

ILOHI Interview with Bill Montgomery

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Interview by Ben Baumann

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

MP3 File, Sony

Bill Montgomery=BM:

Ben Baumann=BB:

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BB: [0:00:00] So before we begin, I would just like to state for the record that today is July 27, 2021. And my name is Ben Bauman. I'm here in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I'm speaking via phone with William Montgomery who is in Salina, Ohio, and we're doing an interview for the Indiana Legislative Oral History Initiative. So just to start off, when and where were you born?

BM: Yeah, please call me Bill, by the way Ben. I was born March 20, 1950 in Inglewood, New Jersey. My father was in his last year at Columbia Law School. So, I was born in the East, but I'm not from the East.

BB: Okay, perfect. All right. And you go by Bill Montgomery?

BM: Correct.

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

BM: Don and Barbara.

BB: Okay. And where was your family from before Indiana. [0:01:00]

BM: My family is from Salina, Ohio. This is where I was raised.

BB: Okay. And so how did you get to Indiana?

BM: Well, I went to college at DePauw. I was a freshman in 1968. And after completing my degree, I went to Ohio Northern University Law School, in Ada, Ohio. And in 1976, I moved to Frankfort, Indiana, and a year later, I ran for the legislature. I was involved in a three-way Republican primary to challenge the incumbent Democrat Don Stanley.

BB: Okay, interesting. And so you went to college in Indiana. And what did you major in in college?

[0:02:00]

BM: I majored in psychology. And I was a four-year member of the DePauw baseball team.

BB: Oh, wow. That's cool. Okay. And just growing up, what understanding if at all did you have about your family's political views?

BM: Well, I had a pretty clear understanding my father was a Republican County prosecutor in the early 1950s.

BB: Yeah. Okay. And while you were at DePauw, how did you view your college experiences?

BM: Well, I had a great college experience. I did a lot of things I was very active in, in many, many campus affairs, including the campus newspaper. It was a tumultuous time the Vietnam War was raging

the for students at Kent State [0:03:00] in Ohio were shot during that time. And the Air Force ROTC building at DePauw was burned by two students. Yeah, so it was a tumultuous time. And I really do count my lucky stars that I was surrounded by a bunch of really, really good guys. I was in the Phi Kappa Phi Fraternity. And I really think maybe if it hadn't been for that cadre of good solid friends that you know, I might have become a wayward son as some people did back then. But I didn't I pretty I pretty much played it down the middle.

BB: Okay, interesting.

BM: Dan Quayle was at DePauw at that time by the way.

BB: Okay. That's another interesting factor at play there. Wow. [0:04:00]

BM: Yeah. When I ended up serving in the House, both Ned Lamkin who was our majority floor leader, and John Donaldson who was our State Rep from Lebanon we're also DePauw grads. So that was kind of neat.

BB: Yeah, that's cool. All right. Yeah, pretty good alumni group there in the general assembly at the time. In what ways did your awareness of politics change when you were in college?

BM: I think I just became more aware. I wasn't involved in any in any formal way. But you couldn't help but, you know, be made aware of particularly of world affairs, not I don't know, you know, necessarily about intricate State of Indiana affairs at that time, but I certainly had an awareness of, you know, what was going on in the world because many of us [0:05:00] while, not many, all of us were of draft age. And there was still a military draft going on at that time. In fact, the lottery was invoked. And I can remember my sophomore years sitting around with a bunch of my fraternity brothers and watching on national TV, as someone pulled ping pong balls with numbers on them out of a fishbowl number, and that number represented your number in the lottery. So, when mine was pulled out, I think I was to 235 or something like that. So, my chances of being drafted were fairly slim.

BB: Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure that was kind of a tough process to watch, because you never know initially.

BM: No, but I had some friends who, [0:06:00] who had low numbers, and they were drafted as soon as they graduated. We had we had student affirance until graduation.

BB: Yeah, geez. So briefly talk a little about your employment history after college.

BM: Well, I went straight to law school, after college. And after graduating from law school, and I moved to Indiana, I had passed up an opportunity to go to New York City. And go into an executive training program with a subsidiary of Swiss Re, which is a reinsurance company. And I declined that, that offer. And I moved to Indiana, bought a used pickup truck, truck and a colleague puppy. And yeah, and I was a bachelor for a long time, by the way. And then I had accepted a job as assistant manager of the [0:07:00] Ladoga Federal Savings and Loan and I was a management trainee there. With the notion in a few years, I would become the manager of the Frankfurt branch, it was called Ladoga, even though it was in Frankfurt, because I think the origins of that savings and loan were in Ladoga, which is kind of over by Crawfordsville.

BB: Yeah. Okay. Interesting.

BM: And so, I did that. I did that for a couple of years. But I was kind of itching for something a little more challenging. And I was one who went to law school a little bit by default, again, that the Vietnam War was raging. As long as I was still in school, I had a student deferment. And I really wasn't sure what I

wanted to do with my life. But I thought, as long as I'm doing something positive, and putting one foot in front of the other, that eventually things might become clearer to me. And in the long run, things would work out on course, hindsight of 50 years, [0:08:00] that's exactly what happened. Yeah. So anyway, I can remember, one evening, with friends watching the movie, the candidate, starring Robert Redford. And I was just intrigued by that whole process. And then, shortly thereafter, I was with another group of DePauw friends in Indianapolis. And I just sort of posed the question, you know, I'm trying to figure out where I want to go in this life, I'm really, I really don't want to practice law. I'd like to be able to use that background and, in some way, what do you folks think I'm good at. And boy, several others just piped up and said, you'd be good at politics. You know you meet people well, you've got a good educational background, and then just having been kind of warmed up by the movie The Candidate, I said you well, let me think about this. [0:09:00] And so I just started exploring a little bit. And I knew that our local state representative at that time from Frankfurt was a fella named Don Stanley. And so, I made some inquiries among some of the local political, politically savvy folks, including some former state office holders, and they encouraged me to get involved and throw my hat in the ring. And if you'll indulge me, this is where it gets kind of interesting because my mother's family was from Clinton County. And but I only lived there about a year and nobody really knew who Bill Montgomery was and in politics, name recognition is you know, it's just critical. So how do I how do I get named and this would have been sometime in 1978, I guess, how do I get name recognition? Well, [0:10:00] my good and dear friend and my roommate at DePauw fella named Mel Trocked who was a young associate with the Ice Miller law firm in Indianapolis. Said, "Your Dad, [meaning my dad], did the identity fraud trail sled dog race, didn't he?" I said "Yes, he did." And by the way, my dad was a John Wayne, esque kind of person. He was big, he was bold. He was smart. And he was the...my dad, (Unintelligible) was the first Ohioan to ever complete the Iditarod and trail sled dog race in Alaska. And after law school, and before I did anything really meaningful. My dad, a retired large animal veterinarian from near Western Ohio and I spent six weeks in the bush in in Alaska, along with my dad and the [0:11:00] Brummer sled dogs, kind of getting the lay of the land. My dad's goal was to raise his own dog sled team in Ohio, and then ultimately compete and then complete the Iditarod. And are you familiar? So anyway, so I had that experience, and my dad did he, he entered the race in 70'. I guess 77'. And he didn't complete it, he got about, he got about three quarters of the way and was involved in a 24-hour white out and given up so he laid out a year and became a little more educated got himself a real good lead dog from some Indians in Alaska. That was the only kind of nonresident dog that he had. And then he went back and completed in 79'. And I may have my dates a little bit off. [0:12:00] Anyway, Dad had done the Iditarod so my buddy Mel says, "Why don't you see.." And by the way, this was, I guess, in 70', 78'. There had been a blizzard in Indiana, major blizzard. Gas was being rationed. Everything was closed down. I mean, it was a major, major event, you probably weren't even alive then. But my buddy says, "Why don't you play on this blizzard, and the, you know, come up with some energy themes, and drive a team of sled dogs to the Statehouse and file your declaration of candidacy. And I thought, man, is that is that outlandish, but let me think about it. So anyway, my dad loaned me five or six dogs. And I had been sports editor of the campus paper at Depauw [0:13:00] and because of that, and because I played varsity baseball, I knew the sports information director at Depauw very well a fella named Pat Aikman and, and I called Pat and told him about this harebrained scheme, and he jumped on it. He was very happy to help me. And he said, "I think it's a great idea." He said, "Let me call my friend Tom Keating at the Indianapolis Star." Now, Ben, Tom Keating was a longtime feature editor at The Star and he was also a Depauw grad. So, Keating was alerted to this guy who was gonna be coming to the Statehouse with a team of sled dogs right down Senate Avenue. And I had been smart enough to get police permit so that I can do this in case you know, be stopping traffic or something. [0:14:00] And I got two fellas, from Frankfurt to be sort of the my handlers that is kind of helping with the dogs and as we approach the statehouse, you

know, kind of standing by in case anything untoward occurred. Well, it didn't. But as luck would have it, there were TV crews in the area that day, so.

BB: Oh my god.

BM: So, I was on TV. Tom Keating, I'm 27 years old. 27, 28, I think 28 maybe. So, Keating wrote an article about this. And he called it spotting publicity house and you can find the article. And then a number of other papers The Lafayette paper picked it up, of course the Frankfurt Times picked it up. And then I was on TV to boot. So, it's corny as...and then of course, I made some, you know some statements about how we need to rethink our energy policy and but what it did [0:15:00] was it got me some instant recognition. And so, I could use pictures of the dogs and I and my big parka and everything. I could use that on some of my campaign literature. And if people you wanted to remember your name, if they didn't they can at least remember who that nut was that that drove the team of sled dogs to the statehouse. In any event, it did what it was supposed to do. It got me some name recognition, when I'd only lived in the state for about a year. And, and then, of course, I filed that day to run for House District 28, which encompass most of Clinton County, and parts of four other counties, including that Tippecanoe, Carroll, Boone, and Hamilton, a few townships in each of those that was about a 90-mile-long district. So, it was it was challenging to campaign in [0:16:00] because it was so long. In any event, that two other fellas also filed a local radio personality named Dan Foley and a fellow named Charlie Eckerd from Sheridan, so three of us were vying for the Republican primary and a chance then to take on the incumbent Don Stanley. And I can remember just kind of running with blinders on. I mean, you know, I'm a, I'm a neophyte, in all of this, I tried to take the best advice from, everybody. I tried to take the high road. And in any event that the night of the election, I went to bed around midnight, just exhausted, having just, as I said, run with blinders on. And I had lost by, I think it was four votes or six votes, something like that. I mean, it just, you know, it was just a horse race, [0:17:00] but I had lost, and I accepted that I was tired. And at three in the morning, my phone rang. And it was a radio station in Lafayette. And they said, "Bill, we are here to tell you that a township misreported its results in Tippecanoe, and you have won. Well, the presses had already rolled by that time, the Noblesville Ledger ran an article about that Dan Foley eking out this victory over, you know, Bill Montgomery and Charlie Eckerd, and it was a little bit like, on a smaller scale, Truman and Dewey. Because I won, and that, I think, ultimately, it was a 10-vote margin, you know, which is just razor thin. And because the district in those parts of five counties, anybody who challenged the results, would have had to file recounts in each of those five counties and it would have been very expensive. [0:18:00] So, Dan fully decided not to try and challenge the results. So, I won the primary and then I beat Dawn Stanley in the Fall. Yeah, it was exciting.

BB: Yeah. Sounds like that's, that is pretty cool. Geez, yeah, it's I don't think I've heard a story quite like that. That's unique. That's cool. Wow.

BM: Yeah. Thanks. Well, it was the whole thing was life changing. For me I was 28 years old. I've been elected. I guess it would had been November of 78'. And then I served two terms and was running unopposed for a third term when Governor Orr appointed me to the Public Utilities Commission. It was called Public Service Commission back then.

BB: So, and that's why you ended up just resigning basically.

BM: Yeah, it was it was kind of bittersweet because I gave up [0:19:00] a safe seat and one that I'd worked hard to, to capture and then hold on to when I was finally running unopposed. But as you know, the legislature is not a career, and I believe in the citizen legislature concept. I really do. You can't make a living at it. And you shouldn't make a living at it. But I was still in my, like 32 years old. And to have sort

of a career opportunity. Made sense to me in the Public Service Commission. What was that? It's now called the IURC, Indiana Utilities Regulatory Commission, but we regulated all the public utilities in the state back then. And it was, as I say, it was more of a of a career position. It paid certainly a living wage, and that was attractive. Plus, it was challenging, very challenging. Indiana at that time had to fit two failed [0:20:00] nuclear power plants, and this would have been in 82'. And that issue was a political football because it was a gubernatorial election here, Governor Orr was running for reelection against a fella named Wayne Townsend, from Hartford City, was running on the Democrat side. But anyway, the whole of these two failed nuclear power plants and their financial ramifications and political ramifications were right on the front burner. And I'm Chair, I'm chairman of the commission. So anyway, that's why I gave up a safe seat. I loved the legislature. It was collegial back then Ben, I had as many, if not more friends on the Democrat side of the aisle as I had on the Republican side of the aisle. And the only pieces of legislation that were really contentious were the money bills. But you know, most of the rest of the stuff, [0:21:00] take for instance, duck hunting on Sunday, making it legal, you know, that's not necessarily political. And you can work with folks on the other side. So, I love that give and take always been, I've always been kind of a public person, as I said, at DePauw I knew everybody, and I just, that's just sort of my makeup. And so, for me, serving in the Indiana house from 78' to 82' was a little bit like going to college. Being paid a little bit, had to study a little bit, and got to party a little bit. And, and it was, you know, for the most part, just great fun.

BB: Yeah, no, that's great.

BM: And during that time, and I was single until I was 36 years old. But I struck up a friendship with one, John Greg from Sanborn in Indiana. [0:22:00] John's also a single guy, and he was a lobbyist for MX Coal. And, or, yeah, I guess it was a MX Coal, and going to law school at IUPUI at night, and we became fast friends and, and, you know, did a lot of stuff together some of the little bit crazy, although never illegal. And we remained friends, really, to this day, because long after I left politics, John, of course, ran against one of his own Democrat Party members in a primary beating beat Bill Roach and then ultimately became speaker of the House and two times, ran unsuccessfully unfortunately for the Governorship of Indiana. And so, when John decided to finally step aside from politics, the company of which I'm CEO of asked John, [0:23:00] if he would consider standing for election to the boards of directors of our three companies. He agreed to do that. So now I see John, four times a year when he comes to Salina for our board meetings, which is it all started, you know, in the 70s in the Indiana Legislature.

BB: Yeah. Interesting to see how those connections carry on. Yeah. So, the first day that I guess, so what were you thinking of the first day that you walked into the state house as an elected official?

BM: Well, I had been given some good advice by fella named Tom Robison, not Robinson, Robison, our OPISON lawyer in Frankfort. Tom had served in the House earlier. And he said, "I'll give you a little advice." He said, "You got to find out where the restrooms are [0:24:00] at" and he said, "I would recommend Bill that you sit in the back of the of the chambers on the left side" Which is where a Republican sat, we had some spillover on the right side where the Democrats were. But I was in that back row. And he said, "The reason you want to do that is so you can get in and get out. You know, if you need to go powder your nose or you need to go talk to somebody in the hall. You're not stuck in the middle of the aisle halfway down in the chambers." And that those are little housekeeping pieces of advice that I appreciated. And so, what did I think? Well, I was you know, I was awestruck. I really, I didn't have a lot of preconceived notions, but I felt very honored to be there. I really did.

BB: Yeah, definitely. What worry about your expectations for the legislative process? Was it more or less kind of what you expected?

BM: Again, I didn't have any preconceived notions. [0:25:00] I learned to sort of accept, I guess, and realize that the old saw about those who liked both sausage in the law should watch neither being made was really true. And I don't mean to imply by that there was corruption, what I mean is by creating a network of friends, sometimes the legislation that you're considering, or that you're, you're thinking about even proposing is done in the evening, or it literally is done on the back of a napkin. And a lot of that takes place outside the...I mean, the real work of, of lawmaking doesn't, it doesn't take place on the on the floor of either the House or the Senate, it takes place, you know, in committees, and sometimes, you know, after hours. So having developed those friendships, [0:26:00] and a network was crucial to, to one's success, and also one's satisfaction with the process, I think.

BB: Yeah, that makes sense. Do you remember the first bill that you sponsored?

BM: No, I really don't.

BB: How did you keep track of the needs and wants of your constituents?

BM: Well, I did a couple of things. First of all, you're in Indianapolis during the week. And then you go home on the weekends. And on Monday mornings, the Frankfort Chamber of Commerce held a legislative breakfast every Monday. And so, the local senator, state senator, and I would be at those breakfasts. And then occasionally, Lebanon would also hold one, or maybe Westfield because I had that part of Hamilton County would hold one. But they were primarily conducted in Frankfort. [0:27:00] And I also put together a little piece called Coffee Break News. Now, you know, this was all before the internet, it's all before cell phones. But I would have our staff put together the highlights of that week's legislative activity, a very short piece, just half of an eight and a half by 11 paper with my picture on it, it was called Coffee Break News. And it was sent to a number of local establishments, restaurants, barber shops. I can't remember what all else, but it was it was supposed to be something that proprietors could put out on their counter and their customers...well, interesting, and I'm the one that started that. But it was amazing how many other legislators saw that and picked up on it. And they created their own version of Coffee Break News. And, you know, I just tried to be visible, [0:28:00] you know, when you're a politician in particularly in the house, you're campaigning all the time. So that, you know, that means attending the fish fries and the barbecues and, you know, the chamber dinners and because my district was so long and encompass parts of five counties, I'm doing those kinds of things in, you know, all five counties.

BB: Yeah. That's interesting. And while you're in the legislature, what role did party leadership play? How influential were there?

BM: Well, of course, very, very influential and one has to be deferential toward the leadership. Kermit Burroughs from Mexico, Indiana, which is up north by Peru as you say, Indiana, Peru and I forget what the other towns are. [0:29:00] Kermit was a farmer up that way, he was also a protege of Otis Bowen, who was governor when I was first elected. And the Kermit helped me a lot. He, you asked me what legislation I sponsored, and I really don't remember, but I do know that Kermit shoveled some of it my way. And some of it came from Governor Orr's office, but Kermit was very helpful to me. I'd seen him on the campaign trail when I was a candidate. Got to know Him. So, once I was elected, Kermit took me and some of the other freshmen legislators' kind of under his wing and made sure that, that we kind of got the proper guidance and, you know, met the right people, and I liked Kermit a lot. So, he was a stabilizing influence, and he was a helpful resource.

BB: Yeah. Okay. That's interesting. Yeah. Do you remember any particular times that you had to work with Democrats to get some specific legislation done or?

BM: Well, it happened all the time. [0:30:00]

BB: Was there a particular bill that might have been debated a fair amount that you remember working with Democrats on or was it?

BM: I can't think of I can't think of a specific piece of legislation Ben. I'm sorry. My memory just isn't that good.

BB: No, that's totally fine. Just curious if there's anything that stuck out to you.

BM: You know, a lot of a lot of it wasn't headline, garnering legislation as I gave you the example of dove hunting on yield legalizing duck hunting on Sundays. There were a lot of little, little bills like that, that maybe weren't, didn't have a big consequence in the large scheme of things. There were a lot of those little things in it just helped to have bipartisan authorship or sponsorship, but I can't think of anything really, really big. [0:31:00] I mean, give me some time, and I might be able to.

BB: Yeah, no, I understand. Let's see more of a general question here. What would you say the public does not know about the Indiana General Assembly and how it operates?

BM: Well, I had kind of a preconceived notion that lobbyists were bad. And once I got elected, I realized that for the most part, lobbyists were not bad. They were purveyors of knowledge and sharers of information that we as lawmakers couldn't possibly obtain on our own. And so, I really kind of had them after a time had a much more positive view of lobbyists and the role they play, and I really didn't, [0:32:00] didn't see anything untoward. I didn't see anything illegal. But I realized that the lobbyists really are an important part of the process. I kind of learned to embrace that. And, frankly, as you got to know, some of these folks, you know, you could give me the real scoop on this, you know, Joe, or, you know, Sally, tell me what this is really about, you know, help me understand. So, I think that was maybe one of my biggest surprises.

BB: Yeah. Okay. So, lobbying I guess it was it played a big role, but it wasn't kind of the negative connotation that you often get with lobbying?

BM: No, no, that's right.

BB: Yeah. Yeah, I've heard people mentioned that before. And what about your general sense of the role of money in politics at the time?

BM: Well, it's interesting. Gosh, I don't remember what the state budget was back then. [0:33:00] Maybe 25 or \$30 million. Yeah. But as far as I conducted my first campaign. And geez, I may have spent \$2,000. That was that was it. I mean, you know, I got a lot of free advertising because of that little caper that I pulled off in the dog sled. But we were paid at that time, at \$8500 a year as legislators and then you got Per diem, that was supposed to be for meal money. And you also got paid for, if you lived over 60 miles from the statehouse, you got paid mileage, and I didn't live quite 50 miles, it was like 56 miles. So, I wasn't able to take that travel voucher monies. But you certainly weren't getting rich [0:34:00] by serving. And I just remember it just, you know, compared to today, like even when a county commissioners raise costs, I mean, it was just it was minuscule.

BB: Yeah. Yeah. That's true. Some people can spend a lot of money today, I guess. Yeah.

BM: And, and yes, I did get some contributions, and again from some, you know, government affairs departments of different companies. And, of course, you know, I welcome that back then I didn't know how to raise money. And I do remember turning one down that I didn't feel comfortable...It was \$1,000

donation from the Indiana Railroad Association. And it was it was given to me by a House member who wanted to be Speaker of the House. And, and it didn't come directly from a reelection effort. And it didn't come directly from the railroad Association. [0:35:00] It came from again, this person who wanted to be speaker and so there was a kind of an oblique notion that, you know, I'm here, I'm helping you with your campaign. And I'd like you to consider supporting me when I run for speaker that wasn't said, but you know, I wasn't dumb. And then, and I just I didn't have a real warm fuzzy feeling about The Railroad Association and its leadership. So, I declined that \$1,000. And ultimately, the head of that Railroad Association was convicted of corruption went to jail. So, six, my six sense was right.

BB: Yeah, no, definitely yeah, that definitely sounds like something that's kind of sketchy. So I understand.

BM: Yeah. Again, another old politician told me after I first got elected, he said, "Bill, you'll have to watch people in your own party closer, [0:36:00] than you have to watch people on the other side. There was some truth to that, because politics is a power game. And I mean, it really is, and you just had to kind of try to keep your feet on the ground and eyes and ears open. Because, again, it's a power game, you know, people try to attain power and maybe step over other people to attain power, not necessarily illegally. But what I just explained to you was an example of what I'm talking about.

BB: Yeah, no, that's a good point. Absolutely. Let's see, what were the most controversial legislative issues during your time in the General Assembly?

BM: Well, as I said, the budget. Always very contentious.

BB: That's a common one, I guess.

BM: Yeah. Because, you know, you're talking about money and spending the public's money. [0:37:00] And, and I can just remember some great phrases like, corporations don't pay taxes, people pay taxes, meaning if you soak, business and industry, they're just gonna pass it on to their customers. I remember that. That one is ringing true. I can remember just enough number of really great phrases like you attract more flies with honey than you do with vinegar. I don't know that. You know, I represent the little people, there was one lady who was always talking about how she represented the little people. But you know, everybody, everybody's kind of got an angle, and they've got, you know, their, their hot buttons and the things they feel passionate about.

BB: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah.

BM: But the money bills were always very contentious. [0:38:00] I guess we'll get we'll leave it at that.

BB: Okay. What would you say was your proudest moment as a legislator?

BM: My proudest moment. Help me a little bit.

BB: Was there anything that stuck out to you that you know, something you really want to get done in the legislature that you were able to accomplish? Or?

BM: I think, you know, I think I was the most proud of just being able to work with people just in general. You know, again, I was handed a bone here or there by Governor Bowen, or by the Speaker of the House. I don't really remember what all those bills were about. [0:39:00] But it was just the ability to, I guess, to work with folks of both parties. And, you know, most people Ben, want the same thing in life in this world. Where we differ is how you get there. Right, yes. Most people want to feel safe, they want good health care, they want good schools, they want good roads, and you know, all those things

cost money. And so again, how you achieve those ends is where the issues arise. And so, to be able to try to, you know, meet on some common ground or find ways to achieve those ends, amicably was the part that I really enjoyed, and I lament the fact that so much of the collegiality has gone out of politics, and it's not just in Indiana. I mean, it's everywhere.

BB: Yes, [0:40:00] I've heard that many times now, unfortunately, just how many people will talk about kind of increasing toxicity, I guess of politics.

BM: Yeah, I don't know that I would like it today. I had a, it was a great period of my life, I was young trying to figure things out trying to get some direction as to where I was going in my life. And it was just a wonderful, wonderful experience. You know, it's like so many things, you tend to remember the good and, and not the bad. I really don't remember you know too many negative or bad things. I just I enjoyed the process. And I enjoyed the people.

BB: Yeah, that's great. What would you say, in your opinion, is the most important work of the Indiana General Assembly?

BM: Well, passing budget, you know, making sure that the state has a balanced budget and has a surplus. [0:41:00] I think that's the most important thing. You've got to be fiscally sound. And that doesn't necessarily mean raising taxes. In fact, in most cases, I don't think it should involve raising taxes. I mean, I'm a conservative Republican. And we are generally loathe to raise taxes, you find other ways to increase revenues and cut expenses. And to me, that comes to mind pretty quickly.

BB: Sure. Okay. Was there any lessons that you've learned about I guess, politics or life when you're in general assembly that were kind of like really big things that stuck with you?

BM: Well, they didn't stick with me then. And they were not revelations then. But I can tell you now I'm 71 years old, and still working. That many of the things that I learned in politics and in the legislature, I have drawn on throughout my working career. [0:42:00] Leadership. So much of what I've learned, I learned as a young politician, and like, General Norman Schwarzkopf, once said, "90% of what I've learned in this life, I learned, learn by doing it wrong the first time." And I've made many, many mistakes, but I've tried to learn from them. And not repeat them. So, you know, public speaking, you know, having a presence in front of folks being able to articulate a point of view listening. And I did have to learn to listen because politicians tend to love the sound of their own voices and well, I remember very specifically being a luncheon speaker of the Kiwanis Club of Frankfort, Indiana. And when it was over, old Dr. Hitchcock, [0:43:00] came up to me he was I mean, he was really, really conservative. And he supported me, I'm sure, but he pulled me aside. And I thought he was gonna compliment me on, you know, my glowing remarks. And he said, "Bill, you talk too much." (Both Laugh) And then he walked away. And I was just sort of, you know, just sort of nonplus. But I took to heart what he said. And, you know, I can remember feeling when I was in the legislature, like I was in the know, all the time. I mean, you're, you're just constantly, you know, in the, in the thick of things, and in the news and on the news, and everything you dealt with, was just so riveted in your mind. And I never felt that engaged before or after I left politics. But when you're in it, you think that, you know, everybody ought to share your zeal and your enthusiasm and they're just dying to hear what you have to say. [0:44:00] What I learned and have learned is that it's not so much what you say, it's how you say it. That would be another big lesson I took away from politics. And I've tried to counsel some, you know, other young people along the way, just, you know, sometimes bite your tongue, you know, saying less is better. And listening is the other part of communication. You don't need to talk all the time; you need to listen more. So, I had to learn those things. And I and sometimes it means, you know, being chastised, like that old doctor did to me.

BB: Yeah, that seems like pretty sound advice. I imagine in politics, especially when some people are looking to catch any mistake, anything that you could say that can be interpreted a differently, you got to really calculated about how you express yourself.

BM: Yes, true.

BB: So, what advice then would you give to future legislators [0:45:00] or even current legislators?

BM: About running or about serving, or?

BB: I guess both.

BM: Well, don't for a minute think that you know it all. Try to be positive. And, again, I lament the fact that there's so much negativity. I never believed that negativity sold. But I don't know. I mean, so many politicians are negative. And it seems to work for him. I don't know that wasn't my style. So, I think being genuine, and being authentic is very important. Don't be something that you're not. And, and I think maybe some politicians can fall into that trap of being something that they're not, but, you know, be authentic, [0:46:00] be honest. Be good to people. Listen to folks, I was always bothered by politicians who are shaking one person's hand and looking beyond that person to see who the next person can shake hands with. In other words, see, that's not being genuine, that's not being in the moment. And so those are two pieces of advice. And I think just, you know, listening to folks that are smarter than you are, and trying to develop your own style, you can't develop somebody else's style. You have to take the best, I think of what others have to offer and craft it into your own. Your own philosophy and your own style, I'll call it.

BB: Yeah, that I mean, I think that makes a lot of sense. [0:47:00] I imagine a lot of people in the general public, kind of feel like politicians might act too much and not be very genuine. I think that would resonate with a lot of people. Let's see. Now, since you're really from Ohio, originally, and you live there today, you might not have the best sense of this, but I figured be interesting to hear your thoughts anyway. How do you think the state of Indiana has changed over the course of your lifetime?

BM: Well, I can speak to that because Mercer County is right on the Indiana border. And we're 50 miles southeast of Fort Wayne. And we're about 30 miles from Portland, Indiana. And my law license is in Indiana. So, to keep up my credentials, I do or have over the years done continuing [0:48:00] legal education in Indiana. And I, every year I've gone to a daylong seminar in the convention center, sponsored by the Bingham Summers law firm. It's not Bingham and Summers anymore. It's (Unintelligible) something, something. But I kept in touch with a lot of old friends that way. And because we're so close to Indiana, we get Indiana news, some Indiana news. So, how's it changed? Well, because I am so close to my old buddy John Greg, he will attest to the fact that the demographics have changed somewhat, where he hails from in Southern Indiana coal country. That was a very strong coal mining area. Very strong union and very strong Democrat and its flipped. [0:49:00] It has flipped. So that's what I think in general, Indiana is a conservative state. Still, whether it's Republican or Democrat leadership in the in the statehouse, and in the governor's mansion, I think in general, the region's notwithstanding, Indiana has remained a fairly conservative state fiscally conservative, socially conservative. So, in that sense, I don't know that that has changed a lot.

BB: Yeah, I guess especially since the general assembly still seems to be very much, mostly Republican.

BM: Yeah, I would add to that Ben, when I was first elected to the House, we had a 51 to 49 majority. That's just two votes. And that I think it made for better legislation, and it made for better party unity, [0:50:00] because you had to stick together. We had we had a couple of mavericks in our caucus. And if they decided to, to buck the speaker and buck the leadership and throw it at the Democrats, it made things, you know, kind of dicey, but having a slim margin kind of forced people to work together. And I don't know that these real wide disparities in partisan politics necessarily is a good thing. I think when you have to work together, you're forced to work together. It makes for better legislating. And I'm not real sure what the margins are, but I think they're fairly sizable, aren't they?

BB: Yeah, it's significant. It's what they call a supermajority now.

BM: I never experienced that.

BB: Yeah. You were definitely serving at a time where it was much more even politically between Democrats or Republicans than today, I guess. [0:51:00] And I'm not entirely sure, I know I've heard different people talk about what they think why it might have happened. But it's always interesting. You know, how we got to where we are today. But in terms of the people from Indiana, Hoosiers, what type of qualities do you think the people from Indiana have maintained over the years?

BM: I'll tell you a story. I'll leave the names out. I was at a dinner party years ago. And I was seated next to the wife and grown daughter of a prominent businessperson in Indiana. And the wife had grown up in the East. And we were just having, you know, sort of your typical casual dinner conversation. [0:52:00] And I had at one point said, "You know, I love Indiana." And this lady said, "What do you love about it?" And I said, "I love the provincialism of Hoosiers." She looked at me and said "I can't stand it." I'll never forget that because she was from the East, she had a little bit of that iffy Eastern snobbism. And so, and I do I love it. I will stick to my guns. And I think it's still that way in many in many places. You know, it's provincialism, you know, it's down home people meet you as you are. I mean I campaigned in pickup trucks with my dogs in the back. So that's how that's how kind of down home and corn cone I was. [0:53:00]

BB: Yep, that's cool. Let's see. So final question here. What would you want the people of Indiana to know about their role in relation to the function of the Indiana General Assembly?

BM: Well, clearly that they are the bosses, that lawmakers work for them. And not the other way around. That they ought to strive to be engaged and to be aware of what goes on in the political realm. And in legislative circles. You know, not everybody can run for office and be in the know all the time, but just be engaged in the process. Don't abdicate your role as a citizen.

BB: Yeah, that's kind of I guess the only influence people can have, is their [0:54:00] you know citizenship and, and taking part in the process so. All right. Well, is there anything that I didn't ask about that you want to mention or had any thoughts on or?

BM: I can remember after I first got elected, my father said to me, Bill, I'm proud of you. But take a piece of advice. Get in and get out. You know, too many lives have been hurt or ruined by politics. And, you know, it shouldn't be a career. We got it, Ohio has term limits, and I kind of embraced term limits. It's not a panacea for all government's bills, but in Indiana has the citizen legislature, which I also embrace, but I was glad I had the opportunity. I was very proud to have served and I'm equally glad that I got out when I did because I think it was the right thing to do.

BB: Yeah, that's a good point. Because I guess there is always a fear that people just kind of cling on [0:55:00] to these political positions forever.

BM: Well, you see it every day, in both parties at both the state and federal level. Yeah, they just stay on forever. And after a while, you can't do anything else. You don't have to do anything. You know, I mean, this is not a political job. But, you know, look at Joe Biden. He's been in Congress or (Unintelligible) since he was 29 years old. That could have been me. I was elected at 28. Because politics is a power game. It's not necessarily a money game. It's the power that's addictive.

BB: Sure. Yeah. And I guess people are always also concerned, just sort of if you're involved in politics so much, and for so long, you know, whether you just kind of [0:56:00] get to the point where you stopped really caring about compromises. It's interesting. I'll be curious to see how that develops. Nationally and in Indiana, if anytime soon, but yeah. Well, thank you so much for doing this.

BM: Alright, my pleasure Ben. Good luck to you and your venture.

BB: Yes. Thank you. And yeah, I'll be in touch and let you know when I'm getting ready to post it so.

BM: Okay, that's terrific. All right. Adios.

BB: Thank you. Bye bye.

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