

**Oral History Interview of
Mikel Ward**

**Interviewed by: Daniel Sanchez
March 12, 2015
Lubbock, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Lubbock History***

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The Lubbock History Series interviews document general life histories and other topical stories that chronicle the history of Lubbock.

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Mikel Ward, who discusses her early life and education in Lubbock, her life as a small business owner, and her experiences as a political activist in West Texas.

Length of Interview: 02:09:14

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Daniel Sanchez (DS):

My name is Daniel Sanchez. Today's date is March 12, 2015. I'm in my office at the Southwest Collection interviewing Mikel Ward—Mikel, thank you very much for being here today.

Mikel Ward (MW):

Thanks.

DS:

Could you please state your complete, legal name?

MW:

Merry—M-E-R-R-Y—which was my mother's first name—Mikel—M-I-K-E-L—and my maiden name was Ridge—R-I-D-G-E, and my name now is Ward—W-A-R-D.

DS:

Cool. I'm glad you spelled it, especially for that "Mikel", because—

MW:

Well, the Merry, also. My mother's name was Merry Belle. I don't know where the Mikel came from, other than my brother, I think, had a role in it, and he was probably hoping I was going to be a boy.

DW:

You know, we were talking about some of your family earlier. Let's start getting some of that genealogy. When and where were you born?

MW:

I was born in Lubbock, at Saint Mary's Hospital, where Godbold Center is now, in October 31—Halloween—of 1943.

DS:

Okay, and how about your parents? Tell us about them.

MW:

Well, they both came out here in the mid-twenties. Mother came out here to start to Texas Tech about 1926. And my dad's family was from Tennessee, and he and his brother came out here and—to go to high school, even. They were working and helping support their mom and family—they were pretty low-income folks. And of course, my mother was raised by a single mother—we can get into that in a minute, but it was kind of interesting how—and they were Scotch-Irish, my daddy's background—one of his sisters traced their lineage back to Mary

Queen of Scots, because their mother's maiden name was Stuart—S-T-U-A-R-T, which was that. So—and I've also always thought, probably, there was some Cherokee involved, because there were Cherokees named "Ridge" in the part of Tennessee where he came from, around Clarksville.

DS:

Okay, I was going to ask you what part.

MW:

But they came out here and graduated from Lubbock High, which was where the old Carol Thompson building was, and then they met and married October 11, or 12—I'd have to look to be sure—of 1930. Mother was, like I say, raised by a single mom, and her mother had taught school, but had met my mother's daddy when she was his student. So he was older than she was, and I can find the dates on their births and so forth; I didn't bring it with me today. But as I've told you, I guess one of the interesting things—and maybe an explanation of why I'm so interested in politics at all levels—was that my granddaddy abandoned my mother, who was born in 1909, and he abandoned the family when she was about six, and traveled over the United States with Eugene V. Debs—the leader of the Socialist Party—and very much was active at the more radical early union movements, and so forth. But they were card-carrying socialists that were trying, basically, to—they thought the capitalist system was wicked and unfair, and that if they could just find a way to level it all into anarchy, and get rid of faith in families, primarily—if you could break up families, and never have them form, and get dependence on the government, then they were the only ones that were smart enough to build it all back, and make sure that everybody had an equal amount of money. But they were the only ones smart enough to figure out how that was going to work. So, I studied a lot of the things that he had written, and things that belonged to him, and letters from him, and got an idea very early in my life of—kind of what socialism was, and what a false premise it was—that it always sounds really good, and yet in practice, there's always some more equal than others, who are running things, and they become just as powerful as the corrupt capitalists that they were trying to undo. A lot of that's, I think, a lot of the reason that I'm as involved as I am. He came to see my mother once, in particular, that she relayed to me, about 1940, and she said, "Are you still really active in your socialist movement?" and he says, "Well, yes, I care as much as I ever did, but", he said, "we elected Franklin Roosevelt to be president, and he's putting policies in place to further our agenda more than we ever thought possible in our entire lifetimes," which I tell some people from time to time. But it's interesting—he was a tall, handsome brunette ladies' man, if you will, and I think that was probably part of why he left the family, as well. But it was interesting that he was teaching, and my grandmother was one of his students. Now, that seems strange, but she was probably—

DS:

Where was he teaching at?

MW:

That's something that I'm not sure about. My mother was born in Floydada, and then they moved around even before he left them, because he would have teaching jobs in different places. And she became a teacher, also, even without a lot of further—you know, they had teachers back then that, if you were good at what you were doing—plus, my grandmother was a milliner—made beautiful hats and things, as well. So some of that, I wish I had better history, but the fact that mother had written down something for my daughter when she was young, and interested in genealogy at a point that—some of the things about my granddaddy. But one of them was that if Eugene V. Debs had ever been elected president, that probably my granddaddy would have been his vice-president. Now whether he inflated that to her, you know, but at least he was a very important sidekick. Of course, Debs wound up in jail and prison from time to time. I don't know whether my daddy was with him or not—I mean, my granddaddy. But anyway, there's some interesting little bits of things there that—not that they were prominent people, but my mother and her mother were in Dallas when she finished high school, and so she decided to come out here and go to Tech about the first year that it was open.

DS:

Yeah, you said she was here probably about 1926?

MW:

Twenty-six is my thinking on it. Here, again, there may be archives somewhere that, you know, I could find it. But her name was Merry Belle Blackwell. My Granddaddy's name was Aubrey Blackwell. And so she was an only child, and my daddy was the youngest of six children, so there's a lot of interesting things, to me, you know, about my family. But maybe because of my daddy—or her daddy—being so radical, to the left, it would be considered nowadays—my mother and father both were very conservative in their political viewpoints, so from the time I was little bitty, I'd tell people all the time, I was knocking on doors and handing out literature before I could reach the doorknobs. But they were one of the first very few families here that started the Republican Party in Lubbock. And that would have been in the early- to mid-forties—I'll have to find out if—exactly when they started having a primary. I know we did by '52, because I got out of school one day when I was about—what would it have been—nine—to go out to whistle-stop thing from Eisenhower. We hadn't supported him in the primary, but we were—this was during the general election, and they used it for a photo-op. So there's a picture of me, somewhere, with my long, strawberry-blonde curls, with President Eisenhower in '52. And so—and in my little-girl mind, I had been out helping him, and he recognized that, and thanked me, you know, and so I thought that he had made a trip all the way out here to Lubbock to thank me for all my hard work for him. So I was sort of hooked on the whole thing of

campaigning and helping folks, and all. But it's just something I've always been very, very interested in, and have worked in grassroots politics, like I say, since I was, you know, five or six years old, at the most. And yet, I began to realize—oh, sometime—probably mid-eighties—that I've done a lot of things, and was on a lot of—kind of the contact person out here for various conservative groups in Washington and all, but I began to realize that it was hard to measure if I was even having any impact. I saw a lot of the same things happening locally that were appalling to me at the federal level, and so I began to think that I could do more by focusing more of my attention, and becoming really deeply involved on the local level—more with city issues and so forth.

DS:

Let's come back to that, but first we've got to go back, and—we're going to come back, and let you grow up to that stage. You know, you mentioned that you had an older brother that was, what thirteen years older than you?

MW:

Almost twelve. He would have been twelve about three or four months after I was born.

DS:

And what's his name?

MW:

His name was Pat Ridge. He had early-onset Parkinson's in his mid—early forties—and lived to be seventy-two, or something. But at the time, he was over the whole southern division of the Postal Inspection Service, and had to give that up and retire very young. Never complained, but he was always a role model for me, from the time I was very young.

DS:

Well you mentioned that he was very accomplished at everything.

MW:

He was. Everything he wanted to do, he could do with great ease, and so I always worked twice as hard, just because I admired him so much. He spoke eight languages fluently, and several others that were similar to some other degree. And he could play—had long fingers—of course, being six-foot-five, and I'm less than five-two—so he could play Gilbert and Sullivan operettas from memory on the piano—that's pretty complicated—words and tempo and all of that, and a lot of other things—and was an accomplished photographer. Was just, anything he did—he went to the—after he finished Tech in '54, in '55, he went to the language school in Monterrey, California, studying Japanese, because he was going to Japan, and finished second in his class behind a native Japanese student. So I guess all along, I thought, “Well, I have to do everything,

and I'd have to work twice as hard," and it wasn't that I was pressured, or anything, to be like him, but that was my frame of reference, and I thought, "I'll ever make it, but I'll do everything I can." So a lot of times in school, people would get mad at me because where we were supposed to write a little report, I'd come out and research at the Tech Library for days and days and study and draw pictures—I've always been deeply involved in art and creative things along the way, as well. And I still tell people at my age of seventy-one, that I could live in a house half the size I do if I could decide what I want to be when I grow up. But it takes lots of toys—paints and sculpting—I sculpt murals on walls, and make all my jewelry, practically, and a lot of my clothes—I just enjoy doing artistic things, and they're kind of my relief from the intensity of politics, I suppose. But somehow, I've been burdened my whole life with trying to make the world better through the political system.

DS:

You know, you mentioned, you know, when you were growing up and you were going to school—what schools did you go to?

MW:

Okay, I went to—first grade, I was in Dupre Elementary School, and then my parents bought the old Baptist Student Center, which sat on the same place that the more modern-looking one is now, and it was—I say it's modern, it was modern in—let's see, they moved that house, it was a two-story house, over to a half-block west of the Methodist hospital, on twentieth street—3709. House is still there—belongs to Covenant now—but it was an old-timey house with high ceilings and—because my birthday was on Halloween, we had some fabulous haunted house parties because it seemed a fitting type of thing. But anyway, from Dupre, then second grade through sixth grade I went to Overton. Then from there, seventh and eighth grade, I was at Hutchinson, and where I lived, I had the choice, two or three times, because it was sort of on the borderline of things, and in ninth grade, I made the choice to go to the first year that Smiley Wilson Junior High was open. And so I was in the oldest—the ninth grade class of Wilson Junior High, and we were able to pick the colors and the song and the mottos, and it was fabulous, you know, being in a brand new school.

DS:

Well, you know—so since you were involved in—or liked politics—as a child, were you involved in them at school?

MW:

I—yes, just generally. I was always more interested in issues—like important global issues, or basically promoting—I guess persevering, or saving our American heritage and constitutional grassroots-type government. So school politics wasn't as important to me as—I worked on the real things, you know, and all the elections and things.

DS:

Can you recall—what were you interested in in the ninth grade, per say, on the political scene?

MW:

Oh, goodness, I'd have to think—whoever was running at the time. But in my junior year in high school, my American history teacher was a very liberal, feminist kind of Democrat, and we fought the whole year, because that was in 1960, and I was supporting Nixon and she was supporting Kennedy, and it was sort of fierce. At one point, my husband and I were dating—I'd met him when I was just shy of being fifteen, and didn't intend to even go steady. I kept telling him "I don't want to go steady," and he says "Well I just want one woman in my whole life, and I think you're it," and very businesslike. But anyway, we were at a dance in high school, and she was one of the chaperones. And it was one of these, where you dress old-timey, and I was dressed up like a dancehall girl, and he had on guns—we were fully dressed, but she was trying to throw us out for dirty dancing—of course, she didn't like me. So I've always—and I was very much into civil rights for blacks through that period of time, and that was a little against the grain, maybe, in Lubbock at that time.

DS:

Yeah, because that was—you just mentioned 1960—because that's the year that Tech started getting ready to integrate—1961, I think, is when they finally integrated.

MW:

But I was very interested in—and it sounds funny; it sounds like a liberal perspective, but I wanted to do it through conservative means, not top down, but grassroots up, and convince people with facts—and that's still what I deal with a lot. We were talking about my husband—he was in a very, very modest upbringing—his father was an alcoholic, and he started working when he was about nine years old, and didn't appear to have all of the potential that I seemed to see in him. But he was much more mature than a lot of people my age in high school, and even though I never would go steady with him, I never did leave him, either. We wound up marrying in May of '61, and have been married for fifty-three years.

DS:

So was that right after high school?

MW:

Uh-huh, yeah. Actually, I finished early, partly because I was going to get married, and I had enough credits and things, so I—even though I really graduated, and go to all the reunions with his class and mine—'61 was his class, and mine was actually '62, but I had enough credits, and finished up that summer, after I got married, so I'm sort of part of his and my class. They all

think that I'm part of his class, because I knew more of his friends than I actually did my age group, the next year, even though I had known some of them. But because, here again, I had the option—going out of ninth grade—of going to Monterrey or to Lubbock High—but because my dad had graduated from Lubbock High, and my brother had graduated from Lubbock High—and I loved the building, and its history, and all of this, so I wanted to go there, as well. So all these things are sort of fateful, I suppose, you decide things and probably I would never had married who I did if I hadn't—

DS:

So what'd you start doing after you got married, and—?

MW:

Well, my parents had bought a little bitty—what had been an ice cream—like a Zesto stand—and it was, when they bought it—this was in the fifties—probably fifty-six, or –seven-ish—it was a little shoe repair shop. And I—actually my husband and I bought into it—bought half of it, and bought my mother and daddy out, and paid for the other half of it in about sixty-nine, probably. But I worked at the shoe repair with my folks—actually before I got married, as far as that goes—dying shoes—leather shoes, even, I mean mostly leather shoes. And I did all of the work for Hemphill-Wells, and Margaret's, and people would bring in very expensive, brand-new things, and I'd strip all the finish off and dye them to match clothes and even paint prints on them, if they wanted something to go with a particular outfit. So I was involved in that all along, and then we bought that and kept on going.

DW:

You know, that kind of ties in with what you were talking about earlier: what you do nowadays, where you try to match things—I guess because you were doing that back then?

MW:

Oh sure, oh yeah. I was making charm bracelets before I'd go to school in grade school — putting different colors on a bracelet, and started designing my clothes before I started to school, probably, and my mother sewed on an old treadle sewing machine, so I learned how to sew early, and was very fashion-conscious, I guess, more than maybe a lot of kids would have been. But I've just always had a lot of interest—I'll never die of boredom, I may burn all my dopamine up in my brain before I'm old enough to do that, but I guess I have a certain work ethic that's—there's no way I can just sit down and do absolutely nothing, and everything has to contribute to something relevant.

DS:

And so while you were working there, at the dress shop, in the sixties—I mean the shoe shop—what was going on in the political world that you were trying to be active in?

MW:

Oh, very much—I was very active in the '60 campaign with Nixon, and then in '64, very much integral—like a volunteer coordinator—one of—kind of getting things out to other people in '64 for Goldwater. So I—but I've always been involved—

DS:

Did you get to meet either Nixon or Goldwater?

MW:

I think Goldwater was here once—I don't know about Nixon. I might've gone to a rally, but I didn't necessarily meet him, I mean, if they came through I was there because I've just always been involved, but I've always found that what I tend to work on is more non-partisan, and that's—

DS:

Talk about some of those issues that you worked on.

MW:

Well, and see, that goes forward more. But even like the integration issue—I just thought it was appalling—where City Hall now was Sears Department store, and over there, by the elevator was “white” and “colored” fountains, and I just thought that was appalling when I was a little bitty girl. I just thought, “What in the world?” because I had friends that would come over and play with me—we had a black yard man who was just like family, and he'd been real, real close to my brother and my whole family for a long, long, time. And he'd bring his grandkids over, and they were my age, and I thought nothing, I mean I never thought about there being any class or difference in what we were all about. So I guess, all through there, I wasn't just—I was more about issues throughout my adult life, and I began to realize that there were some Republicans—like back then, the Rockefeller wing of the Republicans—which we would call, now, “RINOs”—Republicans In Name Only—and then there were others like me, that were grassroots, that didn't like a lot of the kind of the crooked, crony stuff that goes on, and that's the same way I am on a lot of things. But we had our only daughter in February of 1963, and so she kind of helped raise us as well as we raised her. And we're still really close—she's in Lubbock, and is a hair stylist—we're more like sisters. But it's just a lot of things along the way—I've worked in a lot of campaigns—one in particular that I remember, and I'll have to pinpoint the date—it was either '82 or '84, probably '82, I would guess, it was probably an off year—that I was working for a congressman who was running for senator against Lloyd Bentsen. And he had an insurance company—his name was Jim Collins—and he had an insurance company in Irving—this beautiful compound right in the middle of downtown Irving, with a lake running through it, and swans, and cabins, and all sorts of things. And so was one of his main campaigners, and so spent

a lot of time in Irving at rallies and we'd preview ads and decide what they were going to run and all these other things—and he was an older fella, and he said “Mikel, I—“ he kept observing me, and one day he said “Mikel, I've been in politics a long time” —he'd been a congressman for years—and he said, “I've worked with a lot of people, but,” he says, “I've never found anybody in my life that didn't require food or sleep as long as you had enough politics.” And I think about that sometimes, because I'll get to going, and it gives me adrenaline to keep going if I'm working on something that's really important. So he was doing a good observance, I suppose, it was an accurate—

DS:

Yeah, probably, and it describes you well, doesn't it?

MW:

(Laughing) I guess so. I'm very intense about everything, and everything has to be as good as I can make it. But, you know, I don't—I would have been, I guess, a good pioneer woman in some regards, because I'm very much into saving everything and recycling everything and always have. I love to take clothes, and take a skirt and turn it upside down and make a top out of it, and you know, completely redo things. And it's more fun for me than if I had all the money in the world, and could go buy ready-made clothes. And so, you know, that's another part of me that doesn't quite fit. I have rain barrels, and these Democrats will say, “Oh, that's unusual, I thought Republicans didn't care about the environment,” and of course I do, but I don't care about it being mandated and crooked and twisted—I want to do it because I value that water and all of our resources out here, because I grew up out here, and know how scarce they really are. And so I've just always done things very inexpensively—I started to say “cheap” —but inexpensively, anyway, and have done a lot of—I make everything I can out of things that I have, and everything has possibilities. Anything that comes across my purview, I can pick up—even whatever it is, and I say, “Well, I can repurpose that into something else.”

DS:

You know, you were talking about that campaign in '82, and we talked earlier about how you had transitioned from the national scene to more of the local scene—do you recall what it was that finally made you say “It's time to switch?”

MW:

Well, I didn't switch—I just started working in between, you know, campaigns are just every other year and whatever, and I was the volunteer coordinator for Reagan in Lubbock in 1980, and we had let the party use a building that we had leased, across the street from Ridge Range—which, our building was 3313 34th, on 34th and Indiana. But we had a place leased across the street, and we'd kind of used it as an outlet and we had always had boot and shoe repair, and saddles, and lots of other things, and then there, when our daughter was young, we rode horses,

and I had to win those things, too. I'm just really not—really more competitive with myself than other people, but I had a big ranch horse off the Four Sixes ranch that was an absolute outlaw. They had—nobody could do anything with him, and they were just about ready to toss him, and he was sixteen-and-a-half hands tall—which is huge—and I went out and whispered in his ear and got on him, and we “play-day-ed” —which is poles and barrels and relay, and all these things, and one—senior women against women who had been riding horses all their lives, intensely. But we got interested in it because our daughter was, and we were at the store, and we had a buckboard, and had a horse that pulled that, and so, you know, it was just sort of natural through there. My husband jokes about it—that the horse was the least of it—we bought a motorhome and everything else so we could go camp out where we were “play-day-ing” and stuff with saddle clubs and things. See, I'm off my topic again, but in the—in 1980, I—of course, I'd been real involved in Reagan's campaign, and loved him dearly, and met him several times, and of course his reelection was in '84, and it was more toward the—became—well, our daughter was on her own, you know, by then, that was a lot of it, and I had time, and I began to notice things that were a reflection of what I didn't like in Washington. And then—well, I'd been involved in a couple of rollback elections—attempts, where we had plenty of signatures, but they wouldn't confirm them—in the late '80s —and the movement in California—the “Prop 13”¹ movement, and the fellow who started that—I can't think of his name right now, but he was out here in Lubbock—came a time or two and met with us and stuff. But I guess it was some of those kinds of things, where taxes were going up too much, and we weren't getting our value, and I started looking at budgets and that type of thing—and then, in 1990—I had just had a hysterectomy, and wasn't in shape to do anything—and they called me from Washington from Citizens Against Government Waste, and—I mean I was known because I was sort of a contact for this congressional district for several national think tanks, whatever—like Conservative Caucus, and Freedom Council was more on social issues—so they got my name, and they're the ones who put out the “pig book” —pork-barrel spending summaries, and that type of thing. Well they called me and said, “We're trying to have simultaneous rallies across the country” on the same day—like on a Saturday—and had a theme—I've got several T-shirts, you ought to take pictures of all my T-shirts from all those rallies—but anyway, they said “Would you hold this rally?” and I says, “I just don't see how I can. I'm just not up to it.” And they said, “Oh, it won't be any problem, call your Chamber of Commerce and they'll be happy to help you. And they'll set up a microphone and a place and get the word out.” And I said “We've already dropped out of the chamber of commerce because we didn't agree with their agenda, but I'll prove it.” So I called the head of the chamber, and he said, “Oh, Mikel, we would never be involved in anything like that, because we benefit too much from higher taxes.” And I said “Thanks, that's what I thought, but—”. Anyway, so—but I did find enough people and had a quick news conference and had two or three hundred people show up, you know, at this first Tea Party—when everybody was arguing about who started the Tea Parties here, I said, “Y'all are all wrong; I did

¹ Proposition 13, amendment of the Constitution of California, enacted June 6, 1978, via the initiative process. It reduced property tax rates on real estate holdings by roughly 57%.

one in 1990.” But it was not officially that, but they were successful, so they decided that they would try to foster a network of taxpayers’ groups, and they were calling them “Taxpayers Action Network”, so it was—T-A-N were the initials, and so my husband came up with “South Plains Area Residents’—like possessive—Taxpayers Action Network” —which, the acronym was SPARTAN, and I’ve kept that, even, as my e-mail. And I had thought, even then, that this would be cool, and we were talking, you know, I’d go to conventions and things, and we had a group in Texas that all met about once a year in San Antonio, where the head of it was. And it was a good thing to do, and we need more of them, but it’s so hard to get continuous leadership, because there’s nothing in it for you individually. We’re not supported by anybody—they were just encouraging it. It didn’t come with any money; we were just under their umbrella, sort of. So I thought, “Well, that’ll be like a lot of things, and they’ll give us alerts on what’s happening, and we can do letter writing” and so we created this nice structure of a group, here, in 1990 and early ’91. And in the fall of 1991—well, let’s see—I’ll go back—’88, a very innocuous-sounding constitutional amendment was on the ballot—like those longs lists of things—and up until then, it had been completely illegal in the state constitution to give any public money to anything private, unless you were buying a good or service—like, you know, you can hire people to pave the highways and things, but not just incentive-type things. And that little amendment said something to the effect that cities and counties can promote economic growth. Well who could be against something like that? And so it passed overwhelmingly, but nobody had any idea the Pandora’s box they were opening up with it. And so the enabling legislation then came about in the 1990 legislative session—might’ve been ’89 —whatever. But anyway, it was going into effect in ’90. So I found out—well, they started to promote it here in Lubbock—and this was like the first part of October—and, as usual, I’m into reading fine print, and really wanted to know because I could see pitfalls with this. If you could use the sale—it was a half-cent sales tax for economic development—and if they could use that money to leverage it, and borrow a lot more money, that could be a real problem. And then I wanted to know, how do you repeal it, and I wanted to know all the details, and wanted to read the bill, and nobody had one. And it was called “Article 5190.6” —still in effect—and so I wanted to see all of the real nitty-gritty stuff, and you know, how many signatures would it take? How could you repeal it? And I was very skeptical of it because it flew in the face of free enterprise—which is the way that economies work—I’m an Austrian economics fan; [I] go to all the things out at Free Market Institute, by the way—on Tech campus. So I was trying to get a copy of it and no one seemed to have one. So finally, it turned out that a man from the comptroller’s office had been out here to brief the city council in executive session, behind closed doors, about this upcoming thing that we could do. And so someone in the media, I think, gave me his number in Austin. And I called him and said, “This is Mikel Ward from Lubbock, Texas, and I’d like a copy of this bill and the enabling legislation, and all of this.” Well, he assumed—wrongly, I didn’t tell him—but he assumed that I worked at the city, and apparently thought there was no intelligent life anywhere else. And so he spent the next thirty or forty minutes telling me how to get your hands on the money. You can call anything “economic development,” but whatever you do, don’t let any opposition form—

that's the only time they've had any problems with this, is people started questioning it—and on and on. And of course I was flabbergasted; I was standing in the middle of our store and didn't have any way to tape him, but finally, after waxing eloquently about how wonderful this all was for government—that it just a brand new revenue stream that you'd have available, and sales tax was going to continue to grow, and all of this. Finally, he said, “Have I answered all of your questions?” and I said, “I think you have.” And he says, “Well, I guess you'll be at Texas Municipal League this weekend?” That was, like, it would have been like October tenth, or so by then, and I said “I'm sure people from Lubbock will be there.” And he says, “Great. We're going to have an in-depth workshop on how to get this past your voters before they know what hit them.” And so the next day I was out finding out how to take out a—what's called a “Specific Purpose Committee” or a “PAC” in opposition, and we only had from that time in October until January of 1992 before the election. But it was novel to the media here, and so every day I was being interviewed, and Mayor Pat McMahon was being interviewed, and it elevated me into a public persona that I had never wanted—I was just doing what had to be done—and I happened to be the chairman of SPARTAN and therefore we sort of had a vehicle. And so a lot of things have come up that way, but anyway—I don't know whether we want to—I didn't even bring that with me, as far as the exact dates and things, but we were able to win pretty major against it. And there was a second proposition on the ballot—and I still have a copy of the ballot, and a copy of what we repealed on the ballot—second part was to repeal the entire chapter in the city charter dealing with the board of city development—and it even said “Including appropriations.” Well, see, we had had, since about 1925, the board of city development—the BCD—here, with very little accountability, it was just “promote economic growth,” and stuff, and a lot of it had been funneled, I think, too, to the chambers—and we had three chambers, which was stupid, also, like you couldn't all work together—but we had one that was white, and one that was Anglo—I mean one that was Hispanic—and one that was black. Anyway, that was on the ballot, and the idea was that we would all go for the sales tax—there were two propositions—that we would go for the sales tax, because it had a—I think an eighth for property tax reduction to sweeten it a little—and the second proposition, they expected that we would do away with the BCD and that would fix it all, and then we'd have this new revenue stream. Well, the voters thwarted that by voting down the top one and voting out the BCD by eighty-four percent—which was supported by about a three-cent property tax—says “half-mill tax” or something on the ballot—but it was a three-cent property tax. And of course it went up every year because property valuations and new growth was exponential from '25 on. So we messed up their grand plan, and there were even editorials before, and articles and things before that election that said, “What if the worst thing in the world would happen, what would we do? We would have no revenue, and we'll all dry up and blow away.” So I got blamed—or credited—with that election. Then that led to a lot of other things, and even though I'd been working a lot in local things—and I'd go down and testify when there was a budget hearing or something like that. Suddenly I was immersed at the city level, and that led to me running for city council in May of '92 —because I was sort of the hero of the taxpayers

at that point—and so that's another whole story. I don't know how far you want to go, or if you want to go back and pick up something else, but—

DS:

Well, I think we're on pretty good track. I don't know how you're doing on time.

MW:

I'm doing good. I've got until about four, so I can do whatever. I don't know how long you have. You may get tired of me.

DS:

I have until they close the building.

MW:

I just didn't bring anything with me, so if there's bits and pieces and you want some dates filled in—I think I e-mailed you my little treatise that I did.

DW:

Well you meant, you know, we're to '92 now, and you said you ran for office. What office did you run for?

MW:

I ran for city council in district six. Joan Baker had been the city councilwoman there—I still know her—and so she was retiring, and I really didn't want to. I went out and tried to recruit people and everybody kept recruiting me instead. And the main opponent—there was a four-way race—two other men who were very friendly to me had decided to run also, since it was an open seat—but the main opponent—or the establishment opponent, I guess, the choice—which there always is, and then there's grassroots to all these things—and it was one of my grade school classmates named Ty Cooke. And Ty's father was one of the co-owners of Field's and Company that sold bathroom and lighting and lots of things. And I had known him enough in school, I just didn't feel like he had the same kind of interests, or the same inclinations that I would have toward controlling the growth in city government—which had always been my thing, because I've always found that the private sector can do most things a whole lot better than the public sector. I even put a test, a lot of times, on things from Frederic Bastiat's little thin red book called *The Law*. And in it he explains, if you put a test on what's constitutional, or what's the role of government, and is if you as an individual can hire something done and not violate the law—like you can hire somebody to protect your house—like a fireman or a policeman—you could hire those yourself, as an individual, and not go to jail. But if you are trying to do good, and you notice that one neighbor has three cars, and one neighbor down the street doesn't have one, you can't go—I mean he didn't say this, this is the modern interpretation of it—but basically what

was lawful and all was what you could do without violating the law. But in modern terms, you can't go hotwire and steal the car from the man who has three cars and go give it to the other man, however benevolent that may seem—and yet that's the whole case for welfare. They're forcing people to take something that other people have worked hard for and give it to someone else. And it's so ingrained now, it seems radical to say that that's not all wonderful, but—see, I was beginning to notice, too, that a lot of these policies—you're saying when I got involved—or begin to really solidify, I guess, my philosophy, was because a lot of the policies that were put in place during the Depression—supposed to be short term or whatever—but the idea that government could do big things and rearrange the economy and do all this—it broke down the barriers that were there before. [It] started somewhere with Woodrow Wilson, and even Teddy Roosevelt before that—of overstepping government bounds—but during the Depression, and then during World War II, it just never got back on an even keel. People tell the story all the time about Davy Crockett, who was in Congress, and somebody's house had burned down and they came and said “Can you—“ you know, as a Congress—“Can you put money into a fund, out of the public treasury, to replace these people's house?” and he did, I mean, he voted for it. And he went home, and this old farmer said, “I can't ever vote for you again; you were giving away something you didn't own.” And so there was a philosophy back then that government's role was very limited. Of course, the more intrusive it becomes, and the more they think they're doing good. Even people of goodwill—the results are not what they think it will be. So in '64, even, when Johnson beat Goldwater and put in the Great Society. They started the huge welfare programs that we've spent trillions of dollars on, and we still have the same percentage of people—if not more—in poverty now than we did when he started the antipoverty program. So it's almost like government—without intending to—promote dependency and keeps people from having the opportunity to do things on their own. And it's sort of like they said: “We've got a deal for you,” to a single fifteen-year-old girl. “If you'll just have your babies out of wedlock, and don't marry—as long as you don't marry, we'll give you welfare, and we'll be your daddy.” And so there's a lot of these things that I began to realize, you know, were problems. And I could work on those at the federal level, but then I noticed that locally—and by the way, going back to after the '92 election, they never skipped a beat. I ran in the '92 election—in May—and wound up getting forty-nine percent—but not quite fifty—in a four-way race—lacked about sixty-something votes—but I was assured of winning the runoff, I mean, everybody was on board, but I got out and did a complete grassroots thing. All these grassroots people have no money—lots of shoe leather and lots of hard work, but never establishment money, locally or at any level—and so I had people out at the polls on election day—and this was pre-cell phones, where everybody could communicate—and at my party that night, people began to tell me that these two men had gone in to the voting places all day long with an ice chest between them, and they said—well, they were handing out my literature, and encouraging people to go vote for me—and these two men would go around—and they were in a little sports car—turns out it had license plates off of a wrecked full-sized Chevrolet—and they were asking them if they were going in to vote, and they'd say “No, we're going in to count ballots.” Well, we had just changed—I was an

election judge forever, I've been a precinct chairman long as I can remember, where I—in the precinct where I am now, since 1980, but anyway—and I wasn't for this, of course—but I was so pleased, because before they had went to the paper-pencil-optical scan ballot that spring, we had dealt with punch cards, and you had to take them—and I'd always take somebody—a clerk—with me—and bundle them up in hundreds—and I was always worried, because you saw the—we didn't call them "chads," we didn't know what they were—but you were always worried that somehow, you were distorting that, and so I was so glad that we went to something that would be in a lockbox—nobody would be handling it. Well, unbeknownst to me, the city had decided to hand out the keys to the judges, and they were to sort the ballots all day—and when I went in with a lawyer on Monday—I'll get back to the rest of the story—but on Monday, after the election, I went storming into city hall with my lawyer, because we had all kinds of anecdotal things where people saw judges sorting ballots in two stacks—just something I couldn't imagine them doing, because I knew it was locked—I had conducted the March primary and runoff, and then we'd had the regular city election; it was closed, but suddenly on the runoff, they decided to hand out the keys to the ballot boxes, and the excuse they gave was—the city attorney's office—was that we never did call this under subchapter C, and under subchapter B we could do what we wanted to do. And he said, "We did that so that the rounded corner on the ballots would all be turned the right way." This was an election with less than three or four hundred votes. And I said, "I would have been perfectly happy to have waited fifteen more minutes for you to turn those around, instead of you having them tampered with all day." Well, that was that day; the next morning they found another box of ballots in the basement at city hall that they'd just somehow not gotten counted, so they go them out—so all this stuff was building up a lot of suspicion, so some of my folks just were more outraged than I was. I was so tired that if they'd thrown the whole thing out and started over, I couldn't have gone through another election. It had gotten real mean and real crazy and all sorts of stuff, like things do—particularly if you're the grassroots. But anyway, they took some precincts and started looking at the signature rosters, and calling people where there was a difference between the May election and the June election, and they'd say, "Oh, I wished I'd gone, I was planning to go and vote for her"—talking about me—"that sweet lady"—whatever—"but I didn't get there." And it showed they'd voted, so we had forgeries. So I finally took all this anecdotal evidence, and took it to the D.A., but they talked me out of filing charges. They said, "It's not doubt, it was stolen, but you know, how're you going to determine who's to blame?" And I didn't—that's what I was saying earlier to you—I never really had the fire in the belly to be an elected official. It was never really what I felt like my role was, but I was forced into it a couple of times, because it seemed terribly important, you know, to have somebody there that would question. So I never did make a big deal about it, but when other things came up—like the other sales tax elections—I made it a point, and forced them to put a paper seal on the back of the—the back end of the absentee ballot boxes—with my signature on it, so that they couldn't do that again. And so, you know, but those are the kinds of things I don't know whether you want to include somewhere, because I don't have anything now to prove any of it. I just went on; I figured if I said anything about it publicly,

even, that it would just look like sour grapes. And I really felt like I could be more effective on the outside. That's questionable, I guess—I still keep wanting to get some person on there—and worked very hard in this last city council election for one of my very best friends—Ben Clark in District Three—because I swear, and I laugh about it when people would come to me and say “I'm thinking about running for council,” and I say, “Well, I want you to know that there's a lobotomy machine down there, and as soon as you're elected they put you through it, and they suck all your brains and fill it with mush, where you come back and say, ‘No, I'm not representing the taxpayers, I'm representing the city against the taxpayers.’” Because the best of people with the best of intentions seem to get elected and completely—either they don't tell the truth about what they believe in—they just parrot—

DS:

They just say anything to be electable.

MW:

Uh-huh. Well, that's pro-taxpayer. And then when they're elected, and they're shown that, “We've got to have this much money, and this much more money on top of that, and we've got to borrow all this money—.” Because they're volunteers, basically, they just say, “Oh, I guess that's the way it is.” And I want somebody that says, “Whoa, look at this,” you know, whatever it is. Right now, we're very involved in the storm water thing, and I begged the council last summer—“You shouldn't be going up this much at one time—and particularly when you're reshuffling how it's all done.” So it follows through on a lot of different things, but I've decided that—I speak so much to the council, and if they look around and don't see a lot of other people—which, hopefully, there will be tonight—but if they don't see a lot of other people saying the same thing, I think they hear me like the adult voice in the Charlie Brown movies, where if the adults—the teacher or whoever—sounds like “Wah wah wah wah wah” and I don't think they hear a word I say—and I'm going in with facts. I've always found that you don't have to even put a heavy opinion on anything. I trust people enough—and particularly out here, they all think they're good conservatives—that if you give them information, they will vote their pocketbooks, basically, or vote for what makes sense. I'm accused all the time of just waning Lubbock to dry up and blow away, and roll up the sidewalks, and when I ran for mayor in '98—which is another whole story—it was basically—the literature and the thing was that I was going to close senior centers and we'd quit having parks, and we'd be lucky if we even had fine policemen—and it's crazy, but that's an easy thing to convince people, that I'm scary and don't want—or anybody that I'm associated with—is trying to ruin the city, rather than helping it grow. And here again, there's kind of immutable financial truths, as far as I'm concerned—I mean it's pretty provable every way—that the more money that you leave in people's pockets, and don't tax them to death—they will spend that money, grow their businesses, spend money in the stores, and sales tax generates a tremendous amount of money. Every eighth cent, right now, is generating probably 5.3 or -.4 million dollars, every eighth cent—and the city has a penny-

and-a-half, altogether. I didn't get into the rest of the sales tax elections—we can if you want to, but I'd have to have my cheat sheet on that one. Oh, I know pretty much what all happened, but as far as percentages and things, it might be good to look at that and go through it. But we fought over the same half-cent sales tax through six elections, from '92 to '03 —almost ten years. One of them we were critical of, but we didn't fight it because it was kind of an overwhelming thing, and that was when they put up the whole half-cent to bring in the defense accounting center thing. And we knew from inside people we had talked to that we were not going to get it, and we could not talk them into putting it on the ballot, contingent on our getting it, and so there were people on the council, including Ty Cooke, who got out and campaigned against repealing it. And we went out and circulated petitions and got twelve thousand or so signatures to repeal it. But in the six months that they had that sales tax—from 2003 to—I mean, no, ninety—I'm sorry—'93 to '94, they captured about—I'm wanting to say close to four million dollars, and they pretty much used that to pay the state—bribe the state, if you will—to put the John Montford Unit here. We bought them the land and helped build that. I mean—whatever—you know, things are not always the way they appear. People don't realize how things happen behind the scenes on a lot of things. But ask me something else.

DS:
Well—

MW:
I can talk nonstop.

DS:
Well, you know when we were talking earlier—we were talking about, you know, taxes and stuff, and when they first started doing TIFs²—I think the first one was North Overton—can you talk about what you, as someone that had worked in that realm, thought about when you first heard that this was going on?

MW:
Well, actually the very first one was a year before the North Overton TIF—they created the central business district TIF—which stands for tax increment financing—and I didn't bring all my details on that. It's part of my lecture I give. But basically, the tax increment financing is that they use a base value of properties at the time that the TIF starts, and then everything that is added to it for the life of the TIF—which can be however many years they set it—everything else—the people will be paying the taxes, but all of the proceeds over that base amount is put back into that area for the life of the TIF. So—and I'll talk about the downtown TIF in a minute, if you want to—but the North Overton one was created in 2001. And everybody agreed that the

² Tax increment financing, a public financing method encouraging redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvement projects.

Tech ghetto area over there had become pretty rundown, and, you know, sort of crime-ridden—wasn't a good place—and that something needed to be done. So we were happy, you know, that Delbert McDougal and all wanted to do something about it. I went to the very first meeting where a lot of people were very upset—it was over at Ramirez Elementary School, and I think overall, they treated people pretty fair, as far as purchasing the things like that. But the way that the TIF was set up was the problem, and it was done pretty quietly, like all these things always are. And people don't even understand them, or if they hear it, they think it's some magical fund with magical fairy dust that funds it. But what happened when they cleared that off—and it wasn't immediate—but when they cleared that off, then the underpinnings, the sewer lines, all of this—and water lines—were in bad shape. So what a developer would normally do—the city decided to borrow forty million dollars and commit the TIF tax funding to pay it off. And so the base amount there in North Overton, I think, was something around twenty-six million—you're testing my brain, because I know it, but I like to refer—I'm very accurate on numbers because everybody else can just fudge on everything, but if I ever make a mistake of one penny, anywhere, I'm discredited for life, because—

DS:

Well, and this is going to live on in infamy. (Laughing)

MW:

I know. (Laughing) So I'll come back, and I'll send you good, exact numbers. But basically we borrowed forty million dollars for twenty years. Well, that was from 2001 until 2031—it's actually thirty years, I guess—whatever—because—and so we're still paying the debt on that out of this, but until 2014—another little-known thing we ran across in studying budgets and things—despite this looking like the poster child for how the world ought to work, and the huge increase in value—things like Walmart, and all these things—all that—everything except, probably, the personal property part goes back into the TIF—and personal property means—like on a Walmart—means their inventory and their fixtures and things—so that may contribute some to the general fund. But basically, the bulk of things that are in the TIF area—which was 4th to Broadway, University to [Avenue] Q, basically—excluding, probably, the outside frontage on those, because they were business-type things, but overall pretty much that whole area. And so that whole thing will not pay off until 2031, and yet, until 2014 we were helping subsidize the debt service on those bonds—those revenue—well, I don't guess they were revenue bonds, I guess they were COs, like most things—Certificates of Obligation—but we were paying for part of that out of our solid waste fund. We've used utilities—I've skipped a real important thing that I'll have to go back to—it's another one of these dastardly things—it's not about the TIFs, but I think they're starting to pay back, a little at a time, back in to the solid waste kitty—but we've used utilities to pay for things totally unrelated to what they were, over a lot of years. I have several real “hot-button” things that I'll be happy discuss upside-down and wrong-side-out. But anyway, that's kind of the gist of that, and so the city bemoans the fact that they just don't ever

have enough money, and yet they create these things and divert what would be a lot of tax money—and actually, it's not just city tax money, it's everything but the school district—your county, hospital district, water district—and the city all forego the money into their general fund for operating to pay for this, in effect, and that's why you drive down Glenna Goodacre Boulevard and you see benches on top trees on top of landscaping on top of—I mean it's overdone because there's lots of money flowing into that TIF, and it doesn't all go to debt service. So there's some complicated arrangements with things like the Overton Hotel and the conference center and some of the revenue from it goes into the TIF as well. The city's invested a lot more, even, than the forty million into that, and it's a good thing to have, but you look at it from a perspective—would the voters have ever voted to do it? And there's no way in Earth that they would. The other one, that was started for the central business district, started in 2000 and it was a twenty-year TIF, but because probably over half of the property that's in their boundary—which is University to—I mean not University—[Avenue] Q to the interstate, and basically, I think, goes up to 19th, and 4th, and then it has this leg that goes on the north side of what's now Marsha Sharp—was 4th Street—so that big hotel that just went in on Vernon—Avenue V over there—will never—what it is will never be on the tax rolls until many years out. So anyway, the downtown one was not building out very fast because so much of the property down there is either owned by government—which is exempt—or churches and nonprofits, and so there's really not a heck of a lot of commercial, non-tax-exempt things that can be redeveloped. So here again, in 2009, in the Texas legislature—and this is where you have to sort of keep up with what they're doing, because they do things that affect us drastically, and yet thinks—“We didn't do it. See, it's here in this law,” but we have taxpayer lobbyists—taxpayer-paid lobbyists in Austin working against the taxpayers, even as we speak. But anyway they—in the 2009 legislative session—they got carved out—it doesn't say “Lubbock,” it says a city “this” size in a county “this” size with a TIF “this” whatever can be extended from twenty years to forty years. So the central business district TIF, without any discussion or much of anything, got extended until 2040. So I keep telling people, they can build gold-plated skyscrapers to the moon, and none of it will be on the tax rolls until I'm—have exited this planet. I mean, I would be ninety-seven years old in 2040, and so I'm not real thrilled about putting more money—they keep wanting to put more money into downtown, and if they can't make it with a forty-year TIF—which is what we're paying the McDougal's, as master developers—and the way they renegotiated their contract—or his contract, I think it's mostly Delbert, he plays like he's retired, but he's really not—but we're paying him what was a real—like thirty thousand a month, now he's only getting fifteen thousand a month, plus commissions, and if he develops his own property—which he's buying up a lot of things down there—if he develops it, he gets a forty percent bonus on the first-year taxes, that are paid once it's finished, or whatever—once the tax money starts coming in—that he gets forty percent of the first year's thing as a bonus. So he gets a bonus if he develops his own stuff, which is a lovely deal if you can get it.

DS:

Sweet.

MW:

It is, and I—you know, I'm friendly with these people. I can pick up the phone any time and call Marc and he'll just tell me everything he knows about things. I worked with him a lot when he was mayor. We didn't agree on the economic development giveaway stuff, but that's been a large part of what I've been involved in, and it dealt with the sales tax elections—which I can go into—I kind of know the basics of it, but if you want percentages and numbers—which are pretty impressive in some cases—you'd either have to print off what I e-mailed you, or—

DS:

Well, do you want to just leave that for another session?

MW:

Sure, we can—whatever.

DS:

Because you've got some time you can spend with us, right?

MW:

Huh? Oh yeah. You would get tired of me by the time I got through telling you all the things in the world. Do you want to switch from that kind of topic to a couple of others that were—?

DS:

What is it that you'd like to talk about?

MW:

Well, in—well I referred to my election in '92 —well, a year later a woman called me— anonymously to start with, I figured out pretty quick who she was and called her back, scared her to death—but we were coming up on a bond election in 2000—I guess it wound up being 2004, but they were talking about it and putting it together—and she, it wound up, had been the city treasurer. Now she can't talk about it, because they finally settled with her—nobody knows this—and I've got a lot of proof of this—but anyway—this is where you may want to hit the delete button sometime and do away with my story—but she called me, and she said, "They do not need any more money; there is huge amounts of money in the investment portfolio." And she was doing all of the investments for the city—she had a banking background. So she had noticed some very irregular reporting on, here again, utilities—everything goes back to these utilities. When they were submitting the summary to the appraisal district, you put in all the details of things so that they can determine how much taxes can be raised at the tax rate to pay for what

you need. Well, the chief financial officer at the city, at the time, and I can name him if you want to—you may have to seal all this up until I'm dead and gone, because these people are still around. I mean there's several stories like this that I know inside out and have some pretty good proof—paper proof of—but anyway, when they were submitting the summary to this central appraisal district, they were showing practically no revenue coming in from water, sewer, and solid waste. So we were paying—it'd be like if you go to the grocery store and buy your groceries and pay for them, and then come home and get a bill for them. So we were paying property taxes on a lot of the debt associated with these three utilities because it was not being accurately reported. So it got really strange, and of course I made a big to-do about it, but I had actually helped David Langston when he ran for mayor—he was running at the same time I ran, and I was going to be on his team and all this stuff, you know, except '92, but I—and so afterwards, I wound up serving on a charter review committee that I've still got, and I told you the city didn't even have a copy of it, but I had one so I let them make a copy of mine. And I was serving on a thing to help stir up neighborhoods. People tease me that I'm a neighborhood organizer, sort of like Obama, but except I'm trying to do other things— but anyway, I guess I am. So anyway—but anyway, they were submitting this inaccurate summary, and when she pointed it out to the chief financial officer who was doing it, he fired her on the spot. And so she didn't even get her pictures off the walls in her office; she was thrown out right that minute. And so she sat on—well she actually, I guess, had filed a suit at the time—I don't quite know her timeframe on that, but she had nothing to give me except, “go look for this.” And so we pulled up things that I'd never heard of or seen before in my life, like special trial balances and Dunbar registers, and it was all on microfiche—a lot of strange things—and put together all of the information to prove what she was talking about—and I even made up a folder of it all. But I went to the mayor—Langston at the time—and explained it all to him, and all the color drained out of his cheeks and he said, “Well, you know this happened before I got here.” All I finally pulled together was like six years, from '86 until '92 at the time—and I don't know how long before that they were doing it. They were balking tremendously at giving me anything, down there at the city, about it. I think at one point, they told me I owed them seven hundred and fifty dollars, and I said, “Good luck getting that,” you know, but—it was for their time hunting these things for me—but anyway, I put it all together and so I talked to him, and he—I said—he says “What do you want me to do about it? It happened before I got here,” and I said, “It's still happening. I want you to fire Robert Massengale, and if there's reason, you know, if you find cause, then there may be something criminal there. He wasn't necessarily benefitting from it, but it was—somebody was working on it together to generate a lot more money.” So he said, “Okay, I'll help you—whatever—I'll see what I can do.” So I got on the council agenda with Keith Potts—one of my cohorts in SPARTAN—and we handed out these folders with all of the evidence—you know, ironclad—in it to them, and the mayor turned on us and said, “How dare you suggest that anything like this ever happened. You have unmitigated audacity to accuse this fine gentleman of anything.” And I—by the way, I have a video of it, but it was never put on city magazine. It was privately recorded by us. Well, that was a Thursday—you know, when council

meetings were—the next Tuesday, they called Mr. Massengale in to explain in a work session, and some of the folks that were on the council at the time—including the one who had supposedly beat me two years before—this was into '94 by then—he and our current congressman were teasing each other back and forth: “Ha ha, huh, did you put the forty million in your desk drawer?” “No, I thought you had it in yours,” because it was just shy of forty million dollars that—over the six years, which seemed huge at the time—now they steal more than that in a day or two. Anyway, but they were joking about it, and so he came in and drew all of these charts and said “Well, we transferred this from here to here to here to here to here to here,” like trying to follow a pea under a cup, or something, and said so there wasn’t anything wrong with it. But then, he pulled out what I had never seen, and it was a letter from our bond council, warning them that what was being done was so irregular that it was going to affect our bond rating if it didn’t stop. And he looked down at his feet and says, “That sounds pretty bad, doesn’t it?” and so—but they kept denying to the media and to the public that anything had ever happened. And they’ll take officials’ word for things over little ragtag taxpayer people who—anything like this is pretty complicated. I mean, the way it was being done was not real simple, so they took their word for it, but at that point, they had to really replace him, and it just happened about that same time that the LP&L [Lubbock Power and Light] needed a new director, so Robert Massengale became the director of LP&L. and, of course, we know what happened with LP&L later, but these kinds of things fit together.

DS:

And I think the LP&L troubles were kind of the same type of stuff, weren’t they?

MW:

Yeah—even worse, probably. There was never a good report done. The best one was probably done by somebody who was an assistant city manager at the time, and he was looking into the accounting practices—which were abysmal—and over all of that—of course Ty Cooke resigned off the council because he was being paid a lot to keep the records of the West Texas Municipal Power Authority, and just generally the whole thing was run into the ground. But it was—my take is somewhat—and this is just purely speculative—a lot of these things, see, got covered up enough that unless I was—I couldn’t get information to confirm what I wanted to confirm, because at that time, see, we were still in a competitive situation with Southwestern Public Service at that time. And so, even in the budget books, there was nothing about LP&L because it was a competitive matter. And so there’s gaps, totally, in what anybody has available—as an individual, you couldn’t get it—probably still couldn’t get it—but apparently there was—and this is purely just hearsay on this one thing—but apparently there was about six or seven million dollars that they just never could figure out what happened to. And that’s not public anywhere, that’s just what I’ve been told by people that think they know what happened. I don’t know, some of these things are just weird stuff, but it has always got a lot of us that two city-owned power plants are named after the two scoundrels who completely just almost bankrupted the city,

you know, along in there. And see, through that time, then, from about—and I didn't bring anything with me—but I've got budget books—you're going to run out of tape and time and everything else—

DS:

Oh, no. It's only an hour and a half, that's all.

MW:

Send me away whenever you like. I told you, I have lots of stories, and they're just part of what I think needs to be—people have tried for years to get me to write a book, and I don't really want to do that—as you can tell, I'm more verbal. But to sit down and try to put it all in writing—I guess I could use Dragon [Dictate], or something, and record a lot of stuff, but I'd rather let you do it. It probably has more likelihood—I don't think anybody would let me publish a book—it would be a little scary.

DS:

You know, and you mentioned that, though—one thing that can be done with these interviews—

MW:

Transcribe them some way—

DS:

—we're doing a transcription of it. Then that can be edited into something like that. So—

MW:

I've had people decide they were going to—

DS:

You could do a series of interviews, then edit them into your memoirs, right?

MW:

Right. And I guess that's why this cartoon hit me so funny. It's hard to have time to put down all of the history, because I'm still right in the middle of current history. And this storm water thing will be something that people will talk about forever, and I'm totally at the core of it, knowing what's going on, and tried to prevent it even when they started the storm water utility in '92—I said "We don't need a utility to do this," because the original purpose—and I'm jumping way ahead of where I was—but I was at the council meeting, in the work session room, when they stacked up a stack about this tall of federal documents that had to be filled out to be testing the chemicals in the runoff off our curbs. And I said "That doesn't require a whole utility." "Well, we have to do it," and one of my SPARTAN members was on the committee that was first

discussing it in '92—it went into effect in '93—but they said, “Well, we could do what we need to do for fifty cents a month, but we’ll make it a dollar seventy-one, and that way we’ll never ever have to go up at all, ever,” and for businesses, it was a little under twelve dollars—eleven something. And so, but that was in their committee, and I just got it back, and now he’s deceased, also. I wish I had some of these—I always called them my “cranky old codgers,”—a lot of the World War II vets were part of my SPARTAN group, and I just adored them, but they were hard as nails and knew what they believed, and they loved me, and I didn’t care what party they were in—we never talked party—[inaudible 01:32:34]. I’ve got everything in the world. But anyway—but like on the storm water, I called around and—we were always throwing Amarillo up at the city because Amarillo had virtually no debt and practically no property tax, and we were going through the roof on everything—and so I called and nobody was forming a whole utility around this little requirement. Well, it built up so much money, and they saw they could—and there’s a PowerPoint that I can send you that they just did—I capture all of the PowerPoints; I’ve got friends in the video department, so after everything that’s ever presented, I call them and say, you know, e-mail me the PowerPoint that so-and-so did, and so I’ve got lots of those things—no, seriously. But you know, that’s—and I don’t guess there’s any—I could ask for them under open records. There’s been a lot of different approaches to open records, as well. Anyway, I’ve got that, and so it shows where it was level, and then took a hike, and there began to be flooding. See, they—this is historical, too—they pretty much quite building storm drains—and I’d have to go back and see the map, but I looked at it in '92—and actually visited with Keith Smith, who’s retiring, who’s a good friend of mine down there—but he’s the head of the—chief of operations—he replaced Marsha Reed when she left—good guy, he’s retiring the end of this month. But I had gone down there and looked at the storm water drain map, because we were wondering, when they began to talk about you know, using this big pile of money, and started borrowing money to mitigate the flooding there on the South Loop and Quaker. And, granted, that all needed to be done, but over and over, we have built big structures right in the smack-dab middle of playa lakes. We do it all the time. I think they’ve quit doing it now, but we’ve created a lot of the drainage problems by not—well they said they’ve mitigated it—they go dig a ditch next to it where the—they build a playa lake next to it, somewhat. But like where Covenant Lakeside is—which was Saint Mary’s—when I was growing up, I lived close enough that that lake was huge, and went across Brownfield Highway, almost to—well, pretty much to 19th—Quaker didn’t run through at the time, but it was all—that was all lake, from there to 30th—big, humongous lake—and they built that right smack-dab in the middle of the lake. And so this project that we’re working on right now that’s causing this huge hike in our storm water utility—that’s an eighty million dollar project, with thirty million more to be sold in the next year or two if we don’t get them to delay something for a few minutes—try to catch our breath and catch up—but that eighty million dollar project is to drain back, see, and go across and catch Arnett Benson. But we create the problems, and then we have to beaucoups of money fixing them. But they quit building a lot of the storm water drains, and I can’t tell you exactly, but I remember it seemed to be sort of—the last ones were sort of around North Overton. But they quit

building storm drains in 1969—now this is according to Keith Smith, who's retiring—but it pretty much stopped—maybe 26th and University, I mean, somewhere like that—and here, we've just paved over the rest of the farmland, and didn't build anything that would—they started relying on the playa lakes. But then they filled up, some, with silt and EPA wouldn't let them dredge them out, because we might disturb who-knows-what, you know, so a lot of our problems get dumped on us by federal mandates and overregulating that, you know, come with a big price tag that nobody picks up and all. But that's another whole, more current story, but it's interesting in that these things were created that way. K-Mart's in the middle of a lake, Walmart on the South—I mean on Northwest, whatever—6th and Frankfurt—wherever I am, I'm turned around in this building, but—

DS:

Well, even the one that's on—off of 4th and the Loop—that's right in golf course, and they had a little lake there, too.

MW:

Uh-huh, it was a nice big lake. And they built that, and Kohl's was in the middle of a lake, K-Mart was in the middle of a lake. And then there've been no—we've never had impact fees, where developers would help pay to mitigate the drainage for what they're doing. Here again, this is the favoritism—the winners and losers thing—and I'm not anti-development, and it's fine to build, but it falls back on the people who can least afford it—in fact, I think it's in here—I'm carrying around things to go to the meeting tonight, rather than—I've just—I had asked for the street repair debt, and its breakdown on when it pays out. That was what I got in a big fight with the mayor on, on Monday, was he was disagreeing that there was any street repair debt still on there. Let me find this cool little chart that somebody did—you might appreciate it if I can find it—there it is. They took the four tiers—now this is individuals, this wasn't a city project—but they took the four tiers on the storm water fee right now—this is tier one, tier two, tier three, and four, and per square foot, the very smallest, least able to pay are paying the most per square foot of impervious on this end, even though their rate is fairly low per foot, they're paying the most. And then what nobody takes into consideration—I hope they're starting to, because there's people screaming bloody murder—

DS:

Yeah, and the reason that is, is because, you know, it's a tiered thing, so it's not really how many—it's like up to this amount of square footage, and—

MW:

Right, but your smallest houses are paying more than these, per foot. And of course, I'm sort of somewhere in here, so I'm paying—I'm at sort of the low end of the big tier at the end—which, ours went up by eighty-three percent, and of course, they've raked me over the coals because I'm

complaining—or tried to tell them don't do it—at the same time was the—what they had proposed in the budget was to go up on storm water, total revenue by thirty-two percent. Well they call that “revenue neutral,” because that's what they wanted to go up to. But over last year—or over December, even—suddenly this went up this huge amount at the same time that they completely turned everything upside down and paid six hundred thousand dollars to outside consultants to calculate this mess that we've got to redo—didn't do it in house—we do very little in house. But some of these are just really interesting stuff—

DS:

Yeah, that's been the trend for years.

MW:

Oh, it had. And I guess that's why I keep doing what I'm doing. I would love if somebody would just take over doing this fulltime, like I'm willing to do, but—

DS:

You'd need to pay them.

MW:

And I don't get paid, so you know, it's a—that's why taxpayer things are always underfunded. People don't—they're not required, and they don't see any reasons to pay for government not to do something. And so the people who like fund candidates and things—like the developers all got behind Jeff Griffith because they were worried about Maurice Stanley—who didn't even make it to the runoff in this last city council election—and yet they all got behind him because Maurice didn't want to keep annexing. And so we got caught, and then it almost became a rematch because I was managing Deanne Clark's campaign, and Windy Sitton, former mayor, was Jeff Griffith's treasurer—and I had challenged her fifteen years ago, exactly, for mayor. And that was another—sort of another desperation thing. I need to bring—show you what triggered it. They had hired—we hire lots of outside consultants to come in and tell us how to run the world—the 34th Street thing was—the Merchants' Association, I actually started, and I was not still in business—but they had hired an outside consultant to do a central Lubbock master plan. And they came in and says, “There's entirely too many little businesses along 34th Street. They can't possibly be making a living, and they all need to go away.” These people were very much—they were thrilled that LISD had bought Terrace Shopping Center and taken it off the tax rolls—they didn't like businesses on streets. And so, anyway—and they didn't realize that their little formula thing for the radius of who was shopping on 34th Street was anything—I mean that it was much broader than they were considering, and—this is another whole story, here again, I'm jumping from current to something else—but they—I still have one copy of that; I had a whole bunch of them, and I've given them to people until I'm down to my very last one—but they put together this lovely, spiral-bound notebook about what needed to be done. And so I

started talking about it on the radio and spreading the word the best my little old voice with no money does. And even friends of mine, who were on the council, said—they always say, “There’s all this disinformation—Mikel’s putting out misinformation” That’s standard, it’s going on right now—Victor³ did it to me two weeks ago, and Glen⁴ did it on Monday—and so it’s ever thus—but they always argue with me about facts, and facts are facts. I don’t deal in opinion, I deal in real stuff. And so I said, “You don’t think it’s true, go read page ‘so-and-so’ and page ‘so-and-so’ and page ‘so-and-so’ in your report,” because they were fixing to adopt it at the next council meeting. This was about ’95-ish, I think, when they finished it. So I went into high gear—my little band of rebels—whatever—and we called all of the merchants up and down 34th Street. There’s over six hundred little businesses—some big—and churches, and whatever—on 34th Street, from [Avenue] Q to Slide, because this report said they need to all go away. And if they don’t go away, they need to go in little—and there’s a sketch of what it was supposed to look like—into the four corners of University, Indiana, and Quaker—never mind what was on those corners, you know. It’s easy to do this stuff, and these reports absolutely drive me crazy, because they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on them, and I’ve never seen one that had any vague sense of reality—whether it was Imagine Lubbock⁵ or EDAW⁶ or this, or—we’ve been redesigning downtown Lubbock forever. There was a ping report, and, you know, we had all these things—

DS:

We have the copy of that here, yeah.

MW:

Yeah, I’m sure you do. So anyway, but this was just bizzaro—that they were scheduled for demise—however they were going to accomplish that—and they wanted 34th Street to turn into—except for these little concentrated, two- or three-story little mini-mall things—everything else was going to magically turn into medium-density townhomes. So we called all these businesses, and we all got together one afternoon when it was really cold and rainy, over at Dr. Peter Ho’s conference room—he’ll vouch for this. And so we got them all stirred up, and one of the people that we called—the people owned Data-Line—so they had copiers galore, and so they took this book and made several hundred copies and spiral-bound it—you know, what was going to happen—and then I made an index to it, you know, what page each of these things were. They wanted to lock up all of the Tech students’ cars somewhere in a lot somewhere, and let them out occasionally—maybe on the weekends. I mean, this stuff was just crazy city planners run amok, and so out of that, the council realized that I wasn’t going to relent, and suddenly I had this army of businesses, and so they said “We’ll have a public hearing on this at Coronado High School.”

³ Victor Hernandez, Lubbock City Councilperson for District 1, 1993-2004; 2010-present (as of 2015).

⁴ Glen Roberston, mayor of Lubbock, Texas, 2012-present (as of 2015).

⁵ Imagine Lubbock, project by Lubbock Chamber of Commerce to promote urban development.

⁶ EDAW, a San Francisco-based urban design and community planning firm, hired by Lubbock’s Downtown Redevelopment Commission.

And so, by the time we got over there, they had set us up a table—says, “Go ahead and hand out your reports,” you know, and what we were doing, and about four hundred people showed up over there at that hearing because we’d made a big to-do about it. And as a result, the report was never adopted—but it would’ve gone into the planning department to be implemented. And so people—there has to be somebody who reads fine print, and tries to prevent crazy things from happening. But out of that, they created the 34th Street Merchants. And so, you know, there’s things like that where—and I guess maybe why I think it’s important—it’s not about me, but it’s to encourage other people that say “What can I do? I’m just one person and nobody’s going to listen to me,” —if you’re based—if you have the right motivation—and even my enemies will say, “Well, she does her homework.” Jay Harris, that was at the paper for many years—died some years back—but he would scream at me across the A-J [*Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*] newsroom, “Mikel, you’re going to go down in the history of this town as single-handedly destroying the whole town,” because he wanted everything to—he wanted taxpayer-funded development. And so I had a lot of people that felt that way, but he’d scream at me and then, later, he’d call me—and I didn’t even hang up the phone on him sometimes, when he’d call me and was ranting and raving at me—and in a minute he’d call me back and say, “I’m sorry, Mikel, I don’t agree with anything you’re doing, but you do do your homework.” And so there’s—so I have built, I think, some respect, because I just deal in the real data on things. And then sometimes, I fall into things strange—like this thing with the stuff that—the city treasurer had called—and everybody knows that if they can prove, or can convince me that there’s a righteous cause, that I’m just enough tilting at windmills—Don Quixote-type—that I’ll go try to do something to correct a potential wrong. And it’s a crazy thing; I’m not perfect by any means, and we don’t always win everything, but we’ve kept things from happening several times that would’ve been even worse. Another one was—here again, it was accidental, completely—and I guess I feel like God sort of puts me in places for reasons that I don’t even understand at the time—of course I keep asking him to relieve me of my burden to save the world, and so far He hasn’t done that—anyway, but this was a funny thing at one point—and I’d have to find the—I don’t even know whether—I had a whole file on the Lubbock Housing Authority—but the Lubbock Housing Authority built the—bought the old Dunlap’s building—where LP&L is now, on Broadway, eleven hundred block, whatever it is, thirteen hundred block, one of the two—about thirteen, because they’re just east of—

DS:

City hall.

DW:

—no, of First Methodist. Yeah, well, of city hall, but on Broadway. And they had bought that whole building for the Housing Authority. And I was just appalled—here we were supposed to be helping poor people with public housing, and what in the heck did they need with this huge building with a mezzanine, and you know, parking garage, and all this stuff? And to me, that was

taking money away from the purpose—and we were obviously paying for it with federal money some way or another—and so I went down there—and this was—see, I was building credibility. Of course, reporters change all the time, and you have to go convince each new one that you're not some raving lunatic—which is what I appear to be at the beginning—and about the time I get them comfortable with taking information from me, then suddenly they go “poof,” and I've got to start over with another one, you know, particularly at the paper, but TV things, too, I mean they turn so fast, I don't even know who they are half the time.

DS:

Yeah, because those kids are just going through here as fast as they can.

MW:

They're just interns, yeah, just getting some—but there's some good folks that I've kept in touch with forever—well, like James Clark, before he had his accident, was a great reporter over at channel twenty-eight—and then he was in that one car wreck, and was paralyzed. He left for two or three years, and when he got back, then suddenly he turned up, and he was working for stations. Well, we had a total rapport, and trust built, so anything I want stirred up, I can still call James—whether he was at eleven, and now he's back at twenty-eight—but you know, there's a few that are long-term, but mostly it's quick turnover. I'm building that very much now with Matt Rose—I mean not Matt Rose, he's at LP&L—Matt Dotray, at the A-J—in fact, that's probably why the mayor was having a fit on Monday, because they had asked me about this silly thing on the—no, it was on Wednesday that I had the fight with the mayor—it was just yesterday morning? Oh my.

DS:

Yeah, that's when you told me about it.

MW:

I guess it had just happened. Seemed like it's been two or three days since then, but anyway, he had called me, and I was out—this was after our meeting on Tuesday, out at Beck's—Beck Steel—and so he called me, and wanted me to comment on this story he was working on about this mismanaged city and the world, and all this stuff that was in the paper yesterday, and I said, “Well I haven't even seen it—I don't want to comment on something I hadn't read, yet. What's it based on?” and he said, “Well, it's on police—which was basically, kind of your crime rate—on parks and rec—how many square miles you have—” and we do have more parkland than practically anywhere, because we've built them around the playa lakes—we also have more coastline in Lubbock than things on the coast. Just little tidbits—facts—but anyway, so I said, “Well, it sounds like to me they weren't really looking at mismanaged, or how you spend your money, it was if you'd spent a lot of money,” and so he quoted me in the paper, which was not

good—the mayor wasn't happy. I wasn't saying anything ugly; I just said it sounded like they weren't taking into consideration a lot of other things that—

DS:

Yeah, the criteria on—that you mentioned—didn't mesh with what they were saying.

MW:

No, it didn't give you a full picture. So, I don't know what it was based on—I don't even know what Wallet Hub is, but whatever. But anyway, getting back to the Housing Authority—so I stood out in front of the Housing Authority and said “What in the heck did they need with this big honking building?” you know, when you're supposed to be doing something else. Suddenly, all these people that lived in public housing started calling me and telling me all these tales about Oscar Sharpe—who was the head of the Housing Authority—and what a crook he was. And I was just astounded—I was meeting with people that'd park down the street and come walk to my house so nobody would know they were there, and we had all kinds of crazy stuff going on. Well, turned out in the end, he was convicted and sent to the pen. It never would've happened—and I had no—I mean, I didn't—I wasn't crusading about that, but he had apparently—I guess that's what he was convicted on, was all sorts of things. I even had to go down there to that building and meet with the FBI and the feds investigating him while he was in an office in the same building, a couple doors down. And I really feared for my life in there, for a while, because it was—I mean what he was doing was really bad stuff. And usually things don't—I mean they're not—

DS:

Life and death?

MW:

Well, no, and not that—

DS:

Criminal?

MW:

Criminal—they just—there's different classes of criminal. Some of them get away with a whole lot more than he did, probably, but he was pretending that he formed—not really formed anything—but he was writing checks to bogus plumbing and cabinet and different things for work done at the deals, and they didn't exist. And then he had people out using materials, and Housing Authority property on his own house, and some real fun things. But he was a scary dude. But it's things like that that happen, and I don't even know, you know, when something doesn't seem quite right, where it may lead. And I'm trying to make me the star of the show, and

it's not, but it's just really to encourage other people—that are little people—if you ban together, you can take on pretty big things in your own community. And it's kind of my—people keep trying to get me to work more on federal things, and I say—I keep up with all of it, I watch—I keep up every day with what's happening everywhere, but it's like a drop in the ocean to write a congressman or a senator, or whatever, and even if they vote right, you don't know what—you can't know about things far away in great detail. And luckily, you can just do whatever you want to do—I mean it's available, and the people who are elected by you are easy to find, and you can try to persuade them. It's a lot more rewarding, in a way, and you really can see some impact. And as I was telling you, and we can get back into the half-cent sales tax another day, but of the half-cent sales tax that was out there through two of the elections—and January of '95 is part of the arena election—here, again, I wasn't against Tech having an arena, but I didn't think it was an economic development thing that all the taxpayers in Lubbock ought to be paying for. And I said at the time, I said, “Tech's using the coliseum more than two-thirds of the time, and when they need an arena, they'll find a way to build one, and probably get some private help on it,” and damned if that's not what happened as soon as we didn't let them have the money. And within two or three years, it was being built, and we saved that. But, as part of that election in January of '95, we voted—they put it on two separate things—it was three-eighths to go to the arena, and one-eighth for property tax reduction—so we grabbed that one-eighth then, and then in—well, in '98, they decided they would pull out all the stops. This was when Windy was mayor, and I'll tell you in a minute why I finally decided to run against her—but—and strangely enough, back then, Victor Hernandez was my cohort; we were best buddies, which is funny now, because he just loves to rip me to shreds now, and he's forgotten—and Floyd's⁷ forgotten that I ran his runoff campaign—you need something to drink? You're—

DS:

I'm dying, right?

MW:

Okay, you look like you were. Do you need something?

DS:

Well, I think we're probably getting close to—by the time that we need to wrap it up. We're at two hours—what time—

MW:

Well, I've got ten to four.

DS:

Yeah, so we can just wrap it up, and then—

⁷ Floyd Price, Lubbock City Councilperson for District 2, 2004-present (as of 2015).

MW:

Yeah, I will, let me finish this part, because as part of that election in January of '95 was an eight-cent property tax reduction—traded one-eighth-cent sales tax for it—and so in '98 they pulled out all the stops—and we can go into that in great detail later—but I think they spent about hundred and ninety-five thousand dollars trying to pass it, and it was pretty much done inside city hall—but they put up a—they put a couple of CPAs [Certified Public Accountant] here, up as their front—and despite spending all of that—and they didn't raise that much, so that's when the chamber came in and used their industrial foundation money and paid off the debts that had been incurred for the PAC [Political Action Committee]. And we might've spent five thousand dollars, and we beat them by sixty-three percent. And so finally, the last one was in 2003—Marc McDougal was mayor; Tommy Gonzalez was the city manager—and I love Tommy, I've known him since he was going to Tech, and was in charge of graffiti removal, I mean that's where he started—he was just—worked his way all the way through the organization, just hard working great kid. And so he was the city manager, interim, and so Marc called me, and he said, "We want to talk to you about something." So I came down there, and they said, "We're wanting to put this sales tax" —there was three-eighths cents left, still—"on a ballot, but" —Marc said, or Tommy, —I don't know which one—said, "We know better than to put it out there, because you'll just go out and defeat it again, if we do." And so he said, "We've got to have you on board, what's it going to take to get you on board?" and he said, "We want to give you all another eighth for tax reduction, and city keep two-eighths." And I said, "Nope, that's not good enough." So I came home—felt like I was gambling in Las Vegas or something—and they called me back and said, "Okay, we give, we'll let you all vote on two-eighths for property tax reduction, additionally, and we'll keep an eighth." If we had not fought through those six sales tax elections, right not LEDA [Lubbock Economic Development Alliance] would have this money to bribe businesses and force existing businesses to pay for their competitors' goodies. They would've had probably twenty-one—more than twenty-one million dollars a year. And I never did go back and tell you that that BCD [Lubbock Board of City Development] money wound up—they never repealed it, and we're still fighting to get that taken off—and so it makes up the other part of LEDA's money, but it's still called Market Lubbock money. And they said "Well we can do that, because it's not BCD anymore, it's a different name." But it was the same revenue stream that we voted out by eighty-four percent. So I've been fighting that for twenty-three years. And finally, I've sort of got the mayor at least acknowledging that it wasn't carved on a stone tablet that they had to have three cents. So as the sales tax has gone up the last two years, they've been slightly, slightly lowering the three-cent part so that they stay level at about nine million at LEDA. But what could we do with nine million dollars that would be a whole lot more?

DS:

Yeah, and you mentioned something interesting, there, when you talked about the, you know, the

unfair advantage that they give one company over another because they subsidize everything—salary, taxes—it's just—

MW:

Well, and there's two or three different ways they do it. There's outright incentives, and then the city council has another whole thing that just never appears on the tax rolls at all, and it's tax abatements—has nothing to do with LEDA. And so I keep track of way too many things, so if they want to start screaming about over sixty-five having a tax exemption, I can show them a lot of other places that they need to do something.

DS:

You know, and as a—do you still have a small business?

MW:

No, we—

DS:

So as a former small business owner, what do you think about that when, you know, when somebody steps in?

MW:

Oh, well, that's where my heart is, and that's why it upset me so when they were acting like that I was against the paving of—or repaving of 34th Street. Paul Beane put me on the bond oversight committee—he finally told Jeff Griffith and the media and everybody else, he said, “Y’all are crazy. I wouldn’t have put her on that board” —and he didn’t even ask me, and I called him after they called me from the paper when he put me on there, because I was the only one that wasn’t on the Citizens Advisory Committee in the ’09 bond stuff—and I wasn’t even in his district—but he stuck me on there, sort of as a watchdog over the rest of them because they wanted to be sure that the money went for what it was supposed to. And he said, “You think I would have put her on the bond oversight committee if she’d been against the bonds?” because Griffith was sending out postcard after postcard, saying that Deanne was part of a “against everything” crowd that even opposed paving 34th Street—which, of course, set me off into orbit—and so this is how all this stuff—you win things—and of course, Deanne, despite being outspent seven-and-a-half-to-one, probably—she came within five votes of beating him.

DS:

Is she going to run again?

MW:

No. Deanne’s older than I am. And we don’t—any of us—we don’t have a desire to run peoples’

lives and make all these kinds of decisions. I can pick and choose what's important, and focus a lot of attention on it, where if you're a councilmember, you get a book this thick before every meeting, and there's no way on Earth—as a part-time, unpaid person—that you can scrutinize zone cases—you know, you said you served on some of that kind of thing—but another session, I'll tell you some of my Windy Sitton stories.

DS:

Well that sounds good. We'll make it another session. Thank you.

MW:

I'll leave a teaser there.

DS:

All right, thank you Mikel.

MW:

You may never want me to come back again.

DS:

Oh, I think we do.

MW:

Well—

End of interview

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