

## **ILOHI Interview with Thomas Teague**

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Indianapolis, Indiana

Interview by Ben Baumann

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

MP3 File, Sony

Thomas Teague=TT

Ben Baumann=BB

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BB:

[0:00:00] All right, then I guess we'll just get started here. So, before I begin, I would just like to state for the record that today is September 29, 2020. My name is Ben Baumann, and I'm here in Indianapolis, Indiana, and I'm speaking via phone with Thomas Teague, who is in what's your current location in Indiana?

TT:

I'm in Denver.

BB:

Oh, you're in Denver that's right in Colorado. who is in Denver, Colorado, and we're doing an interview for the Indiana legislative oral history initiative. So just starting off when and where were you born?

TT:

I was born in Anderson in 1942.

BB:

Okay, and what were your parents names?

TT:

My father was Frank and my mother's first name was Winifred.

BB:

Okay. And how did your family get to Indiana originally?

TT:

[0:01:00] I don't know. I think multi generations before my father. I don't really know the answer to that except it was. It was way before my father. My father was born in Anderson as well and and maybe even his father.

BB:

Okay. Wow. And what were your parents occupations?

TT:

My mother was, worked for Indiana Bell and was a housewife. Really most of her life. My father was a UAW union leader.

BB:

Okay. Interesting. Did you have any siblings at all?

TT:

I have a sister and a brother both.

BB:

And how would you describe your childhood overall?

TT:

[0:02:00] I would say it was a unique one in the sense that my father was a very, very active in politics, of course, as a union leader. And from the time I was very young, he sort of had planned a political career for me and, and all, you know, he was also a professional athlete. He played professional baseball. And so growing up in Indiana, when I did basket...playing high school basketball was sort of the ultimate goal of every young Hoosier and so he was very instrumental in motivating me to excel in classroom and athletics and to take an interest in government and politics.

BB:

Yeah, okay. [0:03:00] That's really interesting. And how long did your dad play professional baseball?

TT:

Three or four years, he signed with the Cincinnati Reds, but never made it to the Major Leagues. But he he had a good career. He was a really, really good athlete.

BB:

That's really cool. And so it kind of sounds like your dad was perhaps the most influential person in your childhood? Would you say that's correct? Or was it a kind of a split between your your dad and someone else?

TT:

No, I think my father was the primary influence. There were many other people who were in his network or part of his environment that had an influence on me. When I was young, he would take [0:04:00] me to visit the congressman, for our district. And you know, it was a very unusual childhood in that respect.

BB:

Okay. Interesting. And so what understanding I know you mentioned your dad was involved with unions. And what understanding of politics did you have from your childhood?

TT:

Well, I would say way more than the average person because I was exposed to it. And deep into the pool, for example. JFK came to Anderson and the 1960 campaign. And my father, there's a picture of my father and JFK, walking up the pathway to our house. So my father had a lot of in those days, [0:05:00] the UAW local and Andersen was because of Delco Remi, which is now gone. But in those days, he had 18,000 members in the union. And so he was a powerhouse in the Democratic Party. So JFK, I got to meet him in 1960. There in Anderson and he gave a speech in Anderson.

BB:

That's really cool. Wow. Very interesting. And what was it like meeting him, then? Did you get to talk to him much at all? Or...

TT:

Only a few words, but yeah, he just said "He hoped I would consider public service as a career." The picture shows, shows them with two sheriff's deputies there. I don't. There might have been a secret service presence. [0:06:00] There probably was he was just a candidate. And I think it was in October, maybe, but there's a YouTube of his speech in Anderson and so on. I could probably look it up. But anyway, the thing that I was most intrigued by was why he would come to Indiana, in the late stages of that campaign when it was very unlikely when Indiana would be competitive.

BB:

Right. Sure.

TT:

So that's the level of understanding I have. Had of politics.

BB:

That's interesting. And how did he do in Indiana that year?

TT:

I don't remember. But of course, Nixon carried and Matthew Welch was elected governor, however. So a Democrat was elected governor that year. [0:07:00] So but I don't remember the margin, but I was still surprised that he would take the time to make an appearance in Indiana.

BB:

Sure. Sure. What schools did you attend as a child and teenager?

Speaker 1

Well you went to public schools. Pretty pretty routine. Academic programs from elementary through high school. I did. Because of my father's priority setting. I did play high school basketball in Anderson, which was kind of a big deal. And then I went to Anderson College. Then I did, went into the Air Force. Right after that. The Air Force sent me to get my master's degree. [0:08:00] So anyway, I went to the local college, because that was also that besides the union, the second biggest constituency in Anderson was the college.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. Interesting. And would you say you got pretty good educational experiences overall, or?

TT:

Well, they got better as I went along. My master's degree was at the University of Oklahoma and that in public administration that was really a pretty good program. Then I went to IU Law School and then after law school, I spent some time at Harvard Kennedy School.

BB:

Great. And what favorite subjects did you have growing up in school?

TT:

Well, at the college level it was political [0:09:00] science in high school, I think I was more of an athlete. Too interested in courses probably history though.

BB:

Sure. And did you have any particular views of Indiana or what it meant to be like a Hooser growing up?

TT:

Well, I think it was limited by growing up in Anderson, I think it was pretty much a view of small town, Indiana. I think maybe Anderson was 100,000 or so at that time, but it was...that was my view of Indiana and it was pretty non progressive, I guess I would say it was pretty slow, slow paced and a lot of room for improvement. [0:10:00] I would say in the in the political world in Indiana.

BB:

Did you have any changes in your political developments as you got older and matured?

TT:

Well, not really. I was elected at 28. So when I graduated from college, I went in the Air Force, left the Air Force, I was elected. So probably the most interesting thing about that story is that I ran in the Democratic primary in 1970. While I was in Saigon.

BB:

Wow, that's interesting.

TT:

Yeah, that doesn't happen very often.

BB:

Yeah. No, not at all.

TT:

So my views didn't change, because I, I'm not sure I may still be the youngest person ever elected [0:11:00] to the State Senate. That may have changed. But if not, I'm know, 25 is the constitutional requirement age. So I didn't have a lot of time to change my views.

BB:

And when if at all, did you get married?

TT:

In 1970 or 1967. I had a short marriage in the Air Force, and didn't work out too well. Then I remarried in '78. I'm still married to that person.

BB:

And what's your wife's name?

TT:

Liz

BB:

And do you have any children?

TT:

I got one son, Andrew.

BB:

[0:12:00] Okay. Now, do you think that your family influenced your career much at all? Or?

TT:

I would say 100%. If your father is a professional athlete and leader of a group of 18,000 people, pretty hard not to be dominated by that.

BB:

Yeah. What about your wife and son?

TT:

Well, my wife worked for variety of not for profits over the years, and my son is here in the Denver area and works for organization in California remotely.

BB:

Yeah. And so when you first got involved in politics, and you're running as a candidate, what were the key issues or legislation you wanted to champion or fight against?

TT:

[0:13:00] Well, as I said, I ran in the May 1970 primary from Vietnam against two opponents, there was a Republican incumbent. And I would, I would say, in the primary, the big issue was simply name recognition. My father had a very prominent name and, and I had also from kind of being a basketball star and going to the local college. So it was pretty much in the primary, there

weren't many issue differences. It was pretty much name recognition. And in the general election, my incumbent opponent, I think felt like he would win easily and so I don't [0:14:00] remember him being very active. I don't think we debated. And I focused on issues of that were the general kind of platform of the Democratic Party. And I had, you know, had some views coming out of Vietnam, of course, but those are mostly federal. But so I would say I didn't deviate too much from the orthodoxy of the Democratic Party and the general election. I would say my election win was do way more to, again, name recognition. And I campaigned full time once I got home, got home in July. Yeah. And the election was in November, I campaign full time. So I don't think it was issue oriented. Really.

BB:

[0:15:00] And did you have like a particular campaign strategy at all? Or?

TT:

Well, yes, it was to outwork my opponent, outspend my opponent. Put a coalition together that my father had been cultivating all those years. And I at that time in Anderson, Indiana being a Vietnam veteran, did not have the negative connotation that it did a little bit later in the 70s. And so I won a few medals while I was there. And I I feel like the fact that my story was pretty unusual. And, and I think, perhaps even if there was a number one issue, it was that Madison County did not have a state senator, [0:16:00] in those in the 1970 Election, we had joint state senators, we didn't have single member districts. And so the district I ran in was Madison, Henry. And I forgotten what county Ford Mills in but Hancock, I guess. And so the two senators were... So those three counties had two state senators, one from Henry, New Castle, one from Hancock, Ford Mills. So, Madison County was the sixth largest state county in the state and did not have a state senator. So I on Madison County by, I don't know, 8 or 9000 votes. So I think if there was an issue it wasn't partisan, it was, we should have you know, we're big enough. We should have a state senator.

BB:

Yeah, that makes sense. [0:17:00] So what was your first election day like?

TT:

You know, I really don't remember the details. I was very confident that I was gonna win the Democratic machinery in those days, and Anderson was 10 times better than the Republican machinery and the national trends. You know, it was Nixon won in 68'. And so the party usually loses seats in Congress in 70'. And the national trend was, was democratic. And Larry Conrad won the Secretary of State's office that year. So the generic ballot for Indiana was leaning democratic. So yeah, I knew I had outworked him and outspent him and so I really felt pretty calm. I didn't think I'd win by the margin I did.

BB:

[0:18:00] Did your campaign strategies change throughout your political career?

TT:

Well, the next time I ran was 74', when a hamburger could have been elected Democrat. Because it was a Watergate.

BB:  
Yeah.

TT:  
I didn't even I don't believe I campaigned at all okay. I mean, I just wouldn't. I was at Harvard when Nixon was resigned from office, and it was August of 74'. And I saw I took my election so for granted, I wasn't even in the state for most of the run up to it. And my opponent didn't campaign either. So yeah.

BB:  
Interesting. So, what were you thinking as you walked into the statehouse, [0:19:00] for your first official day in office?

TT:  
Well, it's, as I said, based on my father's in floods, Frank O'Bannon was elected that same year and several other very prominent Democrats, Wayne Townsend had been in the house he was elected to the Senate and so they and that class had two future congressman and of course Governor O'Bannon. So I was prepared for, I'd gotten to know all of them during the summer. And my first goal was to establish that I would be an extremely competent legislator and my goal was to get into leadership.

BB:  
[0:20:00] Sure, okay. And were expectations for the legislative process, kind of what you were expecting when you arrived or was it a little bit different than you were expecting?

TT:  
Well, I think I would have to categorize it in two different ways. One was my own personal agenda, which, as I said, was to get elected to leadership within the caucus. And so that went exactly as I planned, and I was elected Caucus Chairman. Very, very early in my first term. As far as the process itself, it was run the Senate President Pro Tem was Phil Goodman. I don't know how much of this history you know. But he was indicted and went to prison. [0:21:00] And so the process itself was my own personal agenda process went as planned. The process of how the Senate worked, was pretty askew.

BB:  
Interesting. And so how did you learn the ins and outs? The Senate?

TT:  
Well, first of all, I studied the rules. I wanted to be a sort of many parliamentarian. And secondly, I was from day one, I was in Frank O'Bannon's orbit. And his father had been a senator, state senator, as you may know. So he was...his father had been the state senator, I think for 20 years. So I latched on to Frank O'Bannon and Bob Fair and some of the other leading lights of the Democratic caucus [0:22:00] and got the committee assignments I wanted and, and careful about the bills I spoke on and so on. So it was very calculated.

BB:

And how would you go about understanding the needs and wants your constituents?

TT:

Well, I think in the first term, I did a pretty good job of having regular town hall meetings and chamber commerce had Saturday sessions every weekend during the session. And, of course, my father was still active in the union. And I got plenty of feedback from them. The lobbyists, of course, tried hard to keep us informed. And I had a very deep network in Anderson. So if there was a banking issue, [0:23:00] talk to my banker, and, so I very quickly learned how to use legislative staff better than my colleagues, we didn't have much staff in those days. But when I became caucus, Chairman I, I was able to use our staff to great effect to help our caucus members. So we did a daily digest of the bills that would be on the floor. And and we were very advanced in terms of keeping members informed from a snapshot perspective of what was in the bill and what the consequences were. So it all really just came down as Mitch McConnell would say to providing whatever my fellow senators needed. [0:24:00] It was more tactical than policy by a longshot.

BB:

Right. Yeah. Sounds like it. What was the first bill you sponsored?

TT:

Well, it kind of came out of Vietnam. I think the first bill was to repeal the death penalty. That did not make me an immediate hit in very many circles, but of course, it didn't go anywhere. I didn't really care though.

BB:

Yeah. I understand. What was the regular interactions like amongst members of the general assembly, formal and informal?

TT:

Well, I really feel like I served in the golden age of the state senate. John Mutz was in there. [0:25:00] Bob Orr, the Senate at that time had Mutz, Orr, and O'Bannon and an incredible array of talent. And we all got along there I was maybe one of the most partisan. Probably I think my colleagues would say that. But at any rate, Bob Orr and I became great friends, we sat, he sat in the back row because there were more Republican senators. And so he sat over on the Democratic side of the aisle and sat right behind me, and when we got to be great friends and stayed great friends, and we ran against each other for Lieutenant Governor in 74'. And so it was extremely collegial. I, you know, I stayed in touch with John Mutz. [0:26:00] And lots of...So it was. It was very, very professional and collegial. So I would...I was uh probably lost a lot of that as time went on.

BB:

Yeah, that's kind of, I've heard that before. Yeah. What about the differences between the majority and the minority parties?

TT:



Well, other than they have more than we did. As I mentioned, the protests have gotten a little trouble. And I do think that the, our caucus was much younger, more diverse. [0:27:00] But much younger. I mean, we probably had, I think it was 28 to 22, something like that. My first year, I don't really remember might have been 30-20. But, we have very, very incredibly bright, young people under 40. In our caucus, and the, and we were interested in change, and the Republican Party had very, very bright people too. But they tended to be older than 40. And pretty much status quo. And so I would, I would say those were the differences, primarily.

BB:

And were there any differences between the House and Senate?

TT:

Yes. Yeah, I think so. [0:28:00] I really don't know. I think that'd be a very long answer. But the short answer would be that I think we were way more deliberative and moved at a slower pace, and we were content to let the house for the most part, generate legislation, send it to us, and then we would be more deliberative. I bet, you know, I could give you 1000 differences. We just don't have time. But I would, I would say that if you looked at the membership, as I mentioned, we had we had two governors, two future governors in the Senate, we had. Julian Carson was also there during my time we had so three or four people went to Congress. And I would say the star power in the senate its a little biased, probably. [0:29:00] But was way higher.

BB:

Yeah. A lot of big names. It's true.

TT:

Well, you know, Townsend went on to run for governor. And so it was, yeah, I would say. And Julia Carson was a very formidable person, to say the least.

BB:

And what did you think about the process for generating a bill? Did that seem pretty straightforward to you? Or is it complex and there was a learning curve or?

TT:

Well, actually, I don't think it's very complex. You know, the Legislative Council. Took the basic concept put it into, into an enactment document. I think there. There were way, way too many bills introduced by a lobbyist [0:30:00] or a constituent. But no, all the legislator had to do was say, I want to introduce a bill to end the death penalty. And three days later it appeared.

BB:

Yeah, yeah. Okay. And did you ever find it tricky to garner support for your legislation? Or did you kind of know going in what bills would be supported or not?

TT:

Well, I think people introduce bills for different reasons, not all of which are to get them enacted. And sometimes there to make a statement, and so on. But if I really wanted a bill passed, of course, I, as Caucus Chairman, I knew how to count and how to get Republican sponsors.

[0:31:00] So, again, I don't think the only reason someone introduces a bill is to get it passed. And it may just be to start the process where a bill I introduced in 71' might finally become law in 77'. So it's not a failure if it doesn't get enacted in the session that you first introduced it.

BB:

Yeah, that makes sense. Now, when people were voting on legislation, did you have a pretty good idea of what way people were going to vote?

TT:

Every time. Well, you can't really afford surprises and I'm sure the Republicans had a, I have told other people that, you know, we went to caucus, every day before we went down to the floor.

[0:32:00] And we knew I would say, 99% of the time how the vote was going to go. And if someone wanted to change their vote, they had to come talk to leadership. I mean, they could do it if they wanted to, but they needed to let us know.

BB:

Right, right. And what about the role of party leadership? How significant was party leadership in sort of dictating how things went in the General Assembly?

TT:

Well, since I was in it, you can't really expect me to give you a very fair, unbiased answer. So, you know, 77'-78', I was majority leader. In fact, I'm the last Democratic Senate Majority Leader. That's how long it's been since the Democrats have controlled the Senate. And so from my perspective, the whole reason my goal was to get into leadership is that's where the action is.

BB:

[0:33:00] Yeah, yeah.

TT:

So I would say it was. In today's world, just ask Mitch McConnell, how important that is? So, I would say it's, it's very hard to overestimate how important.

BB:

Yeah. Now, what was the relationship between Democrats and Republicans in your time? Was it easy to work with the other side? Or did it become more complex later on? Or was it always complex?

TT:

I don't know. I think you and I have a basic divergence on. I mean, I appreciate your questions and they're very good questions. But the premise of most of your questions, is that the [0:34:00] interaction was influenced by policy or by partisanship, or by the nature of specific bills or whatever, and my experience was that the relationships while those things all mattered, and were taken into account, the relationships as far as Bob Orr and I were concerned, I was probably as good a friend with him, as I was Frank O'Bannon and admired him and respected him and and it had nothing to do as he was a Republican and I was a Democrat. And so I, at least for me, the relationships were not based on...they were based on mutual respect. [0:35:00] And I don't know

how they could vary by complexity because, you know, we I would say in a typical session, we cast maybe 500 roll call votes. And it's almost it would take somebody who was a minutia expert to look at the pattern of voting and associate it with a rhythm of partisan conflict. There were a lot of unanimous votes.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah. I think you raise a good point about that, because I think today especially, you know, when people are thinking about politics and relationships between opposing parties, they don't see there is really any room for being polite to each other at all. [0:36:00] I think people pretty much get this opinion that it's all cutthroat. And so I think it's good that you point that out. Do you think that that changed over time? Did it seem like it was harder to develop those normal relationships with members of the of the opposing party over time?

TT:

Well, I only served two terms. And in that time, I would say no, they, they didn't change very much. I think, what's happened in Indiana from a person who's been in and out of Indiana. Since I was left office, the Democratic Party in the legislature is essentially a non factor. And we were a big factor. In the eight years that I served, even though we're only in the majority, two years, but if you can't even stop a quorum, if the opposition has a super majority, [0:37:00] it leaves you to whining and complaining.

BB:

Yeah, it's yeah pretty lopsided right now for sure. What would you say the public doesn't know about the Indiana General Assembly and how it operates?

TT:

Well, that would take about a library probably I don't think the public knows very much at all about it. Maybe they don't care. I think some do. But I also think the media misunderstood the process, with some exceptions during my years. And I think what goes on behind closed doors is pretty much totally unknown to the general public. And to a high degree unknown to the media.

BB:

Yeah. Interesting.

TT:

[0:38:00] I often said if the media only knew how to ask the right question. They could learn a lot. But yeah. I just don't think the process lends itself to sunshine, if you know what I'm saying.

BB:

Yeah, no, I understand. What were the most controversial legislative issues during your time?

TT:

Well, probably Equal Rights Amendment. I was the Senate sponsor of that when it passed. That was pretty controversial. Daylight savings time always seemed controversial. There were, I don't know, really, I guess specifically, dozens and dozens of them that revolved around something like the quack laetrile cure for cancer or. [0:39:00] But I would say there were really not that

many I, you know, the bulk of our time was taken up with a recodification of the criminal procedure laws, and it was taken up by things that did not generate a tremendous amount of heat occasionally. But you know, when I think of what the typical session was, like, only a small slice of the time was revolved around deep controversy. I think, for one thing, leadership would keep controversy off the floor if they felt like it would take too much legislative time.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah, that makes sense. Now, I remember reading a bit about your role in the ERA legislagtion. [0:40:00] How hard did you have to fight for that? Was it easy to get that passed? Or would you say that was pretty tough?

TT:

Well, I would say, tough from the amount of time it took to, to position it properly. You know, I, it was, people don't remember exactly how hard the right element of the Republican Party was opposed. I remember debating Phyllis Schlafly, and there were 1000s of people at that debate. I think The Today show covered the Senate chamber, the day it passed, you've probably read the story about how I got Rosalyn Carter involved. [0:41:00] So from that standpoint, one of the biggest factors was Senator Garton, who was also one of my best friends, he and I, he was elected in 1970, as well. Senator Garton was a sponsor of the Equal Rights Resolution in January of 77'. And of course, we needed his vote. But I would say it was not easy keeping our caucus together. Witness, you know, Wayne Townsend saying the day of he might not vote for him. And hence, the call to Mrs. Carter. So we were willing to, you know, to play some pretty big cards.

BB:

Yeah. [0:42:00] And what would you say to like, sort of summarize for people that might listen to this in the future that aren't too familiar with, with the context of it. What were the biggest arguments for and against and who were making those arguments?

TT:

Well, I think the opposition sincerely felt that women didn't need equal rights. If they were semi-thoughtful, they argued that the 14th Amendment due process clause provided some protections, but they did not see the need to put it in the Constitution. Phyllis Schlafly and her colleagues at the Eagle Forum used tactics like unisex bathrooms and how much would be lost if [0:43:00] women had equal rights. And again, I have a biased perspective, but I think the proponents felt that the 14th Amendment did not give adequate protection and Senator Bayh as you probably remember, and Larry Conrad his staff person drafted the amendment and the Democratic Party have access to all of the congressional legislative record and, and my arguments were based on the law. And I did have a unique argument that I argued on the final day of passage, and I argued when I debated Phyllis Schlafly, which was that there were two paragraphs to the amendment. The first paragraph stated what the amendment was. And the second paragraph said this amendment [0:44:00] shall take effect two years after ratification. And I argued that it was the second sentence or paragraph that was the most important because even those who feared the ERA the most would have two years to get ready for it. If the Supreme Court someday voted five to four, that the 14th Amendment did mean equal rights, it would go into effect that day. However, nobody was persuaded by any argument.

BB:  
Okay. Interesting.

TT:  
We won because we had the votes, and we had the power to bring it to the floor. I think. I do think that Republicans in the House, get some credit. I think Herman Burrows was the Speaker and so the Republican House, passed it and sent it to us. [0:45:00] So it wasn't totally partisan.

BB:  
Right. And, yeah, so after you finally got it passed, you know, what was your reaction to that, after all the work you put into it?

TT:  
Well, the media at the time, I think, characterized my reaction, wrongly. But you know, that doesn't, doesn't really matter. I guess there was some sense of relief and accomplishment. But honestly, I would look to what was next. Since I was Majority Leader. I had to look at what was next coming up on the floor. And I did not do any interviews. And so once it was over, it was over.

BB:  
So there was a, an old, I'm not sure actually how old but there's an Indy Star article that I found that said that you called [0:46:00] the passing of the era. "Indiana's Finest Hour", is that true?

TT:  
Yes. And I sincerely meant it at the time. And I mean it now because we were the last state to ratify during the period Congress set for ratification. And we, we took all of the steps we took for history, because it was unlikely it was going to ever become law within the ratification period, and some states had rescinded their ratification and all knew for sure whether, therefore, that meant that if a state ratifies in resends, which category are they in, but we made the effort because it was the right thing to do. [0:47:00] It was to put Indiana on the side of in the journal of history that we support equal rights for women, even though it was probably not going to have the effect of law. In other words, you could have argued that, since it's, it's very, very unlikely the ERA is going to get the number of states required to ratify, we still, we still we're proud to be on the side that did it anyway. And I think that's something people miss, about the legislative process. And they kind of define success by whether something actually becomes law. And there are all kinds of other messages that need to be conveyed that whether or not it your side, [0:48:00] turns into immortal stone of law.

BB:  
Yeah. Interesting. So would you deem that your proudest moment as a legislator?

TT:  
No, I don't think so. I feel good about it. I think my proudest moment as a legislator was the number of really, really good friends I had on both sides of the aisle. Frank O'Bannon and I were roommates at the Indianapolis Athletic Club for seven of the eight years that I served, and, never

met a finer person. And so I would say having Frank O'Bannon in my life or Robert Orr, [0:49:00] John Mutz, Wayne Townshend or was the greatest achievement having their respect.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah, that's fantastic. Now, you mentioned briefly a little bit earlier about how it can be hard to change people's minds when it comes to voting on things. How common is it to be able to change people's minds or does that not happen very often in your experience?

TT:

Well, I don't know whether you're familiar with the term pre suasion or not. Okay. So there's a book called pre suasion by Robert Cialdini. And the concept there is that before you ask for the vote of a colleague or before you ask someone to buy your car, get married to you, [0:50:00] you pre sway them. And, and so I don't think there's much changing of the mind of anybody in the legislature or anywhere else for that matter if you haven't set the stage and persuaded them, so I don't. And looking at my own voting pattern over those eight years. I could probably count on one hand, the number of times someone said something or gave me a document. That said, my position should be changed. And I changed that I if the time to persuade somebody on how to vote is long before the session starts. It's not during the session, that's just almost impossible.

BB:

Yeah. Wow. [0:51:00] Okay. What was the biggest hurdle that you had to overcome during your time in office?

TT:

Think I jumped most of them. Probably that I had no intention of going along to get along. There was an article in the Indianapolis News in my first year, where I blasted the entire state senate. And it came out about noon, I guess. And as the afternoon newspaper, and someone copied it and put it on all of my colleagues' desk. So I probably the biggest thing I had to overcome was getting [0:52:00] them to understand I was going to say what I thought and let the chips fall where they may, because that's not a very common practice.

BB:

Yeah. Yeah.

TT:

You don't usually get ahead by criticism, criticizing your colleagues.

BB:

Typically. Yeah. So what in your opinion is the most important work of the Indiana General Assembly?

TT:

Well, I could give you lots of answers, but I'll stay with the one I believe in is relatively safe. And I would say funding education properly, protecting the environment. Operating under a code of ethics.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. So now thinking about some more specifics on different [0:53:00] legislation that was going on that I found seemed to be popular, and among the media at the time, do you remember anything about the property tax control bill in 77'?

TT:

I can tell you a lot about the property tax bill that Governor Bowen got passed earlier than that. Which was of course extremely controversial. I don't remember much about the property tax protection bill. So tell me about it?

BB:

Well, I was just saying that in 77', there was talks in newspapers, there wasn't much information, unfortunately. But it did mention that you are critical of a property tax control bill. And it didn't give a ton of context to it. So looks like it must have been something that was [0:54:00] kind of off and on in the papers but...

TT:

Well, that may have spilled out from the 76'. When I was really, I had the end enviable job as Democratic Lieutenant Governor candidate to take on Doc Bowen. I remember going to Bremen, his hometown, and having to be critical of him. And and so I of course, most Democrats felt that the bond tax package which doubled the sales tax, in order to reduce property taxes was read via was regressive. And I don't remember the details of the Protection Act if it was designed to protect what Governor Bowen did. I would, I was on record about 1000 times against that. So.

BB:

Yeah, okay. [0:55:00] What about do you remember anything about the lobbyist code of ethics?

TT:

What year was that?

BB:

It looks like it was also in 77'. And there was dispute over it.

TT:

Well, in 74', or 75', I authored the legislative code of ethics for legislators. And obviously, lobbyists definitely needed an ethical code. Because as I said, the President Pro Tem went to jail for taking a bribe. My guess you know, I don't remember it. But my guess is that not very many lobbyists wanted to have to register and disclose things. And the Republicans maybe took their side. But those ethics bills, as well intended, as they were, were riddled with loopholes.

BB:

[0:56:00] Yeah, sure. Do you remember anything about your proposal to guarantee electric service for people in Indiana?

TT:

Well, I only remember it conceptually. And as I said, there were many, many bills or resolutions or ideas I floated that made a statement, not necessarily that I wanted them to become law. But I, I think in that time, when Carter was President, interest rates went through the roof. And I was probably concerned about the ability of the base of the Democratic Party to pay their electric bill. And without going into a lot of detail, the [0:57:00] utility commission that regulated rates was problematic. I really don't want to go into a lot of detail. The regulation of utility rates in Indiana, tended to favor the utilities. So that was probably where I was coming from.

BB:

Yeah. Okay. Well, turning towards I guess, the last set of questions I have for you. Remind me when was your final year in the Indiana General Assembly?

TT:

78'.

BB:

And was that something that you just decided to stop running? Or did you lose an election?

TT:

No, I lost the election. I had a primary opponent, because I took a stand on a bill that many, many Democrats did not like. [0:58:00] And also at that time, I felt like I had my father died in January 78'. My last year. And with that, my motivation to have a political career was muted significantly. And so we were, we were planning to move to Colorado, whenever my legislative career was over. And so I narrowly won the primary and then was defeated in the fall.

BB:

So, overall, how would you describe, or I'm sorry, summarize your time as a legislator?

TT:

Well, as I've said, the friendships [0:59:00] I made the effort that I made to get into leadership and make a difference, and it probably created a network that has lasted all my life. As I look back on it, I'm glad I did it when I was so young, because I was in at 28 and out of 36, and still had time for other careers.

BB:

Yeah, sure.

TT:

And a political career. Is this something my father aspired to more than I did? It was great fun, but it was. It took a tremendous amount of time and energy. And you couldn't legally make any money.

BB:

Yeah, yeah.

TT:



[1:00:00] I think my pay even my best year even with leadership pay was something like maybe 9,500 a year.

BB:

Yeah. Do you have a favorite story at all from your time in the assembly?

TT:

I do. And then I gotta go on. Sounds like you're about done anyway. My favorite story is how playful I was and how willing to put poke a finger in the eye of the process. So my favorite story was in January, Agnew was Vice President still so it was probably 73' I don't remember the exact year, [1:01:00] but Agnew was Vice President he hadn't been thrown out yet. And he had played golf at Pebble Beach Pro-Am and he had hit a spectator and so it made the national news and so each day when the senate started the session, we would do the Pledge of Allegiance and establish a quorum and then we would have resolutions like congratulating the Anderson High School Band. Nobody paid any attention to them. So I had my staff draft a resolution banning Spiro Agnew from playing golf in Indiana for the safety of all Hoosiers. So and I alerted the AP Recorder. And, the Indianapolis Star [1:02:00] and some of the other reporters to watch for this resolution because they were all adopted by voice vote. No debate, no anything. So we we start the session and people are milling around and my resolution comes to the desk and it the clerk reads a resolution by Senator Teague for the safety and welfare of all Hoosiers. And so then they stopped they don't read the whole bill. So but when I think Bob Orr was the Lieutenant Governor anyway, he I think he was presiding and he said "All those in favor, aye." And you know, we voted aye. And on the CBS Evening News that night, Walter Cronkite ended his broadcast with in Indiana today the state senate banned [1:03:00] Spiro Agnew from playing golf. So that was, that was my favorite moment.

BB:

Yeah, that sounds pretty funny. Wow. That's great. Well, I know that you gotta go here. So I guess I'll just wrap this up with just one last question. What do you want Hoosiers to know about their role in relation to the function of the Indiana General Assembly?

TT:

Well, there are lots of standard pat answers I could give. And I'm sure you've received a lot of those. I would say that if they care passionately about a specific issue, or a specific office holder, or a specific party, that they should band together with people who feel that way. [1:04:00] And try to make a difference. Unfortunately, I feel that it's harder and harder to do that. But I certainly my son just wrote a two page letter to Senator Gardner out here in Colorado regarding the nomination by Trump. And so my son's still trying, my son is still making his voice heard. And I think it's important for the person to be heard, even if no one seems to be listening.

BB:

Yeah, definitely.

TT:

Well, as you're doing this project, and I don't know, very many people besides scholars will look at this. But if that period when I was there and the subsequent years, some people have sacrificed greatly to serve the state of Indiana.

BB:

Yeah. Absolutely. Well, thank you so much for taking part in this. I appreciate you taking the time to do an interview with me. Thank you so much for doing this. This was great. Really appreciate it's gonna be really interesting, I think for anyone who wants to use them, so.

TT:

Okay good to talk to you.

BB:

All right. Take care.