

ILOHI Interview with Robert L. Meeks

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Fort Wayne, Indiana

Interview by Dr. Michella M. Marino

Transcribed by Dr. Michella M. Marino and Jessica L. Cortesi

MP3 file, Sony

Robert Meeks=RM

Michella Marino=MM

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(MM setting up the recorder)

[0:00:10]

MM: I will just state for the record then that my name is Michella Marino, and I am interviewing Robert L. Meeks. What does the L. stand for?

RM: Leroy, after my father.

MM: Ok, great. Today is Thursday October 11, 2018, and we are at the Allen County Public Library in Fort Wayne, Indiana, so I will just start with when and where were you born?

RM: I was born in Fort Wayne and on February 3, 1934.

MM: Ok. And what were your parents' names?

RM: Roy and Esther Meeks.

MM: Ok. What was your mother's maiden name?

RM: Bauermeister.

MM: (Chuckles) How do you spell that?

RM: B-A-U-E-R-M-E-I-S-T-E-R.

MM: Ok.

RM: German.

MM: Oh, ok. Where's—

RM: Her brothers were all born, a lot of her brothers were born in Germany.

MM: Ok, so [0:01:00] when did they migrate over?

RM: Uh...I think when my—she came, my mom was born here, so it had to be...And when she died she was 50 years old, so sometime after she came here. They couldn't speak good English. They still spoke German.

MM: Your mother included or the brothers?

RM: She spoke German but she spoke English, but she could speak German. In fact, she talked a lot of times in German because she didn't want me to know what she was talking about. The only thing is, I picked it up.

MM: Mmhmm. Smarter then.

RM: Some key words, especially around Christmas time.

MM: (Laughs). That's important to find out the gifts, right?

RM: Yeah.

MM: What about your father's side of the family?

RM: My dad, uh...I'm not sure, he, his lineage goes back to Scotland. He's an Irish, Irish side, but he was in the Navy [0:02:00] after World War I and before World War II. And uh, spent some time there and he just... he worked at General Electric Company in Fort Wayne there for like 35 years, well, its maintenance, when he retired. And so he came to Fort Wayne, started at Churubusco working for the doctor up there who had an onion farm, and he worked on the farm. And somehow he got down here and the doctor took care of me. The doctor took care of all our kids as World War II was going on, 'cause you had to have the little stamps to get anything—sugar, shoes, whatever—the doctor would take care of people then he'd take a coupon and we'd go up there to see if he'd give us the coupon so I could get shoes and sugar and stuff for the family. That's when I was just seven. 'Cause I remember when World War II started. [0:03:00]

MM: Do you?

RM: I remember that.

MM: What--Tell me that story.

RM: Well we were... My dad was you know, not active in politics. I didn't have anybody on my side of the family and my mom, none of that side of the family's in politics. And uh, we were in the car going somewhere when it came on the radio that Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. My dad turned the car around and took us right back home.

MM: Wow.

RM: And uh, I was. I remember that. I remember when World War II ended.

MM: Where were you when that happened?

RM: Downtown Fort Wayne, with everybody else. They were runnin' up and down the streets yellin' and screamin'.

MM: Uh huh, so like big celebration?

RM: Yeah. So I came uptown with my dad.

MM: So did you have any family members that served around World War II then?

RM: I had a lot of relation. I had cousins that served in uh, the [0:04:00] Battle of the Bulge. And one of them came up from, up through Italy. I had one of 'em that flew, uh, B-29s, B-17s. Was in the Air Force. I had others that were scattered out through the s—But I, not in my family, not in my immediate family. 'Cause I only got another brother, two brothers. One of them, of course he passed, and I have my younger brother who is still alive.

MM: Well that's interesting. My grandfather who was ten years older than my grandmother, fought up Italy to that same route. That's interesting.

RM: Well my grandfather, my mom's father, was an officer enrolled in the German army...

MM: Wow!

RM: ... during World War I. So he a connection there, but I never uh... [0:05:00] One of my brother's son, Brian, did the lineage on the family, and I've yet to see that, he hasn't got it quite done yet, but that's how I going to-- knew my dad had some ties to Ireland. I don't know what those are, he just said I had Irish blood in me, so.

MM: Was that strange at all for your family with the war, with America fighting Germany, with the German background at all or?

RM: No, it didn't. No, the Bauermeister name... One of the Bauermeisters, a nephew, was— became Chief of Police in Fort Wayne. That wasn't very long ago because I was a kid, I was about 16, 17 when he was a Chief. So I rode his motorcycle with him when he was an officer with a, with a bike. [0:06:00] (both laugh) I rode the bike with him one time.

MM: Yeah. Well, so I know um you just said you have two siblings, right, now where'd you fall on that lineup? Are you the oldest, or youngest?

RM: I'm the oldest, and then Bud was next, then my youngest brother.

MM: And what's your youngest brother's name?

RM: Fred.

MM: Fred. Ok. And how many years are there between you all?

RM: Uh, he just turned 80.

MM: Ok, ok. Well what was your relationship like with your siblings growing up?

RM: We fought like hell. (laughter)

MM: Seems typical for brothers.

RM: We did. We played ... I went to Concordia High School, they both went to Fort Wayne Central. And uh, we used to play lot of basketball back of the house and we played football across the street in the big field 'cause I lived on the west side of Fort Wayne. And we used to, we had a team and we'd challenge the team from the [0:07:00] south and we went out to the club, I think it might'a been the uh, soccer club, out on west of Fort Wayne and that's where we played our football when we had a team match with somebody else. No pads, no helmets, just tackle.

MM: Wow.

RM: And my dad always said if you ever get hurt don't you, don't you come home. Well I got, I twisted my [inaudible] once and I laid on the floor for I don't know, probably a week, week and a half, before I could walk. (laughter)

MM: Oh, goodness.

RM: He never knew it.

MM: Yeah.

RM: 'Cause I got hit broadside. But uh, we used to fight. We used to wrestle a lot. Especially Bud and I. And then, I played football and broke my nose. I caught a forearm across the pile and broke my nose. Course it was just flat. And my mom was really [0:08:00] upset that I was playing football, she didn't want me to. Bud wanted to play and she said "don't you ever come home with a broken nose." Well he came home one night, had his book over his face. Took it off, his nose was flat over here. (laughter)

MM: Oh, no.

RM: Somebody stepped on his nose. Boom Boom Thurston stepped on his nose. I caught mine with a forearm. It was a, it was a, r— there was some rivalry there between us. Rivalry And I can tell you when I played basketball for Concordia, I mean, I made all city at Fort Wayne at the time. Not because I scored a lot, I scored about ten points a game but I can rebound. I mean I was, get in my way and I'd knock you down. I fouled out every game, just about, but I was aggressive. And uh, we played Fort Wayne Central one time [0:09:00] and I think I had 27 or 28 points in that game. And this is a story, this is a true story, 'cause I told it at Bud's funeral, and

Bud was the waterboy for the basketball team for Fort Wayne Central. And I was playin' and Bud walked by and Herb [inaudible] who was the coach goes, "why in the hell did I get you?" (laughter) That's what he said.

MM: (chuckles) He probably didn't like that.

RM: I told that at his funeral. That's a true story.

MM: Now how come you were all at different high schools?

RM: Well, I went to, we all went to Lutheran grade schools, and I had a chance to play basketball for Concordia because they came out to talk to me so that's why I went there. I didn't go to Central 'cause my younger brother was an outstanding athlete in Fort Wayne when he was [0:10:00] a senior. Played basketball, football, and ran track. He was really good. He had, he had Michael Jordan's legs, he could jump. I mean, he could, he was very good. He could shoot well. He guarded Oscar Robertson [name?]. He says his highlight of his career was he blocked one of his shots, in the corner.

MM: I imagine, yeah.

RM: He says that was the highlight of my career.

MM: Now, didn't Robertson play for, was he Crispus Attucks?

RM: Crispus Attucks, yeah. So you know, we all...Bud played football. He didn't run track, play basketball, but he did play football.

MM: Who would you say were the most influential people in your childhood?

RM: ... Well, I think my, the teacher that I had in grade school, last name was Rosenthal. [0:11:00] Ray, or Rosenthal. He was probably because he also coached the basketball team but, and I got to [inaudible] and when we won the tournament, Emmanuel did that's where I went to school. I made the free throw and we won by one point. Wasn't by much like 17 or 18 (both laugh), but... I think he was.

MM: Just a good influence on ya, or?

RM: Yeah, oh yeah, and my basketball coach was [inaudible, name], he probably had something to do with it. And when I got out of high school, I went to international college and I went there, I don't know, for maybe a year and I got drafted. During the Korean War.

MM: Ok. So when did you graduate high school then?

RM: I graduated in '52. [0:12:00]

MM: '52, ok.

RM: And I got drafted in '54.

MM: That's the tail end of the Korean War there.

RM: Right at the end of the Korean War and just at the start of the Vietnam War, 'cause I qualified for both. This one was ending and this one had already started, so I got both of them. And I wear both on my [inaudible—legion hat?] Korean and the Vietnam War, since I qualified for both.

MM: Uh huh. So were you drafted into the U.S. Army or a different branch, or how did that work?

RM: We stayed in the Army. Two years.

MM: Where were you stationed at?

RM: Well, I went and took my basic at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and... no, I took it at Camp Chafee, Arkansas. And then I went to Fort Leonard Wood for just a short time and then I went to Fort Hood, Texas. And then I went from there to Indianapolis, Fort Bend. I took care of the pay records [0:13:00] everybody got out of the service at the service unit when they discharge.

MM: So that was your main job?

RM: Yeah, because I had some college accounting.

MM: Just so I get the timeline right, you said you had already been at IBC for a year and a half or so before you got drafted, is that right?

RM: I did not finish. I did not finish. I spent my two years and I came home and I went back there and I graduated. I had two courses, accounting and advanced accounting. I had no [inaudible]. It was a different attitude for me then 'cause I was married and I actually studied, which I had never done before. But I actually studied and I got good grades. In fact, I didn't have to take one of the finals because my average was high enough.

MM: Did you want to be an accountant, or what were you thinking about doing for your career?

RM: Oh, I don't know, I was just... I didn't really want to be [0:14:00] an accountant, I didn't know what I wanted to do. Even when I got out the service I didn't know what I wanted to do. I had to have a job, so I got a job with construction. Poured the concrete on 27 going south when they built that four-lanes. I carried the steel—on the truck, off the truck—that's what I did 'til they got the road done, and I didn't have a job. So I'm looking. And I was at one of the companies in town getting ready to get an application when one of the county officers came in and he said "You looking for a job?" And I said "Yeah I am," he said, "Well I got an opening at

the jail, you oughta go down to the jail and see the sheriff.” So I did. That’s how I got into law enforcement. Started out as a midnight jailer.

MM: What was that like?

RM: [0:15:00] Was pretty good except on Friday and Saturday night.

MM: [chuckles] I bet!

RM: Got a little tough then, and they like to fight when they get drunk. It was not fun.

MM: So at what point did you realize, “I’d like to do this for a career?”

RM: When I got the jail, I got out on the road finally after I served as a jailer for a while, then I got to be dispatch, then I went into the car. I spent about maybe two years in the car on second and third shift. I worked second for a while but I wanted on third. There was only three of us in the county that worked that whole county. East car, west car, roaming car.

MM: And is this LaGrange or is this Fort Wayne?

RM: Here. In Allen County.

MM: Woah.

RM: There were three of us. And if one is on vacation, the other guy is on day off, then you were the only one all night.

MM: [0:16:00] And is this sheriff or regular police department?

RM: Sheriff’s department. There was only three of us. (both laugh)

MM: That’s sort of mind boggling right now.

RM: It is, it’s hard to believe. When I went to Elkhart County as a trooper there was three road cars on the sheriff’s department days, middle shift, late shift. And now, on the third shift, they’ve got five cars and a detective. And when I was there they had one car on that shift. Down here, there wasn’t any of us. If you got into trouble, you had to figure out how to get out. I caught—I mean, I had some close calls. Coming down there, coming down Wells Street at four o’clock in the morning, there’s a car weaving just a little bit and I turned the lights on and the next thing I knew he came across State Street [0:17:00] running about 90 miles an hour going against the light. Came down to Fourth Street and he turned, stood up over the curb, bounced off a building, went a block, and made another turn, and a black kid jumped out. Went to the next corner and he turned right, a black kid jumped out. Went down to Sherman and went across Broadway, he ran that light and I didn’t do that, thank God, because somebody went through there just as I got to the corner.

MM: My goodness.

RM: Car was rolling down the railroad track when I got there, it was full of stuff. They had burglarized a [inaudible] shop north of Fort Wayne, just off of 3. They got 'em all rounded up, one of 'em was a convicted felon so he got some time. But I had—I caught some kids in the back of Hoagland High School in the woods one night, three o'clock in the morning. They were going to kill me if I got close to them. I never got close. [0:18:00] Shotgun, lights, on the ground. They were gonna kill me. 'Cause they had had a running gun battle in Indianapolis. Burglarized three or four places in Hoagland. I never got close to them, I just happened to sweep my light back there and that chrome bounced off and I think "that's not right, I better check it out."

MM: And so, you're by yourself.

RM: I'm by myself. I called the plate in and dispatch came back, said, uh, "Code x," you know, something wrong. So I just got away from 'em. Got 'em out the car. They were sleeping back there. I've had a lot of those close calls.

MM: I bet.

RM: I was in the basement of the building one night, and the door was open. I'm walking in the basement of this grocery store, [0:19:00] and dark cat jumped out at me. (both laugh) And I'm tellin' you! It's a wonder I didn't shoot that cat.

MM: Almost had a dead cat on your hands.

RM: I'm tellin' you the hair on the back of my neck was (swooshing sound) like that. It'll scare you, I'm not kidding you. You're in dark, a cat jumps out.

MM: Well, what did you like about being a sheriff, being a –

RM: Policeman?

MM: Yeah.

RM: Excitement. Always knew something was going to happen. You could always make something happen, that's why I liked that late shift. I was about a lot of high speed chases. I caught burglars. I caught people that stole cars. Did wrestle a lot of drunk drivers. Was in a lot of fights. I was in every riot Indiana ever had.

MM: You were in what?

RM: The riots in the '60s. Remember those? We had a riot squad at Ligonier. [0:20:00] Every post had one. And I was in every one of them. I was in Michigan City, I was at the prison, I was at South Bend, I was at Fort Wayne, I was at Kokomo twice. I went to Purdue when students took over the building down there. We went down there. We didn't have to go in, but we went down there and ate and turned around and came back. Kokomo was like going to war. They had

all the street lights shot out, they were throwing beer bottles on my car, and bricks. Two cars, two people with a car, two cars together.

MM: Mmhmm. Well what was going on? 1960s were kind of a tumultuous time.

RM: That's when the Blacks were demonstrating. Down at Kokomo, a Black had shot a Kokomo police officer. Everybody got nasty. We finally closed up their barbeque pit about three thirty in the morning. That was fun. I had a shotgun, loaded, safety off. [0:21:01] It was, uh, I never fired my gun but one time. I chased a—I got a call, dispatch, just general dispatch, about a car that was stolen. Michigan, a white car, two kids—two men. No direction, just a white car. So I'm coming home. I worked 6-2, so it was probably about two thirty on the way home, in Goshen, that's where I lived. On 33 this white car went by me. So I just turned around on it, and the next thing I know, we're just going full boar. I don't know if you're familiar with Elkhart, but we went through three stoplights at 90 miles an hour. And they turned on Prairie Street, there was a stick and it died on him. [0:22:00] And the doors opened up; two guys jumped out and the guy went one way and I fired one into the air. He stopped, I got him, and the other guy we picked up a few hours later. That's the only time I've ever fired my gun.

MM: That's a pretty good record.

RM: I tell everybody when I did that I shot a hole through the broom. I [inaudible] Not true.

MM: But a good story!

RM: That's a true story. Somebody told me I shoulda wrote I book, 'cause I got stories like that I could you for hours. I liked being a police officer. Only problem is I was district commander, I had taken an afternoon off to play golf with a bunch of detectives that were friends. We all had accumulated hours, so we all took comp time, and I had a few drinks. Coming home it was one of those fall nights, it was really dark, it was raining. [0:23:00] Had stuff on the windshield. And I went to pass a car and there was a buggy coming south this way, and he had a little light on. I didn't see it till I got right there and I turned, I caught the front wheel. So they tested me with a tester, I was .07.

MM: That's under the legal—

RM: Yeah, at that time it was .15. Or .11. It mighta been .11 at that time. So I went on home, they investigated the accident, and—

MM: Everybody was fine, I understand, right?

RM: And nobody got hurt. 'Cause if I had got turned quick enough, it would have keep me from running over it. But uh, some 'tendent—I was Bob Orr was going to be Governor, and he had told me I was going to be superintendent. To some other people, "Bob Meeks will be my superintendent." [0:24:00] Well, [Shadow?] was the superintendent, so he filed charges against me, driving under the influence. And I had my hearing, the lawyer couldn't come in with me, he couldn't ask questions. And uh, so he convicted me. Took one of my stripes away, took me outta

the district control. I was first sergeant, demoted me to sergeant. I was no longer district commander, and suspended me for five days. So, I took the five days and went to California. And when I got in the Senate, I had appealed that thing I don't know how many times, appealed it once more and they turned it over. Put me back as a first sergeant and gave me all my back pay that I had lost. [0:25:00] Well I told the FOP lawyer— it was [inaudible], that whatever happened I'd give my money back, so I gave my money that I had got to the FOP 'cause they paid [inaudible] for my [inaudible]. I was in the senate and I got my ID card. They wouldn't give me a new one, 'cause mine shows sergeant. I was *first* sergeant. So finally I called the personnel manager and I said "this is Senator Meeks and by god I want that and I want it changed *now*." I finally got it done. But I left the state police because [inaudible] I couldn't work there anymore. The love of the job—it killed. Very honest with ya, I was getting close 'cause the guy that took my job wanted to be the district commander. He lived there, he was working the [0:26:00] toll road, he was a lieutenant on the toll road. But he wanted that because he only lived two miles, and so he took my job and I just didn't have the—you gotta have a love for that or you can't do it. I couldn't do it anymore. I didn't do anything. I used to run 50 arrests a month. I used to work anything. I wrote 150 warnings, and I just didn't do anything. I quit.

MM: And was that in 1981? Around there?

RM: 1981. So I figured if I didn't leave, I'd about end up getting charges filed 'cause I wasn't doing anything. So I figured I better get outta there 'fore I got in a fight.

MM: Yeah. Well can you explain real quick the progression. So you started at the jail and then you said eventually you got put in the car. So how did you become sheriff and then state police and then—

RM: I wasn't sheriff, I just worked for the sheriff. [0:27:00]

MM: You just worked for the sheriff. Ok.

RM: Yeah, I was just a road patrol, just a regular— I wasn't even a sergeant, or corporal, anything, I just worked a patrol, third shift. I made application for the state police, and took the exam, passed it, I got accepted so I quit. Custer [inaudible] was the sheriff at that time, and when I left he said, "See ya!" Custer and I didn't get along very good. (MM chuckles) I didn't, I just... my brother thought the sun rose and shine in him and I told him anytime, bud, I never liked him and I never did. He wasn't a good leader. He was a—he just was a public appearance guy. I couldn't do it. So that's why I left. Lot of guys [0:28:00] told me that I shoulda been sheriff, but I said, "I don't want that." So I got on the state police, and they sent me to Elkhart. That's where I went to work out at Ligonier district. I worked there until I got [inaudible] in 1969, then I got transferred to LaGrange. I'll tell ya, I tell a lot people this... I'm a Christian, I believe in the Lord Jesus, he has his hand on you and you don't even know it. I woulda stayed on the state police, but that accident shoved me out of there. ... I didn't want to go to LaGrange County because I liked Elkhart County, lived in Goshen. LaGrange County was buggies. [0:29:00] You know, the stores and the streets are closed up at nine thirty at night. I didn't want to do that. But they sent me there anyway, 'cause I had to move there when I got promoted. I had to move in one of those four counties. So I got in LaGrange County. I got in there 'cause there

was a house that had three bedrooms and a shower, stand up shower. ‘Cause I take showers, I don’t take baths. I found it, so I—I was looking in Steuben, I was looking in DeKalb, Noble, but I ended up in LaGrange, only ‘cause of that. So I worked—I ran for the school board and I got elected. And uh, closed the building, tore a building down, closed a school. Not very popular. (chuckles) I was on the—

MM: Is that, was this Lakeland? [0:30:00]

RM: Lakeland.

MM: Lakeland school board.

MM: We tore down this old building down at Howe, which uh, in the uh... the Historical Society. Tore that one down, closed the uh, bright, had a beautiful gym, but had all kinds of problems had to take care of. So that was really, but anyway, I decided I was gonna... With my... When I was in the state police I was active in the FOP. I became a district trustee, then I become the state conductor for the state of Indiana. And during that time, I had gotten the Appomattox Award, which the highest award the FOP gets for people that demonstrate commitment to the job, to the form, the ability to communicate, work across lines. So [0:31:00] I put a lot of time in [inaudible]. [inaudible] was the senator up there, became very good friends with me because I was an Elkhart basketball fan. I’m tellin’ ya all this stuff, but it’s just kinda fillin’ in the blanks.

MM: Sure.

RM: Anyway, used to—when [inaudible] would coach for Elkhart, I used to go with the team. Escort ‘em, if they win, come to the regional. Jim [inaudible] and I escorted ‘em down. Red lights, siren. And I got to be very good friends with both of ‘em. And uh, [inaudible] was the announcer for the Elkhart radio station.

MM: What was his name?

RM: [inaudible]. So I talked to him a lot. I went to Indianapolis, always took him. We went out of there, talked. Anyway, kinda got the feeling that... [0:32:00] So, I was on the school board, I thought, I’m gonna run for the senate. John [inaudible] had been the senator for twenty-eight years. He was thinking about retiring, wasn’t sure. So I went and talked to him. I said, “John, are you retiring?” He said, “I don’t know. I don’t know yet.” Well, ok. I went back the second time, “you goin’?” “Well I don’t know yet.” “Well, I’m going to run, John. For your seat.” Well, so he retired. So I filed. There were three of us on the ballot for the uh, not for the general, for the primary.

MM: Do you remember who the other two were?

RM: One of ‘em was a schoolteacher, there was a farmer. One was schoolteacher in Kendallville, one of ‘em was a farmer in Noble County.

MM: And what made you choose the senate over the house?

RM: I don't know. I didn't want to go to the house, wanted to go to the senate [0:33:00] 'cause I had talked to [inaudible] 'cause he seemed to know everything that was going on. So I went ahead and run. I had never been involved in politics and [inaudible] didn't think I was going to win. I won by 331 votes in the primary. And I won by 25,000 in the general.

MM: Wow.

RM: What they forgot is that I had worked that whole area. Somebody call me, says, "Everybody that you helped vote, you'll win hands down." So I worked hard. I mean, I was everywhere. If there was a Democrat coffee shop, I went in there.

MM: Well when did you sort of develop—you know, you said earlier that no one really in your family had been into politics. When did you sort of come into the Republican party, or you know, understand—

RM: My dad was a Republican.

MM: Ok. So you at least understood [0:34:00] your family's politics in the sense of—

RM: When I came on to the state police, I had to declare whether I was Democrat or Republican. I declared Republican, so it kinda followed me through. I voted Republican all the way. I never voted a straight ticket, 'cause I've had some people on the other side that I thought were qualified, were on the other side. Some of my very good friends were Democrats. When I campaign I never mentioned my opponent's name, talked about me. If I'm paying for that ad, I want my name in it, not yours. You want your name in it, you pay for it.

MM: That's a pretty good tactic.

RM: Exactly what I did. And I, you know, I ran some air. I don't think I ran any movies, I ran some radio spots. [0:35:00] But uh, my best radio spot was my grandson, who I think at that time was eight, maybe nine. He says, "Hi, my name is Patrick Martin, but my grandpa—My name is Patrick Martin but my grandpa calls me Patrick," over music. He said, "My grandpa is state Senator Bob Meeks," he says, "I don't know what he does, but he's busy all the time. He's helping everybody." And it just, it was the best. He went to school, he says, "Hi Patrick Martin." (both laugh)

MM: That's funny. That sounds like a cute ad.

RM: It was funny. That was the best commercial I ran. I ran a lot of 'em but that was one of the best.

MM: Let me jump back here. You said earlier, [0:36:00] at least when you came back from serving, you were married. Did you get married before you—?

RM: Got married when I was in the service. Got married 1955.

MM: 1955. And Carol, is--?

RM: Carol.

MM: And what her maiden name?

RM: Shuman. German.

MM: Stay with the Germans, right? And when did you all have kids?

RM: Well I had four. Four kids. I have a daughter, I have three sons. And my daughter, I think she's sixty, sixty-one. She must be sixty-one because my son is sixty. And my—they all—my daughter lives in Topeka, and my son lives in LaGrange, one son lives in Noble County. One owns a grocery store, did own one in Payne, now owns one in Flora, just west of Lafayette. SuperValue. [0:37:00] And so, they're very close. Well, they're not very far away. And then I have... I think I have five grandkids. I think I have four great-grandkids. I've got—Pat [inaudible]'s got two, Heather's got two, that's three. Yeah. I got four. She's got one that lives with her that's his son, his son 'cause she's been married twice. So if you count that I've got five.

MM: Yeah. So then, did your wife work outside the home, or...?

RM: She worked at the local bank in LaGrange for uh... I had two jobs. [0:38:00] When I wasn't with the state police I was building buildings or pouring concrete or driving truck.

MM: So was there about an eight or nine year window when you were done with the police but before you got into the senate? About that time?

RM: Well during that time I started my own business. I sold burglar and fire alarms and I had... I had [inaudible-guard or garden] service and I had a hundred-thousand dollar payroll. I sold so many, a couple alarms a month, 'cause I only had one guy installing 'em. And he'd...a lot of times I had to help... When I was campaigning when I had to fill slots for guys that the guard wouldn't show up. I had to, I'd be out in a tie and white shirt, I'd be in there sweepin' the floors [0:39:00] doin' the guard's work 'cause he didn't show up. I had a contract to fill. And then I had a couple... We were at—the golf course was havin' trouble, and my wife and my daughter sat out there one night as guard service 'cause I was gone, so they pulled the guard service from ten o'clock at night until five in the morning. And I figured that's enough of that crap so I sold the business.

MM: Well you were mentioning... go ahead, sorry.

RM: Well I just couldn't... I just couldn't do it all you know. When I got elected I just had to, I just washed it all. I ran for the school board during that time. When I do things I get too involved, you know, I can't... I was president of the school board I think three years out of four.

We had some very contentious meetings [0:40:00], smoking in schools, that really got nasty. Fired the basketball coach who had coached my son. Fired him. That was really hard.

MM: Messing with basketball in Indiana, that's a risk. (chuckles)

RM: It's hard. It wasn't a bad—it wasn't a hard vote, it was an easy vote. But it was hard because of all the anxiety that everybody—you know, everybody says it's pressure. Pressure is self-imposed. Give it away. I had pressure when I was chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I'd give it away. (both chuckle)

MM: Well, let's jump back into the government stuff then here for a second. You were talking about campaigning and the way you sort of ran ads, but what were some of the big issues to you as you were campaigning?

RM: Well I ran... [0:41:00] My philosophy on education was its best served with the local help. You can't reinvent something. Teacher'll just —get out of the way and let 'em teach, quit getting' in there and trying to mess things up. Quit trying to find the magic bullet that'll make everybody score higher. That's been my philosophy all the way through. Even when I get in the senate, I did that. That's why I got along with ISTA. 'Cause leave the teacher to teach, get outta the way.

MM: So was education a big issue even before you got into the senate? Obviously with the school board...

RM: It was. It was always been a big issue. But with the school board, because I knew so much about it, that was one of the things that was on my schedule. That and service, I guess. I talked about small government. [0:42:00] Not expanding, get out of the way, let everybody be themselves without having a hand over ya, pushing ya and shoving you around. But let me finish that story about the Lord putting me in LaGrange County.

MM: OK

RM: So in LaGrange County I ran for school board and got elected. Then I ran for the senate and got elected because I was in LaGrange County because I didn't want to leave. I was put over there, they had to kick me a bit to get me in there. But if you set back and I look at that, you know, I've got—I've had—the Lord's had his hand on me a lot because I had back surgery, I got this bad leg, I had a stroke and I suffered no damage—none. You know, [0:43:00] doctors said I was a miracle because I could squeeze and talk to him. And I've had—it poked a hole in my heart one time and they drove a stake down through my chest. I mean, I've had numerous times when the Lord's had his hand on me, protecting me. All the fast driving I did and never had an accident driving fast. I used to drive a hundred every day, I mean, every day, just to practice if nothing else. And um, did some crazy things. I'm one of the few troopers that drove the Indianapolis 500 in my police car. I said, I can't tell that story.

MM: (laughter) Sounds like a good one.

RM: I can tell you but you can't print it. [0:44:00]

MM: You want me to pause it? (chuckles)

RM: No, I just won't tell ya.

MM: Ok, alright, I'll let you have that one.

RM: I should've got fired if they woulda found out about it.

MM: Yeah, maybe better not to have that one on the record, probably. So, um, what was—do you remember your first election day? So after that first campaign and you won, what was that like for you?

RM: Well, we had—I had scheduled a reception afterwards at one of the local restaurants that was owned by the Democrats. But she welcomed me in, she put up a big feast for me—just treated me like a king. And that was—I think—I finally went home about two-thirty, three o'clock in the morning. And we walked in, we just got in there, [0:45:00] and my wife or my daughter I think was with me, when the lights went out. And we had a backup—I got a two twenty 'cause I got electric heat—we had a backup from a pole came back into the house and melted my box downstairs. Got so hot it just melted everything in it. It was on a concrete wall. If it'd been on the other wall, the house woulda burnt down. 'Cause I went down there, black smoke was just pourin' outta there. I got down there, I got my light and shut power off, but everything else in the bottom of the box, all the breakers, all of it melted.

MM: My goodness.

RM: Yes, it was a good thing I was at home, 'cause that was the day I got elected, that night. If I'd have been in there another fifteen minutes... See, a hand?

MM: Wow. [0:46:00] How did your family feel about you running for senate?

RM: Oh, they were all in favor of it. All of 'em. My kids all helped.

MM: About how old were your kids at the time?

RM: Well, let's see. I ran in '88, my daughter was born in '56, son was born in '57, so they were young. They carried signs in the parade for me. All had shirts on, "Meeks for Senate" shirts, so they all carried these big signs that said "Meeks," they all took signs and put 'em out. I had a party right before the election where I had hot dogs and we dunked for apples and I had popcorn and I'd brought a magician in for the kids. I had I don't know how many people there, probably I don't know 300 maybe? And had 'em all take a sign—"when you're all done, take a sign home" You know, take the sign. (chuckles) [0:47:00] I mean that's—I had fun. I worked hard, but I had fun doing it. I went, like I said, when I ran I said everywhere.

MM: Did your campaign—well, obviously you went through five or so elections. Did your campaign strategy change every time, or did it get easier, or?

RM: Same. Same way. Kept selling me, I advertised my home phone number in every piece of advertising I did. On the place mats in restaurants?—“Senator Bob Meeks, close as your telephone, my home phone number.”

MM: Wow. What made you do that?

RM: Did that for twenty-five years in law enforcement. I just, kept doin’ it. You can’t take care of people if they can’t get a hold of you.

MM: That’s true.

RM: Now, all they got is the 800 number goes to the senate. [0:48:00] I believe in servin’. If you’re gonna serve, serve. And I did a lot of that. I mean, I got a call one time, the guy says “my son’s having a birthday” six, seven, eighth birthday, I don’t know, “would you come over and wish him a happy birthday?” Sunday afternoon, I was home. I said sure. So I got a little pin, one of those Indiana pins, went over to the house, it was a trailer. I walked in, it was a small trailer, had a little cake standin’ there, it was his birthday. So I sat down, had cup of coffee and a piece of cake and sang “Happy Birthday” to that kid on Sunday afternoon. I bet they don’t do that now.

MM: Probably not. So it sounds like it was obviously very important for you, for your constituents to be able to reach you. [0:49:00]

RM: Well yeah, yes. I always figure if you can’t find me, I can’t help ya. So I was always... That was my message when I ran. I had the county Democrat chairman Kosciusko County lived in my district ran against me. “Bob Meeks. Lobbyist. Give him everything. Takes everything. He’s under their control.” Did that whole lobby thing. I never answered him, I just ran my ads like I would, service, I’m here to help you, if you need me, call. I believe in education da-dah, finances da-dah. Oh, that. I did a lot of town meetings. Anyway, he ran, I have 99 precincts, I won every one of ‘em. I beat him in his own two to one. [0:50:00] But I won ‘em all. But he really gave me hell, boy. That’s all right. I can take that. Was helpin’ me ‘cause he was gettin’ my name on all the [inaudible].

MM: So you told me the story about election night. What were you thinking when you first walked into the statehouse, when you first came to Indianapolis?

RM: Well, I’ll tell ya. I told my wife this story. When I walked into the senate, went up on the balcony and looked over the floor of the senate, I got this warm feeling. And I told her, “when I lose this, I’m out.” I could feel that warmth, this responsibility. That feeling that I had. And I told her when that is gone, I’m gone. I never lost it. I just had to leave ‘cause my health. [0:51:00] If I’d of stayed in there, the doctor said I was gonna die ‘cause stress was killin’ me. I was working eighteen hours a day, can’t do that. Workin’ on the weekends.

MM: Mhmm. Was that when you had the stroke, then?

RM: Yeah. I had it on Monday, I didn't go to work. I was in—I stayed in an apartment down there when [inaudible--Dave Walkins?] was on the other side I was over here. Didn't feel very good. And I couldn't get this hand to work. Couldn't stick on my nose and I couldn't stick it on my hair. It was like this. I couldn't understand what in the world's wrong with that. How am I gonna play golf? Well, I know, I'll get one of those bowler things and keep it stiff. Next day it took me three hours to shower and shave and get dressed. So I went in, I went to the bathroom, [0:52:00] and I couldn't get my zipper back up. My hands would not work. And nothin' was right, so there wasn't a doctor of the day 'cause I asked them to get a doctor, well there wasn't one that day. So they had one of the guys who was a senator was a uh, a skin doctor, a...

MM: Dermatologist?

RM: Dermatologist. So he said we'll get him up here, he may not be able to see what's wrong with you, but he'll get your skin cleared up. I said, "hot dog." So he came up, said "you're going to the hospital," so they called the state police, got a gurney up there. I said no, I can walk down. So I walked down, got on the gurney out there and put me on the ambulance. My heart was beating so fast, they couldn't count it. So went over to the hospital, state police took me over in the car, [0:53:00] got sick. They said, "hey, don't you throw up in my car." I said, "hey I've been that route, I won't do that." (both chuckle) 'Cause I had, anybody throw up in my car was bad news. So I got out of the car, threw up on the side walk. Went inside, that's when the doctor said "squeeze my hand," squeezed it, "talk to me," I talked to him, "can you raise your leg, move your arm down." So I took a MRI, and what happened this carotid artery on this side, inside tore. It's layered in there, one of the inside layers tore. It seized it. Piece broke off, went right up here. So they took the CAT scan, they showed me where it was at. So the Lord took care of me. Kicked me in the pants and told me to get out of there. [0:54:00] So I did. Well, that was... that was not a pleasant time.

MM: I bet. Well, how did you...jumping back to when you first started with the senate, how'd you learn the ins and outs of state government?

RM: Well I sat next to Dick Thompson in the back, back room of the senate, in that first year. Dick Thompson was on his [inaudible] And Dick helped walk me through the process in the senate. I just paid attention, I read the rules of the senate that give you [inaudible]. They make any changes, you get a new binder. So I read those so I understood, and I listened. And the first time I went to the mic, I think it was on a resolution, so it really didn't take much preparation, but I just [0:55:00] paid attention to what was going on and watched everything in the back row you could see everything. Who was workin' who. I just watched and learned. Bob Gar[ton] and I spent—I stayed at the Columbia Club, so I had breakfast every morning with Joe Harrison, Bob Garton. And there was probably 8 or 9, oh 10 of us, all legislators, had breakfast every morning. I was in there in the evening, we'd go back for the par. Downstairs, I sat with Joe Harrison and listen to Joe. He'd tell me do this or do that. I'd ask him what about that and he'd tell me. That's how I did it.

MM: Would you say like... How do I want to word this? A lot of business was taken care of informally, over coffee or a drink, over dinner?

RM: Generally. [0:56:00] That's how I...I spent a lot of time in the Columbia Club 'cause I didn't go out, just go back to the country club... the

MM: The Columbia Club.

RM: Columbia Club, yeah. And stay there with Harrison. Garton would come downstairs at night. We'd just sit there and shoot the breeze. And there was some lobbyists in there, got to know those people. And just... I just listened. And learned. I listened to the guys that went to the mic and how they pontificated. How they... bloviated, some of them. (chuckles) But I just watched and listened.

MM: So you keep saying the phrase, "going to the mic," is that when people would go up to sort of argue for their bill or their legislation?

RM: Debate.

MM: Debate, okay.

RM: Present debate. [0:57:00] I love the debates.

MM: How did that work? So did someone sort of get to present their side and someone else would counter it?

RM: Yeah. What you do if you got a bill, present the bill, then there's open for debate. And "why do you rise?" Question the author. "Senator, do you yield?" "I yield." "You may question. Questions, you can't argue, you can answer but you can't argue. So you do that back and forth. He'd bring up his point. You don't have to—I turned him down one time. They asked me, a guy wanted to question the author and I said "no." I had that option to say no. They'd ask me the same question about a half a dozen times and I was done. It wasn't going any more. [0:58:00] And there was some guys wouldn't read the stuff. They'd pick out a piece that didn't mean anything without reading the rest of it around it. They'd argue that little piece and I wasn't gonna do that. Some of 'em are still down there that do that.

MM: (chuckles) Yeah. Do you recall the first bill that you put forth?

RM: Yes, I do.

MM: What was that?

RM: The first one I went to mic on was a bill changing the date for the license of river boat captains. It went from a fiscal year to a calendar year. So I presented the bill. Question, one of the Democrat senators...I can't remember his name right now but he was sharp, oh, McCarthy? ...McCarty? Not McCarty. [0:59:00] [inaudible] Simpson's husband.

MM: I think it is McCarty.

RM: Anyway. He came to mic, he said “Senator, what’s a river boat captain? What’s he do? Where does he operate?” I said “well, Senator, there’s a constitution labelled three...” Oh, he asked me what a navigable waterway was. I said, “well Senator, the constitution labelled three of ‘em, Wabash,” I named all three of ‘em. And they’ve been upheld, they’re still listed today as navigable waterways. “Well, thank you,” he sat down. If I hadn’t a known that, he’d a hammered me. So I never went to the mic unless I knew the answer to every question.

MM: Yeah, you prepared.

RM: I did. I did every... I mean, I knew that stuff backwards and forwards. [1:00:00]

MM: Well how did that bill come about? Was that something a constituent--?

RM: Somebody asked me to carry it. They gave it to me, something to get started with.

MM: Mmhmm. Okay.

RM: That was my first one. That was Bill McCarty.

MM: Yeah, there you go. What was the regular interaction amongst assembly members? Did you mingle with the other side?

RM: Sure. I used to go to dinner with the Democrats. Bob Hellman. And Maury Dahl, was from Lafayette, er—from Terra Haute. I used to go out to dinner with those guys, just the three of us. They always said that I was the best debater on the Senate—on the Republican side. Whether that’s true or not, I don’t know. That’s what they said. I used to go with—I used to go, and when Hellman was the majority leader, [1:01:00] minority leader, I used go in his office he had M&Ms over there. I’d go and eat his M&Ms. I’d go in there and sit down, have a cup of coffee. Jim Lewis from Evansville, or down the southern part, I can’t remember where it was, it was southwest. Him and I collected little pins. If I got extra pins, I always gave ‘em to him, and he’d give ‘em to me. His wife was door keeper on the minority side. When he celebrated his fiftieth wedding anniversary in southern Indiana, my wife and I went down, celebrated with ‘em. Was a big party, and we were part of it.

MM: So you had good relationships across the aisle?

RM: Yeah, I had no problem doing that. I always contended that they got elected to serve *their* 26,000, as I did. [1:02:00] They ought to have a voice in their government. If it was something that was valid, I could support that. They had some guys that were very good. Louis Mayhearn was probably one of the best debaters they had. Intellectually intelligent. He’d always have a new word every day and he used it in a sentence. That’s what he told me, a new word every day and he used it in a sentence. He was a good... he could argue logically and at times he almost convinced me he was right. Hellman on the other hand, he could talk about a paperclip for a half hour. And he was good, I’m not saying that’s bad. He was good, he could talk. He’s a lawyer. Lawyers are born to argue, [1:03:00] they’re not born to be peaceful.

MM: Yeah. What about relationships with House members? Did you know many people that served in the --?

RM: I knew a lot of 'em. Yeah, I got the reputation, if you want something done, you gotta send it to Meeks. So I knew a lot on both sides of the aisle. [inaudible] when he was speaker I could go to his office, ask him a question. Before that, the speaker before Pat was... guy that ran for governor on the Democrat side this last time...

MM: Oh, Gregg.

RM: Yeah, John Gregg was speaker. I could go up and talk to him when he was on the floor—on the mic. Chair. Ask him a question and if he said no, I knew it was no sense pursuin' it 'cause it wasn't gonna go nowhere. Same way with Pat. [1:04:00] Pat chaired the budget committee. I was--That was before I was on the budget committee, I could still talk to him. He said 'no, I meant no.' I understand no, no sense goin' any farther. There was a lot of good guys over there and I got to be friends with a lot of 'em. Some of 'em I knew, some of 'em I didn't associate with. A lot of 'em I did. There's a lot of golfers over there, I'm a golfer. You can settle a lot of things on the golf course. And I always respected them and... My House member was a Democrat. I'm a Republican, he was a Democrat. He was my good friend and I never helped anybody that ran against him. [1:05:02] And it made a lot of Republicans mad. And uh...

MM: Who was that?

RM: I gotta think.

MM: Well I can probably look it up too.

RM: Geez, isn't that awful. I just saw—his wife's name's Faye. God I just saw him the other day. He died here a while back.

MM: I can look it up. I can find that very easily.

RM: Now let me think a minute. This bothers me. He was sheriff eleven years. I was the first state police officer who saw him when he got elected. The first one that saw him in his office. Now that is bad. I can see his face. We used to ride together to go to town meetings. Geez that's bad. I'm having a senior moment.

MM: (chuckles) It happens. Well I should be able to tell you the name too. [1:06:01] I'm trying to think. I think I don't have any of the House stuff in here.

RM: That is really bad. He's one of my best friends too. Doggone it.

MM: I think (looking through papers, drops some) we'll let it sit for a bit and the name will come back. I'll get those for you (dropped papers). Oh, you got 'em? I do that with names too sometimes.

RM: Anyway, I never helped—He ran against the guy that was the House member, congressional member. His wife knew... [1:07:00] anyway, I went to a meeting. They asked me to introduce doc [inaudible, Bolan?], which I did. There was a lot of Republicans, it was a Republican function. I didn't say anything about the guy that's running against my friend. I said, after it was over, two guys come up to me, say "why didn't you bring his name up, say something about him?" I said, that wasn't my job, my job was to introduce Doc, which is what I did. "Well, you shouldn't a done that. I know how you are with him—Dale." Dale. He said, "oh, you're with Dale, you're buddies with him." I said, "Dale is my friend, and he'll be my friend when this is all over." And so it was. I didn't help anybody that ran against Dale. And like I said we used to go to town, [1:08:00] we had a town meeting we'd ride in the same car. (both laugh)

MM: That's good.

RM: And one time, I'll tell you a story, we were having a town meeting at the Kendallville Library. Carol's with me, we're walking down the hallway. Dale is partially in the room, partially in the hallway. He says, "well I can't answer that question" but he said "Senator Meeks is coming, maybe he can answer it for you." So I went around the corner and there wasn't a soul in there. Nobody. (both laugh)

MM: That's funny.

RM: We had a town meeting in LaGrange and we had a guy that was putting 25 or 30 signs in his yard, advertising. The corner state road 5 and US 20. We passed, registered, had to put a thing-- He got mad, he said "that's my yard, I can put in there what I want." [1:09:00] And he was just--He raised Cain, I mean he was obnoxious. Town meeting. He called my wife one night, just reaped her right over the coals. I mean it was terrible. So, town meeting. First guy up, started going "yak, yak, yak, yak, yak." I stood up, I said, "I'll tell you something, if you ever call my wife again and raise hell with her like you did, you and I are going to have serious problems. I said, "if you ever call me again, shut up and sit down." Dale gets up, "and you ever call me again, call my wife." It was funny. I mean, when I said "shut up, sit down" he went whoosh (sitting down sound).

MM: Right down.

RM: Somebody said "you didn't tell him that did you?" I said "I did." I did some other things. [1:10:00] I filed a bill one time that said town marshals have to work within their town. Town marshal has more police powers than state police. 'Cause they can write for, oh, things like stop s—or in towns, things like parking violations. State police can't do that. So, they're outside—we got one guy, town marshal in LaGrange, a little town. He's been—he drives 35,000 miles a year. He's running up and down 120, grew up at Howe. Runnin' radar north of town. Got a girlfriend up there, he goes up and runs radar in front of her house. Just outside the city. No protection in the town. The town's payin' his wages, he oughta be in town. They shouldn't be running around the countryside. So I filed a bill. [inaudible] [1:11:00] Well they didn't like that, obviously. I got a lot of information. Guy was tellin' me, he says, this chief of police, town marshal. Runnin' radar out there on that stretch of road, cite 'em all into court and if they decide that they don't

want to court, tell ‘em you can just settle it for forty dollars. Well, they don’t want to go to court, so they pay forty dollars, forty bucks, goes right to the town to the police department. Says he does it when he runs out of money. That’s the kind of stuff that was going on, so I was trying to stop all that. So I said, local town cop said, “I know ‘em all. They’re all friends of mine. Want to have a meeting?” Said sure, I’ll have a meeting. “When can you manage?” Well, I’ve got a town meeting in Syracuse, so I’ll come by Saturday about one o’clock, I’ll stop in. So I go in and the room is packed. The room is a [1:12:00] little bigger than this, but it’s packed. I’m in front and the first seat’s right there (points). I mean, it was contentious. I had asked the sheriff and he said “I support that.” At the meeting, the sheriff stands up and to support it, he said “It’s wrong, you shouldn’t a done that.” I said, “You told me you supported it.” He said “well, that’s before I talked to everybody.” Yeah, uh huh. All the town—all the marshal board was there. All of ‘em. It got pretty nasty. I tried to answer a question, they all shout at me. Well you can put this on the record. This is exactly what I told ‘em. (makes hand gesture)

MM: Time out.

RM: Time out. If you don’t shut up and let me answer my questions you can all kiss my ass and I’m outta here! Got real quiet in there. I said “now we can talk.” That’s exactly what I told him. [1:13:00] Somebody said “you didn’t tell ‘em that.” I said “that’s cop talk [inaudible] understands that. That’s what I told him.

MM: Yeah, talk to him like you normally would.

RM: It got real quiet in there and we worked it out.

MM: Uh-huh.

RM: The guy says how about two miles? I say two miles I can handle. I got it all worked out and the committee chair wouldn’t hear the bill, so it’s dead. He wouldn’t hear it. Said it’s too contentious, I’m not going to do it. It’s a good bill, and he said I’m not gonna do it. He’s got control, I can’t force it. So it died. But it’s a good idea. You know that driving on the left-hand lane, going to—I filed that bill when I was in there years ago. The chairman wasn’t gonna hear the bill, there’s no way you can enforce it. I said, oh yeah there is, you can be in that lane behind him. Yeah, but that isn’t gonna happen very often. Well, once is enough. [1:14:00] They get the word out, they won’t do that. He wouldn’t hear it. This time they passed it. It’s now law. Drive that left-hand lane, you gotta move over. It’s a good bill.

MM: Do I understand, too, that you put forth a seatbelt bill?

RM: The what?

MM: Seatbelt bill. Where you—police can pull you over for not wearing your seatbelt, right?

RM: I carried that in the senate.

MM: Mmhmm.

RM: I delivered the—I presented the bill, I had the final—the author always gets the final remarks. You present the bill, debate, you can close. The senate always gets to close, the senator. So the guy sittin’ upstairs, said I’m one of the best speeches he ever heard on the senate floor. I said, I’ve lived this seat belt thing. I started wearing a seat belt in 1956. [1:15:00] It was just a lap belt. I said, I’ve seen people that died because they didn’t have a seat belt on. I’ve seen people that lived because they did have one. And I, you know I went through my whole—I talk about fifteen minutes on that thing, and it passed.

MM: Would you say that your career as a law enforcement officer influenced a lot of the legislation you put forth?

RM: No. It just... I did a lot of public speaking when I was on the state police. Did a lot of—did a lot of drug lectures. Did a lot of those. But... I had the background for some of the things that were goin’ on. I tried not to be known as the police senator. I didn’t want that.

MM: Sure. [1:16:00]

RM: I wanted to broad thing. That’s why I tried not to carry anything unless it was really important.

MM: Well I have to ask about the hypnotist bill.

RM: Oh!

MM: (chuckles) Tell me about that.

RM: One of the guys in my district, he’s dead now, was a hypnotist. And uh—actually he believed that. When he’d go to the doctor to get some surgery, he didn’t take it, didn’t freeze it, he didn’t take any medication, he’d hypnotize himself. He wouldn’t bleed, he wouldn’t feel any pain. Truth. That’s a true story. So he got me involved, because they weren’t licensed in Indiana. There’s a lot of people goin’ around sellin’ this stuff that aren’t really licensed and just [inaudible] people. [1:17:00] So I filed the bill to make ‘em licensed, they had to go be qualified this or that by somebody. And I got invited to their, I think their national—one of their meetings—where they hypnotize people up on the stage. And everybody said, yeah, that was put up. Well, mighta been put up with some of ‘em, but I tell you there was some of them were gone, they were out. Out. Did some dumb things when they were out that you wouldn’t normally do. And if you were receptive to hypnotists, you could set there and be talkin’ to somebody and the guy would go under. I was sitting at this table, big table, and this one gal was sitting next to me and she went like that [makes gesture]. I said what’s the matter? She said he was starting to put me under, [1:18:00] I had to get out of there. So, I carried the bill and it was, uh, difficult—everybody laughed at me. But I got one of their plaques and the national organization. Indiana finally became one of the states that licensed. Was a fun bill.

MM: (laughs) I bet. Sounds like there’s some funny stories on the floor from that.

RM: Oh yeah. I tell you a story, one time I had a—we had a situation occur in Auburn where... I'm tryin' to put the facts together because this has been quite a while. A guy got shot when he broke into the house. End up suing and [1:19:00] there was a lot of movement in my district up there because it occurred in Auburn. I can't remember all the facts, I'm probably not getting it right. Anyway, I went to a meeting a while, there was a couple hundred people there, with Dennis Kruse, one of the other house members, and me. Mighta been... I dunno who else was over there, one of the house members, anyway. They were trying to figure out a way to take care of this, and they didn't come up—they come up with a lot of weird ideas. You know, everybody get the gun, drag him back in the house, all that crap. So I got to thinkin', the way to solve that is once you commit a crime in my house, you have waived your rights and if you get hurt as a result of it, I'm not liable. [inaudible] [1:20:00] So I had LSA write the bill. We wrote it three or four times, I worked with [inaudible]. Was brilliant. We got that all put together, I put it on the floor. I passed that thing two or three times outta the senate, sent it to the house. Never got anywhere. Bob Helman used to debate me on that. So second time I did that, we got involved in debate, he was really workin' be over. And I'd just got done, he'd come back "you just kicked my butt." I said "I should, I just saw the tape from last year." He said, "you [inaudible]." I did, I watched the tape from last year, I got him. I knew exactly where he was goin'. But they had one guy who's still in there, Randolph, [inaudible--Lonnie] Randolph. He kept sayin', "in other words, I'm goin' home from school [1:21:00] and I walk across your yard, you can shoot me because I'm trespassing and I'm [inaudible]." I said no, no you're not. You're not gonna do that. You gotta commit a crime when you're in my house, a crime of burglarly. Something in my house. Well, he kept asking. I bet he asked that question thirty times. One little piece outta that bill went. That bill. He's the [inaudible] of Randolph. I liked him. He got in trouble on the toll road one time, ran outta gas or had a flat tire, and he called me and I took care of it for him. He was travelling across, he knew me so he called me, and I got a guy to help him out. Didn't cost him nothing.

MM: So I know you were involved with the budget too, and were on the budget committee. And you were known for saying "there is no money," is that right?

RM: I'll tell you that, when I became— [1:22:00] when Maury retired I got budget committee.

MM: Okay.

RM: And then Bob Garton made it to appropriations committee and split the budget. The budget and the appropriations committee. And then took the tax and fiscal policy out of it, gave that to Luke.

MM: Luke being Kenley?

RM: Kenley, yeah. Brilliant. Very smart. Good legislator. Him and I had a little confrontation, but I'll tell ya about that in a minute. But anyway, I got that. The budget became mine. So, Daniels got elected, we were 750 million dollars in payment delays.

MM: And this is early 2000s?

RM: It was 2000. When he first came into office. No, it had to be later than that because there was Bayh for three years, then Bannon.

MM: I bet it was '04.

RM: [1:23:00] It had to be eight years after '88. Cause they had O'Bannon then Kernan were in there for four years, or eight years. Six years. Kernan, filled the last years of Frank's term. Bayh was in there for eight years. Anyway, he got elected, we were 750 million dollars into payment delays. 600 million structural deficit, we were spendin' that much more than we were taking in. So... we had to tighten our belt to get rid of those. So that was my goal as appropriation chair, to get that under control. So my "there is no money" became my slogan. There is no money. So I went to the—they always have a big convocation [1:24:00] of lobbyists and business people. They all get together, and then they have various divisions from government come in and talk. I was in there with Jeff [inaudible—Eshvik?], [inaudible-Vy?] Simpson, and I don't know who the other... two senate, two house, four of us on a panel. So became my turn, they were talking money, da-dah, da-dah, it came my turn, I says "thank you for allowing me to come today, but I tell you the model for this year is there is no money. Now, come on, there is no money, there is—come on now, sing—there is." I had them singing. I said remember that, there is no money. (both laugh) So they came in, they knew there wasn't any. So we didn't spend any. [1:25:00] So at the end of it, the next budget cycle we had cleared that 750 million dollars and we had a billion dollar surplus. 'Cause we didn't spend anything, and education still got 660 million dollars of new money.

MM: Wow.

RM: So the second year I was at that same convocation, same people. So I'm talking, all the sudden I shook my pocket, I'm still talkin'. I get my cell phone out, "'scuse me a minute. Hello. Yes, Governor. That's what I'm tellin' 'em, there is no money. That's what I've been tellin' them. I'll continue, Governor. Thank you." (laughs) Got the message. I did it in such a way they will remember it. That's what I did. I made it fun. I had fun doing that. But, uh, that's why I developed—when I went to caucus, "there is no money." [1:26:00] They gave me a big sign "there ain't no money." Well I didn't say there ain't, 'cause that's a double negative. There *is* no money. Gave me a great big sign and they all signed it. That was my mantra, there is no money.

MM: But you brought us out of the deficit, I understand.

RM: Huh?

MM: You brought us out of the deficit right?

RM: Yep, exactly.

MM: Wow. Well tell me a little bit about the Republican caucus. How did that work?

RM: Worked good. It's where you get the chance to tell your story among your fellow Republicans, try to convince them you're right on your feeling about an issue. You discuss the

issue. If there's anything that the Democrats are tryin' to do, you discuss that. We always made sure we had a Republican in lead on all bills. 'Cause the senate is Republican, [1:27:00] they're responsible for anything comes outta their house. So you make darn sure that you've got your name on it. You wanna make sure it's right, 'cause it's law. So we talked about a lot of those things. There were some arguments. Bob Garton was probably the smoothest guy to manipulate people that I ever saw. He did it in such a way that nobody got mad. He got mad. He'd "okay, I'll go downstairs and file a bill *today!*" No, they wanted him just hold off a minute. See? He got 'em to move. He was good at it. He was a good leader, I'll tell you, and a good man too. He read *every* bill that came into that senate. I mean *every* bill.

MM: That's a lot.

RM: And he had—they worked something in there, [1:28:00] maybe you oughta change this a little because it—they change the constitutionality, make marks on it. Said, "ya know, better change this a little bit." He was very good. And he was a good friend of mine too. I uh, hate to see him leave.

MM: Yeah.

RM: 'Cause he was easygoing talk to.

MM: Were you there a couple years after he was out?

RM: (nods head yes or no)

MM: Okay.

RM: I was—David Long became... Yeah, that was interesting because Kenley come up with maybe Long and Kruse, they had a meeting. They were talking about [inaudible]. Getting your vote for pro tem. I said, "you guys forget about me? Maybe I want to run." Just (gestures, laughs) twist 'em a little.

MM: Uh-huh. [1:29:00]

RM: Can't just take everything for granted, got to have a little... They wanted—a lot of people wanted me to run for pro tem, but I felt like I do better in the budget, serve the state better there. And over there. I mean, I ran the Ligonier district. Everybody said I was the best district commander they ever had, but I didn't let anybody step on anybody. I didn't let anybody from the outside step on anybody. I stuck up for my guys. Uh, but anyway... I didn't want to be. But I thought I'd stick it in there, just put them—let them know I was around.

MM: Yeah, sure.

RM: Didn't want to let them think they were getting away with everything. (both chuckle) But anyway, David got elected. He did a good job. Yeah, David...

MM: Mmhmm. You said you had a story about Kenley?

RM: Yeah, Luke and I. [1:30:00] Luke was fiscal, tax and fiscal policy. And I had—we had given the k-12 funding to Ryan Mishler, and I took college funding. College and the rest of the budget. 214 pages. And Luke was having meetings with the, I don't want—maybe I don't want to say. Yeah.

MM: Okay, that's up to you.

RM: I got... I got upset with Luke because he was trying to do the college funding and that was my job.

MM: Hmm, yeah.

RM: He got mad and then he called me the next day, apologized and I did too. So it worked out, but.... You know, I—take care of yours and I take care of mine. [1:31:01]

MM: Sure, sure.

RM: But I had that with other people, too, so.

MM: Yeah. Well, having served that long, there's bound to be conflict, certainly. What would you say, you know you served close to twenty years, or right at twenty years... what were the values of the Republican party during your time?

RM: Good government. Small government. Trying to pass things that meant something. That had—that had meaning. I was told you can't come up with a new idea on anything because everybody's already tried it. And then I—I had a lot of bills. My goodness, my first year I musta had a ton of 'em. But they come to me, I say yeah, I'll take it, I'll take it. Well I was dumb to do that 'cause I couldn't realistically work 'em all. But I got quite a few of 'em that were good bills that meant something that passed, [1:32:00] that had meaning. But I think the philosophy of the government, Republicans, always been small government. Get people the right to move without having suppression and government on their back. It's been that way, was that way when I was there. That was Bob Garton's philosophy. We had—the basic principles of the Republican party is good government. ... Fiscal responsibility. Take care of education. Take care of the needs of people that can't take care of themselves. Those that can take care of themselves oughta do somethin'. Welfare is fine, but if you're capable of working, you oughta put something back in the pot. I think that's kinda the philosophy that still prevails. [1:33:00] Uh, good philosophy, good government. Problem's always been between Democrats and Republicans: we believe in good government, they believe in spendin' money. No fiscal responsibility. We do.

MM: Okay. Can you walk me quickly through the process of putting forth a bill? What does that look like?

RM: Well you gotta—somebody come—normally starts with probably somebody in the lobby community. Everybody says lobbyists are bad people. They're not bad people, 'cause there are

so many pieces of legislation. You gotta have somebody that knows the facts so you can make a logical decision. A lobbyist does that. Now, there's always two. Your first question you ask is who's gonna oppose it? That's the first question you ask, at least, that's what I asked. [1:34:00] I wasn't gettin' any [inaudible]. So you get the idea, take it to LSA, they draft it in bill form, law form. So the language consists of in the format of how it's decided. You bring it back, give it to you, read it, you check it, you make sure it's what you want to say. If it's a lobbyist's bill, you go back to the lobbyist, say "is this right, is this right, this right? Is it constitutionally correct?" "Looks good." Okay. Then you, you got—you file the bill, I think the LSA three days. Goes on the floor, it's read on the floor at least three days. Goes to second reading. Call the bill for second reading is eligible for amendments. If there's any amendments from anybody in the floor, you can amend it. You can [1:35:00] accept the amendments or you can debate. Debate is a vote. Normally a voice vote, sometimes it's a roll call. After the second reading, goes to third reading, that's when you debate the bill, present the bill for consideration. You argue, go to vote, pass. Who's your house sponsor? Gotta have a house sponsor. You send it to somebody in the house. I had a bill one time that was on water. I wrote the bill that regulates personal watercraft. [inaudible] the whole bill. Who you sendin' it to? I'm sending it to Dennis Kruse and Phyllis Pond. (both laugh) Kruse and Pond. (both laugh)

MM: Good fit, right? Oh, that's funny.

RM: I tell you, that bill got defeated on the floor of the house. [1:36:00] That's a good story. I tell that a lot of times because you got the feeling that the floor of the house because Phyllis didn't read the latest version. She had the original version, which we changed and made the sec—she didn't read the second one, so it got beat. So the people that had lost a daughter because she was waterskiing and a personal watercraft cut between the boat and (makes a hitting sound with hands) caught her, sucked her right in there with that rope and killed her. They came down, two of 'em, there mighta been more, they lobbied every house member. Every house member. So there's always another piece of legislation that's in the same section of the code. Amendment to that bill, [1:37:00] sent it back to the house, and they lobbied every house member and that bill passed. So I tell everybody if you think the government doesn't respond to you, there's a good example. You gotta get involved. If you've got somethin', get your people together, don't yell and scream. Just ask them to come out and ask, talk to them about it. You can change people, and you do—that bill passed.

MM: Wow.

RM: I tell you, I've been very fortunate in my twenty years. I've got four honorary doctorate degrees. I've got one from Vincennes, IU, Purdue, and Trine. Also I got the one from Ivy Tech.

MM: What was the fourth one you said? From Tr--?

RM: Trine. Up at Angola, Trine University.

MM: Oh, okay.

RM: One of the best engineering schools around. [1:38:00] It's got a marble [inaudible]. Super chancellor up there, a president. He's taken that university and just. I mean, the campus is beautiful. I got to speak to every one of those graduating classes, all of 'em. Got the cap and gown, I still got 'em. The gowns and all, I can still wear 'em.

MM: (chuckles) If it gets cold this winter.

RM: Yeah. I'm an honorary doctorate, I can wear my gown if I go to a commencement. But it's funny enough. I got the Sagamore and Wabash from the governor. He presented it to me on [inaudible--election day, Lincoln day?].

MM: Which governor presented it to you?

RM: Daniels.

MM: Daniels.

RM: Great guy. He really is. Probably one of the best governors we've had in a long time. Fiscally responsible, I mean he knew it. And he's smart. Very smart. [1:39:00] He's doing a great job a Purdue.

MM: Yeah, I was gonna say, he's up at Purdue now, right?

RM: He had a—they had a bill that they wanted to attach a penalty if a riverboat was sold, called it transfer penalty—tax. I wouldn't do it. I said no, I said they put 700 million dollars in our coffers every year, why do we want their [inaudible]? You know, why do you want to bite the hand that feeds you? I wouldn't do it. The Governor says, "We're gonna do it." I said, "Governor, you work in the executive branch and I work in the legislative branch, and we're not gonna do it." (both laugh) And we didn't.

MM: Well you would have been around when the gambling legislation was undergoing. What was your stance on that?

RM: Oh yeah. Well I voted for the riverboats, I voted for that. My vote was what [inaudible].

MM: Yeah. [1:40:00] What was your take on—would it be good for Indiana, or what was sort of your motive there?

RM: Well, people are gonna gamble. They go to Las Vegas—you go to Vegas, get a plane out of Indianapolis, it's full. They're gonna gamble, might as well just let 'em do it here. I like the model that—what's that, when you come into Kentucky, used to a big, big sign, "Indiana's stealin' our money" or something to that effect, cause they went in there to gamble. 700 million dollars. I believe in... When they did it, I tried—there was two boats that uh... I got a signed autograph from the president. Donald J. Trump. I had a meeting with him. One of 'em, there was about five or six of us, maybe more, that had a meeting with Trump over his two riverboats. [1:41:00] Had dinner with him.

MM: Oh, really?

RM: Yeah. Anyway, they had a guy that wanted to buy one of 'em and put it in Angola. So, that was after I got outta the senate. 'Cause I said, "You got one in northwest, you got *two* in northwest, you got one in southeast, you got one in southwest, you got one in Indianapolis. There's nothin' in the northeast, give us a break." "No." So what happened? The Indians built the one over at South Bend. So now northeast still don't have anything. We got a horse track, up there at [inaudible], which is full every day. So I just figured that gaming, regardless, it's coming. Might as well do it.

MM: Now is—fill me in a little bit on the Trump thing because, wasn't um, he—so we wanted to buy some of his riverboats, [1:42:00] or he had some in Gary, or?

RM: He had two of 'em up there, joint at the hip. Two riverboats and they were right together. You can go on and go this way or this way. Well, I think he was... gonna sell 'em, or something? I can't remember what, he was tryin' to get 'em to be land based. Can't remember all the details of that meeting. It's been... it's been twelve, thirteen years [inaudible]. Anyway, the guy that wanted to build the one over here was a Black fellow. Came here in his limousine, and he had the money, he was gonna—he had the land staked out he was gonna buy. Woulda been ideal, right close to I-80, I-69, woulda been ideal for that part of the state. They were in favor of it. Town was. Because you go down to southern Indiana at... [1:43:03]

MM: [Inaudible].

RM: No, I'm talking about the one over on the east side.

MM: Oh, in the Evansville area.

RM: No, the other way. Lawrenceburg. They got the streets lined in gold.

MM: Oh, gosh. What's that one called?

RM: I don't know, I just—

MM: I can't remember.

RM: I had an argument with her. I went down there—they got, I don't know how many millions of dollars in their foundation. And we were thinkin', we oughta take some of that money. Oh, talk about a sore spot! So I met with the town council from Lawrenceburg, they came up to the office, and of course the senator down there Johnny Nugent, he didn't want to do that, [1:44:00] which I don't blame him, 'cause they didn't want to do it. So we got together, we think well, we'll just take a little bit of it, based on how much you have. We didn't get it done, but I went to Lawrenceburg. Budget committee went down there and this guy that was town... town clerk or town manager I guess. Wasn't the mayor, was the town manager. We got in a little debate about their money, how much they had and why they weren't sharin' it with everybody like they

should. Ya know, if you got it, you oughta share it. We got all done, the guy came up to me, said, “You know, I always wanted to meet a son-of-a-bitch from Indianapolis, I finally did.” I said, “Thank you, sir. Comments are well taken.” (both laugh) That’s what he told me. I wasn’t very popular down there. [1:45:00]

MM: Yeah.

RM: Ya know, I was just tryin’ to—when you’re lookin’ for money... We authorized the riverboat down there, and we—although it was a private contract that they had negotiated with the riverboat, we thought we oughta have a little piece of it.

MM: Was that Argosy? Is that what that one’s called?

RM: Could be. I can’t remember. I been there a while. Budget committee travelled around. One down at Evansville, I won. Got out there, and we went to have a drink, I had to buy.

MM: (both laugh) That’s what happens when you win.

RM: Cost me more than I want.

MM: Oh, that’s funny.

RM: Ridiculous. But it was fun. You know, I think—having getting those four honorary doctorates, and I got some nice plaques like this. I get a pin to wear when I go to [inaudible] things. [1:46:00] I still get invited back. IPFW Fort Wayne, all those buildings down there, when I was on the budget committee. The Innovation Center was a concept that had that they wanted to start, working partially but they wanted to expand it. I got a five million dollar grant to start that and that thing is now part of IPFW. It’s still there. Student housing, IPFW Fort Wayne, first student—regional campus that got student housing.

MM: That’s you too?

RM: Yeah, they built the medical center up there for doctors. (both chuckle)

MM: You again.

RM: I did a lot for—well, I did that because [1:47:00] everything up there helps that whole area which helps me. Helps that whole area. Even though I live in LaGrange, still helps me. Helps my whole area. And Fort Wayne was not my district, never had Fort Wayne, that was my brother’s.

MM: What was it like to serve with your brother?

RM: That was good. Every Sunday night we had milk and cookies in the room at the hotel. We stayed in the Renaissance up on 9th Street. Every Sunday night we got together and talk about things. He came to me—he was executive director of the National Service Association in Washington. Went into Arlington, so he had a high paying job. He made lots of money. He was

sheriff he made lots of money, [1:48:00] his retirement, lots of money. And he came to me and he said, "I'm thinking about running for the senate. Do you care if I run?" I said, "No, I'd love to have ya." He said, "Well, I'm gonna run." So, good. So he ran and got along just fine. He uh, he argued. He was really argu—he'd go caucus and if he had a point he wouldn't—he wouldn't let go of it. And he went to—he was just—the way he did things. He'd go to the mic and say "Well, the honorable so-and-so," you know, he was really like how they do in Washington. That's how he did it. Very respectful. And uh, he was alright. He got along just fine. We never had any arguments.

MM: [1:49:00] Well he kinda followed your career path, too, right? I mean, he got into law enforcement, then—

RM: He took my job when I left the sheriff's department.

MM: Uh-huh.

RM: Yeah. Just happened to be that way. He died when he was in office. And he came to me after I got—I got promoted to brigadier general in the Indiana Guard Reserve by General Buster. Got my stars. He was at that party, because I had a new [inaudible] and I wanted him there. On the way back he told me that he had cancer. I mean, he was—he told me in the parking lot. In the senate parking lot. Of course, you know, we helped each other and got along... When he came back the second time, he said it's back. It's really bad. [1:50:00] He died when I was in, when I was in, uh, Florida, playing golf. Had to come back. He was a good brother. What he believed in, he believed. He didn't budge. His convictions were very strong. Lived that police life for twenty years, as in the sheriff's department, then he went to Washington. Travelled all over the country. He had friends everywhere. He met with Clinton several times, as the National Sheriff's Association. So he, and he was rubbin' elbows with some big people. I rubbed elbows in Indiana. [1:51:00] He was at a little higher level.

MM: (laughs) Now your other brother, Fred, is that what you said? Was he in law enforcement as well, or?

RM: No.

MM: No.

RM: He had his own business. I had a son, that's Lane, when I left the senate, I had all the signs. I tried to convince him to run. I said, "Just go file." The name, everybody knows the name. They'll think it's me. I mean, not that I'm so good, but they'll know it—they got the association with name, they know what means—service. He said, "No, I won't do that." I said, "Man, it's laid out for ya. I'll give you all the sings. Give you everything I got, give you the money." He said, "No, I won't do that." And he wouldn't do it. His son was about a senior in high school, [1:52:00] a *devout* Republican.

MM: Oh, really?

RM: And he follows politics, he knows politics. He debates with the teachers, he really does. And he woulda been—he woulda run. He’s a gifted musician. He plays the piano, he sings. He plays in the church. In fact Sunday, he’s playin’ church. They’re lettin’ him—he’s gonna sing two Billy Joel songs in the church Sunday. He sang in the school. At the end of the year they have everybody comes in and performs. He got on the stage and sang two songs. Played the piano and sang, and the girls went nuts. He sang “rock a [inaudible], crocodile, rock the baby” or whatever that is, he sang that song. [1:53:00] And they were yellin’ and a’screamin’.

MM: (chuckles) Oh, that’s fun.

RM: I said, “How’d it go?” And he said, “Oh, it went fine. Two of ‘em asked me to marry ‘em.”

MM: (laughs) Big day for him, I guess.

RM: He entered in a contest at my daughter’s request. He won first place. He can play, I tell ya, he’s really a good pianist. He ads lib when he’s playin’. He played a concert—his teacher, he’s still takes piano lessons at the end of the year, supposed to his last one this year, and he has a concert and he plays classical stuff and he plays a duet with her.

MM: Wow, impressive.

RM: Oh, he’s wonderful. Yeah. He’s very good, and he’s got a good voice. I think he’s—I don’t know, he’s not sure where he’s goin’ yet. [1:54:00] I think he may be goin’, I don’t know where he’s goin’.

MM: Yeah, big decision.

RM: Ball State or IU or... Some other one up here somewhere.

MM: Yeah. Well I just have a few more questions left, but—

RM: I’ve just been wanderin’ around with this.

MM: That’s okay. That’s the whole point, to get all these stories down. I’m enjoying it. What would you say the public does not know about how the General Assembly operates? Or just about the General Assembly?

RM: What they don’t know, obviously, what goes on behind those closed doors when we have caucus. The Democrats... the difference I see between Republicans and Democrats when it comes to those closed door meetings—the Democrats go in there and they fight like crazy, but they come outta there and they’re bond together, and they stay together. Republicans go in [1:55:00] and fight like crazy, and they come out of there all over the place, and they’re talkin’ about it out here. Democrats don’t talk about it, Republicans talk about it. That’s the difference. But that’s some of the things that go on behind those doors. It’s not bad, it’s just... it’s the way. Makin’ laws is like makin’ sausage. Doesn’t look good. And you know, General Assembly’s—the legislature was created to take the fighting off the streets and move it into a confined area

called the chambers. That's why it was done, take it off the streets and bring it in here. That's exactly the way it was. So what goes on in there, in those meetings is generally not general knowledge of the public, they shouldn't know about all that. Not that it's bad, but it's just that it's sausage.

MM: Yeah, you just gotta work through it [1:56:00] to get everybody on the same page or understanding the issues.

RM: Yeah. It's just—I think that's probably one of the things. Some of the back deals that are made... to get something done. There's a lot of negotiating, give and take. It's not that they shouldn't know that, but that's the way it works. You do this and this. It's nothing illegal, it's not bad, it's just the way you get things done. It's sausage-making. "I want this." "Well, I want this." "Well let's see if we can't work together, and we both get it." That's what Dale Sturtz, Sturtz was that guy. Dale was—we had an excess lottery money. We used to give out grants. He took his in the house, and I got together with him, I said, "Now Dale, you take those and I'll take these and we'll get 'em all." That's what we did. [1:57:00] He got 'em and I got 'em.

MM: Was that the bill Indiana Fund, was that what that money was called.

RM: Yeah, and I ran that for a while. I took care of that. But uh, that's how we got things done.

MM: Yeah.

RM: So, it's not bad, it's just sausage-making.

MM: Well, what were some of the most common controversial either issues or pieces of legislation that you recall from your time?

RM: The ones that I always—the controversial ones is the abortion question. Those things just... back and forth they... they keep tinkering with it.

MM: In parties or between parties, or?

RM: Well, mostly Republicans sometimes. Democrats are pro-choice, Republicans are pro-life, generally. And those arguments on the floor [1:58:00] of the senate get pretty nasty 'cause it's personal to some people. And ya know, when you get into those issues, they become really controversial. So those—and they just go on and on and on. It seems like everybody's gotta talk about it. And I made my—when they came to me, I made myself known that I am pro-life, don't bother me. But I also believe we got enough—don't need to be tinkering with that thing. Leave it alone. Those are some of the issues... Budget was always a question. That was always debated and argued. 'Cause wasn't enough here, too much there, union [inaudible] back and forth. Education was always debates because you had ISTA wantin' [1:59:00] this and uh, Bob Garton, er, Bob Margraf was leader for the ISTA at that time.

MM: They were pretty powerful back in the day.

RM: Yeah they were. And I got along with ‘em fine. He sent a note into me one time, said “Vote yes.” I went out into the hall, I said, “Don’t ever tell me how to vote. Can talk to me, but don’t ever tell me.” I got along with him fine. I didn’t take any of his crap.

MM: Um. What legislation did you work the hardest on?

RM: Budget. That and uh, I rewrote all the bills on the uh, on the lakes. ‘Cause I started a lakes management group ‘cause there was so many complaints comin’ from high water [2:00:00] or this and that, ducks, you know, just all kinds of complaints. And so I said that’s—I got together with a guy from DNR, said “Let’s form a lakes management work group and have people from all walks come together.” And we did that. Our first meeting was in Angola, there was so much water, it rained so hard the water was clear up the top of the curbs. But we had a lot of people, so we divided them in three groups and put all the issues down that were raised in those groups. Took those issues, took it to the lake management work group which I chaired. Debated, talked about it. Created a lot of legislation that went through there. Uh, just—I can’t remember all of it—it was just a lot of legislation... about the environment, [2:01:00] about the fishing laws, about everything. Boats. Licensing. It all went there. I don’t know how many pieces of legislation we passed, but I think something like eighty recommendations for legislation.

MM: Wow.

RM: A lot of ‘em got [inaudible—passed, lost?], a lot of ‘em didn’t. But you talk about stuff, which is good sometimes.

MM: What was your proudest moment as a legislator?

RM: ...I think, if I think back the proudest moment I had was when I walked in that first day. I stood up there in that balcony and looked down. That was the best day. And every time I went in there. I walked the halls, I could hear the [2:02:00] voices from the past. I could hear the debates. I could hear the—I walked—I could just walk in the senate floor and just feel the majestic feeling that I had when I walked in there. Not power—I didn’t have power, it was just a feeling of responsibility because I could just—I could change the law. It’s quite a feeling. I enjoyed that. I think I was—In the last budget that I passed, normally that’s debated. There’s amendments filed, there’s debate, argument. When I filed the last budget, it went for second reading, no amendments. It went to third reading. I presented the bill. I think it was five got up in favor of the bill. It passed without debate. [2:03:00]

MM: Wow.

RM: First time in twenty years that that ever happened, that there wasn’t any debate or a meeting. You know why? ‘Cause I worked with the Democrats. I did, I worked with them.

MM: Do you think that’s key for getting things done?

RM: Oh, absolutely. I mean, right now the senate’s got, what, 37 Republicans? They can do whatever they want. Only need 26. They don’t need Democrats. But when I was in there, one

time it was 26-24, now that's pretty close. 'Cause you gotta have 26 votes to pass anything. And if you're short one, you got 25, Lieutenant Governor is gonna vote 'cause he chairs. He's the president of the senate. And he was a Democrat. So, that was a different tune, but then picked up more seats and it got easier. [2:04:01] But still, ya know, like I said, I think that Democrats, they deserve to have a voice 'cause they have 26,000. I think I had 26,376, but I think I knew that 'cause one week they all called me. (both chuckle) I think. Ya know, I loved that job. I had to leave. I loved the challenges, I loved the people. Got madder 'n hell sometimes, but it was fun. 'Cause you could argue on the floor with a Democrat, go across the street that night, and have a drink together. And not argue over there.

MM: Yeah, you could leave it on the floor.

RM: You didn't take it out. Now that [inaudible—line?] conquers. [2:05:00] We never had that problem. I was down there when they had they 5,000 people, workers when they passed the right to work bill. That was pretty exciting. There was so many out in the hallway that you couldn't walk around. The building was, the floor was, there was ... 6,000 of 'em, about west of the left door—west door. I had a guy from LaGrange came down, he said, "I come here to give you hell." But he said, "Found out I can't do that." I said, "Why?" He said, "They told me out you were alright." So I said, okay, that's gone. So, I went out and walked in the middle of them f—them 6,000 of them in the middle of 'em. I said, "Just don't tell 'em who I am. Let's just go see what's goin' on." I went out [inaudible]. (chuckles) He said, "Aren't you afraid?" I said, "Of what?" [2:06:00] Tougher 'n [inaudible], I been in riots, boy. (both chuckle) I know what it's like to be afraid.

MM: Yeah. This was different.

RM: I think that's probably. That and that budget. And that first time on the floor of the senate was, and my first bill. That was... I tell ya, I carried every piece of legislation that I carried. I knew everything about that that there was to know. I took that bill and I read every line. If there was a code [inaudible—side or site?] listed, I checked to see what it was. I wrote it down so I knew what it was. So they, "What's this code, Indiana code side, what is that?" I tell 'em, 'cause they're looking for places to discredit you. Never got it done.

MM: Had to be prepared. [2:07:00]

RM: I was prepared. I didn't care what bill it was.

MM: What would you say was your biggest hurdle that you overcame during your time of service?

RM: Biggest hurdle?

MM: Mmhmm.

RM: Uh. Movin' from chairman of the... uh, chairman of ... chairman of... I chaired the... Let's see, I'm trying to remember chair I think... Oh, the gun legislation came through that bill. That

committee, 'cause Bob Garton sent 'em all to me. 'Cause every one of 'em, if they got outta there had my name on it. I handled 'em all, 'cause they didn't—[inaudible] didn't they weren't good. But movin' from that chair to budget was the biggest hurdle.

MM: What made it so difficult?

RM: Responsibility. You're talkin' billions of dollars. [2:08:00] You're talkin', what? Billions of dollars for education. For higher ed. For general services of the government. State police. I wrote their paybill. I funded it. Sue Lansky was the lead, but I'm the one that helped put that together. I got the money in the budget. And the way that happened, Larry Borst was finance chairman and I was chairman of the budget committee. Larry and I went to... Tennessee to play golf. Went down with Jim Binnegar. I said, "Larry, got money for the state police?" "Yeah." I said, "What you gonna do with it?" "Oh, just give to state police." I said, "You can't do that." You gotta develop a matrix of some kind [2:09:00] that puts the money down the way it has to be. If you send it to the state police, they'll take it. And 20% for a guy that's makin' \$40,000 is a lot more than for a guy that's makin' 10. You can't do it that way, 'cause the guys at the top will take it all. "Well, we're gonna send it to [inaudible]." I hammered it all the way down there, all the way back. I went back, he finally said, "Okay, I'll do it that way." I said, "Thanks." That's exactly how that happened. So they go the matrix. Some troopers got \$15,000 raise. Now, after 25 years make \$60,000. You know, I never made 20. Wait till next year. That was my argument when I went to the mic. I said, "I was told that for years. Wait till next year." I said, "Guys, this is next year." [2:10:00] Was told that for twenty years. That was a big accomplishment, getting that done too. But I try to remember, I've...I got involved in a lot of things.

MM: Yeah. What's your favorite story or anecdote as a legislator?

RM: Oh boy. I'll have to think about that one. I think that story about [inaudible] and I goin' to meetings together when we both stood up and told that guy to sit down. That was probably the funniest thing that ever happened. But uh... I can't, off mine I can't think of anything other than that.

MM: Sure. Asking you to think about twenty years, I'm sure a lot happened there.

RM: Oh, a lot happened in twenty years.

MM: Are there any overarching lessons that you learned from your time? [2:11:00]

RM: What?

MM: Lessons that you learned as a legislator?

RM: Listen. Listen. Listen to people. Don't try to talk when they're talking, listen to what they have and what they need, then try to fill it. If they got a problem, try to help them. You know, some things I can do, some things I can't do. I did a lot things I didn't think I can do. One of 'em sent the wrong check one time. She sent the check to the state that shoulda went to the federal government and switched 'em around. And boy, that's a mess 'cause that's electronic transfers

and they go to Cincinnati. The fed does. Gee. Tried to straight that out and was terrible. I had one, she paid and check bounced. You know what the fine is? Double. She owed 700, went to 1400. [2:12:01] Tryin' to fix that was not easy either, but I did. I said, "Don't ever do it again." She said, "I won't."

MM: (chuckles) I bet. How was—ok—

RM: Th—Go ahead

MM: No, go ahead.

RM: I was just gonna say, the things like that that I did. Never make the headlines. The day to day things. I enjoyed doing all of that. That's why I left 'em my phone number. So she could get me.

MM: You wanted the people to call you and to be in touch.

RM: I can't help ya if you don't call me. And if ya do call me and I can't help ya I'll tell ya I can't help you.

MM: Unless they chew out your wife. (chuckles)

RM: Yeah. But I, you know, most of the time you can usually do something, even if it's just little things. Agreeing with them, making them feel like they have a chance to say something to somebody, they can make a difference. [2:13:00]

MM: How has the state of Indiana changed over the course of your lifetime?

RM: Well, where I live it's gotten bigger. We've had an influx in people in the county that I live in, 'cause we got an abundant number of lakes in LaGrange County. So there's a lot of people that are retiring in the [inaudible—city?], people getting older. We got more Amish. I mean, we got Amish everywhere. Got 'em livin' just down the street from me, both ways.

MM: Why are more Amish moving into the area?

RM: I don't know. There's just more of 'em. They're expanding. There used to be little areas, now they're over the whole county everywhere. And they're good people, they just don't have cars. They go to bed like 8 o'clock at night. [2:14:00] I mean, it gets winter time, the lights are off in the home six thirty, they're off. Anyway, I think Indiana's changed that way. I think uh, in some ways it just hasn't moved. Give ya an example—east of LaGrange, LaGrange is the County seat, hasn't grown much, look at Shipshewana for example, the other way, just boomed. You got trailer manufacturers, they got mobile home manufacturers, they got woodw—it's just expanded over there. Have you ever been in there?

MM: No, but my husband and his family have gone up there a lot.

RM: I mean, that thing—and LaGrange, the only place they’ve got an industrial park is north of town. They picked up a few. They tried to get one up at the toll road, it just fell flat, [2:15:00] it didn’t mature. They got the Major Moves money. I wrote the Major Moves bill, and the toll roads too. I wrote the senate—I was the senate sponsor of that bill. They got that Major Moves money...and I had to divorce myself from it because I was so upset the way they’re spending it. They’re giving the fire departments fire trucks. That’s not what it was intended for, and I tell ‘em that. And they said, “Oh, no, we—the law’s been changed.” Well, I called LSA—there hadn’t been any amendments to that bill since it was drafted and passed. None.

MM: What was the money supposed to go to?

RM: Five things: economic development, uh... can’t remember, economic partnerships with counties for economic development. It could go to roads [2:16:00] for economic development. There was five things you could use it for. They took a million of it, million eight, gave it to a school to build, a, uh, concept on tech, a tech lab they called it. A million eight. I told my wife I just gotta shut up, ‘cause it just absolutely infuriates me when they spend it that way.

MM: Frustrating.

RM: I’m fiscal responsible. It oughta be spent the way the law says it oughta be spent, and it’s not. They give the fire department—they said well, “Meeks promised the fire department \$500,000,” and Meeks didn’t promise anybody anything. I never promised a soul anything. They said, “He did.” I did not. I know better than to do that. [2:17:00]

MM: Yeah. Well, how has the general assembly changed?

RM: Well...when I was there, the way it was changing, the Republicans were runnin’ everything. I suspect now with the way in the senate they do what they want to do. That’s—the biggest change I see, there doesn’t seem to be any equal between the Democrats. And there ought to be a little more. I want the Republicans to control, but I don’t think they oughta have everything. But it’s the same people singin’ from the same song sheet. That’s what it looks like to me, and it seems to be working. They got good people, good people on both sides down there. I don’t—I got people I don’t even know. I been gone now since 2008. [2:18:00] Ten years.

MM: So there’s been a lot of change probably, or turn over at least. Well, what is any enduring qualities do Hoosiers have? Still have?

RM: They have the ability, they’ll take care of one another. They’re very giving people. I can tell you that first-hand ‘cause I ran—we had a shiner up there that was very sick. Spent a lot of money, spent a lot of time in the hospital. I had a fundraiser for him and we raised \$21,000. Presented it to him at Christmas time to help pay for the bills. People were giving hundred dollar bills, five hundred dollars. And one guy gave a thousand. I mean, it was unbelievable. We had a breakfast, you come for breakfast, throw money in the pot. [2:19:00] I mean, I had a stack of bills like (gestures). Unbelievable. But they do that for everything. My wife is a volunteer at the clothes and food basket, which gives food, clothes. She’s been there I think thirty-four, thirty-five years she’s worked there. In fact, she’s working today, she works Monday and Thursday.

Giving. People come in there Christmas time. Canned goods, I mean everything. They have a fundraiser here, they have a fundraiser there. All goes to the food and clothes basket. They take care of a lot of people there. They feed a lot of people. I mean, it's just—LaGrange—the people that I know, that's the kind of people, they're giving. [2:20:00] One gets in trouble, everybody's there. I guess that's the way the Amish are. The house burns down, the next day everybody's there to help 'em build a new one. Everybody. That's the way it works. So, I think that is the probably the best quality that I see in Indiana. People are very giving of themselves.

MM: Yeah, it's a good quality.

RM: It is. It's a Hoosier.

MM: That's right. I think we've been through most all of my questions that I have here for you. Is there anything I haven't asked or any stories that you want to share that we haven't covered?

RM: Oh, I don't think so. I think I've talked enough. I told you a lot of stuff here, I don't know how good it is or what you're looking for.

MM: No, this is perfect. Perfect. But you als—

RM: I think in my twenty years— [2:21:00] I enjoyed my twenty-five years in law enforcement. I enjoyed my four years on the school board, although that's the most contentious position. I mean, when you fire the basketball coach you get tear buildings down, you just don't m—In fact, when I ran for the senate, I didn't even carry my own precinct. I got beat in my own precinct. They were mad. (both laugh) Oh, god. That was somethin' else. Anyway, just—I loved all of that, but my years in the senate did—I had, I was not the law. I was the maker of the law. It gave me a different perspective on how things oughta be. That probably was the highlight of my life, my career. [2:22:00] That and the fact been married to my wife. I got married in 1955, so I been married a few years.

MM: A few, yeah.

RM: She's a very good woman. Very beautiful. Got four kids, got grandkids, and great-grandkids. Got four wonderful kids. I'll see 'em all tomorrow night, we play cards every Friday night. [Inaudible] Euchre.

MM: That's a fun family tradition to do.

RM: Yep, we do it every Friday.

MM: Aw, good.

RM: Yeah, it's a lot of fun. But I think that twenty years is—I didn't spend much time at home. My wife didn't go with me, I went down Sunday night and came home Friday. Saturday and Sunday, had papers spread all over the table. Reading, doin' the budget, tryin' to—I read every stinkin' line of that thing. [2:23:00] Compared last year's budget, this year's budget, what they

were askin' for next year. Compared 'em all together. And Vy Simpson, her LA was shot to [inaudible], came to me and said, "Bob, Senator Bayh wants to raise the money for airports." I think it was 250, she wanted half a million. I said, "Why?" She said, "Well they need it." I said, "Well they didn't spend their \$250,000 last year." She said, "Well they spent way more." I said, "No they didn't. I'll check and I'll be back." Come back about an hour later and he said, he said, "You're right, but how'd you know that?" I says, "'Cause I read it." (both laugh) I have a good memory for figures, numbers.

MM: Well you just mentioned your family. [2:24:00] How did your being away for part of the year affect them?

RM: Well, it didn't affect my wife because she had, she was active in the food and clothes basket. She took care of that. She's active in the church. She's on the church council. So, my kids were all gone of course. They were all close enough the she could talk with them all every day. So, she did, she just stayed home.

MM: Kept busy.

RM: She did her thing. She just was busy. I talked to her during the week. I didn't call her every day. I didn't have time every day, probably shoulda. 'Cause I went back over the time, I think, that's one of the biggest mistakes that I really made, [2:25:00] is I never called my wife every day. I wish I woulda done that now. I didn't do that. I got so wrapped up in what I was doin' that I just—It's not that I didn't care, I thought, it's just that I didn't take the time. I shoulda. Big mistake. It's the worst thing I did.

MM: Sounds like she was still very supportive of your career.

RM: Oh yeah, she, uh, she campaigned with me. Every time I run, she was right there. She took care of my finances. She was my finance officer. Took care all the money. We used to have golf tournaments. I'd have 75, 80 golfers, trying to squeeze 'em into a [inaudible]. Every time we did, it rained. So they, I told the golf course, "You schedule me when you want rain." 'Cause, god, it rained every time, except the last time. [2:26:00]

MM: (laughs) That's funny.

RM: And I even—my last golf outing, I invited everybody that I could and I paid for it all. Didn't cost 'em. It was my gift to them. Fed 'em, I had donuts in the morning, had hamburgers and hot dogs, then had steak at night.

MM: Sounds like a fun outing.

RM: It was a—had a lot of fun. Had a door prize for everybody that came. We had door prizes, just everything. I mean, I took care of the—some of 'em had good door pr—some of 'em got a full set of golf clubs. Was irons, bag, everything.

MM: Now was this for people that supported your campaign, and career?

RM: I raised 25, 35 thousand dollars.

MM: That's impressive.

RM: Yeah, well I had a lot of friends. [2:27:00]

MM: Yeah.

RM: Got funeral directors. I wrote the [inaudible] bill for the funeral directors. I mean, I carried it for them, but I'm the one that carried it. So I got their legislative aid award, I think I won about six or seven years in a row. (both chuckle) Black. I got—From IU I got some kind of award they give, it's supposed to be pretty prestigious. Don't know where it is right now, I got a, it's a black, some kind of award that's for somebody that's done exceptional work for the university. I got that one year too.

MM: Oh, is that the Chancellor's medal? Did you get that one year, too?

RM: Yeah, I did. I got that at South Bend. How'd you know that?

MM: I saw that online, they have a list of who won.

RM: That was an honor too. [2:28:00] The uh, education building, I funded that. Or, repair it, didn't build a new one. I also got their student housing. That's the second place.

MM: Now, didn't they name the Ligonier post after you, too?

RM: Do what?

MM: Did they rename the Ligonier post after you?

RM: The uh, not the Ligonier, was the toll road post.

MM: Toll road, okay.

RM: On the toll road. In Ligonier they tore down, put a McDonald's there. Kills me every time I go up there.

MM: (laughs) I bet it does.

RM: I hated that. They just spent a lot of money fixing it up, they closed it.

MM: That's frustrating.

RM: Took police away from the people. When that happened, the sheriff's calls went up like this [gestures], 'cause we were no longer there. Even though the numbers were the same, we weren't

there. [2:29:00] It's just amazing how that worked. I don't understand why you'd want to take yourself away. Well, they're trying to consolidate the posts, make 'em bigger. Bigger's not good—smaller, smaller's more cohesive. That post was one of the best posts, best-run posts in the state. Everybody got along, we had Christmas parties, we had all kinds of gatherings for the guys to get together. Our Christmas party was—I'll tell you a story about that. We had uh, every year we had a Christmas party. If somebody done something during the year that brought the attention... like we had, we bought a nice carpet sweeper, expensive. And a year later, [2:30:00] the guy come at eleven-thirty at night or— to pick it up to service it, from the company. Well, he stole it. He not only got ours, he got the janitor's too.

MM: (both chuckle) Oh, no.

RM: So the guy that was on post command go the fickle finger fail award. Took a hand, put it in a glove, put plaster on it, and named it the fickle finger fail award. Not only went to guys. We had, uh, [Inaudible] her and I used to go a lot of FOP functions in Fort Wayne. We danced a lot. We went, we used to have dances, we have [inaudible] troopers, I don't know, about five or six of us went to a lot of dances. FOP dances. [2:31:00] Went to Ligonier, they had dances. Down there, we'd go down there, we liked to dance. Comin' back from Fort Wayne, it's late at night and [inaudible] lived in Syracuse, hit a deer on the way home. So I took a picture of his wife sittin' in the car. She was just—she was just tired and her hair was floppin' on her head. She was sleepy. Took a picture and I blew it up. And I said, "You know, this fickle finger award, sometimes we give it to troopers who do something, and sometimes the wives deserve it too." And I presented it to her. I thought she was gonna kill me!

MM: (both laugh) I bet, I bet

RM: Oh, she died just a couple of months ago. She had Alzheimer's.

MM: Oh no.

RM: She was five years in a nursing home.

MM: Yeah, that's rough.

RM: I still laugh about that.

MM: Yeah, I bet. [2:32:00] That's funny.

RM: We used to have fun. It was fun at our parties. I used to emcee a lot of 'em, a lot of retirements. And always had stories. I told 'em about that district lieutenant. One time he was sittin' in his office with his secretary, and he said, "You know," oh, how'd that story go that I said that? He said, "You know, you shouldn't even be in here." And he said, "By the way, you shouldn't even be sitting on my lap." (laughs) Just stuff like that.

MM: Yeah.

RM: Oh, just, we just, I'd search for stories to tell. So I used to emcee all the Christmas parties. I emceed a lot of retirements. Fact, I emceed Les [inaudible]'s retirement when I was in the senate. I came—he called me, wanted me to do it. I came back to the senate to do it. [2:33:00] Well, I don't know, I've had a good life. I've got a wonderful wife, I got four wonderful kids, I got grandkids. Great-grandkids. They're all beautiful.

MM: Well wonderful.

RM: And I got a home. I don't owe anybody. My bills are all paid.

MM: (chuckles) What more can you ask for?

RM: Can't ask for any more'n that.

MM: Well thank you so much for driving up here and meeting me today. I appreciate it and I enjoyed talking with ya.

RM: All the troopers can thank me for their pay raise.

MM: (chuckles) Okay, I'll make sure that's noted.

RM: I am the one that funded it.

MM: Okay. Um, well—

RM: [inaudible] With Larry Borst.

MM: Okay, I'll make sure they know. Well, while we're sitting here, if you want to go ahead and sign this form. So again, I can go fill—if you just wanna write your name there, [2:34:00] and I can fill out your address and stuff. And then if there's any restrictions or anything that you want on the interview, um, oh sorry, handed it to you the wrong way there. So just print your name right there at the top.

RM: Print it?

MM: Mmhmm... Okay. And were there any restrictions that you wanted? We talked about, so the goal of the project is to eventually put the interviews on the internet so people can listen to them, but if you're not comfortable with that we don't have to. They can be available at the library.

RM: I don't—I didn't say anything.

MM: Okay. Or, if, you know, anything you think of related to that I can cut, but yeah, I don't know if there's any--

RM: Cut the language out.

MM: (chuckles) Okay.

RM: I suppose you oughta cut that outta there. [inaudible] leave it in there 'cause it's true.

MM: That's true, [2:35:00] I wouldn't—I think it's probably okay, but that's up to you. Okay, let me just grab your signature right there and we'll be good.

RM: Okay. Printed name.

MM: Yeah, I think just signature right there here. Or—

RM: You want me to print it or sign it?

MM: Sign it right up here.

RM: Right in here on this line?

MM: Like right next to this.

RM: Right here?

MM: Yeah. And mark the date and we'll be set.

RM: Date is--?

MM: It's the eleventh. October eleventh. Alright, well thank you so much.

RM: Okay.

MM: And if you want a copy of this, I just, you know if you need it, I printed that out for ya.

RM: I don't need it.

MM: You don't need it? Okay. [2:36:00]

RM: You're not gonna do anything to hurt me.

MM: No.

RM: I didn't say anything to hurt me.

MM: (laughs) That's a good thing. [2:36:08]