

ILOHI Interview with Virginia Blankenbaker

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Interview by Michella Marino

Transcribed by Katie Turner

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Virginia Blankenbaker=VB

Michella Marino=MM

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[0:00:00]

MM: [Many loud conversations in background among unidentified voices and clattering of what is possibly utensils and dishes; this background noise continues throughout interview] OK. So, I will just state for the record, then, that my name is Michella Marino, and I am here again with Virginia Blankenbaker [sound of clinking; possibly coffee cup on saucer], and today is Tuesday, October 23, 2018. So, we're just doing more of an informal conversation at, um, Café Patachou at 49th and Pennsylvania in Indianapolis. So, um, one of the things which I'd read a couple articles about and then, of course, was included in the, the book that you let me borrow—but you and Richard had a foster child for a couple of years, so will you tell me a little bit more about that?

VB: That was really a tough one—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Uh, he was a member—his, his family was a member of our North Methodist United Church [Note: VB referring to North United Methodist Church on 3808 N. Meridian St. in Indianapolis – KT], and... I get home from the Legislature one day, and—well, Richard had called and said the minister who worked at Hamilton wanted to meet there, and the coach at, um, Broad Ripple High School—that literally, Donnie Harris was living by himself. [0:01:00] His dad had died, the mother had mental illness and had been put into a, uh, you know, just a [unintelligible] to try to get her feeling better—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um, but he was living by himself, and the coach said they're worried about him, because it's getting into, um, “We're finding him, like down at—” they said 20th and Central—where they had a lotta drugs going on (MM interjects: “Yeah”) at that time—that was—we would go back to, like, '86 again, where hardly lots is happening—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Maybe it was '84, '85, but he presents that to us (stammers) at our kitchen table (chuckles), and, uh, asked if we would consider—well, they asked Donnie—can't live by himself—he said, “I can take care of myself; I've been doing it for many years,” and—

MM: Yeah—well, how old was he?

VB: He was a freshman in high school.

MM: Whoa.

VB: Or a s—maybe a sophomore.

MM: Yeah.

VB: Um... Probably thinking, oh, maybe a junior now that I think of it—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Because Jim—my son, Jim—was a freshman at [0:02:00] University of Indianapolis. Uh, and then the [unintelligible] went to IU. (Clears throat) But, um... They, they said that he wanted to have stability, and they asked him—they said, “You’re going to have to come—you’re going to have to go to a juvenile center where they can help you have a routine, or we’re trying to see where you could be placed.” And... He said, “There’s only one family, and it would be the Blankenbakers,” and it’s because Richard always made it [unintelligible] have to go to the Pacers games—we had season tickets—and he would love that if he wasn’t at basketball practice.

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, “Oh, my gosh, well, then when you said that, I thought I’d be comfortable there and they’re close to my home,” um, was presented to us, and [unintelligible] said yes. Obviously, my big mistake there, as a mother, was we had sons—yeah, should’ve been going into that so—he was—he was [0:03:00] always part of that, too, but, you know, I didn’t think about that till—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Much later—you always wanna fix the problem.

MM: Right.

VB: Anyway, so, he lived with us, then, for 2 years.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: And, uh, had his own room, fixed it up, uh, took over Sharon’s bedroom and went to basketball practice and got a scholarship, then, to the University of Michi—uh, Wisconsin—

MM: Wow!

VB: Uh, [unintelligible] was a really good guard, and he got on their first team—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And... and then, um, we were—that’s when we learned, um—so proud to go down, because he was going to be playing IU—University of—and a freshman—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: He was, he was—

MM: He was playing. Yeah, wow.

VB: And we go down, and he is not there at the game, and we were told by him that he was going to be there, um, and the coach said... Richard went down and said, “Donnie?” And he said, “We have rules. Don’t go to class, you don’t play.” And so, he didn’t play. He didn’t dress, [0:04:00] he didn’t get to go. So, that was the first disappointment... So—

MM: Well, when he had been with you all up here, had he sort of gotten away from being in the wrong crowd—

VB: Yes—

MM: And was doing well—

VB: Yes, yes, they were just splittin’ up baseball—you know, going to basketball practice, school—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Because they had, over on 49th and—see, just across 49th and, um... trying to think, um, Boulevard—no, there’s a Boulevard—maybe—or maybe, wait, on—west of here—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um, was Broad Ripple High School, so as a freshman, he went to Broad Ripple, but over on this side of Meridian, he went to Shortridge.

MM: Oh, OK—

VB: Uh, Broad Ripple was more of a, um, balanced racial [unintelligible] I would say that, whereas Shortridge was, like (stammers), 92% other races and, and probably 8%, 8 to 9% Caucasian.

MM: Wow.

VB: And, um, so in [unintelligible] however, um... [0:05:02] Most of the people that went to Shortridge have lived in this community longer than we have.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: So (chuckles), who are we to say, “We’ve moved in!” (Laughs)

MM: Yeah! (Laughs) You’re the newcomer.

VB: Right. So, um, but—a-and we also—the kids were, um, really wanting to go there.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: Um, they went to a great school at 70 as it was, as, as some of the demographic was changing, and what was really kinda neat was when the kids would, um—Nancy [Blankenbaker] wanted to—she kept saying, “I want my hair like Jaleen’s.” And I said, “I don’t know Jaleen.”

MM: (Laughs)

VB: And she said, “OK.” So, the next day, she walks home from 70, first grade—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And Jaleen is African. And she had the most beautiful—lotta pigtails.

MM: Uh-huh.

VB: And Nancy said, “Please, that’s what I want.” So (laughs) [unintelligible] this is kinda, really neat—

MM: Yeah—

VB: I thought. I, I just thought that was—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: So Nancy and Jaleen were very good friends and that’s what [unintelligible] like that, [0:06:00] we tried to do it, but it was, it wasn’t the same.

MM: Yeah (laughs)—

VB: [Unintelligible] wrong, and, and, uh, but anyway—

MM: And what was her name? Jaleen?

VB: Jaleen, but I don’t know her last name now—

MM: Yeah, have to see about—

VB: But, but then, you know, kids move on and I don’t know—

MM: Yeah—

VB: If her parents moved someplace else, and—

MM: Yeah.

VB: Um.

MM: So, back to, to Donnie, then, so he—does he finish school at Wisconsin, or what was your relationship like?

VB: Well, Richard’s the one that stayed really close to him, with him—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And, um, and he, you know what? He would—um, got a girlfriend [unintelligible] then, he started wanting to do that kind of thing, and he [unintelligible] when he'd come home on a weekend—or, not weekends, 'cause there was always a practice—

MM: Right—

VB: But, like, the holidays, he'd wanna go back with his old friends from Broad Ripple.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: And, uh, and I know that there was [sic] things we would find out later—I mean, Richard would find out—I didn't know it—um, um, one of the, one of the, one of the police, policemen of the [0:07:00] area said Donnie was driving Richard's car which was—Richard had a car that was like a Public Safety—it was his car, but he had all of his police stuff inside of it [unintelligible]—probably, um, safety [unintelligible]. And Donnie was driving that while we were on vacation and Jim was at school [unintelligible] so, Jim doesn't say anything. But, anyway, he started kinda breaking some rules, um, and, and that broke, again, Richard's heart a lot—

MM: Yeah—

VB: I didn't know about it till later, so—you find out all these things—but, but he, eventually—now is gone, I think. Killed by drugs. Uh, like, when he was in his 40s.

MM: Yeah.

VB: So, not that [unintelligible].

MM: Yeah.

VB: It was sad, really sad, but he never got away from the drug [unintelligible] but he did get to get that scholarship [unintelligible] success.

MM: Yeah. Wow. That's tough...

VB: And you, you know, um, gosh, a really great [0:08:00] book now, and it's about, um, a Chinese—one of the tri—kind of tribes in China—China has a lot of different ethnic groups, and, and, um, a mother gave up the daughter and, and now the daughter's in the U.S. and now she's got a little preschooler and the mother's trying to come in—I think about—you can try your best, you don't always know how things will work out.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: It's like [unintelligible] or like your own kids—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Like your own kids. Um, you still love them; might not like what they do.

MM: Yeah. Yeah, for sure—

VB: However, I kinda like—I kinda like what [unintelligible] my five kids does [sic] so far (laughs).

MM: (Laughs)

VB: Even though one of them has gone really—um, Betsy's always been really... Oh, she was always in the, uh, gifted classes—IPS used to have gifted classes. I don't know if they do that now.

MM: I don't know—

VB: But they identify kids in the fourth grade and slap bam, they were in gifted classes, which is School [0:09:00] 80 up in Broad Ripple, and um, the just amazing thing was, um, she was always writing. She had a little neighborhood newspaper (stammers) she started organizing and she had reporters and—

MM: Uh-huh—that's [unintelligible].

VB: So, she's continued writing and she's become kind of a part of the Me Too movement, and—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Um—

MM: Now, is she producing documentaries or something like that—

VB: Yes, yes, she is—she has done a lot—

MM: Uh-huh.

VB: Oldest daughter, Susan, is, um, is a lawyer. And, um, was hired by Sidley Austin aft—out of IU—she was one of the top students there.

MM: Wow—

VB: And, um, then married someone she was dating.

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Who was originally from Indianapolis, but he was, um, really [unintelligible] but anyway, they were married, and maybe a [unintelligible]—by the time of their third pregnancy, she said to Si-Sidley—you know, “I, I wanna be a stay-at-home [0:10:00] mom. I can't do this.” Uh, they're working them weekends and all the time—

MM: It's a lotta hours—

VB: Yeah, and it was taking—so, she was very, um, um, always [unintelligible] organized and she would try—she liked to come home and work on the cam—all of them liked to work on the campaigns.

MM: Uh-huh.

VB: Um, but, but she now, after raising a family of 6 kids, um—when the youngest was in fourth grade, she started a company called Make It Better, and it was bought out by one of the [unintelligible] magazines on the north shore of Chicago—

MM: Huh—

VB: [Unintelligible] She'd been writing articles for it.

MM: Wow.

VB: And then they put it on the—with bankruptcy, she bought it.

MM: Uh-huh.

VB: Now, she's moving into a huge philanthropy that raises money through the business—it's kind of like Martha Stewart [unintelligible]—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: You [unintelligible] a percentage of this you have to make will automatically go to, um, that philanthropy thingy thing—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And so, [0:11:00] she is now in several cities—Marin County, California. And she has a [sic] online newspaper—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: Or, or magazine, called MakeItBetter.com—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: MakeItBetter.net—both of those—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, um—

MM: Wow, that's really neat—

VB: So, and then Sharon has been an incredible mother, and so raised them without her husband, who died of cancer [unintelligible] computer [unintelligible] um, sets up mainframes in buildings and now is undergoing cancer treatments similar to mine. And, um, mentioned Betsy, who's doing a lot of writing and documentaries and, and women's groups—teaching them to write their stories.

MM: Wow.

VB: And—

MM: That's really neat.

VB: And then, the youngest, Jim, is, um, living with me right now and kind of watching and works for a security company.

MM: [0:12:01] Well, it sounds like they've all been successful in their different ways, and—

VB: Quite different—

MM: Yeah—

VB: We're individuals—we're not—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And [unintelligible] all over the map. You know, and grandkids, watching them get really involved, and, um, Lucy Griswold is a schoolteacher in Austin, Texas—I watched her get involved in the—getting her students involved—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: In high school. And it's really amazing and, um... She's very [unintelligible] about how she feels and how they—you know, she's—plays games with them, she'll take a, a headline and make it relevant today in their lives—

MM: Mmhmm—that's so important to do, yeah—

VB: So, it's kinda watching—yeah, I'm watching—you know, watching how they have developed—

MM: Yeah—

VB: The grandchild—the great-grandchildren! (Laughs)

MM: Yeah! (Laughs) Your family's expanding. Um, well, I'd also read a couple articles, and I failed to mention it, so I was triggered about it when I saw it in your book here. [0:13:00] Um, but I think it was an interim session, and I'm not sure what year it was, but where you were on the Child Support Committee?

VB: Oh, yes.

MM: And it sounded like that was very controversial.

VB: Oh, my gosh! Yes.

MM: So, I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about when that took place, and, and why it was so controversial.

VB: And I didn't write about getting shot at, did I? I don't think I [unintelligible]—

MM: Um, there was a little bit about that in there, so I wanna hear more about that, too. Ugh!

VB: Well, so—

MM: And eat, please, whenever (laughs)—

VB: That's OK—well, that, that's what I told her, "I'll probably take this and give it a shot when I get home." Um, you know, it just totally amazed me, um... It's pretty basic. Child support was a big thing and I have to say this one thing—Steve Goldsmith worked on it a lot as Prosecutor, going after parents who were not paying their child support. And, um—

MM: That was, like, a pet issue of his—

VB: Yeah, it was his, too, because, um, there's a lot of tax dollars that are paid when a parent who is working—and often—unfortunately, often it's the dad, [0:14:00] and sometimes they're such [sic] angry with the divorce that they just leave the state and they'll [unintelligible] their business [unintelligible]. Uh, so, the thing is, for them to ask the Marion County taxpayers to pick up theirs or any taxpayer to pick up—but those children need support and the mother maybe doesn't have an education, but does have a job, has a house she can't support, so how do you do that, make it fair without them going on to what's called Aid for Dependent Children? Which is really sucking out of the Social Security system—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And that's—you know, it's like, you're gonna get—you get it either way as a taxpayer, because the people are paying in taxes.

MM: Right.

VB: There's not gonna be Social Security, and now we're fighting ourselves [unintelligible] in that way right now in 2018.

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: It's amazing. But, you know, you're gonna—it's like, you can fix something early on, really try to get it done, or you really pay the cost later on. And, um, so, the child [0:15:00] support was a really big one—how was it being collected, what was on the books—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And yet, the money was going in, and often, it was through Medicaid and other—and Social Security. And so, that's where I really worked on listening to both sides of it, and, and there were—you know, it's quite interesting because I had kids of my own, and some of them had divorced, and some had been angry in their divorce, and you know, you see some of this [unintelligible]—

MM: Right—

VB: Um, and, and still [unintelligible] so what's fair? And that's what the [unintelligible] committee, and they [unintelligible] because they say, "I, I give her money, but I do—I go get groceries and I [unintelligible] the house, so I go do this, and, and now she's filed against me," um, "Based on the law, she's filed against me because she says I'm not paying anything to her, to manage the house and pay for all this, but I am paying actually more than that, but [0:16:00] there's no record of it."

MM: Right.

VB: So, that's the—that was really controversial.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And it was during that meeting that, uh, um, roughly at 9 o'clock at night, someone shot through my bedroom window from the sidewalk [unintelligible] street, and—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And right here.

MM: Well, so, in the book, you said that you saw, like, the bullet later, the hole, but were you there at the time?

VB: Oh, I was there—it was the night—so, the next morning, the man that was trimming the—doing the trim on the house, um, he climbed up and started to trim, um, um, that morning, and so, when it—when he came back the next day, he said... “Who shot through your house?” I said, “What? (Laughs in disbelief) What did you say?” And he said, he said, “Well, come out here and show me how—” He climbed up the shade on the front window where the [unintelligible] began, about three-fourths—he said, “The bullet hole has gone through your window, your shade, your screen,” and [0:17:00] he said, “I'll tell you, it lodged about 6 feet,” um, um, “Because the trajectory is this—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, uh, he said, “It'll be in the wall,” uh, and if it (stammers)—and I said, “Well, I heard something hit—I was reading in bed, it was [unintelligible] uh, reading, probably bills [unintelligible]—”

MM: Yeah (laughs).

VB: Um, uh, I said, “I heard a thud, but I thought it was, like, an acorn dropping or something because the squirrels [unintelligible] the big trees there—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: “I thought it was an animal,” and, uh, so, I said, “Sure, you can look [unintelligible].” So, he comes up and he says [inaudible]—

MM: Oh, my gosh—

VB: It's a bu—I said, “I thought that—I saw that this morning when I was just wa—ready to go out the bedroom—I thought it was a bug [unintelligible].”

MM: Yeah.

VB: But, um, so, he said, “You got to call the police.” Well, I called—I, um, went down to the Statehouse—Bob Garton, that's what he said, had I talked to my secretary? [0:18:00] And, uh, she [unintelligible] her window, and she lived in—I don't remember, like, the—[unintelligible]

Township, way out—and he said, “And also,” um, “A lawyer who testified—a woman lawyer—who testified, whose husband was on the other side of it—this wo-woman testified also, and her office is in [unintelligible] where they shot at—”

MM: Is in where?

VB: Greenwood—

MM: Oh, Greenwood—

VB: Yeah, she testified in—so, it was a—

MM: So, they were targeting people—

VB: Yeah, who were there that day who were—it was targeting me, it was my secretary—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Woman who testified, it was, uh—

MM: Yeah—

VB: The issue—

MM: Yeah—

VB: It was really more about the issue than the [unintelligible] and, um—

MM: So—

VB: The police came, and I said, “You know, I don’t want it in the paper—you know what, I-I [unintelligible] this house on the market.” They said, “Well, you’ve got to not stay here, because no one’s here with you.” ‘Cause the house, like 6 or 7 [unintelligible] and, uh, they just said, “You [0:19:00] can’t stay here [unintelligible] further north—”

MM: OK—

VB: And I also was given a person who stalked me—

MM: Yeah—do you think the stalker and that was the same person or not—

VB: Well, the police thought it could’ve been, ‘cause, at one point, they had taken a gun, a gun from him [unintelligible] he, uh, showed up at a Dan Quayle—this was in, like, ’88—a Dan Quayle rally here, nearby, and they took a gun from him. And they told me I had to get a restraining order against him—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And that was now, like, several years later, ‘cause he showed up at my door, like, at 5 o’clock at night on a Sunday night, and, um, it was initially really frightening.

MM: Yeah!

VB: And I didn't realize who it was—I thought it was my neighbor walking away, and I said, I said, "Gene—" Gene Wilkinson—turned out it was—this guy turned around. I slammed the door, then locked it and [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Did I not call the police? No, I called the [unintelligible] (laughs) I said, "Alice, you don't know [unintelligible]." [0:20:00] She said, "Well, quickly call the police!"

MM: (Laughs)

VB: And that's when they said, you know, "You're—this is too big for you to stay here."

MM: Yeah.

VB: "Too easy [unintelligible] if the lights could be cut, there's no—you know, you have lights go in the house—"

MM: Yeah—

VB: "You don't really have an alarm system—"

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um, "You have the dog, which is good." So, then I did expedite moving—

MM: Yeah—

VB: To another place.

MM: Well, I wanna come back to that issue, but in talking about moving—so, kinda walk me through where you went, because I know you sold this house, and then where did you go?

VB: To, uh, to, uh, a place called The Overlook. And someone who worked on my campaign, she was moving, actually, to a home—her name was Nancy Ayres, and she—I used to work at L.S. Ayres—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: When I was young, and this Nancy Ayres was the daughter of Fred Ayres—

MM: Oh, wow—

VB: Was—the owners— (laughs)

MM: Yeah—

VB: But anyway, Nancy was just a great person, and I looked at her home, and I thought, "Oh, my gosh, there's one door in [unintelligible]—"

MM: Yeah. [0:21:00] Was it a condo or was it a standalone house?

VB: Well, it's a, it's a—it was a, it was a, it was a home, but it's [unintelligible] it has another attached home to it.

MM: Oh.

VB: Um, and Governor Orr moved in that neighborhood—

MM: Oh, OK—

VB: Right down the [unintelligible]—

MM: OK, wow—

VB: And, um—

MM: So, i-is that what you referred to in the book as, like, your Stratford Hall home or something like that—

VB: Yes, that's it—Stratford Hall, yes.

MM: OK, that's what I was just trying to figure out. And then, so, did you stay there until you went to Wilmette?

VB: (Stammers) I was there from, like, '9... 2 or 3—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: [Unintelligible]

MM: Yeah (chuckles)—

VB: Thank goodness for my 4H years—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Because it taught you to—and my parents taught me—to manage a lot of projects at once.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: I was never satisfied in 4H with just having one or two things.

MM: Yeah. You had to have—

VB: I wanted to see [unintelligible] you have to complete them—

MM: (Chuckles)

VB: You know, saying I'm gonna do them is one thing, but—

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, [0:22:00] you know, I tended to, um—[unintelligible] about that—[unintelligible] I, I usually carried a heavy load of—a lot of the not-for-profits rely on me, and sometimes I'd have to hand off legislation that I've worked on really long and strong and [unintelligible] and then,

because I'm doing another piece—it might be an education piece—I would say to, like, Senator Lansky, “It's all ready to go; can you take it?” And so, then she gets to read it off [unintelligible]—

MM: Right—

VB: But that's not what it's about—it's about getting the piece through that's good for—

MM: Right—

VB: The voters in your district, so—

MM: Right. So, however it can get through—

VB: Yeah, so that's usually—I worked a lot of different things—never [unintelligible] AIDS before the Legislature was a no-no topic.

MM: Oh, really? AIDS? Yeah?

VB: AIDS—well, that was back in—the fear was that it's a blood disease, and it's an ugly one, and then a kid that gets a transfusion, uh, is kicked out of school, not allowed to go, and I was thinking, “Let's find out [0:23:00] the truth about this.”

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And, uh, it wasn't a popular subject to talk for.

MM: Were people just scared?

VB: Yeah, so, they were scared that it was, you know, kinda like Ebola or a lot of these things that we're, we're scared of—“Oh, my gosh, I might get it.”

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: It was like a lot of things.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: Uh.

MM: So, did you have... Was it Susan and Nick [Noyes, son-in-law] that lived in Wilmette, or what prompted the move there?

VB: So, so, well, it was this... [Unintelligible] the name of this stalker—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Finally found where I moved, and I started getting the phone calls again.

MM: Up at the other house?

VB: The other house. And when—and even my son, Jim, had the [unintelligible] to get out the front door there, so at a low level, so if there's—he was always looking at the safest—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Place for—seems like he gave up a lot of what his dream was always to look out for me. Um, but, but it was really interesting, um, this guy shows up— [0:24:00] well, my voice, and where he had taken all my vide—voice, um—

MM: The answering machine?

VB: And he'd take up the whole recording and say [unintelligible]. My family said, "I think it's time to get out of politics—"

MM: Yeah—

VB: "[Unintelligible] go away." And Susan and Nick [Noyes], um, bought a place for me near them, which was a, um, condominium, a condominium with a garden, which was cute—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, um, where it was gonna be close to grandchildren. And the grandchildren would come visit me [unintelligible]—

MM: They, they were what?

VB: They would come visit me but they'd see a lot of [unintelligible]—

MM: Uh-huh, of course, of course.

VB: So, anyway, um, and that's where—yes, they're the ones that convinced me—all the kids convinced me.

MM: Yeah.

VB: Which was hard, um, 'cause you have your friends here—I was really excited about Teresa—and Teresa Lubbers, who [0:25:00] replaced me—watching her, and, um, and others, you know—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Things just to this day, it's like I hear something, I wanna go to work on it—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um—

MM: Yeah—

VB: But, but there's [unintelligible].

MM: Sure. Um, so then, you were in Wilmette till... Then, you went to Florida at one point, right?

VB: Well, when my parents' farm sold out [unintelligible]—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: Um, we all inherited a [unintelligible].

MM: Yeah.

VB: And I then... I, I had what I saved from this home, here, and I thought, "OK." And my daughter, Sharon, was in Naples, and I had a very good friend from Indianapolis who was also in this little ar—retirement [unintelligible]—it's not a retirement, it's just a—it's right on the Gulf—

MM: Yeah—

VB: It's a beautiful spot. Uh, but Nancy Seeley, who's been [unintelligible] best of friends, and—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And James Harver, who lived over on Sanibel, they all said, [0:26:00] "Just consider coming down here." Well, found one that's affordable, bought it—well, Nancy Seeley's the one who said, "Hey, one's coming up where we live." There were 30 units and one of 'em came up as an [unintelligible] 1200 square feet—perfect.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And I—oh, and then I had remarried in the meantime, that was the other thing, and—

MM: Yeah (chuckles). Did you, did you meet—John Williams, right?

VB: Yeah.

MM: Did you meet him in Illinois or in Florida—

VB: Illinois. I never [unintelligible] him—uh, uh, we were [unintelligible] Susan was chairing the Lyric Opera—

MM: Yeah—

VB: As something [unintelligible] and so, weeknights, she had [unintelligible] she said, "Nick and I are getting you a table that will seat—" um, it was like, 5 couples—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, but she said, "[Unintelligible] by the woman. Go find a man in a [unintelligible]."

MM: (Laughs)

VB: And I said, "Well there—how do you find one that doesn't sing opera?" But, but, uh, I said— [0:27:00] well, I'd been a widow for a lot of years then, 14 years, and, um, but friends introduced him to me, and they said, "Yeah, he is handicapped in the—um, he—his Polio's come back..." Well, then I find out some other things were wrong (laughs), but then I found a whole lotta things were right about him—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: He was really fun, um, had incredibly—brightest mind I’ve ever [unintelligible]—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And, uh, he headed the probate section of Sidley Austin, one of the largest law firms in the world—

MM: Wow—

VB: And taught many of the lawyers, um, you know, probate law—

MM: Yeah—

VB: [Unintelligible]—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: Which was, interestingly, something I’d worked on back in Indiana.

MM: Yeah.

VB: So, uh, we had a lot of things we could talk about—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And I thought, “Well, so—” And, and then, the friends, they said, “Well, the other thing: He also loves the opera. He and his wife always had tickets—”

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: “And, you know, she died suddenly of pancreatic cancer,” and, um, “He’s getting [0:28:00] ready to go into a—assisted living or retirement home—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: Well, we met, and it was fun—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And all my friends from Indianapolis who also went up there thought he was fun—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And, uh, and then he, he started asking me to do things—

MM: Yeah—

VB: But saying, “Oh, by the way, um, I don’t drive—I’m legally blind.” (Laughs)

MM: (Laughs)

VB: He can’t do [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: [Unintelligible]

MM: Yeah—

VB: I love to hike; he couldn't do that.

MM: Mm.

VB: But boy, was he fun to be with.

MM: Yeah. So that outweighed anything else.

VB: Yes, it did.

MM: Yeah—

VB: Yeah, it was, it was like a graceful period in my life.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: And everyone I knew [unintelligible].

MM: Yeah. Great! And so, then, did you move together to Florida—

VB: So—well, I had bought my place in Florida—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: So, when we were married, he had a really beautiful condo in, uh, in Winnetka... [0:29:00]
Which was big and wonderful. Mine was little and wonderful—we [unintelligible] facing Lake Michigan and could walk to the beach—

MM: Oh, wow—

VB: And, and it's two blocks from my—less than two blocks from my daughter, and, uh, so, I said, "You know, I have a better location, even though I [unintelligible] second bedroom [unintelligible]."

MM: Yeah.

VB: Uh, so, he sold his, moved in with me—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And then, um, and then, the next thing is... Then, my parents—he had some really good advice about my parents [unintelligible] when it was, uh—

MM: Yeah—

VB: City and state was trying to get [unintelligible].

MM: Yeah—

VB: And they were condemning things about it, and, and he said, “Look [unintelligible] what they paid unless you paid good money.” So, he helped me find someone here in Indianapolis—

MM: Oh, wow—

VB: Who turned out to be someone [unintelligible] brought up—he said, “She, she’s [0:30:00] one of the best there is. The other one worked for Ice Miller. But they do a lot for the city [unintelligible],” and I said, “Well, I—the one from Ice Miller you’re recommending was a roommate of [unintelligible].” (Laughs) So, they, they were at their group in their—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Their home. It was, like—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Five of them. And I said, “And the one, the other one you’re recommending had been a reporter for the Indianapolis Star [unintelligible], and—” but she always, she always [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: [Unintelligible] she said good things and bad things about “Well, this is [unintelligible]—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: And I said, “[Unintelligible], uh, I would really trust it.” And so, called her, she took the case—she knew a whole lot of what to do, and she just kept saying, “Don’t accept it, don’t accept it, don’t.” Pretty soon, they want something [unintelligible] so ridiculous, I couldn’t believe it—

MM: Wow—

VB: It was accepted [0:31:00] by the family—

MM: Yeah—

VB: I had money to buy the place in Florida—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, and so, I’m thinking about moving there. Now, John and I were married then, so he had moved in—I kinda skipped it—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Sounds like—we did not go [unintelligible] (laughs).

MM: (Laughs)

VB: But, but, uh... I bought the place in Florida. And then, [unintelligible] right after that—he said, “You’re gonna disappear. I won’t see you again. I think we should get married.” I said, “OK.”

MM: (Laughs)

VB: (Laughs) It was like, “That was easy! What’d I just say?”

MM: (Laughs)

VB: But anyway, um, so, he moved to my place.

MM: OK.

VB: Bought it in March. He pro—he proposed, like, in June; we were married in October.

MM: Aww. And that’s a great picture of your families all together at the, the wedding, so.

VB: And it was good—

MM: Yeah.

VB: So [unintelligible].

MM: And so, then, did you both go to Florida?

VB: Yes, we did—

MM: OK—

VB: A-and then, we were there, and then we’d come back up to Wilmette—

MM: Oh, so you did the snowbird type of thing—

VB: Um, [unintelligible] back— [0:32:00] yes, I’m still domiciled in Florida, ‘cause that’s where I own, and I haven’t changed it back to here.

MM: OK, gotcha.

VB: And I don’t know if you want—I maybe have said why I moved back here, um—

MM: You have, but let’s go ahead and, and get that, too.

VB: Well, I moved back, um, um—first of all, it feels like this is home—like, I walk in here, this Patachou restaurant, and I thought, “Oh, my gosh, I was here when they first opened [unintelligible] neighborhood—”

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And, um, felt like this feels like home to me.

MM: Yeah—

VB: And the thing is, in Florida, it still feels like a vacation spot. The weather's the same all the time... Yeah. And, uh, and you have beautiful [unintelligible] and all that, but I, I still love trees and woods, 'cause that's what I grew up with—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, um, really love, love the trees that come [unintelligible] in, uh, smell—

MM: Well, the property you have now is beautiful with [0:33:00] that, too—

VB: Well, it is, and that's the other thing—I didn't intend to—one day I was wal—I was visiting my daughter, Betsy, who lived nearby, and I was just out walking, get my exercise, and this house said, "For sale—please come in" or something like that—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Been on the market for a long time. And this was, like, in November? [Unintelligible] And, and I'm thinking—I think it's earlier than November, but—

MM: Yeah—

VB: I'm thinking, "Wow!" It was less than—it was more like September—

MM: Yeah. Wow—

VB: Walked in, and then, I saw the lake out there and it was so beautiful and—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And then I thought, "Yeah, I have enough money, I could do that." [Unintelligible] were all the things about [unintelligible] I really love, but—

MM: Yeah—

VB: [Unintelligible] so, I was a saver, and he had a [unintelligible] to the IRAs and—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um, take less money while I was in the Legislature and you could defer \$2,000 a year of your... [0:34:01] Your \$9500 income.

MM: Yeah (laughs).

VB: It's more than that now.

MM: Yeah. Yeah, I bet.

VB: But anyway, uh, so, put that into a second—and then, tax money comes out—well, that was a [unintelligible]—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Um, anyway, [unintelligible] those were all positives.

MM: Yeah.

VB: I had the money to... buy back [unintelligible]—

MM: Right—

VB: I had a [unintelligible] with John, so there's a fixed amount that is, that was [unintelligible]. He was certainly endorsing [unintelligible]—

MM: Wow—

VB: 'Cause he, he lived in my homes—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And he didn't have his homes—uh, uh, anyway, uh—

MM: And, and so, then—

VB: Bought back here—well, I, I didn't buy it right then, I just—and so, I, I couldn't get this house out of my mind, and I called, like, December 14th and said—the realtor was an owner, [0:35:00] too—was the owner—she and her husband. They wanted to go to Florida. They wanted to get out of that house.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And, um, and I made a [unintelligible] I called her—I said, “I, I've been thinking about your house. I really do like it. Wonder if you would take a (stammers) ask for \$100,000 less” than they were listing it on. And she said, “No... Let me think about that.” And she said, “Well, we'll leave the furniture.” (Stammers) I said, “Well, I'll collect the furniture and send it back to you.”

MM: Yeah.

VB: And she said, “We'll leave the furniture.”

MM: Wow.

VB: And again, I didn't think, I didn't—I said, “OK.” (Laughs) [unintelligible]

MM: Yeah.

VB: But anyway... Anyway, [unintelligible] family [unintelligible] came up, and—

MM: Sure. And so, you also wanted to come back here because of a doctor, right—

VB: Well, well, because—well, there was my—this is amazing—4 months later after I buy this place, um, [0:36:00] we knew something was going on with my bloodwork, and, and finally [unintelligible] my personal physician recommended that someone at the colleges—which my doctor in Wilmette was also a [unintelligible] hematologist—uh, but I moved from there to Florida [unintelligible]—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: So, when I went to the hematologist, they broke down—they wanted to do a bone marrow test, and they did the bone marrow test—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And found out I have multiple myeloma, which is not curable, but it's treatable.

MM: Right.

VB: And that's the reason—and, and so, the doctor there was lining up my treatments and my daughters were there and she's telling them, and she said—and I said, “Oh I [unintelligible]—” so that was June—I said, “Well, what—” or May— “Well, what [unintelligible] treatments [unintelligible]?” She said, “We need to start right now.”

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: And I said, “Well, I wanted to go back to Indianapolis. I had just bought a place back there, like, in...”

MM: Yeah—

VB: “January.” And she, she said, “Oh, my gosh.” [0:37:00] She said, “[Unintelligible] hematologist.” That's, that's her business—

MM: Yeah—

VB: She said, “The very [unintelligible] is with the Indiana School of Medicine Cancer Center in Indianapolis.”

MM: Wow—

VB: She said, “His name is Dr. [Rafat] Abonour.” And this Dr. Abonour, who is just the most incredible—and so, she said—and Susan said, “Well, [unintelligible] right away [unintelligible] next week.” So, like, May 31st, I went and visited him, and this [unintelligible] said that there's people coming in from all over the world getting treatment [unintelligible]—

MM: Wow—

VB: He somehow makes room for you.

MM: Wow—

VB: And then, he analyzes all the [unintelligible] done for [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Florida to here, and, uh, comes up with a treatment plan, and man! Uh, and he said, and... So, it was so amazing—he said, “So, here's the bad [0:38:00] news: It's not curable.” And then he said, “But the good news is it's treatable.” So, let's say I'm 82 then. And he said, “Well, basically, you're in really good health and you never smoked and you didn't drink.” He said,

“You’re real—your body—all of your vital organs are very healthy.” He said, “What I see is probably 20 years.” (Laughs) And I said, “That might be [unintelligible].”

MM: (Laughs)

VB: But that’s—he gives everyone hope.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And that’s really wonderful—

MM: Wow. That’s amazing that he’s here, right?

VB: And he’s here in Indianapolis—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And, you know, he should be one of the state’s big economic—if they talk about economics at all, forget to talk about the medical teams that are here. And the best they’ve brought—it brought in, but this person—other, other cancer places had been trying to get him to come here, and... He also does a huge fundraiser, which is such a neat idea, to raise [0:39:00] funds for research for this multiple myeloma. So, it’s like, he owns the [unintelligible]—

MM: Wow—

VB: So, he does a bicycle [sic] with a group of patients and family friends—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: From mid—no, from Columbus—no, right—they take 2 days to come from Columbus, Ohio to Indianapolis—

MM: Oh—

VB: And they have a big dinner, and a bit where he tells them about [unintelligible] about multiple myeloma, so he does a lot of—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Trying to raise money for research so that people can afford to get their treatments.

MM: Wow. That’s really amazing.

VB: [Unintelligible]

MM: Well, I didn’t realize you had bought the house first—I thought you bought the house after, but that’s—

VB: No, I bought it first—

MM: Wow—

VB: And that's just—yeah, this is why I think... I-it is tru-truly amazing. I don't know what's gonna happen next week or the next week, but it's like, because of [unintelligible] things happen because [unintelligible].

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: Um, he comes from a Syrian background. Um, he was born and raised in Damascus.

[0:40:00] Parents were originally Palestinian, so they had to leave [unintelligible]—so, there's quite a history there—his mother and I have become very good friends.

MM: Really?

VB: She is the sweetest... And I said, "Just thank you for your son and your other children—"

MM: Yeah—

VB: "You've raised, because, um, here he is, here in this country, doing so much for so many." And watching the patients who come in who get the infusion, um, it's like, my kids always feel sorry for when I'm going—I should [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah (laughs)—

VB: Instead, I'm, I'm just cheerful—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And they said, "I don't get it. Why are you so happy?" I said, "Well, all those RNs in there are really like your friends."

MM: Yeah.

VB: And I said, "And the other thing is, um, they have great snacks."

MM: (Laughs) So important. So important.

VB: Yes, the snacks are really good.

MM: That's funny. Um... Well, one thing—actually, why don't you eat a few bites? [0:41:00] I'm gonna get a warm-up on coffee. Can I get you some as well?

VB: Yeah—uh, just like a squirt in there, 'cause I—you know what, 'cause it cools down.

MM: OK.

VB: I'm, I'm careful because I don't want to choke—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, um.

MM: Yeah. So, just a little bit? OK. I'll pause that. [Recording stops and starts] That again. So, we had talked, last time, about the 1996 U.S. Congressional run—that's where you were running against Julia Carson—but I didn't realize you had run in '98 as well. So—

VB: [Unintelligible]

MM: So, would you tell me a little bit about that?

VB: Well, tried to decide whether or not I'd run. People were saying, "Run." And I still had some money left in the pot—raised—you know, you raised a lot of money, but then, it wasn't millions of dollars in place—

MM: Right—

VB: [Unintelligible] and I—coming from a financial background, I say, "I think this is what it would take." And [unintelligible] is saying yes.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: Uh, so, I didn't say yes, I didn't say yes... I knew I wouldn't get the [unintelligible] [0:42:00] last time, because [unintelligible].

MM: (Laughs)

VB: Um, but you really need a campaign manager who doesn't—it's not about that person, it's about you, and, um, you're the best spokesman for yourself. And it's really unfortunate, because people try to manage the campaign, and then they may—if they don't come across as well—it happens in national, all over the place. So, I then, uh, finally got Luke Messer, who's now in politics... And, uh, Luke said, "You know—" he, he's a little more, uh—we're not alike on all the issues, but I knew he was a smart person who worked in my campaigns before. And he was a—honest as could be, and just a [unintelligible] his mother recommended it [unintelligible] that's what he said to me: "My mother said if you ever had a chance, to work with [unintelligible]." 'Cause he came from a mother [0:43:00] who raised little boys—I think that was it, uh, with maybe a divorce or something that happened [unintelligible] so. Um, but we started late. We didn't raise money. And... And I was pretty confident that [unintelligible] last time, that this [unintelligible] [Note: VB referring to candidate Gary Hofmeister. — KT] who owned a jewelry store who had a—some terrible things—we did the research—he had some terrible things in his background where if they came out, people would just—and [unintelligible] but not by me.

MM: Right.

VB: And, uh, it was really interesting, 'cause, um... I'm trying to remember the person they brought in, uh, who ran his campaign—

MM: You have the name in here. Let me find it—

VB: Yeah—

MM: I feel like it was, like, "Rick" or something—

VB: Yeah, it was—

MM: Like, "Rick"?

VB: Well—

MM: “Richard,” maybe?

VB: No, it was, um... [0:44:00] And he used to be on TV a lot for uh, uh—

MM: Ralph Reed—

VB: Yes—came in, and, and I... My [unintelligible] in a way, at the Republican township meeting when we were both there, uh, and afterwards, uh, [unintelligible] says, “Oh, I want to [unintelligible] my campaign manager, Ralph Reed [unintelligible] on TV all the time.” And, and, and I said—which I said, I said, “Well, good luck finding anything to use on me.”

MM: Yeah.

VB: That’s what they [unintelligible]. And that was not very nice for me to say, but that’s what Bob Garton said, “You don’t have anything in your background—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: “Like, like your sister says—you have a boring background.”

MM: (Laughs)

VB: But, but, uh, anyway, it’s like each town—that was just like, “I should’ve said that—” it was like a [unintelligible]. And so, then, they come back with this horrible ad the last few days before the election, which is a very, very low [0:45:00] turnout, which I should’ve won comfortably—it’s like a lot of us, we think, “She’s gonna win; don’t worry—” it’s, it’s part [unintelligible] people think, “Well, that person’s gonna win, so—” there’s so much [sic] this going on that there’s—but people don’t show up to vote, they’re on spring break, kids, they didn’t file for absentee—uh, we didn’t do any of that, they—and then, people are [unintelligible] believe kids are getting abortions without parents’ consent—

MM: Yeah—

VB: ‘Cause that’s the kind of ad they ran, which is so ugly.

MM: Which—weren’t they splitting hairs on that, because your position was that you didn’t want the young women to be hindered by finding both parents—single parents—

VB: Yeah. Right—especially wh—yes—especially when—you know what? It’s not up to me—policymakers—to say what’s best for your [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: There’s—everyone has individual circumstances—they also have a—many of them have a [unintelligible] [0:46:03] and who are we to say, “Our law is gonna be above all of your [unintelligible]”? I know how I feel personally, but that’s not what should be for every single person, and that’s what I feel—why do we get involved when we have curbs that need to be fixed and road—

MM: Yeah—

VB: We still need roadwork. We still need to build a neighborhood [unintelligible] education, if there's any money that's [unintelligible] to preschool [unintelligible] I tell people, "This is what you shall or shall not do—"

MM: Right—

VB: [Unintelligible] God, and that was my big problem [unintelligible].

MM: And so, I'm assuming that campaign tactic that he [Gary Hofmeister] used worked—

VB: Yeah, well, and then they continued to use it. Plus, I've—when I would go to the polls [unintelligible] election day, there'd be someone saying, "I've always supported you. I didn't know that you believed in a law that [unintelligible]." Wow.

MM: Yeah. [0:47:00] That's a shame. So, then, I'm, I'm assuming he was defeated by Julia Carson, right? 'Cause she went all the way through '04—

VB: Yes, and interesting [sic]—some of my (stammers), some of my supporters [unintelligible] from high school, husband came up [unintelligible] doctor [unintelligible]—always worked on my campaigns. She was such a lovely woman, and... And she was very conservative in all of her views. She was so angry about what they did that she worked in the other—in the Democrat campaign—

MM: Wow—

VB: That's what Republicans are... You know, if Republicans are going to win, you have to be a majority, and you can't keep saying, you can't keep [unintelligible].

MM: That's really interesting, too, just thinking strategically, for a campaign—if you slam the other candidate so much, you risk alienating that Republican base—

VB: Yes, you do. And that—

MM: That's a dangerous game—

VB: [0:48:00] And my philosophy was always—and I tried kind of a statement that—I, I tried to give that [unintelligible] a statement that you made—could be what you stand for, who to [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Uh, when you're the candidate. And then, so, you're always talking about what your, what your vision is—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Instead of that other person. But look at it right now, what's going on in Indiana, this is 2018, and it's not about—it's about the other person, all the ads are about the other person—

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, who could say the worst thing last?

MM: Right—

VB: Probably.

MM: Right.

VB: And's that's just—I don't get it.

MM: I don't, either—

VB: But anyway, that's what it, that's what it became.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: Yeah.

MM: And—

VB: And that's when my family said, “Hey, go—do you wanna keep doing this?” And especially, it was grandchildren.

MM: Yeah.

VB: Skatie always—7 or 8. And she—went back to visit one weekend—she said, “Why do you even wanna do [0:49:00] this?” I think I told you this—

MM: I don't think so—

VB: She said, “Why?” She said, “You know, you would never see us.” And I said, “[Unintelligible].” And she said, “No one has [unintelligible].” Like A, A+ student—she's very much in [unintelligible]—very calm, good sense, and she's saying—um, when I said, “Well (stammers), on weekends, the Legislature go home,” and she says, “Yes, but you're gonna go home.” You know, then, I get my own place up there [unintelligible] “To see us [unintelligible] in Indianapolis on the weekend and I—you're gonna miss me growing up.” And she said, “I know that's selfish.” And, um, and she said, “[Unintelligible] I do hope you win—the election.” Then, Susan has her kids all write notes and, and, uh, Skatie said, “I'm really sad about you losing. But not really.” (Laughs)

MM: (Laughs)

VB: And [0:50:00] James Noyes—his was almost the same thing, and his mother didn't know what they said—

MM: Yeah—

VB: In that letter.

MM: (Laughs) That's so—that's sweet. Funny. Well, in—back to that campaign, too—Hof—was it [Gary] Hofmeister—he wouldn't sign—he wouldn't do the campaign pledge, right—

VB: No, no—you know what, no, he was... He was in it [unintelligible]—and here's what's really interesting: His business—Hofmeister—they put ads on—they'd never advertised—I don't think they've advertised since—but all during the time of that campaign, they, they put their business ads up, just like—like [unintelligible] it should be illegal. You know, your business has never advertised; now we have Hofmeister ads on all the time—[unintelligible] “The Family Jewelry,” “The Family Values Jeweler,” uh, “The People Who Go Down for You—” you know, and I'm thinking, “This is amazing!”

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: Um, but this is a primary, this one that I should've walked away with, and it's a little bit like [0:51:00] Senator [unintelligible] back at the [unintelligible] legislation [unintelligible] talk about [unintelligible] and getting things, and now, we have a President that's talking about not doing this [unintelligible] duties. [Unintelligible] And we have Senator Lugar, who then—they took [unintelligible] he said, “He's always in Washington—does he own any property here?” Unless you're a multimillionaire and you don't own property here—

MM: Yeah. Right—

VB: [Unintelligible] and worry about [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um, he—and we have a [unintelligible] brilliant [unintelligible] people out of Indiana, and to have him, uh, go down with someone—[unintelligible]—I can't remember the name of the guy now—[unintelligible] the ad [unintelligible]—it dealt with either abortion—you know, some—you always take these, uh, ugly things—

MM: [0:52:00] Use it as sorta scare tactics—

VB: Yeah, yeah—scare tactics—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And that's [unintelligible] Republican party [unintelligible].

MM: Yeah—

VB: But I don't [unintelligible]—

MM: I bet.

VB: It doesn't get—you know what the funny thing—it doesn't make a lot of Republicans wanna hurry to the... To vote.

MM: Right. Yeah.

VB: I-if they're still calling themselves Republicans—

MM: Yeah—

VB: That's the thing—you know, you feel like [unintelligible] what you're born—it's like I—it's like my dad said: "Who are we to decide what a person's going through with some of these difficult issues?" Um, if it's not affecting the greater society, [unintelligible] um, but that's the problem.

MM: Yeah.

VB: So, in the end, we still build more highways, we still build more bridges, but we're not rehabbing what there was, and I will say, Mitch Daniels did a really good job at trying to fund and build and repair bridges, and, uh, and, [0:53:00] you know, he's, uh, good for Purdue and too sad for the country, that's [unintelligible].

MM: Uh-huh.

VB: But he's influenced a lot of people.

MM: Yeah. Yeah, for sure. Um... Don't—I certainly don't wanna end on this note, but I am a little bit more curious—(chuckles) so, I'll ask another question in a minute. But I, I am a little bit more curious about the, the stalker. Um, was he—was it because of your political beliefs, or—'cause I know—I think I read an article, and I'm assuming this is the same person, that he was stalking other people in the city as well—

VB: Yes, he was. Yes—there were, like, a lot of, um—once the [unintelligible] uh, once the, the police tell you to get a—

MM: Like, restraining order—

VB: Res—

MM: Yeah—

VB: For a lot of people [unintelligible] threat against them—including Susan Bayh at the Governor's Residence—

MM: Oh—

VB: Including the priest over at 48th—6th and Illinois.

MM: Mhmm.

VB: Uh, that's where [unintelligible] [0:54:00] they were camping, but there was a divorce, dealt with violence—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And then he, he was mentally ill—declared mentally ill—then, he'd get back on his medicine, and then, then he'd go off the medicine and not refill—[unintelligible] some other Social Security control, what he was doing—

MM: Yeah—

VB: He was stalking people—

MM: Yeah. So, he—

VB: Tom Griswold and, and, uh, Q95 was a [sic]... Interesting station.

MM: (Laughs)

VB: It is.

MM: Yeah. Um—

VB: And, you know, and what's really interesting [unintelligible] in Tom's [unintelligible] because when Richard died, um, and people were there and [unintelligible] um, and he comes to the door all dressed in a business suit and I didn't know him—I didn't know he was, he was doing some of this stuff. And, uh, Tom says, "Yes, he's the one that stands with a chicken down in front of [unintelligible] with his chicken that says, 'Stop abortion—'" He says, "He's nuts," and he says, "He's [0:55:00] done things at the station." And, um, he says, "You gotta get a restraining order [unintelligible]—"

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, uh, so, I had [unintelligible] a warning to get a restraining order—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Showed up at A.G. Edwards after I left one day in the summer, and, uh, Statehouse a lotta times. And, uh, Morrie [Mills] would say, "Who's that [unintelligible]?" I'd say, "Oh, my gosh—"

MM: That man—

VB: And so, got the restraining order.

MM: Mhmm. So, was he—did he sup—was he supposedly fueled by, like, religion or politics? Or it's unclear—

VB: Um, well, if you're mentally ill, who knows?

MM: That's true.

VB: And, the thing is, there were laws saying that you can't—the doctor can't disclose, the parents can't disclose—

MM: Right—

VB: He's an adult—he can check himself out—

MM: Yeah—

VB: There's something wrong with that. He, he can still get a gun. Uh, unless—I mean, we don't, we don't have a good method of shutting that down.

MM: Mmhmm. Yeah. Well, that must've been very scary. Can't even imagine that. Um—

VB: You know, [0:56:00] you know, I didn't really think about it so much.

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: But, but the bullet—shot was bad, that (stammers) got to me.

MM: (Laughs) I can imagine that would be the case.

VB: And you know, that's where the Gifford—um, Representative Gifford, Democrat, from—

MM: Gabby Giffords, mmhmm—

VB: Kathy [sic] Giffords, er—um, truly amazing. There she was, she's a moderate—she wasn't even a radical—you know, she just really knows it—her—um, I identified with her a lot on her iss—the issues, and for this idiot to go to Walmart—I feel stupid for saying it—to go to Walmart and get a rifle that has a distance thing on it and shoot her and almost kill her and others and just—and just neighborhood people [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah.

VB: And no one does anything about it.

MM: And it makes you feel like you can't go [0:57:00] anywhere, you know, everywhere is unsafe.

VB: Right. And when you worry about kids at school—I mean, what is this... It's (stammers) totally (stammers) skewing—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And yet, nothing gets done.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: That's the other thing: Nothing gets done. Um—

MM: Well, maybe that's a, a good question to, sort of, have here towards the end of... Even though you're out of politics, you're still very passionate about—

VB: I am—

MM: The issues. Do you have advice for people wanting to make a change—

VB: Right. And so, someone who really has, you know, the [unintelligible] every single day, and I would join up if [unintelligible]. The one that I was going to work on before—and I talked to Reverend Hamilton—Dr. Hamilton—about it, and we knew sev—we knew several people with high profile names who would also join, and it was Grandmas Who March Against, and it was,

[0:58:00] uh, people from—for—not against, they’re marching for anti-gun legislation, uh, you know, there’s—you know that each person in this room is able to buy a gun a month. By law. That’s weird. And if there’s a person today that’s sitting there, normal, and something just sends them off to whackoland tomorrow, and they still have their guns, and then, grandpa dies with his, you know, 20 guns in the house, and will the family just distribute them? What do they do? There’s no—there’s nothing about how to—but I, I just think a grandmother’s—and everyone has a grandmother—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And if their grandmother’s around, maybe their great-grandmother’s still around—

MM: Yeah—

VB: But, but then, you march, you know—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And it’s like the Million Families March—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: But on statehouses through and then on—and, you know, then on—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Washington—

MM: Yeah—

VB: [Unintelligible] [0:59:01] but that’s what—that’s where I was headed before I started (chuckles)—

MM: (Laughs)

VB: Myeloma treatments!

MM: Yeah. Well, there’s still time for that—

VB: There is time, yes, there is. There’s still—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: You know what, I’m already encouraging, and I do make donati-donations, personal donations to some of these issues.

MM: Mmhmm, mmhmm. Well, it kinda reminds me a little bit, too, of—in the ‘60s—this is a different issue—but when mothers would march against nuclear, you know, armament and stuff like that—

VB: Drunk driving, drunk driving—

MM: Yeah, exactly, yeah.

VB: Uh.

MM: So.

VB: There was some—I was looking through some of my legislation, and, um, and how it's worded in there isn't exactly the way it was. It was, like... Boating—there was—with guys out there, you know, boating and drinking. When does the—when should the laws be the same, and should they not be like, “You're going to be arrested if you're inebriated”?

MM: Yeah—

VB: But no, the laws were different.

MM: Yeah—

VB: And so, you put—you know, you put laws down, and then, what gets [1:00:00] through maybe is not what you really intended [unintelligible].

MM: Yeah—

VB: And that's—that is the thing: The legislation—you just need to keep coming back with it and finding [unintelligible] about it—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And for citizens to feel like they can get a [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: They can, like—like, I was just spending my time over here in School 70 at the PTO meetings, um, and then, the Boy Scouts, and then, the Girl Scouts—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And then, tried to start a 4H, if I could, in a—for swimmers in summer, um—you, you're work [sic] in your neighborhood, but to get enough now, it's millions of dollars of money, even for a little, local office? Something's really crazy.

MM: Yeah. Yeah. Hmm. [Unintelligible]—

VB: Well, I think that [unintelligible] is a way to do it.

MM: Yeah. There are ways.

VB: Yeah.

MM: Well, I think that that's the, the main questions [sic] that I have from our time last... From our last [1:01:00] session. Um, are there other things that you wanna talk about or that we haven't—

VB: Well—

MM: Covered or that you remembered?

VB: One of the things I really loved doing after the Legislature and I moved to Wilmette, um, was, uh, through the League of Women Voters, um, and it was getting strong neighborhood League of Women Voters—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Um, they, they had established—one of the women had established—and she was a lawyer—that was govern—kids getting involved in government in eighth grade—so, a school—or local grade school went up to eighth grade. So, I took over the program of, uh, eighth graders involved in government, and went to each of the offices and instead of this woman who wrote the program—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: We actually—someone was mayor—not for the day; it was for the semester—

MM: Wow—

VB: And so, the school would take—the bus would take these kids from their collective—and it was all the schools: the Catholic schools, the Jewish [1:02:00] synagogue schools—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: The Protestant—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Um, and then the [unintelligible] schools in [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, they had to cross, make sure all those students [unintelligible]—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: They—the schools could select someone, and then, that someone would be the one that would go into being the mayor.

MM: Uh-huh.

VB: Um, but it was for the semester, and uh, and then, each time, there were however many local council members there were, there was one kid for each one. And so, they would learn everything about your job as councilman and would go to sit with you during the meetings—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: That was an after-hours—good school—they were eighth graders! Um, and, and, s—public safety, there was someone who always had that, there was a sheriff, there was a parks department head, and then, all the people [unintelligible] gave a lot of space for a whole lotta kids to—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Be representative, and it wasn't all the same day, because parks only meets on one day—

MM: Right—

VB: Public safety another, the mayor, um. It turned out to be [1:03:00] so invigorating, and these kids got so involved, so they may go on to high school and they were really involved in student government—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: But, but that was—and the—then, then, a friend of mine, who was an old college roommate, was now Dean of School of Education at Harvard, and she wanted me to serve on the rural education—National Rural Education Committee, and where schools are lacking—they're so far remote, and they call it "rural," but it might be one that's on an island off of the East coast—a school—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: And, uh, so then, this was written. That was for, like, in 19—I'm gonna say... No, 2000—maybe 2 or something—

MM: Uh-huh—

VB: Two or 3 when I got involved with the Rural Education Committee, and they—we went to meetings all over the country—

MM: Oh, wow—

VB: Trying to get better funding for these little, unique places, instead of—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Saying, "Well, they're now—there's not enough students, we have to consolidate to—into say, all of Washington Township."

MM: Right.

VB: Even though you're way on this other little island that's always [unintelligible] [1:04:03] maybe run a boat or something—

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, that was that—

MM: Wow—

VB: Um, so, I'm gonna give you—that's just a—that's a real concise background of—

MM: Yeah—

VB: What, uh, I wrote for that. And then, this was—I can remember sitting with Teresa Lubbers and, um, they told me about—I’d entered the mayor’s race, so, wait, um... Oh, they may have chosen who it would be for mayor—

MM: Right—

VB: And I’m right—so they said, “Write a letter to send to the precinct committeeman,” so this was a letter to the precinct committeeman about why I was running, and that might—and I’ve made a copy, so you do it and then just shred it—

MM: Oh—

VB: There’s personal information about—

MM: Sure—

VB: Uh, years or family members or something—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And then, here’s another... So, that would be—so, the one is like 19—well, 2000 and...
[1:05:00] Uh, 2—that’d be more like 2001 or 2002, ‘cause I got really involved with the League of Women Voters up there.

MM: OK.

VB: Um, and then, this one was ’91—

MM: Wow—

VB: And then, this one was, like ’83 and high—why that one was interesting to come through—and that got ripped. And you can just put ‘em in—keep this [unintelligible] (laughs). Then, throw all the—just shred stuff that you don’t want—

MM: Yeah, sure.

VB: But you might have this one already—

MM: I haven’t seen this one, I don’t think—

VB: Hor-Hortense Myers—this was really interesting. Hortense Myers was a re—AP reporter and, turns out, I learned... After my dad was my first intern—my first page—

MM: Page, uh-huh.

VB: Hortense was covering and she’s—came up later and she said, “Your dad was [unintelligible]” —way back—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And, you know, like, she’s in her 50s or 60s—

MM: Yeah—

VB: So, if that was it, you know, Dad would be, like, 83 or something—

MM: Yeah—

VB: [1:06:00] Uh, so, so, she ended up wanting to interview me, and these were issues that are—these were some [unintelligible] things I worked on that were—and just took an issue that wasn't fair—it'd be like the issue of... Moms go to work at 8:30 in the morning—a lot of 'em are teachers—and the kids don't go until 9:45—come on, now—

MM: Yeah—

VB: What's wrong with this picture—

MM: Yeah—

VB: And you know, and everyone's saying, "It's stupid. That's what's wrong with it!"

MM: Yeah (chuckles)—

VB: So, how do we get it changed? And we get it changed, usually, without legislation.

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: But the threat of legislation—that's why we got some IHSAA rules changed, um... There was a student in my district named Ginny Purdy, and as a little kid, she showed an affinity for tennis. She didn't have any brilliant tennis stars in her background. She had—and I'll be darned, she, um, um, her—at the end of her seven—eight, eighth grade, [1:07:00] *Seventeen* magazine was a magazine for girls, and *Seventeen* magazine offered, um, you know, t-tennis tournaments—

MM: Oh, mmhmm—

VB: And she won *Seventeen* magazine—which tennis people from all over who were kids—

MM: Yeah—

VB: They're kids! So, she's now a freshman at North Central, and the IHSAA said that she didn't get anything from them—from a trophy—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Like me—in 4H—

MM: Yeah—

VB: I got a trophy or I got a—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Blue ribbon. She got a ribbon for winning.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And they s—they cut back and she could not play tennis with her high school team because she... Was a professional. She's too good—you know, she's a winner—national—I said, “OK, so, if, uh, a person wins the national math contest for all eighth graders, do they—are they not allowed now to enter a math contest their freshman year?”

MM: Yeah—

VB: Well, well, then, I got—[1:08:00] I could get a pass that they could not require kids in amateur things—that they could not give them the right to not participate in high school sports.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And, um, and I—the folks that passed, the day of that election, they (stammers) had an event at IHSAA—someone—they were big at IHSAA—appearance and actually is on the floor of the Senate, which is illegal, but—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Talking to, um, O'Bannon—Frank. And Frank, apparently, was a good friend of this person. Frank changed his vote—but it didn't pass—it was an equal vote, it was an equal vote, but then, that next summer, IHSAA had to rule before it. I took Ginny Purdy down to Columbus over to their meeting, and her parents were with me at the time, and, and, um, they let that rule—

MM: Yeah—

VB: Disappear—

MM: Yeah. Well, it might be—

VB: [Unintelligible]

MM: It's not like if she got, like, thousands of dollars or something—

VB: Right, right—

MM: But she wins a trophy—

VB: Yeah. And, you know what? And this is so—that's kind of about some of the—some of it. [1:09:00] Well, the—for some reason, the greater [unintelligible] the thing on prostitutes [unintelligible] I didn't really understand?

MM: (Laughs) Yeah—

VB: I grew up in a different era and didn't even hear that word when I was on the farm in Indiana—

MM: Yeah—

VB: In—out in the rural area—but here we are, dealing with, um—and it was around 16th and Penn, with literally people jumping out in front of cars, and my husband's now Public Safety and he's a prude, too (laughs)—

MM: (Laughs)

VB: And he said, “Virginia, you can drive [unintelligible] where the police [unintelligible] and they’ll show me how they’ll literally jump out in front of cars.” I said, “Well, they sound pretty desperate—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: “Probably some bad things have happened in their lives—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: But anyway, it dealt with—OK, so here behind—there’s a trashy, kind of a lot of [unintelligible] going on in bookstores.

MM: Mmhmm.

VB: And then, we called them X-rated. Well, now, my Bet—my daughter, Betsy, [unintelligible] writes [unintelligible] (laughs).

MM: (Laughs)

VB: Boy, how things have changed—

MM: [1:10:00] Yeah (laughs)—

VB: But, but it’s, uh, a whole different—uh, there’s not drug dealing going on that we know of, but anyway, that’s for (laughs)—

MM: That’s funny—

VB: That was a big thing, and of course, the moral majority said we let that one [unintelligible]—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: (Laughs)

MM: Yeah, I see that.

VB: But anyway, you can throw that away afterwards, too—

MM: No, I haven’t seen this article, so I’ll read through that—

VB: But, but this thing on mayor was pretty much why I was running for mayor, and I had to really think about that when I wrote it [unintelligible] from my home—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: And I said we can save money by just working in the basement of my home.

MM: Yeah—

VB: Which was good.

MM: Yeah.

VB: And, you know, a way to save on your... I'd say, if you're saving on your campaign, um, [unintelligible] to value that with [unintelligible]—

MM: Yeah. Right—

VB: [Unintelligible]—

MM: Right—

VB: But, you know, this business—I'm really angry about this thing [unintelligible] (both laugh) worry about that one—

MM: Don't worry about it—

VB: But, but your—

MM: We'll get it figured out. But it's just a silly timeframe—

VB: [Unintelligible] run for mayor [unintelligible] superintendent of schools [1:11:00] in Indianapolis—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: He was [unintelligible] stuff—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: The ISTA's—(stammers) you know, some of those people [unintelligible] and I'm thinking, “So, you have the teacher's group, the superintendent, and my principals—all were handing out my stuff in their business—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: And I thought, “Something [unintelligible]—”

MM: Yeah—

VB: “Don't worry about it, you know [unintelligible]—”

MM: Right—

VB: People support you who—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Because they know that you could... One thing that, um, Louis [Mahern] talked about with school, um, was something that Morrie [Mills] headed up, was [unintelligible] budget for the schools and how they [unintelligible] manipulated that—

MM: Mmhmm—

VB: Um, um... I would take—most legislators would not go into the [unintelligible] of how that's figured out—

MM: Well, I'm gonna stop the recording here. Thank you so much for meeting again.

[Interview concludes]