister said that I should apply for a Bride and Groom program on the networks, well they aren't the networks yet, CBS...AB... CB...NBC, I forget, CBS I think, anyway, so ok, so I wrote a letter to um Bride and Groom and then we went ahead with our wedding plans because by that time we had been together three years, just always a distance. I would write her letters. So, lo and behold I got an invitation to come to Hollywood and be married on the Bride and Groom program.

BB: Wow!

CD: And that's what I did.

BB: Wow! (chuckles). So, so was this like uh some type of TV show then or? [0:20:00]

CD: Yeah it was just when...it was a TV show, yeah, Bride and Groom. And they had people in... well one of the big comedians at the time also happened to be married the day next to ours although he wasn't a comedian at the time, what's his name...uh uh, excuse me for the moment, anyway, that was just interesting, they just pick people out enough for five people a week and then they send us on a honeymoon, at Laguna Beach. The interesting thing, this is a curious aside, not to their, interesting thing at Laguna Beach, where we put that big old towel, wasn't too developed then, so the people from Hollywood would come down and go on the beach while we were there. And Victor Mature was there and one day when I was right by him, he's got sitting there with a girl (chuckles) a girl on each side...

BB: Oh my gosh.

CD: ...That's the kind of place it was. That's an aside, I'm sorry.

BB: No, no that's good. That's a really interesting detail. (laughs) That's neat. So what was the name of the actor again? [0:21:01]

CD: Uh Victor Mature. That was his name.

BB: Victor Mature? Ok, interesting. Wow. And so what did you... (chuckles)

CD: (laughing) That was odd...the whole...even being the bridegroom was odd, everything was ... but anyway, it was wonderful for someone who maybe needed the help.

BB: Yeah.

CD: I was making...yeah, anyway.

BB: And what did your parents think about you guys getting married as part of this program?



CD: Oh, I don't think...well I I suppose my father wondered about that...

BB: (laughs)

CD: ... in terms of ... but it didn't matter to him that much personally. He was glad to hear that I had worked something out...

BB: Sure.

CD: And uh uh, my mother and they all, they all fell for my wife. She was and is a beautiful girl. And so, she...being the first one of the seven children to be married why even though we had been going together for three years before we could [0:22:00] do it we're all late sharing. I suppose there are a lot of people were not exactly like our kind of people in terms of their training and upbringing. So, my family was kind of late in getting married.

BB: Oh, ok. Sure. Interesting.

CD: Yeah, so I was the first one.

BB: Um, let's see. Do you have any children?

CD: I have five children. Yes.

BB: Ok.

CD: We have five children.

BB: Right.

CD: One of them, uh, you know, one is the...was the valedictorian of her class type, went on to Wellesley and then went on to Mayo, uh, medical school and the second one became uh, accountant and the third one was a school teacher and has been up until even recently and the fourth one, let's see, uh what was he, oh he was teaching, he was in college teaching and the fifth one uh well let's see, no the fourth one, the fourth one went into the ministry and the fifth one was a college teacher. [0:23:00]

BB: Oh, ok. Interesting.

CD: Yeah.

BB: And what are your children's names?

CD: Well, Rochelle and Camille and uh Charles and uh (under breath) (*Rochelle, Camille, Charles*), Christian and John.

BB: Oh ok.

CD: (chuckling) It's not that hard to remember it's just putting them all together in the right order.

BB: Right, sure, sure. Um, did your family, like your children and wife influence your career at all or...?

CD: Uh, No, I don't, I don't, I don't think so. It's the way, the way things that happened. You know, I had wanted to go on to college teaching. That's what I had prepared for when I went on and got my masters and why I took the graduate degrees beyond that and was going to get a PhD. [0:24:03] And then an event happened, a kind of unusual man had picked me up and met me in Lansing, where I was still going to school in Ann Arbor, but anyway, he had me come and preach in his church. Well It was unheard of you know. I didn't preach in major churches.

BB: Right.

CD: But he had me do that. And then he took me he eventually took me down to Indiana and introduced me to some people where they had had a minister that didn't work out so well so would they like to take a student minister for a while. Well they did and they took for three years and that's how I got through seminary and *why* I went to seminary. I was never even planning to go to seminary. I'd had enough of religion, not I won't say bitterly, but you know, I'd had enough of that with Grandfather and father and brothers and so on. But just the coincidence of thinking he was such a persuasive person, wonderful person. He had me come and take his pulpit, you know, when we met [0:25:00] and that was unheard of for someone that wasn't even a preacher in vena but he had in mind that that's where I was going to go. In one way or another he happened to direct me because I took that student church and got a scholarship to go to seminary and that changed everything.

BB: Sure, ok. Interesting. And so, moving on in your career how did you become more involved in politics?

CD: Well, um, I was the minister of that church in LaPorte, Indiana. Three years had gone by since the other things and uh there were some people in that congregation that were active in politics and they just just pushed it one time and said you guys we're not very represent... well represented here so said would you run in the next one. I said no no I can't do that a minister doesn't run very often what with the...well they pushed hard enough in terms of wanting a candidate [0:26:00] and apparently I had some popularity in that in that small community so, you know, I said well ok, nothing to lose, they agreed. I remember they tried it out in Lansing one time after I'd given a school plays and they liked them so much they wanted me to come to Lansing to be in the teaching profession so I figured well ok they wanted me then to go in to maybe run for an office. No, I didn't do that thing we weren't that way. But these people pushed hard enough so I went and lo and behold I won.

BB: Wow!

CD: Uh, uh, then there was more pressure to continue. The Governor was a uh became a friend of mine. And his..I knew his family also from the town. Uh, and they kind of indicated maybe I should keep on and run for Secretary of State. I said I can't do that, that's not where I belong. This is...what I mean I appreciate the legislature and so on, but uh, I without being (unintelligible) I just simply went on [0:27:00] and went to the next preaching opportunity in Columbus, Ohio and without (unintelligible) of course that finished my work had been done and I ...this was a year or two after I had been off...so I that's the way it went. I didn't have any intentions staying in the ministry.

BB: Right, ok. Interesting. And, uh, what what exactly shaped your political outlook at the time when you first started becoming involved in politics?

CD: (airplane sounds) Well, uh, I was I was uh tended to be quite solidly on the republican side because the democratic side was represented by the south which was uh not very friendly to the blacks in the (unintelligible) and I was very much uh, in fact in Cicero, Indiana, was in the Presbyterians, to my knowledge, was the first time that accepted black people into the congregation cause they had a separate denomination in the Presbyterian church. Well, I didn't go for that so I put a couple families and brought them in as members [0:28:00] and by the coincidence my friend, the Governor, by sheer coincidence happened to be visiting that weekend. He was the first one to come up the aisle and congratulate them. So, that was very meaningful to me to think that just by the action of things we integrated that church and that whole town and even the repub the republican party. But the reason for my being republican was the background and so on but because the democrats in the south was also discriminating against the blacks and so on so that didn't suit me. So during that time after I finished and before I went on I really moved over to say I no longer believe to the republican party because whoever came in was not very friendly and what's his name, Kennedy, was very open more in terms of nondiscrimination. So that changed my mind. I think it was my my disappointment with the southern block [0:29:00] of republican churches, uh republicans at that time tended to be discriminatory. So, with Kennedy come in so I thought well, that's really where I belong. I talked to Governor Rockefeller one time, I had an occasion to be with him and so on, and it was uh, obvious that, you know, that kind of leadership was where I belonged as far as party was concerned. When I went, when I went to Columbus (chuckling) one of the reporters wanted to be my manager and help me run for office there (laughs) but I didn't...

BB: Wow.

CD: ...do that. When I went to Detroit five years later or seven years later, they had a sub headline on the New York (unintelligible) "Move over Governor Romney" you know I thought I was going to run for office there. But I had no intent for that. I had not in the first place. I loved the idea of the legislature and the whole thing but I didn't see [0:30:00] myself as having a career there. It just happened.

BB: Right. Interesting. Ok. And if I understand correctly did you say that you uh, you switched parties later on in your life because of Kennedy?

CD: Well, at that point, yes at that point.

BB: Ok.

CD: When I left there see I had been elected as a republican but when I was over in Ohio by the end of four, five, six years a lot of things had changed...

BB: Right.

CD: ...both with Kennedy and so on. I wasn't totally fascinated with him but I was very much into the race issue.

BB: Um hmm.

CD: I was very much against discrimination against people of color or religion or anything else. And uh, I had been well taught by my family that way. They, then so that was just come natural. I didn't belong in a party that discriminated. So when things switched in the Democrats were now open party and the

Republicans uh were in the right wing uh the southern anti southern party then I moved over to the, it was a very natural thing, [0:31:00] over to the more liberal party.

BB: Ok. Interesting. And um, since you were so interested in helping , you know, progressive rights, was that one of the key issues that you, that you wanted to work on when you were in the Indiana General Assembly?

CD: I don't think there was much opportunity to do that because one thing is the head of the um, the head of the Senate there was led by uh uh uh eminent black man. And he...they were taking care of those things and things were working better. And also my friend the Governor was very much of the different position than would be the, you know, the southern businessman who's black , and so on.

BB: Right.

CD: So, the whole atmosphere there was very open and in the uh legislature itself. But uh I didn't get any of that at all about the anti uh negro thing [0:32:00] because the Senate was led by a black man and so on.

BB: Right. Ok. Interesting.

CD: But it was, it was an interesting coincidence there was people that without my urging I just they had started out cleaning our clothes in the basement of the hotel. They gotta a cleaner with 'em. And pretty soon it came to...I says to them well if you don't have some thing about church you can come to this church it is just down the street a ways... well that started it...they came, then they brought some other people. Well, then I say the coincidence, of just pure coincidence the Governor happened to be there uh Indianapolis... up in LaPorte, he happened to be there on the very Sunday they were welcomed in the church. And I didn't know it then but I think it was the first Presbyterian, *white* Presbyterian church that took in black people. We didn't know that...you know we didn't...

BB: Right.

CD: ...know that. You look at people as people.

BB: Yeah, sure. That's amazing, wow.

CD: Interesting coincidence of things of life.

BB: Yeah, definitely, that's fascinating. Um, so when you first joined the Indiana General Assembly [0:33:00] did you have any type of goals for like legislation you wanted to work on at all?

CD: Uh no, I had friendship in the other representative from that town it was very close and uh we just, you know, sat in the back of the legislature we uh neither one of us was pushy for you know, we gotta get more of this we gotta make money...

BB: Yeah

CD: ...we were there to it and do our duty and so uh that's why at the end of the term, the year, I was willing to take another church in Ohio because my my legislative life was happenstance, it wasn't an

ambition of mine. I liked all of those things but that was just one of the opportunities that was kind of pushed on me and I did it.

BB: Yeah. Ok. Um and at the time did you have any like national political heroes or state heroes or people that you looked up to at all or...?

CD: Well, as I mentioned, I I happened to have an [0:34:00] acquaintance, a brief acquaintance with Governor Rockefeller and I liked that. He was much more open at that time to the whole position of non-discriminate uh public, you know, there there, it was just a natural thing to do because even as I was growing up as a child the church where my father was and founded was not far from the edge of where the black people were close down by the Buick plant, the Buick auto plant. Well. it didn't mean anything to him, ya know, he he was changed by the father-in-law, the Scotsman, they were wide open. So, he had those people come back and forth our church, he exchanged a young people's group and then he had a certain negro evangelist from the Bahamas with there to be a preacher In our church. So I was brought up that whole thing that was totally different from people who had those kind of chips [0:35:00] on their shoulder you know. It was a natural thing – we lived with them. I remember – it was a totally other thing, an Indi..., a big tall Indian from the west was there and he was about 6 foot 7 (chuckles) there was no place to put him so he had to be in the same bed with me...

BB: Wow.

CD: ...where would he go? Nobody would take people like that, you know, or someone with deep background...

BB: Yeah.

CD: ...so that was my whole upbringing and learning. So, I didn't have any chips on my shoulder because Indiana seemed to be well moving in that direction at that time, at least northern Indiana.

BB: Yeah, ok, yeah. That's that's cool, ok. Um, so when you were running for the Indiana General Assembly did you have any, sort of like, campaign, like formal campaign at all or...?

CD: Well, uh no I just had friends, I remember one chap, he was a man with a shirt shop, he made up a big sign and put on the top of his car, you know, that stretched from one end of his car to the other just blaze [0:36:00] my name around and he (chuckles) I didn't have anything... to uh... you kno..., I didn't have any organized group or program.

BB: Right.

CD: Oh, I did this, I, I when I was nominated and so on I went in the next town, the neighboring town, and went from door to door because uh I just was introducing myself. I figured they weren't our town they were a little rural town about 250..., ten mile or fifteen miles away so that's the only kind of action thing that I did that way. I just figured they deserved to have, to know who was running and so on.

BB: Right, sure, ok. Um and did you have, do you remember who your opponent was during the election?

CD: Yes, uh uh, one was the... do you know the people that do the shoes? What's the guys' name that has the favorite shoes you're suppose to buy, the orthopedic shoes, Scholls. [0:37:00]

BB: Oh, ok.

CD: Yeah, uh uh one of, uh one uh one of that family was running for it, was my opponent.

BB: Interesting

CD: I gotta end,,,Yeah so, yeah, interesting, I'm sure it was kind of unusual it wasn't my choosing. I just I went simply at the urging of the people who knew me. But being the minister of the church where I was in all that town I'm sure that gave me a certain kind of exposure that other people wouldn't have had.

BB: Right. Yeah, definitely, yeah. How did it feel when you were first elected?

CD: Well, I was, I was uh, I was encouraged because the people were so encouraged that worked with me and I was that...I don't know how it worked Michigan City and Ligonier, Indiana were the, were the, you know, the centers of it and over towards Chicago. Uh, I, uh I didn't uh, it was interesting [0:38:00] and I don't, so I the other fellow elected he and I both took our seats in the back of the legislature, the very back (chuckles). He was about 6 foot 6. (chuckling).

BB: Oh my gosh.

CD: I guess...we weren't very pushy that way in terms of trying to get on this committee or that committee.

BB: Right, ok, interesting. (chuckles). So, moving to your time in the General Assembly, what were you thinking as you first walked into the State House for your first day as an elected official?

CD: Uh, well, it was it was interesting to me uh uh and I began to clean it with him. Birch Bayh was there, and he was, of course, the democratic side. But they used to fool with me after a couple weeks they grabbed me going by the caucuses and they pulled me into the democratic caucus they say here you belong here you belong here (laughs).

BB: (laughs)

CD: Well, it wasn't that I didn't belong in the republican [0:39:00] except they realized and his wife for instance had me call when she was trying to get the state to eliminate capital punishment. And so, they worked like that. But it was the interesting thing a very very good relationship with the democrats and the republicans there. I think I was somewhat amused because I didn't have a big agenda.

BB: Right, ok. Yeah, yeah, it sounds like that you were not quite as political as perhaps some of the other legislators might have been who were...uh yeah.

CD: Who was making their life of it. And I think whatever I say anything these people realized, of both parties, realized I was not there on a lark but I was there not as a politician but I was going to be a minister.

BB: Yeah, sure. Ok, and what were your expectations for the legislative process? [0:40:00]

CD: Well, I think they did pretty well. They gave me some special honors and cents because I was asking for some additional money for the settle health situation up in the northern Indiana. Things like that. Also, I was a little against, as I may have mentioned, using for instance, the various churches, both Protestant, Catholic, sometimes would develop big pieces of territory and churches didn't need that much. But they would use that and then eventually develop not parking lot but it'd turn into a housing thing and so and so. Well, I was against that. You know, you can't mix up religion with kind of getting your head in the finance of it. So, I really was interested in not a very heavy way, but a steady way of saying it's not right. [0:41:00] We can't have this territory all excused from taxation and later turned into a profit thing. Those are little things, but you know, I didn't want to get with any big things. I figured that was my line. I didn't want the churches to take advantage of their positions as tax exempt.

BB: Right, ok, sure. That's really interesting, yeah, especially given your background, you know, being a minister and all. So, wow. Ok.

CD: Um hmm.

BB: Let's see. How did you learn the ins and outs of state politics?

CD: You mean there at...when I was there in Indianapolis?

BB: Yeah, yes. How'd you learn about the process?

CD: I just think...all across the lines. I say Birch Bayh was a very friendly in telling what they were doing and not to trying to influence in any way just realize we were all working together and that's he would, uh, they would, two or three of them would half drag me into their caucus just for fun, you know. Which is a way of saying it was, it was less doctrinaire on either party [0:42:00] at that point. I don't know why it was, but it certainly was for me and I think it was more a friendship than a fierce competition.

BB: Ok. Interesting. And did you have any political mentors in the Indiana General Assembly would you say?

CD: Any political try to come up and talk to me, influence me? I, I don't think so. I think we just kind of were wide open. I, I, in fact it's hard for me to remember at this stage, you know, some of the most pressing issues between the parties. I don't think they were very fierce. Uh, for instance, the Governor was a republican and yet when he ran for the senate, the poor guy, he was very well liked in many ways, but it was a different turn. The democrats took it that time. And Birch Bayh came in and he was very wide open. [0:43:00] Well that's about as much... you know it's a very short session...

BB: Right.

CD: ...and, uh I still had to do my preaching on weekends. I'd just dash off after the thing was over and go up and take my sermon and get back on Monday morning.

BB: Sure, ok. How, how did you know the needs and wants of your constituents?

CD: Well, by first of all the large congregation, they there and then the people who were not congregation who would ask me after I got elected or even before I did. One of the fellas there, a prominent man in the Jewish community he actually had offices in judge and so on ... well anyway he was very straightforward and open and wondered what my attitudes were and it only took a few moments to realize, you know, this was this was right down his [0:44:00] line too. Particularly in finance and other things. He wanted to know if I had, you know, uh soft bar...enthusiasm, gonna change this and that. No, it wasn't that. I wasn't, I was not trying to be somebody. I was just trying to be with it and that made it very helpful for me both with the democratic party and the republican party. I didn't have, I didn't have any real combat.

BB: Right, ok. Uh, do you remember what the first bill you sponsored was?

CD: Oh my. Oh my. I've got those books out in Wyoming. Uhhhhh. That, I uh, I don't, I don't remember. I don't remember. I may have sponsored one that I refer to in terms of making sure the religious communities do not take advantage of the tax things.

BB: Right. Ok. [0:45:00]

CD: But I don't know, that wasn't a fighting matter, just a matter of observing. I don't remember. One thing that was not part of in the legislature was Birch Bayh's wife who was very much against capital punishment. Then she dragged me in there and she'd hold rallies in the evenings for and so on. Well, yeah, I couldn't, I couldn't be wildly "oh, we gotta get this thing done" but on the other hand I couldn't be indifferent to the fact that there's a problem there.

BB: Right.

CD: I didn't feel like sponsoring any of legislation on that. I didn't think it was possible to win at that point. I didn't even consider it.

BB: Yeah, ok, sure. Um, and so, how would you say the regular interaction between the other members of the General Assembly was like?

CD: I, I think pretty good. As I say, you know, they did invite me into their rally and have a have a drink with them or something. [0:46:00] There was not anything uptight about the thing.

BB: Sure.

CD: It may be that just they realized I myself wasn't a doctor there, uh politician and maybe that made it much easier for me that I wasn't aiming for anything. I mean, nobody said anything but that I think they took for granted this wasn't a lark. This wasn't I was down there to play games. On the other hand, this wasn't a vocation.

BB: Right, yeah. That makes sense. Ok. Um did you see any differences between the House and the Senate or?

CD: Well, there were differences. The Senate was led I think by a rather tall impressive black man and uh so but it wasn't a fierce difference but that was I think most of the leaders of the Democrat Party and the leaders of the Republican Party had to work those things on those levels that didn't really directly



affect us [0:47:00] at that point. They had things to work out there's no sure, but I didn't see any big combat coming down the line.

BB: Right, ok, sure. Um, what was the process like for generating a bill?

CD: For doing what you say? For?

BB: For creating a bill?

CD: Being a bill. Well I just chalk I can't even remember the bills that I would sign on to but I remember talking to the chairs of these... we kept a rather unconscious friendly relationship so it wasn't you know, they whatever what little I had to offer the way of bills they just simply put it in the legislative group there that handled those and they wrote it up and there's no problem with that.

BB: Uh ok. And did you ever have to uh work hard to get support for any bills or were they pretty, pretty straight forward?

CD: Uh pretty straight forward. [0:48:00] I never got, you know, arm twisted or anything else. I think, uh, there was some differences strong between the Senate and the House. But they weren't, they weren't that fierce. I don't think there were issues that were difficult at that time. They were sort of housekeeping bills most of them.

BB: Right, ok, sure. Um and when people were voting on bills did you have any sense of how people would vote before they voted?

CD: Aaahhh. I don't think... it was interesting the other one with the county where I was... we chose to sit in the back of the Assembly. Part of that was not only modesty but we reali...they realized, we realized that we weren't the professionals who really knew what they were doing there before they heard the case. In other words, I didn't come in with an agenda neither did my roommate there come in with an agenda. And we sat and listened and we [0:49:00] were trying to be obviously out of it but we didn't want to be pushy with the thing.

BB: Right.

CD: So, uh we just listened carefully and were carefully. I was surprised, I don't much, I don't remember any big issue we fought over.

BB: Oh, ok. Wow. Uh, what role did party leadership play during your time there?

CD: Well, with our with our rallies, uh you know, you're talking about the rallies, why we would, and mostly in committee meetings most of us...we didn't have any big rallies... let me get this together now, but the committees handled that pretty much...

BB: Right.

CD: ...and so if I had a question I'd drop into a committee or go someplace else. That's the way it was. I don't remember that as being an issue particularly. All was welcomed.

BB: Ok. Sure. And you already mentioned before that the relationship between Democrats or Republicans was pretty good [0:50:00] um so I guess everyone was pretty comfortable working together on various bills and stuff?

CD: Yeah, that would be about the size of it yeah.

BB: Ok.

CD: I didn't have any hand, nose to nose, fist to fist things. It wasn't that kind of a legislature as far as I was concerned.

BB: Yeah.

CD: It was lots more compatibility than I would have expected. Except that I didn't know enough not to expect it. It worked very well. I don't remember any head to head conflicts.

BB: Ok. Great, yeah. Um, let's see a different type of question. Now what would you say the public doesn't know about how the Indiana General Assembly works or State Assemblies in general?

CD: Um, from my standpoint I thought I wasn't surprised but I was very often [0:51:00] accosted by, not accosted's the word, contacted by people in my county, my two counties to say about especially if something had to do with the farm business, especially the farm people did that...

BB: Um hmm.

CD: ...they were very important to know. I was not as well acquainted with, so they were more informing me than anything else, so I'd get up to date on what the issues were as far as the farm community. That wasn't a major thing, but it was a regular thing. People constantly did check in, sent me a letter or called or come down there and some of them were members of our own church. They, of course, stepped aside completely from the church business and they were dealing simply with politics. But I found it was a very pleasant thing. I didn't find it very combative. For some reason, I don't know why, I was not trying to play the lamb don't tread on me kind of thing...

BB: Right.

CD: ...it just seemed to work out. [0:52:00] It was much more acro...as I say, you know, they half the time they say you belong over here when I would go to caucus...

BB: (laughs) yeah.

CD: or something. So, you know, that's kind of the way it was.

BB: Right.

CD: Of course, some of us every time the session was over with, we'd go retire some of them to their homes. I went to the motel where I stayed and so on.

BB: Ok, sure. And did your legislative service have any impact at all on your family life or?

CD: Well I brought two of my children down after we had a post session, you know, to have them see what the legislature was like and so on and they were interested but I didn't involve them and I didn't have many people asking for special privileges, attention from my county or so on. [0:53:00] The church people didn't do anything they knew better than that. You know, they knew me, and they knew that. We were not on church business. We were, and uh, we were tuning in. But it wasn't unholy business it just wasn't holy business, you know.

BB: Right, right. Um.

CD: Yeah, so the kids got their exposure, the first, the oldest girl and the oldest boy. They got that and so on.

BB: Sure.

CD: But I don't think they ever had any interest in going into politics. It was just baffling to them, I think. You know, they were both youngsters.

BB: Yeah (chuckles). What would you say was the most controversial legislative issue during your service in the General Assembly?

CD: Oh boy. Well, it'd be...I'm so removed from it so it's just hard for me to think in those terms now.

BB: Sure, sure.

CD: I, I'm sorry, [0:54:00] I'm probably am too far gone, you know, being 95 doesn't leave you with an awful lot to draw it from. (chuckles).

BB: (chuckles) Fair enough.

CD: It's hard. I've got the books of my labor at the ranch where I am out in Wyoming but and I do review them once in a while I'm really afraid that I have dropped out of it in terms of what we were working on. It's just too far removed and uh, as my boys would say you probably aren't qualified to talk about anything anyway you old man. So...

BB: (laughs)

CD: ...so they had great fun of it so on. But no, my children are all very conscious of the political systems and so on. None of them tried to run. But they all was...were aware that we were on the edge of that and it wasn't just some sort of a foreign game. We were all part of it. Um yeah.

BB: Right. Ok.

CD: Well I probably have taken your time more than I deserve. [0:55:00] But I wish I were fresher but I'm just so long ... I would have stayed in out of the two states and now the third one. Not only Indiana but Ohio and then Michigan and now [hesitant stutter] here I am in the Midwest, and actually I'm out, supposed to be, out at the ranch in Wyoming. I went now except for my wife's illness...

BB: Right.

CD: ...I had here a decent thing. But Minnesota is a wonderful state. But it's just one that I liked. But I'm out in Wyoming is where I'm supposed to be a resident because they have me here because of her.

BB: Right.

CD: I'd have to have a decent thing. This virus thing is (laughs) we're lucky we got in one of those homes where they have no problem with virus. They were way ahead of it. And one of the biggest things here in Minnesota is homes for the elderly is been one of the chief sources of miravirus you know. [0:56:00]

BB: Yeah, yeah.

CD: Yeah, it's funny. So, I would give you more and would be more interesting of it if I'd kept close to it but ah...

BB: Oh, well that's ok. I mean it's, you know, this is actually not the first interview I'm doing with someone from actually the same year you served in. So, I understand that it could be hard to remember some things.

CD: Yeah, I should have more things that would say oh this was contentious or we worried about that or we fought about ... and it wasn't just like kindergarten where we were playing with toys, it was serious...

BB: Right.

CD: ...and we, yeah. But it was a long time ago now.

BB: Yeah. Well...

CD: And uh...

BB: ...well, that's ok. I'm, if you're still free though, I have a few more questions I would like to ask.

CD: Ok, alright.

BB: Let's see... uh, what, uh, what piece of legislation do you remember, if at all, sort of took the most time to work on?

CD: Oh boy. Well, (pause) I'm too far gone in [0:57:00] terms of memories. I'm not much help. I should be better if I'd stayed in Indiana and kept up with but moving from state to state to state has made me drop aside with those things, you know.

BB: Right.

CD: I don't really have a good answer to that. I should be more meaningful but as I say, at my age, uh, and I didn't keep it up. As I moved from Indiana to Ohio to Michigan to Minnesota those things get dropped by the wayside.

BB: Um hmm. Sure. No...

CD: I'm sorry about that.

BB: ... that's totally fine. This happens, you know, off and on because we interview so many people. So, it's totally normal it's ok.

CD: I would have had much much sharper things, you know, ten years ago or something but uh ...

BB: Right.

CD: ...and you know, as I say, I don't want to rest on it but 95 a lot of drops to the wayside. (chuckles)

BB: Sure, sure, yeah I understand. Um, do you ...

CD: I just...especially I've got three years or so a real problem with my wife [0:58:00] and has occupied almost all my time and energy to keep things going and so on. So, (chuckling) I should be more helpful for you. I was not unintelligent. I was not stupid. But I was not anxious and I was not brilliantly seeking attention. I didn't need attention. I got attention in the pulpit every Sunday. I didn't need any more.

BB: Yeah (chuckling), sure.

CD: And, uh, so. Also, in the community. La Porte was a small community and I was quite well known there. I remember, one of the Jewish participants, who was himself a lawyer and was very much interested in all these things, he gave me a real run through when I was elec... and even before I was elected and afterwards to kind of test me out and see where I was on those things. Well specifically I don't remember what his particular interests were but they were decent, uh, he was very supportive. He was just interested, what kind of a, what kind of a character [0:59:00] we've got going here this legislature. What's he doing there?

BB: Right.

CD: So, that was... the Jewish community was very understanding. They understood who I was, that's what they did. I didn't have particular bills that had anything to do with them but they wanted, and I think, you know, they asked me questions in detail and I'd have meet with them but when they saw, that well, you know, this isn't the agenda... I would think if I saw a minister coming in there, I'd have to look carefully at what his agenda was.

BB: Sure.

CD: It would bother me, you know, why he would be there. And uh, my object was to be not a minister but a citizen and that's just about the heart of it.

BB: Sure, ok. Yeah that's that's fair. Uh, did you, were there any moments in the legislature that made you proud at all or...?

CD: Well, uh, I think we were proud and cheered [1:00:00]our leadership in the house which at that time was Republican. But I thought, I think we...I, well felt...they handled things fair and then as most of us

began to work a little bit more with Birch Bayh, he was coming along we didn't realize at the time what he was going to be prominent in that state. But I think it was a good relationship there. I never have any, you know, call outs of so.... I should offer more but I ... maybe I was left out of some of the conflicts I don't know ... I had to go up every weekend to do my preaching's and so on ...

BB: Right.

CD: ... at my church but I don't remember much of that. I didn't see any enmity between them. We talked together. I guess, it is not just a nice big kindergarten where everybody is playing with the blocks...

BB: (chuckles)

CD: ...on the other hand I don't have much specific things to mention to you on it.

BB: That's ok. I actually ... so a couple of other questions here. I was able to dig up some [1:01:00] information about you from the old newspapers at the time. And, uh, that might give a little bit more insight that might help you remember...

CD: That might be better, yeah, yeah.

BB: Uh, let's see...

CD: I got somebody calling like mad but that's alright. Go ahead.

BB: (laughs) Before I go into that question though I have see one more...what in your opinion is the most important work of the Indiana General Assembly?

CD: What's, what's the most important work they did?

BB: Yeah. What's their purpose, for example?

CD: uh, uh (pause) oh boy. I'd have to get my books out and read them again, you know, it's been so long.

BB: Oh, ah. No problem. It's, it's ah a mostly it's a pretty open-ended question in terms of what we're looking for is just like...you know, ah, like what's the...[1:02:00] why should people care about the Indiana General Assembly...like what does it do you know?

CD: If I was closer to my library as it is, I could quickly give you a more intelligent answer to this. I've got within reach of it...the books are on the shelf out there in Wyoming. Ah, I'm sorry it's not much help. I'm not being, as what you say, as sharp as I used to be and as I would be but I'm just not giving a fair shot to you. Not because I'm holding anything back. It's just it's been a long time. I think you have to excuse me for saying well it's been a lot of other states since then and a lot of people and a lot of places. It's just hard. And, and I guess I have on my hand right now a question of ok what to do with my wife and family so...

BB: Sure...

CD: no problem...well I have a good thing or a bad thing of being of a family of seven [1:03:00] and you know, only one other, a sister and I, none of my brothers and I'm the only one left (chuckles). I don't laugh at that. It makes...gives it an excuse why I'm a little bit behind and not very sharp on things because after all, I'm not even supposed to be here.

BB: Yeah well, I totally understand and don't worry. No need to apologize at all. I mean I'm just glad you're willing to do this because I know when you look back it's, you know, such a long time ago in your life but it's something that, you know, that's interesting for historians and people that are interested in the history of the General Assembly even if you just remember little things. Those things can help add up to a story, and it's useful.

CD: Yeah.

BB: So, I know it might seem like, like you know sometimes, throughout this conversation it's hard to remember something and you can't really contribute much but [1:04:00] you've already contributed a fair amount believe it or not so...(chuckles).

CD: Yeah. Well I hope it's been some, some use to you. I know you've got a hard job there. It's a hard, hard job you're doing. And uh, very very perceptive in what you're asking. I just wish I were a little sharper and a little younger and have more memory but ah too many waters gone over the dam and so. And I think I'd better try to call it off because I know they're calling to see if I'm, not the hospital but the health care what's going on now, and so on, I have to watch over her. So I think unless you've got something pressing I think I'd better cut off now because I hear them bring the phone in (unintelligible).

BB: Yes, yes. That's totally fine. Well, I'd just like to say thank you so much for doing this and you know, I, I do have other questions that I'd be happy to ask you in the future if you wanted to talk again. [1:05:00]

CD: Yes, I'd be willing to do that. Yes, why don't you get some of the questions more pertinent to what you want. And I'll be here, and usually am callable. That that would be good.

BB: Ok.

CD: I wish I could say I could go retrieve the books, but I can't get out to Wyoming now with my wife is so ill. So, but I'll be glad. I congratulate you on the earnest with which you're doing that. You know, I think it's so remarkable to come up with such a program. I'll have to buy the book somewhere when you get through huh?

BB: Yeah, well yeah. We're uh, we'd appreciate the support for, you know, helping the project and taking part in it and I'll be happy to send you like a copy of the interview or something at some point. We're going to have a website and everything else for it. So, um...

CD: Uh huh, well ok. I, I, I have, do I have your phone number here?

BB: Um, I...

CD: Yes, I have it here. If I have the occasion, I could ask my son to maybe look over the thing. If I have anything special [1:06:00] that comes across me in the next week or so I'll keep this number and maybe give you a call back.

BB: Sure, ok, and within the next week or so also if you're willing, I'll give you another call and ask the last few questions I might have and...

CD: Yes, that'd be fine.

BB: Ok.

CD: Yeah, I, I just, I just appreciate the work I had to do. Ok. I'll look forward to that then. I'll leave the phone number here so that I've got it open. I'll wait until I get a call if it comes up huh.

BB: Alright. Ok, sounds great, I look forward to talking to you in the future.

CD: Ok, thanks very much for your patience.

BB: Alright. Thank you. Bye bye. [1:06:40]

## **ILOHI Interview 2 with Calvin Didier**

Thursday, June 5, 2020

Interview by Ben Baumann

Transcribed by Mary Kelley

MP3 file Sony

Calvin Didier=CD

Ben Baumann=BB

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BB: So, uh, just before we start I'll just state for the record again that today is June 5, 2020, and I'm on the phone with Calvin Didier who is in Minnesota, I believe, and I am in Indianapolis, Indiana. So coming back to where we left off last time, I did have some questions over some things that you seemed to be involved with during your time in the Indiana General Assembly that I read in some old newspapers and stuff in the archives. Let's see, for example it appeared that, and maybe we went over this a little bit last time, but that you were not a resident of Indiana at the time you were serving in the Indiana General Assembly. Is that correct?

CD: I wasn't a what? I wasn't a graduate..?

BB: A resident, a resident.

CD: A resident. Oh yes I was a resident. [0:01:00] A full resident.

BB: Ok.

CD: Both before and after.



BB: Ok. As in the newspaper it appeared that there was some uh talk about how you were living in like Ohio or something at the time.

CD: Well that was, that was a year after the legislature was served.

BB: Ok.

CD: Actually, at the end of another year then as typical in the ministry I was invited to Ohio but that was a whole year afterwards.

BB: Right, got it, ok. Um, let's see, (pause) now during your time and I, again, you might have talked about this as well, early a little bit, but it appears that the death penalty was something that was being talked about a fair amount. Did you have any particularly strong opinions about the death penalty as a minister or just as member of...?

CD: No I didn't. It was a meeting of Birch Bayh's wife was not serving in the service but Birch Bayh was the head of his party, the Democratic party anyway, [0:02:00] she was very strong and had a after hours gathering of people who, you know, were interested. It was not my opinion and not expressed and neither for nor against. I was obvious but I wasn't involved in that.

BB: Right, ok. Yeah.

CD: She conducted hearings in the house after, at night, after hours for people who were interested and I listened and attended but did not intend it because that was just too much for me to deal with.

BB: Sure, no, that makes sense, ok. This is more of an open ended question but what was it like serving during the civil rights era? Were there any particular tensions at all in the General Assembly or?

CD: During which event, you say? [0:03:00]

BB: The civil rights era just...

CD: Oh, Civil Rights. Well the Senate was um, the head of the Senate at that time was a black man so that wasn't really much of a big problem. I think, um, I think well what the problem was the tendency at that moment, about to change soon, that the Democratic Party was kind of heavily regulated by the southern states, which were definitely difficult in terms of the relig... uh negro and black freedom and so on.

BB: Right.

CD: So, the attitude was about to change shortly after Kennedy was elected. Republicans were more open to mixed racial things. The democrats led by the southern states at that point were pretty much difficult for registration of blacks voting [0:04:00] and so on.

BB: Yeah.

CD: That was just a common thing and then it changed pretty quickly after the Kennedy election which was at the end and I wasn't going to be in office anymore, so it didn't come one way or the other.

BB: Sure, ok. Um, and I guess during your time the Civil Rights Commission was created in Indiana. Do you remember anything about that?

CD: No, I don't remember particularly, no.

BB: Ok.

CD: I would have been interested on the side of that. But I can't remember specifically if there were any occasions for it. I don't remember any movement in other words. I was just obvious in my position that I'd be on that because to my knowledge while I was the pastor of that church, this would be during the time or after that election I received some black members from Michigan City into House of Hope Presbyterian Church in LaPorte... [0:05:00]

BB: Right.

CD... and to my knowledge those were the first black people in that branch of the Presbyterian Church in the State. And as I said I think earlier by sheer coincidence Governor Hanley was there in service that day to welcome these new black members. And we didn't make a big issue out of that. It was a private issue. It had nothing to do with the election of it. Of course, this was after I was gonna leave office and move to another state anyway.

BB: Right, ok, sure. That makes sense. Um, now a few different questions. So overall, I guess, when you look back at your year that you spent in the General Assembly in Indiana um what do you think about your time that you were able to serve in the state General Assembly? How do you reflect back on that?

CD: What was the second question? Did I reflect back you say? [0:06:00]

BB: Yeah.

CD: Well you see the Assembly under my term was so many days and then I think the end of May and that was the end. And didn't meet again for another year. Well by the time the other year had come I was already had moved to another state.

BB: Right.

CD: It didn't affect us one way or another on that. There was no general meeting of the parties between elections.

BB: Sure, ok. Do you have...so what would you say...how would you summarize your time as a legislator? Um, like did you enjoy your time there or?

CD: Yes, it was very interesting and made some good personal friendships on both sides and I mentioned to you earlier my relationship with sides was not so much at parties because they used to tease me and the other party try to drag me into their conventions...

BB: (laughs)

CD: ...because uh that was the fun of it you know.

BB: Right.

CD: Because they recognized [0:07:00] that was uh you know, in- between parties as far as the atti...raised and various other things and so...

BB: Yeah.

CD: ...just for the fun of it.

BB: Yeah, ok.

CD: [unintelligible] relationships all along.

BB: It must have been pretty interesting being someone that could kind of blend in I guess with different parties at the same time um?

CD: Well, um yeah. Well it was a good relationship, cause never had any quarrel on that basis, never an issue. I didn't, I didn't somehow there weren't any issues that came up or I certainly wasn't a part of any. And so that was a kind of a, you know, good friends' idea that they used to kinda kid me as they went along. They knew in a sense where my position was in regards to race and other kinds of that thing. So...

BB: Sure.

CD: ...that was the fun of it I guess. They made a good relationship – both sides.

BB: Yeah, ok. That's great. Do you have a favorite story or something from your time as a [0:08:00] legislator?

CD: (long pause) Hmm. Well, I don't remember a particular thing. I think most of the issues of the legislature were routine in the financials and so on. But I don't remember any particular thing that came up just the fun of the association.

BB: Yeah.

CD: There wasn't any kind of hostility between the two the parties at that time.

BB: Ok. What about were there any lessons that you learned?

CD: Any lessons? Hmm. Oh, let's see. What I'd say. Umm, I don't particularly...I know people... I remember [0:09:00] one... remember who was the court, one of the court system in Indiana who was a jewish a member of the jewish ... he when I was running for office he interviewed me to know what my attitudes were. Then he was quite satisfactory. Because he was on the...he was a Republican also I think at that time, that's beside the point who he was. I remember he did interview me when I was running.

BB: Right.

CD: Then, you know, in a sense whether it matches a situation (metallic crash sound) he gave individual personal support. Also, my various member of my congregation helped in taking signs on their cars and other campaign materials in a modest way to do that. So, there was generally good a good understanding that this is, I don't know, this is not a racial thing, not a critical thing to represent the party and that was a part of it. At that time the [0:10:00] [unintelligible] were much more in favor of openness as far as the racial business is concerned.

BB: Sure, ok. Yeah, that makes sense.

CD: I mean the southern part of the Democrat party was definitely anti-black in that.

BB: Right, yeah, yes of course. Um, do you have any regrets as a legislator?

CD: I can't think of any. It was a good time and there was, there were no issues that were outstanding. I didn't have any conflict with the agenda at that time. I had my own input as I said in regards of some aspects of taxation but that was complicated in terms of I didn't want...I didn't...I guess I mentioned earlier it's probably too complex...I didn't want churches, for instance, [0:11:00] to have business...of having big properties which are supposedly under a tax rate thing and turning them around eventually and making housing areas of that. But that's too complex to explain...

BB: Right.

CD: ...it's a matter of, you know, I didn't want advantage taken of that. That would be really a material...it never come up as an issue at all just as a personal thing. I don't think that's enough to describe cause it's it was be only just a subtle understanding that we are not to exploit the thing. It's a certain taxation.

BB: Sure, ok. Um, what advice would you give to future state legislators in Indiana based on your experiences?

CD: Uh (pause) well I didn't have anything to say about the ministerial end of it...to recommend or not recommend [0:12:00] I just ignored the fact that I was a minister. I just was another citizen.

BB: Right.

CD: I had this urge by locals to do that and there were and so there wasn't any big issue either. It's just a matter of, I don't know, figure I guess to turn around I don't know what it was and if in part of the business before that just member serves.

BB: Um hmm.

CD: Um, I don't know what to say in regard to your question. Uh, it was a good experience. Uh, it's another thing, this is probably not mentionable there but I went to Ohio and was installed there, is our system, I went to another church there. Uh then, of course, I had no further connection with Indiana at that point.

BB: Right.

CD: But they then wanted me immediately to be some people wanted me to be a chaplain of the House in Ohio. [0:13:01]

BB: Oh, ok.

CD: Well, um, that seemed alright at first, you know, cause they seemed to have that and as time went on this was, you know, a year or two after I was out of Indiana. So then one of the members who was Jewish said, well you know, when you have your prayers to open the session in the name of Christ our Lord and so on and said you know for the rest of us who are not in that denomination, suddenly it just opened my whole eyes about the whole thing. So I quit being chaplain and from then on shortly after that in a totally different situation, I was part of an organization of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State...

BB: Yeah.

CD: ...it was more my basic position. And I didn't realize it so much until I got to Ohio and they asked me to be a chaplain and I thought oh this is out of order.

BB: Um hmm.

CD: You know, you don't want to be saying so on so on and so on through Jesus Christ our Lord and so one of the members called to my attention well from that point on I shifted my whole my whole attitude of life. We never had that happen in Indiana. [0:14:00]

BB: Yeah.

CD: And suddenly it occurred to me when they asked me to be a chaplain I just...there's something wrong about this. I don't like this so...

BB: That's interesting.

CD: ...shortly after that, as I say, I became a member and eventually an officer of the Americans United for Separation of Church and State. But that has nothing to do much with Indiana directly. I don't mean to interject...

BB: No, but that is an interesting detail though and I ...

CD: Excuse me...

BB: ...it kind of shows a little bit, I guess, about your mentality...

CD: ...I can't quite hear that. Say that again closer.

BB: Yeah, I was just going to say that uh that I know it doesn't necessarily have to do with your time in Indiana but I think that's an interesting detail that kind of reflects on your mentality about things, and how you, you know, kind of analyze situations.

CD: Yes. That's true. It really is. That reflected my whole attitude. Maybe I wasn't totally aware of that coming all of this it had nothing to do with Indiana but after afterwards in Ohio when they asked me...the whole thing came up and I changed [0:15:00] the whole relationship.

BB: Yeah. Was it, is it common for ministers to be involved in such organizations?

CD: Excuse me, what was that again? What did you ask?

BB: How common was it for a minister to be involved in an organization that's in support of the separation of church and state?

CD: Well, that became a very large part, interestingly enough, even a big section of the Southern Baptist church (unintelligible), their leader, for a few years, were the principals in that organization.

BB: That's interesting.

CD: And um, yeah, so you see underneath there was a...with certain churches, certain denominations would not be in favor of religious organizations, as religious organizations to be connected with our legislature, our laws. And so they organized that nationally. [0:16:00] And the interesting thing was the largest support of it in those years was the people the Southern Baptists in Texas.

BB: Wow, ok.

CD: They helped form that and were the leaders of it. And somehow tension got to me when I was in Ohio and I said wait a minute this is this is this is where I would stand on that. So, I became, eventually became a few years later, I became president of that organization.

BB: WOW! Ok. That's, that's fascinating. Now that, that is really interesting. I think most people just hearing, you know, that idea they would think that churches would, you know, perhaps stay out of that or something. So that's, that's, that's really great that uh...

CD: No (stuttering) I was a member there and then eventually became the national head of it for some years later for several years.

BB: Wow.

CD: It was very important for me to [0:17:00] emphasize...it wasn't directly related with my experience in Indiana because...

BB: Yeah.

CD: ...I was no way representing any kind of church thing. I just wasn't even even giving prayers to the Legislature but when they asked me in Ohio, it sent me wondering what's what's going here, there was too much church in this business.

BB: Yeah. Yeah.

CD: Too much religion. So that's...I gradually...I don't think that the situation in Indiana helped me except to the extent that I was so obviously unattached with any religious organization as far as the Indiana Legislature was concerned.

BB: Yeah, sure.

CD: It had nothing to do with my religious denomination as such.

BB: Right, ok. Um, let's see. When was the last time you were in Indiana?

CD: (sigh) You mean, you mean to live there or just to visit?

BB: Just to visit.

CD: Oh, well. Uh, to visit. Let's see. I had some friends there [0:18:00] and relatives there in Indiana. That would be back, oh I don't know...it's been (pause) it's been quite, quite a few years now because of the size of my family and so on...

BB: Sure.

CD: ...out there in Minnesota. Um, other than going through Indiana on my way to some place I don't think I haven't been there for maybe, you know, thirty years.

BB: Yeah.

CD: I just haven't had occasion except to go through.

BB: Sure. Yeah, I, I just wondering cause to see since you were there obviously in the '60's if your perception of Indiana in terms of, you know, has the had the state changed much since you lived there and served in the Legislature but?

CD: Uh, I, I think, uh, I think there was a difference [0:19:00] that I wasn't involved in, but it was obvious though...Indiana at the time I was there and elected was republican and I was with a republican governor and so on. And that shifted right shortly after that.

BB: Ok.

CD: Nothing to do with me that. The shifted parties... I did...Kennedy was a part of that and whoever else did and then the whole southern thing changed about. So, um, you know, there was a (garbled) shift, Indiana which had been strongly Republican became, for a while, Democrat. I don't know how serious that was. I was gone there. But certainly changed some attitudes when that shift came. And a lot of part of it was the business of the racial thing.

BB: Right.

CD: And Indiana wasn't always perfectly clear on that. In southern Indiana was, you know, some pretty strong racial attitudes.

BB: Yeah.

CD: I did too. So, well, [0:20:00] but it didn't affect much. I didn't have much occasion to visit Indiana after that. Cause I was up in Ohio and then I went up to Michigan, in Detroit, and then from there came over here to Minnesota.

BB: Sure, ok.

CD: I didn't have much occasion to follow through on those things being busy from shifting from one church to another which is typical of the church memb, uh denomination how it shifts. A congregation calls you and you go.

BB: Right.

CD: If you're interested in that. So, I went from there to Ohio, from Ohio to Michigan and Michigan to Minnesota. And then from Minnesota to Wyoming.

BB: Yeah, ok. So, when you were living in Indiana...

CD: What's that again. I didn't hear.

BB: When you were living in Indiana what was your...what were your thoughts about what Hoosiers were like as people?

CD: What who was like as people?

BB: Hoosiers?

CD: Hoosiers? Hoosiers? Well, I was very, I was very impressed with the [0:21:00] Hoosiers. I had a good relationships in that state. I, for instance, I was elected as a Republican but obviously the Democrats, under Birch Bayh and the rest of them, were very appealing to me as far as their attitudes, their openness and so on. I thought that was very good and so then the Governor of the State had been a Republican, Senators and he was the governor in a Republican party and also but then when he ran shortly after that, a couple years, to run for Senate, he lost and it turned around and the Democrats won that. Once again, part of that whole evolution that came with the change from, you know, southern attitudes and also people like Kennedy. I think it moved over in Indiana also it moved over in some ways.

BB: Right.

CD: A lot typical of South Bend... [0:22:00] our recent fellow... mayor of South Bend running for a President for a while trying to get nominated.

BB: Right, true.

CD: It shook the whole thing up quite a bit.

BB: Yeah. Ok. So, I really only have one more question here for you.

CD: Ok.



BB: So, you have been doing a pretty good job of getting through these. Let's see, you know, since you were a former legislator and obviously you know the General Assembly is and who's elected to the General Assembly is based on what the public wants so what do you want Hoosiers to know about their role in relation to the function of the General Assembly?

CD: Excuse me. Who to role? Who did you say?

BB: So, like, Hoosiers role. The general public in Indiana. Like what do you want them to understand about their role in relation to the General Assembly?

CD: Oh, I would say to [0:23:00] avoid the extremes of political vision and realize that we mostly come together in the center of these issues and have very similar attitudes. That's the main thing that I noticed my being there. It wasn't a, it wasn't a denominational thing in terms of parties. It was the way people thinking. I was very impressed with them for the most part. There tend to be, I'd just say privately, a little difference between the southern part of the state next to the southern borders and the northern part but uh I was impressed with their understanding and willingness on both sides of the parties to try to have what's fair and right and defensible [0;24:00]...

BB: Um hmm.

CD: ...in regards to the legislature.

BB: Yeah, ok.

CD: Um hmm.

BB: Now, do you think that politics has changed from when you served in the General Assembly?

CD: Well, I think politics in general has. I can't state specifically about following through Indiana...

BB: Right.

CD: ...all of the time but I think there was a, there was a kind of a comradery at that time and so it was easy for me to even be close related to both parties because I was...

BB: Sure.

CD: ...there wasn't that much enmity it was a matter of holding positions of course and some people had suggested that I would stay and ride... go for another like Secretary of State maybe and move on up and I quickly said no that's not my vocation. I don't do that. I'm not interested in shifting into a political life. Um But political lives are important to me as an individual citizen. [0:25:00] So that was the point of it and I learned that. There wasn't any temptation, for instance, I had some people I [unintelligible] rather well to suggest that I run for another higher office like Secretary of State or that and I just said no no no that is that's not where I came from and not where I'm going.

BB: Right. Ok. Well, um, is there anything that I didn't ask about that you want to talk about or?

CD: (chuckles) No, no, ...

BB: Ok(chuckles).

CD: ...I don't think so. You've been very thorough I can't understand how you have the patience and (unintelligible) to do this. I hope it works out well for you. I hope I haven't left something out or misrepresented. I, I, you know, I think you've done very well on that. I don't object to what you just wanted. Ok, what's it going here.

BB: Um hmm.

CD: And um, I think you can see that from this point of view. And so if I have, I hope I haven't hindered [0:26:00] that. I tried to end a complicated answer especially a complicated situation but not really. You know, it's always a kind of human situation with me. Cause the same people that were my members were some of those that supported me to run for the office.

BB: Right.

CD: That attitude prevailed. So, that's one that I had. I wasn't running as a politician as such I was running in terms of a human interest.

BB: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I think that gives an interesting sort of or look at the General Assembly and some of the people in it. I think, you know, the perceptions of what politicians are like, you know, usually people probably think about politicians being, you know, very very political. Um, and it's good for people to see that there is it's more complex than that and you have a lot more different type of characters and a lot of people are just there because maybe their community wanted them to be there especially in state politics so.

CD: Uh huh. Yeah. Well I would say that you have been very thorough [0:27:00] in this and very open. I hope your project goes well because...

BB: Yeah.

CD: ...you've been very good at asking the key questions and I hope I haven't mislead or I certainly didn't want to but I hope didn't understand but anyway I think you have a grip on it and best to you now. Sorry it took so long and so much with my heavy hearing. But when you get to be 90 the hearing gets a little old (laughs).

BB: Yeah, no, no worries. I understand and I think that the fact that you're able to, you know, still do interviews, you know, in your 90's is I think is probably just going to be inspiring for people. (chuckles) So, I think you did fantastic and I really appreciate you taking the time to help out so.

CD: Yes, well it's very good of you and you've been very patient and I hope it works out well for you.

BB: Alright, perfect.

CD: Alright, well good to know you. You've been very conscientious about it and the best of luck for it. I'll do what I can when you send the papers.

BB: Alright, thank you, take care.

CD: Um hmm. Bye.

BB: Bye. [0:27:57]