

ILOHI Interview with Otto Bonahoom

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Indianapolis, Indiana

Interview by Ben Baumann

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai> and Ben Baumann

MP3 File, Sony

Otto Bonahoom=OB

Ben Baumann=BB

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BB: [0:00:00] We'll just go ahead and begin. So uh let's see. I would like to state for the record that Today is August 24, 2020. And my name is Ben Baumann. I'm here in Indianapolis, Indiana. And I'm speaking via phone with Otto Bonahoom. Who is in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Is that all correct?

OB: Correct.

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

OB: I was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana. November 5, 1930.

BB: Okay. And what were your parents' names?

OB: My parents were the Bedia B-E-D-I-A, J. Bonahoom and Louise M. Bonahoom.

BB: Okay, interesting. And where was your family originally from? Were you guys in Indiana for a long time or somewhere before that?

OB: Um [0:01:00] No, we uh. Well, my dad was the superintendent of the Indianapolis, Sears Roebuck store at the time I was born.

BB: Oh Okay.

OB: And my mother's family is from Williams County, Ohio, which is up uh Northwest...Ohio, only about 35 miles from Fort Wayne.

BB: Interesting, okay.

OB: And actually, I was my family was living in Indianapolis. But my mother wanted to come up to Fort Wayne to deliver me because she was only 20 years old. And uh she wanted her mother and her own doctor. [0:02:00] So she came up to me and I was born here in Fort Wayne on November 5.

BB: Okay, sure. And where was your dad's family from before they started living in Indiana.

OB: Well, they were all immigrants. My dad's family and my mother's family were immigrants from Lebanon. Okay, interesting. And they lived in. Most of them live in dad was born in Toledo, Ohio, and they uh lived there, I have actually, when I was born, Lebanon didn't exist. We were Syrian then.

BB: Right. (Laughs)

OB: I've always kidded everybody that until 1948. I told everybody my ancestor was Syrian and suddenly it was Lebanese.

BB: [0:03:00] (Laughs) Things change fast.

OB: Yep.

BB: Wow. Okay. Did you have any siblings?

OB: I have two younger sisters.

BB: Okay. And how would you describe your childhood growing up?

OB: Well, we uh we lived here in Fort Wayne, middle class family uh not rich and not poor just got along. I went to [0:04:00] Catholic grade schools and the Catholic High School, Central Catholic High School and we're a very close family. I had the uh I had two of the very best parents you could have. My dad was an exemplary guy who was quiet and wise, and my mother was also and I (Laughs) always laugh tell everybody that I'm nothing like my dad. Okay, I try to be wise but I'm not nearly as wise as he My dad was a guy a few words, but he instilled in me an understanding that the world doesn't [0:05:00] owe me living and that if I wanted to do something I had to figure out how to do it.

BB: Right.

OB: And I did that. It's quite interesting. He never fought a battle for me, no matter what happened. I'll give you an example. I had a uh, I was a very good student, I was an honor student my whole life. And I came home one day and I was in high school and I said "this nun hates me. She's, she's gonna kill my average." And my Dad said "Son, you're gonna find people like that in your life all the time. You better figure out how to win her over."

BB: Wow.

OB: And I did. And I did. She...the lady that...the woman that I'm talking about became one of my closest friends for over 50 years.

BB: Wow.

OB: Uh I had two fantastic Sisters of Providence who are from uh near Terre Haute I believe. [0:06:00] (Laughs) Suddenly I can't.

BB: No worries.

OB: Pardon?

BB: No worries, don't worry about it, its fine.

OB: Anyway, and I I corresponded with or met those two sisters several times a year for 50 years.

BB: Wow.

OB: They both lived to be into their 90s and they were just fantastic people.

BB: Wow.

OB: I, I had a very uh, very, very blessed childhood.

BB: Sure.

OB: I'd just give you an example. I went to college at Marquette University, and I came home after my first semester as a freshman. And I added the [0:07:00] English teacher assigned a term paper. I was I was on a (unintelligible) in my class. And I had never written a term paper. I didn't even know what one was.

BB: Right.

OB: And, and I called up the Sister Constance, and who was still teaching at the Central Catholic in Fort Wayne, and I told her my problem she said "No problem. Come on down. Saturday morning, meet me at nine o'clock in the (unintelligible). I went down there. And uh she taught me for about seven hours.

BB: Oh my gosh.

OB: And by the time we got done I understand what a term paper was and how to write one and what the what a footnote was and how to write one. The whole thing.

BB: That's incredible.

OB: (Laughs) I I tell that story because I just think it's, it's remarkable [0:08:00].

BB: Yeah.

OB: What she did, I took it all and I I went back wrote my term paper down, got an aide called her up and said, well, you it worked.

BB: That's incredible. Wow. Geez.

OB: I was actually my I really, I never had any money by the way, my dad was, was alright as far as financially but he could not bend a dime on my college education and even though I got good grades at that time, the best scholarship I could get was a couple \$100 a semester.

BB: Okay.

OB: And I got it and I got that [0:09:00] in law school. But uh in undergrad I went to Milwaukee and lived with my aunt and uncle who lived only 12 blocks from Marquette University.

BB: Ok.

OB: Where I got a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws, uh and I did it with no money from my father at all. And I worked, and as I said I got a couple of small scholarships.

BB: Right right. Wow. And where did you go to law school?

OB: I went to Marquette, I intended to go to Indiana, I my original plan was to go to Marquette and get my undergraduate degree.

BB: Right.

OB: And uh I did I have an AB in uh [0:10:00] in philosophy, with a minor in Latin, French and English. Uh Which was a little a little unusual.

BB: Yeah.

OB: A couple of my lawyer friends when I found that I noticed that my gosh, your minor had nothing to do with law. I didn't need it for law.

BB: Right. Interesting.

OB: And uh so what instead of going to IU, I got up to Marquette and I like it so well, and also to be honest with you, Ben. I was a big man on campus at Marquette.

BB: Oh, okay.

OB: If I had gone to if I had gone to IU, I would have been another freshman.

BB: Yeah.

OB: That's what talked me out of it.

BB: Right.

OB: I didn't want to start over.

BB: Yeah.

OB: I'm an IU fan, actually, but I just couldn't do that. I was. I was president of the uh [0:11:00] Marquette Student Union. Which is, which is what at that time was their student organization.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And then it was just no way I was gonna go back and be a freshman at any university.

BB: Yeah. Yeah. Sounds like you're very well connected at Marquette then.

OB: Oh, yeah. I, I actually, four of my six children. Went to Marquette.

BB: Wow.

OB: And one went to Purdue.

BB: Okay.

OB: My daughter, my daughter's uh cum laude, pharmacist from Purdue.

BB: Oh, okay. Interesting.

OB: And we've been very, we've been very fortunate with all of the all of the children [0:12:00] have been uh successful and happily married. And uh.

BB: Sure.

OB: I've got I've got 15 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren.

BB: Wow, that's fantastic. Now, in your childhood, did you have much understanding about your family's political views?

OB: Uh There would, there was not much politics, except, actually, I can tell you what happened. (Laughs)

BB: Sure.

OB: We never talked politics at all. But my Dad uh after he left (unintelligible) Roebuck. He uh took over a family restaurant. And he and he ran the restaurant for 15 or 20 years and I worked in it until the time I was 11. And at that time, dad was a Democrat. [0:13:00]

BB: Okay.

OB: Uh In one day (laughs), he had his accounting books for the restaurant and in his arm, and I said, "Where you going down?" And he says, "the Office of police administration..." This back during the war.

BB: Yeah.

OB: In the 40s. "He's called me and said that I am overcharging" and he said, "I gotta go show'em my books" and he said "I gotta explain to them that they can't make me charge the same thing. If I buy a tomato for 15 cents, I can't sell it for 15 cents because I can't make any money"

BB: Right.

OB: Well, well, you figured that was just normal and he expected them to agree with him. And of course, we got down there and they absolutely didn't agree with anything he said. He came back and became a Republican. [0:14:00]

BB: Okay. Yeah. Wow. Yeah, that is pretty crazy.

OB: But I've been a Republican my whole life just about, but I mean, I get a lot of political speeches in college, in high school and college. And, but I'm not a uh I like to think that I'm a I'm a Republican, and I believe in conservative values, but I also have spent my life in both in politics and in normal and regular life. Helping people.

BB: Right.

OB: Which is which I think is an absolute requirement for life. [0:15:00] And that's that's what I did when I was in the legislature and and even today are all throughout my life. I have I've been involved in, I uh was the co-founder of the Martin Luther King Montessori School for young three, four, and five year olds in the in the inner city here in Fort Wayne.

BB: Yeah.

OB: Which is still in existence, and I helped found the Matthew 25 Health Clinic.

BB: Okay.

OB: Also, existence and I was there their attorney for 25 years there, now, a good large, free health clinic here in [0:16:00] Fort Wayne. And uh what I liked about it is as if we were able to get doctors and dentists and health people not just to give money, they donated their time.

BB: Yeah.

OB: Uh And don't forget, I'm talking way back in the 50s.

BB: Right.

OB: Quite a while ago, and, and then the last one I've been involved with, for over 30 years is the Vincent Village Home for Homeless Families. I've worked that for...I was the president and co-founder. And for 30 years, and I'm still I'm not on the board anymore. I got off after 30 years, but I'm still active with them. And I'm very, very proud of what we've done at that time. [0:17:00] During that time, when, when we started we had one little old House that the Diocese of Fort Wayne gave us. And uh and that's all we had and held about seven people, seven or eight peoples I recall. And that's not very big when you're trying to take a family in.

BB: Right.

OB: And we now have about 42 or 43 rehabbed homes very nice homes in the northeast, or the southeast central part of Fort Wayne, which is the lower income part of Fort Wayne. And we, we rent these homes, to these people. According to how much money they got, and we we send our caseworkers to help them so that they don't slip back [0:18:00] into homelessness.

BB: Wow.

OB: The the homeless things that we do is uh we we help them become self-sufficient. So they don't have to be homeless. We help them get a job, we help them get education, we help take care of their children. And then we take in families, almost nobody else takes in families. And that that's crucial if you're going to help people, so I'm very busy, you can probably tell I'm I'm very pleased with that because I can see what it's done. We also we just recently partnered with a

builder. And we helped [0:19:00] rehabilitate the old Coca Cola plant in the area that I'm talking about. And so now that the entire places has I don't know how many but a great number of brand new apartments that are priced so the people can live in them.

BB: Okay.

OB: In the same area that that's maybe about six blocks from our main office.

BB: Yeah. Wow.

OB: And we're, it's uh we...I'm very pleased Fort Wayne, I think Fort Wayne is [0:20:00] a tremendous city. They do lots of things for all of its citizens. And that's primarily what has kept me involved. As I told you, I'll be 90 in a couple of months.

BB: Yeah.

OB: But I'm still I'm very pleased to be with thee to be working with these people. And I I'm still working with them as a matter of fact.

BB: Okay, that's great. Wow. Yeah, that's, that's all really impressive, fantastic stuff.

OB: Actually uh. When I, when I joined the or when I was a young Republican, Ben, and I was a precinct committeeman and a ward chairman. [0:21:00] At that time, I was in my late 20s. And, and I ran for the General Assembly. Uh When I was 32. And I got elected. I was the second highest vote getter in Allen County.

BB: Wow.

OB: The only person that beat me was was congressman Ross Adair, who had been a congressman for 20 years. I was, I only ran for one. I got elected and had only served one term, which we'll talk about later, but because I had I it was too much of a strain on my. My family. I couldn't. I had five young children. And I couldn't leave my wife, rundown their to Indianapolis for, for all the work that they did. [0:22:00]

BB: Yeah, now growing up, you mentioned a little bit before, what was it like growing up during World War Two?

OB: Uh It was actually, none of us really. It was pretty normal. It wasn't anything unusual? Of course, you got to realize you're so much younger than me. Everybody was in the same boat. I mean, we're all about the same I, I have good friends. And even though most of them their families were economically better off than than I was. Nobody gave a hoot. Nobody paid attention to it. So you know, we all just associated together or not. We didn't. It's It's totally different [0:23:00] from today, especially monetarily.

BB: Yeah.

OB: I've watched my grandchildren. Say to their parents, I need 10 bucks. I'm going to the movie or, or 15 bucks. That's just out of the question (Laughs).

BB: Yeah.

OB: And I'm not unhappy with the new generation don't misunderstand me. It's just so different. It's hard to imagine that. Anything I wanted my dad; I'd say "dad I want to do such and such", he'd say sure. "So just go out in the backyard and shake the tree and whatever falls off. Pick it up." [0:24:00] Of course you wish. But that's just, that's dad had a great sense of humor. And he also was very frugal, but he never, he never made me. I made all my own decisions. He insisted that I make my own decision.

BB: Right.

OB: Wouldn't, wouldn't make one for me and no matter what I did. He listened to me. And I made several of them that were they worked out alright, but but they were scary kind of decisions. But I said, "How come you didn't tell me what to do?" He said "You wouldn't listen to me anyway. Son, you have to learn how to not make decisions and like your own." And I said, "Boy what if I made a mistake?" He said, "Well, you'd have to live with it. That's all."

BB: Yeah, interesting. Okay. Wow. Now, what was your first job out of law school?

OB: Well, [0:25:00] I I when I got out of law school, I I was 11th in my class, and I thought I would be able to get a pretty good job. But I got out at night I well, first I, when I when I graduated, I had to spend two years in the Army.

BB: Okay.

OB: I graduated from law school in 54. And then I got drafted immediately, three months later, I was in the service. And I should tell you about that, I guess I...I got drafted and did my basic training. And I got sent to Germany.

BB: Okay.

OB: And to finish out my two-year term, and I wound up being a clerk for I was not an officer. At that time, [0:26:00] they weren't giving out. They weren't giving out first Lieutenant, direct commissions, like they apparently do now. We're in a lot of time to do that that time. But they offered me one after I got in for a year, but I decided I wouldn't go to accept it after I've done all the dirty work that a BMC does.

BB: Yeah.

OB: But so I, I got sent to Germany. And I was stationed in Nuremberg. And once I got this torch job for the legal in the legal affairs department, I was engaged at the time to my wife. And I wrote her a letter and said, you might as well come over here, we'll get married. And that we will get to see Europe together. [0:27:00] Because I've got I've got an eight to five job, five days a week. And. And you there's no point me...I don't want to see Europe without you. So that's what we did we I'm the oldest son in the family. She's the oldest daughter of a family. Nobody was at our wedding, but us and some friends that I knew in the army. So we were married in Munich. When you go to Europe, you have to be married in a civil ceremony. They won't let you be married merely in a religious ceremony. So in it, if you were in the army at the time I was there. The only the closest place I could get married in a civil ceremony was Munich, even though I lived in Nuremberg. I was stationed in Nuremberg. So I got married in the (German word), which is the marriage office in the [0:28:00] (German word), which is the district court in Munich, and then I had to go back to Nuremberg and get married at a ceremony in a religious ceremony.

BB: Yeah.

OB: The next day, that was July 30. That, by the way. This July 30. Jen and I've married 65 years.

BB: Wow. Congratulations. That's amazing.

OB: And so we then we spent the next Well, that was July 30, 55'. And I was released from the service in August of 56'. And between those two dates. Jane and I visited Rome, [0:29:00] Florence, Amsterdam, Paris, uh London. Practically all of and every city in Germany, except Berlin.

BB: Wow.

OB: So we had a very full...We drove all those places by the way. My 48' Studebaker, you probably have never seen this Studebaker. But I can tell you, Ben, that the 48 Studebaker was a little car that looked like it looked the same going forward or backwards. And we laugh about it, anybody who knows will tell you that that's what the Studebaker looked like and I bought it used from another G.I. And while I was over there in Germany, and I sold it to another G.I. [0:30:00] when I left.

BB: Wow.

OB: Uh But we we grow if we really had a fantastic...you know people don't understand if we haven't been there you know for, for example in Italy is the most fantastic place for our art and then sculpt sculpture Michelangelo's David is is in Florence.

BB: Sure.

OB: And Rome of course has all kinds of just everything in the Rome is a fantastic place. Actually, had we known we would have seen Rome last. Because Rome is so, so outstanding and so big. [0:31:00] Everything else is anticlimactic after Rome.

BB: Yeah, yeah.

OB: I've got I've got a couple of 100 color slides of all these places that I went and it's just I love it. I love looking at it. I like to show my grandchildren and my great grandchildren. The trouble is that half of them are just don't you know, people don't don't really care much about history anymore. Too bad. Because they missed a lot.

BB: Right/ Right.

OB: But uh of course, I'm, I'm a liberal arts type of guy, you know, and certainly, my favorite is, is English literature. I'm a Shakespeare buff.

BB: Okay.

OB: I've seen all of Shakespeare's plays at least once. [0:32:00]

BB: Wow.

OB: And, you know, I stopped thinking that I and I love English literature. I read all the time. I'm still reading.

BB: Yeah.

OB: I must have spent two and a half hours reading before you call. That's great.

BB: That's great wow.

OB: So, it's uh I fear I'm not necessarily the prototype. The guy that can see you're out here out because they don't. Most of them don't even understand what I'm talking about. When I when I talk about.

BB: Yeah, that's unfortunate.

OB: Yeah, I agree. It is for them. Yeah, it is for them it. However, I will tell you something. I I talked to my grandchildren. As especially. And they, they listen, they find it interesting. They,

when I [0:33:00] tell him this, the type of things that I'm telling you. They, boy, they don't move. They listen.

BB: Yeah, that's great. That's really good.

OB: Anyway, You You asked me what my that was the first job I had when I got out of law school.

BB: Yeah, ok.

OB: And when I got out of the service, I tried to get a uh hook up with a law firm here in Fort Wayne. And I had several offers, but because I was 11th in my class, and I was a law review.

BB: Yeah.

OB: I was on the Law Review Board show. You know, I was not a slouchy guy. You know, and, but in 1956 they just, you know, [0:34:00] the best offer I got was \$300 a month.

BB: Wow.

OB: And uh, actually, that's what everybody else is working for at that time. And I I shouldn't tell you this, but the one for the big firm offer be 300 dollars a month. And I said to the guys that I think are gonna starve by myself. I don't need any.

BB: That's funny.

OB: But he said, he said maybe you wouldn't be very good at a big law firm. I said I'm free. Maybe if you want me to work for \$300 a month.

BB: Yeah.

OB: Right. And I'm not going to do that.

BB: Right.

OB: Then I got lucky. I um went around different firms looking for somebody just to hire me and nobody did, but one of the guys (Unintelligible) Spears who was at that time they I didn't know him but he was a big [0:35:00] Republican. He. He said "Well, I can't hire you. Our firm doesn't need a new guy. But we have a guy upstairs on the 14th floor of Lincoln tower, and he just left us. And he's got more work who knows what to do with, why don't you go see him?" So I did. And I'd never met this man in my life, his name was Frank Florrick. And it was a two-room office with a uh small place for the secretary and two chairs for the for the clients on the 14th

floor of the Lincoln tower in Fort Wayne, and he says, “Well I can't pay you a salary, [0:36:00] but I tell you what I'll do.” He said, “I'll give you all the work I can. And I'll pay all the overhead.

BB: Okay.

OB: And anything you bring in, you get 50% of anything you do for me, or you get 100% of it. Anything you do for me, you get 50%. He says you think you can do that?” I said “Well, that's best offer I've got.” I took it and uh. Ben, are you a lawyer by any chance?

BB: I'm not.

OB: Pardon.

BB: I'm not, no.

OB: Well, I walk, he showed me this little, tiny office I had. And when I say tiny office, you had to stand up to let one client sit down. I couldn't close the door. Unless you stood up. And it was that tight.

BB: Wow.

OB: He walked in and brought me a stack of files, [0:37:00] about three feet high. And he put them on the desk, and he said “Here go to work” turned around and walked away (Laughs). And I'm looking at this three-foot stack of files like holy Moses. And I uh, you got to remember; I was just 26 at the time.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And uh I really hadn't practiced law. You know, I've been in the service.

BB: Right.

OB: I've done a lot of legal work. I didn't tell you but, the legal work I did was was all military legal work. And I did a lot of them.

BB: Yeah.

OB: But uh it's nothing like civil legal work so. And I, I started working uh and first year, obviously I didn't make much money. But I, I made out we've got gotten better and better as it went on. And I'll tell you, [0:38:00] I like to tell stories that indicate what happened. I got that started with him in 56'. And uh our second daughter was born February 1, 58'. And that time Jane and I were living in the front bedroom of my parents' House.

BB: Okay.

OB: Now we had two children.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And Jane says, "We can't stay here." I said, "I know that there's too many people." She says, "Well, what are you going to do" I said, "Well, we got to find a place to go." And of course, the problem is it was easy to find a place to go, but I didn't have any money (Laughs).

BB: Yeah.

OB: The problem but at any rate, at that point, a acquaintance that I knew a Lebanese family said, [0:39:00] "Well, we're building we were uh, we just started an addition, down in North Fort Wayne, and we'll build you a House and sell you the House and the lot. For \$15,500." For \$15,000, let's say and "We'll, sell it to you on contract with 2500 dollars down and 200 and \$125 a month. And I thought boy, that's great. Jane says "Where you going to get \$2,500? [0:40:00] And I said "Don't worry. I'll have it when they ask me for it." And I went back to the office. And I pulled out one of these files I was telling you about now open it up was a personal injury case. And it was a good personal injury case. And I thought, boy, this is a good case is worth at least 100,000 to the client. And of course, I was green as grass. I had never seen a personal injury case. All I know how to do was I filed a complaint in the summons and sued them. And and the guy who later became my best friend, Bill McNagny, represented State Farm, who was who was the insurance, the insurance for this defendant, and he called me up and he says, "This is Bill McNagny. Why didn't you call me before you file this lawsuit?" And I said, "I don't know you." [0:41:00] He said (Laughs), "Well, I'm Bill McNagny. And I represent State Farm" And I said, "Well, let's finances" and he says, "All my policy I've got you, you're only entitled to 15,000. That's the limit." And I said, "Well, how do I know that?" He says, "I'll prove it to you." He hung up. He was on the third floor came up on the 14th floor in Lincoln Tower, and threw the policy on my desk, and I looked at it and I said, "Well, I see that's what you got." I said, "Are you offered me 15,000?" And he says, "No, I got I got to justify my existence." He says "How about 14,500." Well, I can tell you right now, but I was ready to accept that on the spot.

BB: Yeah.

OB: Because the guy was judgment proof. The guy that I was suing didn't have any money, but McNagny was not being he was not being nice to me. The fact is he knew that if he didn't deal with me well and honestly, I would have and I sued and got a judgment for say [0:42:00] \$100,000, I would have sued the company for not for not dealing fairly and I'd gotten it and Bill knew it.

BB: Yeah.

OB: So he offered to me 14,500 and I'd make a long story short, I talked to the client. Of course, he accepted it, we had it on 1/3 contingent fee basis. That is if, if you when you get a third if you don't when you get zero.

BB: Right.

OB: And so, the fee was about five grand.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And, and I split it with Frank. So he was I got about 2200. And he got about 2200. And that was my down payment.

BB: Yeah. Wow.

OB: You got to remember, you also you have to remember another thing. Man up until that time, I'd never charged anybody more than \$75 for anything done. [0:43:00] And so that was how we that's how we got started. And after that it got better. But I still didn't make an awful lot of money. But I...I didn't you know; I was going on.

BB: Wow. Interesting. So how many kids do you have?

OB: Six.

BB: Six, okay.

OB: I have four girls and two sons.

BB: Okay.

OB: One is the lawyer.

BB: Okay.

OB: My son Joe is a lawyer and he is practicing here in Fort Wayne. He practiced I practice with him and until about four years ago when I retired, Actually, I retired in 86'. But I was 86 when I retired. [0:44:00]

BB: Wow.

OB: So uh but I should tell you that I went along and uh I was you know I was making ends meet and I decided that I needed some more publicity so that people knew I was around.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And that's why I ran for for State Representative.

BB: Okay, interesting.

OB: And I did that in 1962 I ran for State Representative that time I was only 32 told you before I got elected.

BB: Yeah. [0:45:00] Interesting. Okay.

OB: Actually, Ben I uh, my two years in the legislature were probably the two I was in were probably as exciting and as different as anybody's ever had for two years.

BB: Wow. Okay.

OB: We are, you know, you probably don't even know this but Indiana did not have a sales tax. Until 1963. [0:46:00]

BB: Okay.

OB: We passed, we passed the sales tax. And it was it was a huge battle.

BB: Yeah.

OB: Because at the time, things were different then Matthew Welch was a Democrat Governor. And Dick Ristine was a Republican Lieutenant Governor.

BB: Okay.

OB: That doesn't happen today.

BB: Yeah.

OB: It was then, and the legislature was barely Republican by about the Senate wasn't was I could be off on this, but the Senate was only three or four votes Republican. The House was much easier. The House was heavily Republican. I can't remember the the amounts. But [0:47:00] of course, the big thing was the budget and taxes and sales tax. So they nobody wanted neither the Democrats nor the Republicans wanted to be the party that introduced the sales tax or the pay the you know, that passed the sales tax. And particularly, Matt Welsh didn't want it. Because he was a Democrat. He wanted to run for Senate.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And and Dick Ristine didn't want to be the one to get it because he was a Lieutenant Governor. He wanted to be Governor.

BB: Right. Right.

OB: And uh so we spent the first 61 days fighting about it, and we couldn't do it. Nothing happened. So Matt Welch called a special session of 40 days. And uh [0:48:00] so spent another 40 days, fighting about, you know, trying to get, get, get a sales tax passed and pass a budget. By the way, at the time I ran Ben, ready for this you know how much a legislator was paid at that time?

BB: Probably not much.

OB: 1800 bucks a year. So in other words, when I got \$900, for the two months, that I was supposed to be there in 63'.

BB: Yeah.

OB: With with no per diem. There was nothing per day. So I used up the 900 dollars living down in Indianapolis.

BB: Wow.

OB: You know, I can tell you, I know what it is today. And it's like \$2200 plus per diem.

BB: Yeah.

OB: But anyway, so we, we got this extra session, and it [0:49:00] went almost the full 40 extra days. Finally, the House passed the 7% tax. And it was like the second or last day, one of the very last days in the extra session. And so all of us, all 100 of the State Reps went over to the Senate. And we sat in the aisle to see what they were going to do with this bill and the place was packed. There was no room in the stands above and the tension was it was touchable it was so tense. And the Democrats had arranged it so that a couple of their people were sick. But what they did is they arranged it so that it was it was 50-50. There were there were [0:50:00] if all the Republicans voted for it, and all the Democrats voted against it and it'd be a tie.

BB: Wow.

OB: And that's what happened. And we all sat there we all knew what had happened. I laugh about this because the public doesn't understand this, but we sat there all 150 of us. Almost 150 plus the audience. And if you've ever watched that they call out everybody's name.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And you look up on the on the board, see everybody's name. When it got done the clerk says, Mr. German, the vote is 48 to 48 or something like that, you know, whatever it was, and, and there was dead silence in that chamber. And Dick Ristine of course has to break the tie. And he's the Republican who doesn't want to be the guy that voted for [0:51:00] sales tax.

BB: Yeah.

OB: I remember what he said. He said "To get this state moving again. The chair votes, aye." And the place went up. And there was cheering and laughing and screaming and everything else. That's how we got the sales tax.

BB: Wow. Yeah, it's pretty interesting time to be in there.

OB: It was, indeed. And I knew dozens of people in the in the audience, you know, they'd come up to you know, some of them were very good friends. But, as I said before, I I was in one of the most interesting times that you could be in the legislature. However, let me tell you something. I watched the legislature now. And you know, something, [0:52:00] nothing has changed.

BB: Really?

OB: It's all...I'll tell you what it is they're still arguing about the budget, taxes, and reapportionment. We were arguing about that.

BB: Okay.

OB: We were arguing about that 60-70 years ago, and we're still arguing about it. It makes me laugh every time I look because it's, it's changed. Don't misunderstand me. But the issues are practically the same.

BB: Yeah.

OB: So I forgot to tell you, I, I, backed the right guy for a Speaker of the House. And he appointed me to the Ways and Means Committee, which is the most prestigious committee in the House. Vote on the taxes and everything and, [0:53:00] and everything and all the expenses. And for freshman legislator to be on that committee. There was 18 of us. 18 people on the committee, and I was of course, the only freshmen on it.

BB: Yeah.

OB: And that was another thing. That's another reason why I couldn't run again. I was working five days a week, I never came home to Fort Wayne. Because the Ways and Means Committee

was meeting five days a week, sometimes at night. So it was kind of tough on my wife very tough on my wife.

BB: Yeah, that's hard.

OB: But, but it was a great experience. I'll tell you something. I learned more about the state of Indiana in 60 days than most people learn in a lifetime.

BB: Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

OB: But it was uh it was a [0:54:00] wonderful experience. I I don't regret a single bit of it. I enjoyed it immensely. I guess it was I shouldn't say it was it was fascinating. I had all kinds of things happen to me. I had one guy come...I was in the House and a group of people came in and they said to the clerk, we want to meet the the representative who answers all our letters. It was it was me. I used to I used to take my I took the tape recorder out of the secretary pool and I put it next to my bed at the hotel and I would dictate until I fell asleep. And then the (unintelligible) sends all of these letters, otherwise I could have never done it.

BB: Right. Right. [0:55:00]

OB: I I just felt that I wanted to do it. And I was pleased that they all appreciated the fact that I was writing. I was responding.

BB: Yeah, that's incredible. That really is.

OB: Well, I pretty much I don't know if I can tell you anymore.

BB: Well don't worry I have some more questions.

OB: Go ahead.

BB: All right. Um, so when you first got involved in politics, were there any key legislative issues or anything that you were thinking about? You wanted to work on?

OB: Uh No, not really. I did want. I wanted. I wanted to see if I could get. I wanted the legislature to be more responsive. And I don't know whether I accomplished that or not. [0:56:00] But I certainly I did try to do it. But there were, you know, young guys like me, you know, brand new freshmen legislators, Ben, they don't have very much of an influence, because you're too green. I'll give example. One of the all-time legislators put a bill together, and there was a mistake in it. And I wasn't against it, but it was it was. There was a mistake in it. And so I, you know, being green as grass. I put together an amendment to make it correct.

BB: Yeah.

OB: The guy went, we're sure he was a guy from [0:57:00] someplace out in the country someplace. And he was just sure I was trying to kill his bill. And no matter how I told him that I wasn't it didn't bother him. He just dug, he went crazy. He defeated my motion to fix it. [0:58:00] And then when I got finished, I'm walking and they've just pummeled me, you know. And I got back and I'm walking back and the oldest guy in the legislature, can't think of his name now. Took me by the arm as I went by. And he said "Otto, next time, you need something like that, just tell me I'll fix it in Conference Committee, and nobody will even know what happened. I said, "Thanks." Glen, I think was his first name. I said, "Thanks, Glen." Those Exactly. There are a lot of funny things happened in the legislature too. I put together a bill or didn't put together, this one guy who had been an older guy [0:58:00] who had been bothered me with a bill that I just talked to you about, he put together a bill that was going to change the time for farmers to file their Indiana State tax returns to February. You know, and I didn't care whether they did it in February or not, but but this guy was, was the guy who had been really given me trouble. And so, you know, I got I learned quick, I got a good sense of humor. And and the one way to kill a bill is to call it a lawyer's bill. That kills it immediately.

BB: Yeah.

OB: So I got and then the Speaker of the House recognize me and I spoke a little bit about him. And I said that. I said, [0:59:00] "Well, I don't know this, that the only people who will be helped by this bill are lawyers, this must be a lawyer's bills, and the guy went berserk. He started he started screaming "No, no, no, it's not a lawyer's bill, is not a lawyer's bill." And I I've never forgotten the laughter that Glenn Schlenker the guy who I was talking about he said, "You got even with him." But it was it was just too funny. Because I I remember that well, because the guy had picked on me and I thought well, I'm gonna get even. And I know we passed it. Actually, it was a dumb bill. And they didn't pass it but, but it wasn't because of me.

BB: That's funny though. Wow. You learn to play the game, I guess. Yeah.

OB: Well, you got to do that. [1:00:00] You know. And I again, I I didn't learn it too well, I got a few things passed. I'll tell you, here's here's something that you don't understand that people don't understand. I I joined with a State Representative from Michigan City named Bodine. Dick Bodine and I co-sponsored a bill to make the teachers union, the teacher's pension, the State Teachers' pension sound so that there was enough money and and it was done in such a way that there would be no way that they would not get their money. [1:01:00]

BB: Right.

OB: The only thing we changed was that the state was controlling that that pension which we were paying rather than the the union the teachers union boss Bob Wyatt. Well, he was not going to have that, he was he was one of the two strongest lobbyists in the in the legislature. And, uh and I obviously this was a bipartisan bill. It was a Democrat and a Republican doing it and

nobody, the Republicans were fine with it. But the the teacher's union was all Democrats, and I would go to the other legislators Democrats and [1:02:00] and they said, "Otto, I can't vote for this. Teachers will kill me. I won't get elected." And to show you how strong they are. I got a...one of the guys sent me a copy of the of the State Teachers Union newspaper. And the headline was, I'll never forget it whenever to be another 90 years. The headline was, "These men are your enemies."

BB: Oh my gosh.

OB: And it said "Bodine" bought a home (unintelligible) and several uh and of course, the bill got defeated. The only people who really got defeated were their teachers. But that's that happens. You gotta just you just gotta...It was hard for me as uh idealistic [1:03:00] 32 year old to get used to that. But I did.

BB: Yeah, I'm sure that can be rattling at first, to become a target.

OB: But it was I enjoyed being there. I can't say that I didn't. What else you got?

BB: Yeah. So did you have any, like, national, state, or local political heroes at all? Or?

OB: Well, actually, I think at the time, I think I was a Robert Taft guy, a big conservative Senator. Uh And I wouldn't don't forget, I was very young and I it seems to me that that's the...but I I really wasn't hung up on any anybody particular I I got along with all these people, [1:04:00] both Democrats and Republicans. So I really didn't have that. I didn't have a problem with them. And I I didn't sponsor any, you know, I was a freshman. I didn't sponsor any big bills because that just freshmen don't do that. But and I was not involved in the national issue other than here at home. I was a Precinct Committeemen and Ward Chairman. And I was and I was a parliamentarian for the Collin County Republican Central Committee, which means that I I presided over all the elections. So I was involved, [1:05:00] but not for myself.

BB: Yeah. Okay. Now, when you were like campaigning to get elected, did you have any particular things you campaigned on? Or?

OB: I don't think so. But I did campaign differently. And that's one of the reasons why I got so many votes. All the other Republicans campaigned among Republicans. I campaigned among the Democrats.

BB: Interesting. Wow.

OB: That that is a reason that I and I didn't spend a nickel. I never spent a dime of any money. I didn't have any money. I couldn't have I couldn't afford to buy a book of matches for Pete's sakes to giveaway so I didn't have any but I. And besides that you gotta remember to. [1:06:00] I was I was doing a lot of the stuff with helping people that I told you about in the beginning of this

interview. And those people knew it and a lot of them were Democrats. And usually people vote for people they know, or people that they seen doing things that they agree with. I think that's why I got so many more votes. Simply because I think a lot of people who would have voted normally would have voted somebody...voted for a Democrat didn't do it.

BB: Yeah. So what was your first election day like? [1:07:00]

OB: Rather uneventful. I, I didn't have any idea what was going to happen. I was flabbergasted. I now figured it out. But that time, I didn't have any idea what was going to happen. I ran and, and I got elected, and everybody was happy about it. So was I.

BB: Yeah. What were you thinking when you first walked into the State House for your first day in office?

OB: I was impressed. I gotta be honest with you. I didn't know exactly what was gonna happen. And I felt very good about it. But I, again, as I say, when you're a freshman, you kind of take what the what happens, and hope you don't look like an idiot.

BB: Fair enough. [1:08:00] Now, what were your expectations for the process? The legislative process? And was it more or less complicated than you expected?

OB: Yes, it was. Well, there's all kinds of things in the legislative process, that the average guy who's not involved in it has no idea about. Uh Like, you know, things, things get taken you you there's 100 different ways to get something done. I mentioned to you before that. I was I was thinking I was going to do the straightforward thing and get this bill amended. And I got killed doing it. I could have just had somebody in the committee amended. Nobody will know the difference. But I I didn't know that. [1:09:00] And there's there's, you got to remember that. There is uh. There's politics and all of this. So the things that you think ought to happen. There may be some political reason why it doesn't happen. Especially if you're, if you're a newcomer like I was. I learn quick. But I it was a, it was a it was a real learning experience. I will tell you that.

BB: Yeah. So what was some of the like, the political things that maybe surprised you that you didn't understand? At first, that were sort of going on behind the scenes perhaps or something?

OB: Well, there was there was all kinds of (unintelligible) going on. [1:10:00] You don't know about unless you're there a while The old timers knew what was knew who was trading what. But a guy like me you know, I was just meeting some of these people. Uh And you got to remember that the the Indianapolis delegation was the biggest delegation. And, and I got to tell you, the Marion County delegation. And the thing is, I discovered one thing at that time, I'm toward the end of the session. Most of them almost all the things that they were trying to get done, that is the one delegation was trying to get done. They got done. After that. You couldn't get them to even talk to you. [1:11:00] You know, they didn't care anymore. And I remember

one just the big delegations. A, I can't remember where he's from, but one of the legislators who sat right next to me, was from Southern Indiana, way down next to the river. And, and he ignored everything that was going on. And I know that because he was sitting next to me. And and I said, "What are you doing?" He says, He says, "Otto, I came down here to get two bridges and a dam." He says, "That's all I'm interested in. Just get my two bridges and a dam, that's all I care about." He didn't care about any other bill that was passed. He wanted he wanted his, "If I get two bridges and a dam, I'll get reelected forever." And that's what he was after. [1:12:00] You know, one guy from little country town. I don't even remember his name or where he was from. I just remembered he was from Southern Indiana.

BB: Wow. That's interesting. Yeah. It just shows how many people are coming from these totally different places that have different agendas so.

OB: Well, all everybody does. And that's the fascinating thing about the whole thing is the other thing, these these guys that...everything can change in five seconds. Say, you don't you go in and you hear everybody your your committee report. And you say, well, that's what's going to happen. You walk out the door, and somebody does something, and bing bing, and all of a sudden, it's all changed. And the uh [1:13:00] I got up, I got offered a job lobbying for somebody I can't remember a long time ago after I after I was out of the legislature. And I turned them down. And they said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, because in order to do an honest lobbying job, you have to be there all the time." And I said, "I, I'm not going to take I'm not going to take a couple \$1,000 from you, and make it look like I'm like, I'm helping you when I know I'm not it won't work. You know, it's a full-time job and I don't want a full-time job and you shouldn't hire anybody unless he does it full time." Because it's like I said, you walk out of the committee, and you think the thing is set up and in five minutes it's gone.

BB: Yep. [1:14:00] Now, what was the first bill that you sponsor? Do you remember?

OB: Yeah, I spot I can't. Well, that one bill. The fix the teachers' pension plan was, was one good the second one. I had a I had a friend asked me to a barber who asked me to put in a bill. It was a minor thing with respect to the barbers union. I can't remember what it was anymore. But I, I put it in and it got passed. But again, Ben, there's an example. It was kind of an innocuous bill. It wasn't anything special. And and I remember, a couple of the live veteran Republicans, good friends of mine. [1:15:00] They said, "Well, Otto a lot of this is this is a union bill. But if this guy's a friend of yours, we'll back it. That's all it was to it. Yeah. I mean uh if it hadn't been that it got passed. And I don't even remember what it was anymore because it was, it was certainly...you know I can't remember it had to do with how the union was run. And, and the guy see but he knew this, the veteran guy knew it. I didn't know it you know uh, as I said I was as green as grass.

BB: Yeah, sure. What was the relationship like between Democrats and Republicans?

OB: Uh Generally it was pretty good. We didn't have but we were we were all pretty friendly uh [1:16:00] every now and then the guy lose his temper. That's just human that's human I had a lot of Democrat friends down there they were they were good guys. But actually, I and that's it I can't I don't have anybody we never got into any arguments that I can recall.

BB: Yeah. What about the relationship between the House and Senate did you feel like there was a different power dynamic between the two or?

OB: Not really think that they will think that was the case. I think that things were different. That they you know, we the Republicans controlled the House. The Democrats only were a couple short in the Senate. [1:17:00] So they had a lot more influence in the setup. And if one were one or two Republicans didn't agree, nothing happened.

BB: Yeah. How powerful was party leadership?

OB: I think party leadership is very important, and it's very strong. Particularly in the House. The Speaker of the House. Most people don't understand this, Ben, but the most powerful person in the legislature is the Speaker of the House. Not not the Governor, not the Lieutenant Governor. Nobody else, it's the speaker. And the reason is, is because he has absolute control over the bills that are that are presented. And if he doesn't like a bill, he sticks it in his pocket and you never see it again. [1:18:00] You know and uh so the that was one of the reasons why I was on the Ways and Means Committee because I voted for the right guy. I voted for Dick Ristine, who was the speaker. It's kind of another thing I forgot to tell you. I was the representative from Allen and Whitley. I represented two counties. Now they're all divided up into numbers that are completely different. But at that time, I was representative from Allen and Whitley [1:19:00] and Dick Ristine. As I uh pardon me, Ristine is the Governor or Lieutenant Governor. The Speaker of the House, and I were very good friends. And whenever he would recognize me, he was always he would always recognize me as the gentleman from Whitley (Laughs) it was kind of a standing joke.

BB: That's funny. Yeah. Now, did you feel like you worked with Democrats a lot to get legislation done?

OB: Say again?

BB: Did you work with Democrats a fair amount to get legislation done?

OB: Yeah, I did. I did quite a bit. I can't remember exactly any more been too many years ago, but [1:20:00] I'm the kind of guy that you don't get anything done fighting those people. Provided that you don't give up your principals, so might as well cooperate and get stuff done.

BB: Yeah, yeah, no, I understand. Now, you've kind of already highlighted this point a little bit already multiple times. But what does the public not know about the Indiana General Assembly and how it operates?

OB: Well, they just the public doesn't understand the procedure. That's That's the problem. One of the way it the other thing, half of the time. Well, more than that. This is what you probably didn't know, you'd probably want to cover asked me. The news people [1:21:00] who are covering the legislature don't know much more about it than the public does. They miss, they miss direct everybody, I would call home, and my wife would say, "Well, I see such and such happened, I read it in the morning paper." And that's the (Unintelligible) that's old news. That's not none of that happened. That's wrong. "See it says here write in the paper" Honey, I can't help it, they don't know what they're talking about, the guy that wrote that. Also, some of them are not necessarily honest. And I'll give you my best example, I'm annoyed about it. Even to this day. Uh my, my, my dealings with the press. [1:22:00] One night, there was a big dinner given for the entire legislature, and everybody went and do nothing spectacular about it. But I was a member of the Ways and Means Committee. And of course, I told you we met daytime and nighttime. And so we had agreed its 8 PM, which we agreed me, we'd leave the banquet. But we're doing it in bits, you know, four or five of us at a time. So we're not making a big splash and nobody would pay any attention, we wouldn't disrupt anything. Well, as a result of doing that, we all came in to our meeting probably 15-20 minutes late, sometimes a half hour, the most was a half hour. Well, John (Unintelligible) was the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, a real nice guy [1:23:00] from Nappanee, Indiana, and, but he was a little guy, short guy, and he liked to tell everybody how (Unintelligible) he was and he probably would be mad at me saying this to ya. But he got up and tried to make a big speech about you guys call a meeting for eight o'clock I expect all you guys to be here and I don't want you out there boozing it up. You know, and carrying on like that for two minutes. Everybody knew it was John and paid no attention to him because he was just making a speech. The next morning, we all pick up the newspaper and here's this article with a headline that made us sound like everybody on ways means committee we're a bunch of drunks. And, and he went on to write this whole thing. And, [1:24:00] and I saw the writer, the author, the reporter, who who had attended every one of our meetings. I know his name right now. I could tell you his name today. And I said, Steve, what the heck is this? This isn't what we do. And I said "How could you write something like this?" He says, "I got front page and a byline all over Indiana with that story." I almost hit him in the mouth. I was angry. Because he slandered all of us and libeled us and got away with it. But that happens. You just got to exempt it, but I gotta be honest with you. That kind of dishonesty bothered me as you can tell. 60 years later it still bothers me.

BB: Yeah, I bet. Well, I mean, yeah, it's, yeah, that's, that's tough geez. How did your legislative service affect your family life? [1:25:00]

OB: It was pretty tough. on my family lived because we had five. At that time, we had...with the fifth child was born right after I got out, right after the legislation. Legislation was over in 63. She was born in April in 63' and but that was that that was too many kids to have and be down

there. That's the reason I never went back. The people here in Allen County couldn't believe when I said I wasn't going to run again. They said, "My god you're a shoe in, why won't you run." And I said "You love the ticket except for one guy." But this wasn't, wasn't the right thing to do.

BB: Sure. Now, what would you say was the most controversial legislative issue during your time there?

OB: Sales tax, no question. Yeah, sales tax was the biggest issue. And the...and the Well, actually, [1:26:00] sales tax reapportionment and the budget. Those are the things that everybody was fighting about.

BB: Right, right. And what piece of legislation took the longest to work out or that you spent the most time working on?

OB: Uh the budget. The budget easily the hardest. You got to realize, you probably remember, the budget is in a, in a long book, about two and a half about two feet long. And about five inches high. And it's a big, huge, big, and we went through it line by line. It took forever. And there's [1:27:00] a lot of the, you know, there's, I can't remember how many millions of was involved. But the biggest thing they fought about was the budget for health as I recall. Otis Bowen the uh. he was a state rep when I was there, and he later became Governor of Indiana, knew him well, good guy, a medical doctor. We couldn't pass the budget in the House. And we got together and made some adjustments on the health care. That allowed the budget to pass. [1:28:00] Interestingly, I didn't vote for it. And I didn't vote for it, there was only three people that didn't vote for it. The speaker or the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and me and another guy, and I can't think of his name. And the only reason I didn't vote for it was it was a matter of principle. I, I didn't object to it at all. But, you know, I voted I thought we had done the right thing in the in the Ways and Means Committee. And, and this was a compromise in which Dr. Bowen, compromised with the Democrats, and that's okay, you know he did it right. But I was, I was just, I was defending the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. And as I told you, I was I'm one of these guys that. I don't know, [1:29:00] I felt like an obligation to him that, that we didn't do that. We did not make a mistake. But anyway, that that's what happened. You wanna know something that's really funny?

BB: Sure.

OB: I knew Dr. Bowen very well. And I met him several times after he became Governor. And he never forgot that I voted against his bill. He reminded me of it every single time I met him. (Laughs)

BB: Oh my gosh. That's funny. Wow. What would you say was the proudest moment you had as a legislator?

OB: Oh, I think that would have to be the passing of the sales tax bill. It was so hard to do. That was just so hard to get done and we work so hard, and we needed to do it. A lot of people would [1:30:00] say why would you want to be proud of the sales tax bill? The alternative was the was a graduated net income tax and and I was unalterably opposed to that, because I had seen it. In Wisconsin, where they have. And I had made tax returns out for Indiana people, and Wisconsin people and I can tell you right now that the, the Wisconsin for the same amount of money, the Wisconsin resident being about three times as much as the Indiana people did. And I wasn't about a pass...about to vote for a graduated income tax. So that was that was the reason for that. [1:31:00]

BB: What actually...

OB: That's alright. Go ahead.

BB: I was gonna say uh what In your opinion, do you think is the most important work of the Indiana General Assembly?

OB: The most important work of the General Assembly?

BB: Yeah.

OB: Well, it's really hard to say I suppose. The three big things that they have to go with every year. They've got to do taxes, budget, and reapportionment those kinds of things. Those are the most important things. And that's why they come up every year. Today, Ben, there's a lot more I think about it. [1:32:00] I'd have to think, a lifetime that's what it was, today if I went over a little bit, I think I would I might change it. I think that taking care of, of the welfare of the older people is uh...the elderly. See, we've got most people don't understand that the largest, the fastest growing segment of society is over 80. And if you don't pay any attention, all of a sudden, you're gonna have have a lot of, [1:33:00] you know, elderly people, you know, in the poor house. So you got you got to think about that. I, I'm not thinking about it from my own point of view, because I am in that category. But and I'm not worried about it. But I know an awful lot of people who are and they are, they are in trouble.

BB: Sure. What do you remember about the civil rights bill, while you were in the General Assembly?

OB: You know, I don't think the civil rights bill even though it was in the 60s. I don't recall like that in Indiana, and our legislative thing. I don't think we if we did, it was certainly not a big issue. I don't remember. And I tell you right now, probably should have been. But I don't believe it was.

BB: So overall, now thinking just kind of in a big picture. How would you summarize your time as a state legislator? [1:34:00]

OB: I thought that it was extremely gratifying. I learned a tremendous amount about Indiana. And I also learned I learned an awful lot about politics. So that I don't have I don't have all of the, the anger that so many of these young people have today. Anger doesn't accomplish anything. Anger accomplishes absolutely nothing. And I agree that there are plenty of things that we need to fix, but but if you're doing it in anger, [1:35:00] you're usually screwing up. I can tell you one thing that I'll tell you and and I'm absolutely convinced of. I never, ever act, if I can keep from in anger every time I do I regret it. And me many, many times, I have written a letter, for example, I remember I wrote a letter and I was furious. And I looked at it. And I thought, "Nope", I stuck it in my desk drawer and closed the door. And it turns out that had I written it, I would have screwed up everything. You just don't write... You don't think well, when you're angry.

BB: Yeah, that totally makes sense. Um What would you say is the biggest lesson you learned?

OB: [1:36:00] I don't think that you can ever assume that you understand everything until you have really investigated it.

BB: Okay. Yeah. Do you have any regrets as a legislator?

OB: Not really, I kind of wish I would have been able to go back. I'm not...I mean, I, I enjoyed it. But I just couldn't do it. I should tell you one thing before I forget. I you didn't ask me about, about the honesty in the legislature. And I remember sitting in the sitting there talking to a lobbyist, a good friend of mine. [1:37:00] After I'd been there at least 60 days, I was probably in the, in the, in the extra session. And we were just chatting. And I said, you know, I said that. "I heard all about this business of how crooked all politicians are and, and" I said, "you know, I've been here now all this time, and I haven't seen any of that at all. And I just think that's the product of somebody's imagination." And the the lobbyists looked at me with a smile, and he said, Otto, "Nobody's going to offer you a bribe." And I said, "Well, you know, you're, [1:38:00] I guess you're right." What he's telling me is, is that I hadn't seen any evil because they didn't show me any. And of course, I was, as I said, I was 32 years old. I was as naive as you can get almost. And but I still don't think...that there might be one or two guys in the legislature that that do something like that. I'm Absolutely...Well, at least when I was there, I'm sure that there weren't very many.

BB: Yeah, I guess. It just sounds like a bigger issue than people realize it's not as much I am sure. What advice would you give to future legislators or even current legislators?

OB: [1:39:00] Well, I'd like them to be less partisan. And listen to each other. And not be pushing their own personal agenda. I think that we have a lot. You know, a lot of the people, a lot of the legislators, they, they push something, because it's gonna make them look good, or it will further one of their own personal objectives. And I don't think we should do that.

BB: Sure. How would you say the state of Indiana has changed over the course of your lifetime?

OB: [1:40:00] I think it's changed for the better. I really, I think it's changed for the better. I think lots of things are better around and they're working. They're not all better. But they're certainly better than they were. Including, including the big question today over racism. Indiana, had a lot of racism. In the past and they still got some, but it isn't as bad as it was.

BB: Sure, sure. How do you think the Indiana General Assembly has changed over time?

OB: I don't really think I can answer that. I don't have enough information to answer that.

BB: What about politics in the state in general?

OB: [1:41:00] Well, that's it. It has changed in this regard, Ben. The, the local politics is pretty much just like it was I think. But the national politics has now. This is it's a money thing. Who do you know, who can run for a national office unless he's got millions of dollars. That's because we've got primaries. I was, will tell you that I used to be a representative to the Indiana delegation. You know, and I think that I think we did a better job [1:42:00] of nominating people than the primaries do. The primary primaries have too much money involved in the primaries. The, the only guy that can even think about running is somebody that's got a backer that's got millions.

BB: Yeah, yeah, that is that is interesting. When thinking about the people of Indiana. What if any enduring qualities do Hoosiers still have or hold dear?

OB: What say that again?

BB: When thinking about the people in Indiana, what if any enduring qualities do Hoosiers have or hold dear still today?

OB: I I think they want honesty. [1:43:00] I don't think there's any substitute for for honesty. One thing and I I think that they want people who have the best interests of the general public at heart as opposed to one in particular...as opposed to build a business or labor. I think that I think people want you to give them an honest shake. I don't I don't think it's a good idea to be close minded, which is I don't some people are still.

BB: Yeah. What do you want Hoosiers to know about their role in relation to the function [1:44:00] of the Indiana General Assembly?

OB: I want them to be interested. But I'm not sure there's any way to give them enough accurate knowledge to do that. That's the problem.

BB: Right. Sure. Well, that's all the questions I have for you. Is there anything that you want to say or talk about that I didn't cover?

OB: I can't think of anything. I I elaborated on some stuff for you without you're asking me. I think that pretty much covered it uh Ben.

BB: Okay, perfect. Well, that's about all I have for you. So I really appreciate you taking the time to be a part of this project. And it's gonna be very helpful, I think. So.

OB: I appreciate your calling. And I hope it works out for you. Thank you so much.

BB: All right. Thank you.

OB: Nice talking to you Ben.

BB: Take care.

OB: Good luck.

BB: Bye bye.

OB: Bye bye.