

Pat Jacobson: Could you give me your name?

William Bryant: William Bryant, or known as Bill, and my date of birth is June 20, 1937. I just turned seventy-eight.

PJ: The other people in the room are Pat Jacobson, who is the interviewer, and Carrie Nobel-Klein. What I would like to start with is if you could just tell me about where you were raised, and who are your people?

WB: I was born in a little town, crossroads actually, called Amlin, Ohio. It's very close to Plain City, which is in the northwest part of greater Columbus. My mom and dad, my dad was among many jobs, milkman, railroader, and last job, he was a captain in the police department in Columbus, primarily in the corrections part of the police work. My mom worked at Woolworths. She raised all six of her kids, five boys, one girl. I'm number two boy. We lived primarily in the Greater Columbus area. I went to school there. That's quite a story in its own right. But I dropped out of high school and didn't finish my senior year there at Columbus West High School. I joined the Navy just after I turned seventeen years old. I eventually was able to take a GED test. Then when our ship was in the yards for an overhaul in Alameda, California, I was able to go over to Oakland Polytechnical High School and take one course. The teacher, the instructor there said, "If you get a B plus your GED plus your thirteen credit hours from West High School with a D-minus average," by the way. It was horrible. "We will give you a full up high school diploma from Oakland Polytechnical High School," which I got. What's very relevant about that is that Ohio State University had at that time – I don't know about now – but at that time, had to accept a veteran from Ohio who had a bona fide high school diploma. So, I got into Ohio State. I had, unfortunately, had to take the bonehead English and Math to get up to speed. I wound up there graduating with a C average, basically, 2.5. Then I later on, though, I was able to go and get a master's degree from the University of San Francisco at Jesuit School, and my GPA went up to 3.5. Finally, I took all the courses necessary to be a teacher at American University, and I got 4.0 average. [laughter] I kept improving with age. Maybe I'm a fine wine. But at any rate, that is kind of my education background. In California, they require you to take what is called the CBEST test to teach. I did take it and passed. I also took another exam and was like in the highest percentile in the area of History, Western Civilization, sort of kind of a course. I didn't take student teaching because I couldn't afford to take three months off at no pay. So, what I wound up with is with this certificate. But when we came back to Ohio years later, it enabled me to quickly get a substitute teaching license, and I taught in the St. Clairsville schools. Then I eventually wound up teaching for about seven and a half years at Belmont College. It was known then as Belmont Technical College. I also taught at Zane State which provided college courses at the prison where I taught for four or five years. So, that's my educational background, if you will. Is that what we're looking for here?

PJ: Well, we are looking for your whole story. So, that was a good part.

WB: Well, let me tell you, we moved around a bit. I was living in Columbus after I got out of the Navy. I was just twenty years old. I served three years. Got out of the Navy and was going to Ohio State. I went to see a doctor about a skin graft, and lo and behold, the nurse there, I eventually married four months later. That was fifty-five and a half years ago. [laughter] So, we

did have three children, actually four. We lost a baby, but three of them are still alive, quite alive. My son is fifty-four, and he is an ER doctor in Denver, Colorado. My eldest daughter is fifty, and she is a clinical psychologist in Burlington, Vermont. My youngest one is forty-five, and she lives one street over. She works at a dog grooming and daycare place, doggy daycare, and didn't want anything to do with school. So, that's the story of my three kids. They're all wonderful children. They have various problems, especially my eldest daughter. She does suffer from clinical depression sometimes. But I wonder sometimes, when I think about it, if she should be treating people with major mental illness. But she's been doing it for over twenty years. She's got a PhD, and I'm very proud of her. But right now, she's got everything under control, and we're just knocking on wood every day to make sure everything's okay with her. Let's see, in my employment record after graduating from Ohio State and marrying my wife, Helen Jane Tollett, who was from actually Key Ridge, Bellaire, Ohio. She was working after our son was born. She went to work in labor and delivery, and she worked there for forty some years. But I took a job with North American Aviation in Columbus after college, and I was soon offered an opportunity to go to the L.A. area, Los Angeles. We took it and went out there with our little boy, who was about three years old, and drove across the country and went to work at Rocketdyne. Rocketdyne was the maker of the rocket engines that put the men into the moon. They had these great big thruster engines, five of them with seven and a half million pounds of thrust. Then another stage above that with three of them at like a million pounds of thrust. These rocket engines put the people in space. I went to work there, and I lasted there for a couple of years. My wife wanted to go back east, and I did, too, sort of. L.A. just was not my cup of tea. It was being stuck in traffic all the time, it seemed to me. So, we looked around. The only job we could find is in upstate New York at Utica-Rome area, Oneida County, New York, and we took the job. I drove them across country. We stopped in Las Vegas on the way. It was funny. We got to see a show. It was this *Smothers Brothers* and Vikki Carr. It was a fun show. We had got to a hotel to furnish a babysitter. Woke up the next morning and both tires in the car were flat. So, we didn't get out of there until mid-afternoon when it was the hottest to drive across the desert, but we got to. My daughter Leslie, the eldest one, was two at the time, and we got to across the country okay, by hook or crook. Got to upstate New York and no houses immediately available. Oh, boy, what are we going to do now? The company was General Electric who hired me in Utica, New York. So, what we did, we looked around and found a house, but it wasn't quite ready. We were going to take a couple of days extra to close. So, we were going to be there fourteen days without a house. I put my wife and kids on a bus. They went down to Bellaire. My wife called it a nightmare trip. I stayed at the Y, YMCA, in a room, rented a room there. They had rooms for rent there. So, we settled in, went to work at General Electric, and raised our kids. My son went to Boy Scouts. He became an Eagle Scout. Pardon me, if this sounds like it's bravado. I can honestly say I had led an interesting life. Bobby Kennedy was my hero, even more than Jack. It's interesting that that's the case, that Robert Kennedy was my hero. There's just something about the guy that I greatly admired. His connection with poor people, especially his trip to the Mississippi Delta where he visited the poor in a very, very impoverished conditions there. So, I became a big Bobby Kennedy fan. When Dr. King got shot and then Bobby got killed, I was devastated. So, I decided I'm going to get involved in politics. I'm not going to lay around and moan and groan. I got involved with the local Democratic Party in Oneida County. Then there was a big election, and the number one office in Oneida County was county executive. They didn't have anybody who wants to run because it was a sure loser. They were probably just going to leave this seat open and not even

run against the incumbent who was in office. I said, "Well, I'll run." Oh, yes, glutton for punishment. You're going to go up there and get killed and humiliated and all of that. Well, I kind of surprised them. [laughter] This guy I ran against, Harry Daniels was his name. Harry put billboards up all over Oneida County. Now, Oneida County is a fairly large county geographically, bigger than Belmont County. So, he had his billboards all over the place, and he put his face on them with a big grin. He said, "Daniels is in charge." Well, we turned that on its head. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had some radio money. We started something, and as they say today, "It went viral." One party would say, "Why are taxes so high in Oneida County?" Another voice would come in and say, "Well, Daniels is in charge." So, we turned that on him in a big way. If you know anything about billboards, you can't take them down. You can take a radio ad down, a TV commercial down immediately. But the billboard is up for the whole month, and all these billboards were up. Then we did some different things in campaigning that hadn't been done before. We rented the back of the bus instead of a billboard. We just put Bryant, and we used that smiling face and put it right beside it. The same thing with the bumper sticker. A lot of people, they tried to write a treatise on a bumper sticker. No, no, no. Just put the name, put it out there in a bold way, but they don't. But we did. So, we did. Much to our credit, I think a lot of good things happened. The other thing this guy did, and it made a big mistake, the budget for the following year, the county budget, had to be adopted in October. So, he proudly announced that there was going to be a small tax decrease just before the election. A great man in charge has got a tax decrease. Well, I was looking at that, and I found out that there was a new levy being added that hadn't been on before. A new sewage treatment plant was opening up in Oneida County. So, I added that levy to the general ad valorem levy and bingo, taxes increased not decreased. Of course, we caught him on that, and lo and behold, I beat this guy. This is a big Republican County. Utica and Rome elect Democrat mayors. But the rest of the county, the twenty townships and nineteen villages, they're solid Republican. So, we won. Oh, well, this couldn't happen. Something's wrong here. [laughter] Now, this is going to really sound almost holier than thou, but it's true. It's absolutely true. I've even got some evidence here to show you if you want to see it. The Democratic Party was so enthralled with me winning New York statewide that they decided that because – and the reason for that is very simple. Nelson Rockefeller, the governor of New York at the time, owned the counties. They were his. New York City and Buffalo, Democratic mayors, yes, that's fine. But the counties, all fifty-seven of them belonged to Rockefeller, and I punctured that. I didn't know what I was doing, that this was going to have an impact. So, these guys in New York all decided they wanted to come up there to have a big state committee meeting in Utica, New York. They did, and this is before I actually took office. It's between the period of the election and swearing in on January 1. The guy who was the county chairman, a guy named – well, I won't mention his name, but he drove me back. He, by the way, was elected at that meeting as a vice chairman of the New York State Democrats. He handed me an envelope that had \$300 in it. He says, "You don't have to worry. You're going to be taken care of for the rest of your life." I said, "Oh, boy." I took the envelope. I didn't want to get into an argument with him in the car. The way they come up with the graft up there was a company called Coppers, which became Monsanto. Coppers' in the specifications for tar, road tar. They were in a situation where it was noncompetitive. They were a single source. So, what they did they were just – to keep it that way, they were just buying off the politicians, and it was two cents a gallon. But since the county was the lead county on road improvement, we specified it for all the towns, all the cities. So, the money was pouring in, apparently, going to pour in. So, this was the graft or part of it.

I'm sure it was from other places, too. I went home, and I sat up all night thinking what I'm going to do. I went and seen him the next day. I gave him \$288 in an envelope and a \$12 expense report for a sandwich I had ordered at the motel during this event. He looks at me like, "What's this?" A couple months later, I'm wiping out what they called no-show jobs. These guys were on the payroll. The Republicans at the time had their people on them. They didn't have to go to work, were getting paid a county salary. They would have a second job, and these guys were goons, to be honest about it. I was wiping them out. The Democrats goons showed up and wanted their no-show – these no-show jobs for themselves. I wasn't giving it to them. So, county chairman, vice chairman of the state, he shows up at my house after he comes back off vacation, and he says to me, "We are taking over the welfare department." Now, county governments run social services. If you can imagine these guys being able to pass out benefits to people who didn't deserve them, this would be the office you'd want to get your hands on. You'd want to get your arms around this. So, I said, "No, you're not." He said, "What do you mean I'm not?" I said, "I just told you, Joe. You're not going to be able to do that. I'm not going to allow it." He stormed out of my house. I never talked to him again. That was just after the first couple of months in office. Then, of course, many other things happened. The Republicans were really nasty. They controlled the board. They had what they called a board of legislators. Here, maybe they called it a board of commissioners. But the three commissioners here also have the executive – wear the executive hat as well as the policy hat. But up there, the board controlled the policy, and I controlled the administration of the policy. Believe me, if I hadn't been elected, I would have been an appointed county manager as some counties do, I would have been fired immediately. In New York state, only twelve of the major counties, at that time, had a county executive form where you were elected. You were elected in November, not in May, in November. It was hardball Democrat versus Republican politics. It wasn't where you run as a nonpartisan or any of that sort of stuff as they do sometimes for county commissioners. But at any rate, they had a thirty-seven-member board of legislators, and the Republicans controlled that the entire time I was in office. They were nasty. So, I got to point my people to the various agencies. I was appointed the director of planning, the director of social services, the director of veterans' affairs, the director of engineering and grounds, and all the rest of it. It turned out that they had the right to confirm. What they did, they declined to confirm a whole bunch of them. They did confirm two positions which were critical and didn't confirm any of the others. So, what am I going to do? How can I run a government without having these people? They're critical. Well, it turned out we had open vacancies in planning, open vacancies in mental health, open vacancies here and there and everywhere. In mental health, it was for a staff psychologist instead of the commissioner of mental health. "Okay. Staff psychologist, you're going to run the office, but I, in vacancies – it says on the charter – can be the head." I can be the commissioner as well as the county executive. So, the newspaper ran a headline one time, "Bryant, Bryant, Bryant, Bryant, Bryant." Anyway, so, that's what I did. Because they did telephone me before they took the vote and denied the vote to some people, said, "Look, we want to sit down and talk. We want to make a deal." I said, "Do what you have to do." I don't know where I got the guts to do all this. I was thirty-four years old. I lived in this community four years. Nobody ever heard of me. I had no family there, no law firm, nothing like that, just out of the blue kind of thing. So, anyhow, I'm proud of my story. But I'm also feeling I shouldn't be talking so making it sound so good. But then we went along and eventually a year later, confirmed all those appointees to be commissioners. We ran the county government pretty well. I was up for re-election, and they thought, surely, I was just a one-term guy. The governor of New York came

and called me a carpetbagger. They were going to run me out of town on a rail. They took and nominated their golden boy, fair-haired guy, and I beat him worse than I beat the first guy. [laughter] So, the people liked me, and how I got away with that. The Democrats didn't really endorse me. They gave me the line, but they didn't really endorse me because they didn't want to run a primary. Because they were part of this Republican cabal to take me down. So, they just said, "Okay. Here you go." What I did at the time, I used to go and get on TV all the time. I found out that the TV stations, they didn't ask any questions. If I went up to the station by 2 p.m., just on deadline for the evening news, they'd put a mic in front of me, and I could talk for two minutes. So, I started doing that. So, I went over the politicians' heads directly to the people, and it worked. I got re-elected. I also cut the taxes a couple of years in a row because there was a lot of fat. I was able to do that and that was very appreciative. So, I got elected again, re-elected, and things actually got much more difficult in that second term. It got nasty. We had four unions. We had the deputy sheriffs. We had the deputy sheriff's association, it's like a police benevolent thing. We had the government workers. We had the community college professors, and we had the nurses. So, we had four unions, and they wouldn't negotiate as a group. You had to negotiate with them each one, and each one wanted to get what the other got plus one little bit more. So, they can go back to their membership and say we got more. I played that little game best I could, a little quarter percent here, half percent there. So, that they all got the same thing in the end. But the deputy sheriff's lawyer, Rocky – I would tell you, it's Rocky Jr. There's a Rocky Sr. in this story. Rocky Jr. got the mayor of Utica to give away the store, give him whatever he wanted, 10 percent pay raise. The city couldn't afford it. The county certainly couldn't afford it and shouldn't have afforded it. I was digging in my heels. So, one night, we had this meeting to bring in a new college, a new State University of New York campus, a new SUNY campus. The people who wanted this campus were very thrilled about the whole idea. But then there was a place called Utica College, which was right next door to an old psychiatric center that they were going to close. We said, "Why don't we tear that down and co-locate them? Save some money on basic services and stuff." So, we were having a debate on it that night out at this motel up by the airport. On the way home, there comes this flashing light. I wasn't driving, the assistant county executive was. They pulled us over. They looked at us, and we said, "What's wrong?" "Nothing." So, we went on. We went to a bar. We were kind of keyed up. We were having a beer. Then I took the other two home, the county attorney and the assistant county executive. Then I took the wheel, and it was a hundred feet from my house, the light, and, "Oh, you're under arrest." So, they took me out to the jail. The sheriff, who was a Republican, and they called him in. He saw that I was in pretty good shape, had a nice suit on, nothing wrong here, and he got to thinking, "Oh-oh, we could have some problems." So, he says, "You go on home not to worry. Nothing's going to happen. This is all a mistake, blah, blah, blah, blah." I went on home and not hear another thing about it. Next morning, about 7 a.m., the *New York Times* is on the phone saying, "You were picked up on a DUI. How do you plead?" I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute." I said, "I was not driving and drinking. I had a beer and that's it." That was over a period of, I don't know, a couple of hours. So, I said, "Okay. Listen, I'm going to find out what's going on here." It turns out that these deputies couldn't shoot straight. They kept calling this motel asking, "Is the meeting over?" But what they were calling about was UNIVAC, a computer company, was having a Christmas party in the same time, in the same motel. Of course, there was a lot of drinking going on in there. I wasn't in there. I had the publishers of the newspaper, the head of the Chambers of Commerce, labor leaders, community leaders of all kind, educators in my meeting, and of course, they all testified for me. The bottom

line of all of that is that five deputies lost their jobs. They appealed it all the way to the New York State highest court, and the conviction was upheld. So, they were gone. But that wasn't the end of the story. These guys got really mad at me another time. I was being interviewed at a press conference by a newspaper or a TV reporter, and he said, "Why are you so rough on Rocky and the Teamsters and all these?" I said, "Well, I don't like the cops reporting to the robbers." Well, I shouldn't have said that. It was stupid. They immediately sued me for \$2 million, civil suit. The county only insured me for \$1 million [laughter] for defamation of character. Because the county gets sued all the time by people in welfare for all kinds of reasons. So, at any rate, so here I am being sued for \$2 million with \$1 million could be coming out of my hide, and I don't have any money. My wife and I have lived on paycheck to paycheck all our lives. So, here I am, I'm going to get sued. So, what I did, I had made the acquaintance of Ramsey Clark, former attorney general. I went down to New York City. I looked up Ramsey, and he took the case. Well, they didn't want to hear about this, because in defamation, truth is a complete defense. I had gone and dug up a whole bunch of criminal records against Rocky Sr. Not Rocky Jr., but Rocky Sr., the head of the Teamsters. He had control of the funds, the welfare fund and the social service funds and retirement funds of all the Teamsters across upstate New York from Buffalo to Albany. It's a lot of money. He was a Utica guy, but he was a Teamster. It turns out he was in bed with a guy named Tony Provenzano, known as Tony Pro, a mafia figure in New Jersey, who happened to also one time be the cellmate of Jimmy Hoffa. The story gets better. But anyhow, it turns out that I knew about this and so did Ramsey Clark. It turned out that these guys caved and folded and walked away. That mayor of Utica one time was a guy named Eddie Hanna, and he was loony. He sued me for \$20 million one time. I said, "He was unfit for a public office." What he did, it set me off and again, my big mouth. What he did was he fired the blind man selling newspapers in City Hall. The reason he did that is he was mad at the newspaper for giving him a hard time. So, when I heard that he fired the blind guy in City Hall, I said "He's unfit for public office." So, he immediately sued me and the journalist who reported this story for \$20 million. Again, that was a joke. It folded. It just went away. I don't recall how it finally just went away, but it did. It ended. That job was a good job. We had a lot of things we had to do and take care of. One guy, he caught the county building on fire three times. The reason he did it – he called it the welfare building. This guy was let out of one of the mental hospitals. We had two psychiatric centers in the Greater Utica area, and over in Rome, we had a hospital for the mentally retarded on those days. I don't think we can say that today. Mentally challenged, I think is the term today. But at any rate, this guy came out of one of those psychiatric centers, and he caught the building on fire because he didn't get a welfare check or something. It was funny. I was coming to work and fireman is throwing furniture out of the seventh floor of the county building and landed down below. I went in, and the smoke doesn't clear a building when it's been on fire for a month. It seems like you could always still smell that smoke in the building. But they finally got the guy. This was a smart move. When I first got elected, the budget director was a guy who was retired rear admiral in the Navy. What I really liked about that, Pat, was that he was a rear admiral. When I got out – went in the Navy as a seaman, I got out as a seaman, because of my big mouth again. But this guy, being a rear admiral, was reporting to me, lowly seaman. [laughter] I got a kind of a kick out of it. But honestly, this guy was terrific. He was there with the Republicans. I kept him on because I wanted continuity in that budget office, and he was really a good guy. But at any rate, it was quite a to-do. Then time has come to think about seeking a third term. What I did, I thought it over, and I said, "No, no." I've said no to too many people, been too many fights. My son was

turning eighteen. He wanted to go to college. If I ran and lost, what would I do? So, I decided not to run. I sent out resumes, mostly in the Boston area. It didn't occur to me that you're going to get three gongs here at this clock.

PJ: Should we pause?

WB: No. It's only going to be a short moment. [laughter]

[music playing]

There we go. But at any rate...

PJ: Let us wait until it is done.

WB: Okay. So, we decided not to run again. I sent resumes all throughout New England, but somebody sent me a list of companies in the Bay Area, San Francisco area. I sent resumes out there, and I got an interview with Ford Aerospace. Ford Motor Company, at one time, made satellites. They don't anymore. They sold that branch off. But they hired me in Palo Alto, California, and out to California I went with my family. Well, not at first, by myself. It took us three months to sell the darn house in the Utica area. We finally were able to sell it, and my wife and I and kids were all reunited. The girls came on out earlier before my wife and son, then drove across the country. We got reunited and lived in San Jose, which is about forty miles south of San Francisco. It's a fairly big city. I think it's like the eighth largest city in the country today. But we lived in a nice neighborhood. But I worked for four or five high tech firms, bounced around. One of the reasons I did it was to have college money for my kids. I sold my vacation time, took another job, usually at a better paycheck. What I got out of that, which was kind of different, too, was the ability to travel. I got to go to Europe six times, to Japan three times, Australia a couple of times, travelled all over the United States, Canada, and Mexico. I even went through the canals when I was in the Navy. So, I was working in high tech, and it's not as glamorous. Silicon Valley is not as glamorous as some people make it out to be. It's demanding, a lot of hours, and you're on the freeway a lot of time. It's dog-eat-dog kind of competition. But I was offered the opportunity when I was working for this one company to go get a master's degree, and they'd pay for it. So, I took them up on it, went to the University of San Francisco and got my master's degree in management and was happy to have done that. Then we lived out there for twenty some years. We moved from San Jose to Petaluma the last two years of our stay out there. Petaluma is north of San Francisco by about forty miles again, and it's close to Santa Rosa. It's nice up there and a little less hectic. I worked for a company there for a couple of years where we had to go to Europe to find a source for this huge machine that made on dollar bills a color that shifted. When you twisted the bill, the color shifted from blue to green and green to red. It was based on light. They called it color by physics, not color by chemistry, an interesting thing. We had to buy this great, big, huge machine that was able to make this all happen. We needed another one. So, we got to go all over Europe looking for them, picking a source to make that for us. I'm going to have a drink of water, if I may. Did a lot of bragging about myself here today.

PJ: Do you mind if I put a pillow under my arm?

WB: Oh, not at all. Take two of them if you need them. There's a couple behind me here.

PJ: Yes. Maybe a stiff one, too.

WB: Jack, you've been good so far.

Carrie Nobel-Klein: He has been good.

PJ: He has been very good.

CNK: I started your water.

WB: Well...

PJ: There.

WB: Got done there. My wife also was anxious to come home, to be closer to her family. Her mom and dad were both gone, as mine were, too, by then. We come back on our dime. We were able to sell a house out there for twice for what they're selling back here. Come back here and afford to pay cash for a house. So, we did that. We, originally, were over on Green Tree for four years and that was too big a house. We moved over here into this house eleven years ago. We've been back fifteen years. That's when I had the opportunity to teach. I really did enjoy the teaching and the students. Again, sounds made up, but it's not. They had me teach twenty different courses at Belmont. Nobody can teach twenty different courses and be an expert in them. I was reading the lesson one week before the students were. I was racing to stay ahead of them. But it was okay. Then they had me do a study on the business department. We wound up with six new courses as a result of my study. One of the courses which I'm very proud of was created was a course in business ethics. They didn't have that. They weren't offering that at the time. What I did, I did a survey of all the community colleges and several of the state colleges like Youngstown State in Ohio and got back feedback as to what courses they were offering. Then I compared it to what we were offering. Then I found six or seven important courses that we weren't offering that we probably should be because the other schools were offering it. So, we adopted this change in the business curriculum to take into account these six new courses. So, that was sort of a highlight of my teaching. At the prison, I can tell you without a doubt that there's something terribly wrong in our penal system in this country. There're almost all Black people over there. You walk across the yard, you see there's Whites there, of course, but it is predominantly Black. The problem, apparently, as we lock up in this state, 60 percent of the prisoners are Black and only 40 percent are White or other. But the Blacks only make up 12 percent of the population in Ohio. So, there's something just terribly wrong with that. I did find many of these guys, I enjoyed them. They were friends. I didn't have an outside the prison friendship later on with them after they got out and moved on. Most of them in this penal institution here in St. Clairsville are from up in the Cleveland-Akron area. One time, apparently, they did bring some in from Cincinnati, and it was actually a civil war. [laughter] Why are we fighting with these people from Cincinnati? They're all from Ohio. So, they had to take the Cincinnati people away from this and put them in a southern prison. These guys are pretty much

from up there. I had a former superintendent of schools in my class one time, and he thanked me. I was very proud of it. He thanked me because he told me that he felt like he was in a real classroom again when he was in my classes. Apparently, what happened to this poor fellow was – and his mom and dad were both superintendents and principals in the school system up there in the north of Ohio someplace. But he had gotten into bodybuilding, and then he got into steroids. He got into some problems with the steroids, and somebody put him on to some other dope, some opiate of some kind. Then they picked up a drug dealer. The dealer flipped this guy, offered this guy up, "I can get you a big fish. You can give me – go easy on me." They did it. So, this guy wound up with a four-year sentence. An awful lot of those guys in there on drug deals like that don't belong in there. Maybe he did because of who he was, somebody from the schools. But an awful lot of those guys didn't belong in there at all. Like I said, there's just something terribly wrong with our penal system in this country. After doing all that, I'm not that satisfied to keep my mouth shut, I've been writing letters to the editor. The *Times Leader* has published fifty of them. One time, I got published in the *New York Times*. I've been published in the *San Jose Mercury News*. But here, I wrote one and published two weeks ago on Islam, and it surprised me. It's a primer. So, it was meant to be. But it was a very long letter, about half a page. They printed the whole thing. I've taken on Bob Murray. I've complained about, for example, the Jewish people, the pro-Israel, I should say, for their take on Palestinians and have published that. Let me back up. When I was county executive, I was invited to all the churches in the area. I met up with a cardinal. In fact, I got a photograph of me standing over a cardinal. It looks like I'm saying a prayer over him. But the Jewish people treated me tremendously, very, very well. We marched to have the Jews be able to immigrate from Russia into Israel. I was invited to speak at a Minyan breakfast, and I did. It was just so much wonderful feeling and sharing. I, to this day, feel that the Holocaust was the greatest crime of all time. I've even gone out of my way to go to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and the Holocaust Museum in Washington. But I got invited to go to Israel. What the Israelis did apparently, they'd reach out and pick key political people that they want to support them. I think this is AIPAC who does this. I got invited to go at all expense paid for two weeks when I was county executive. But I turned them down. I just couldn't bring myself to do that. I thought, "Wait a minute. No. This isn't right." I would love to go, but it would have to be on my dime, and I can't afford it. So, I didn't go. So, I have great, great feelings and identification, and yet I am so unhappy with what's happening to the Palestinians. I think it's just something wrong with it. But at any rate, I wrote a letter to the editor on that, and that got published. So, I've been writing letters to the editor. I don't think you were there, Pat, but I did a lecture, a talk on the – I did it on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. I thought that we ought to think about these things a little bit. I don't think that you use here want to be too serious. I worry about me being too serious. I'm not radical. I'm a humanist. I'm not radical. But I'm afraid, a little bit afraid, that I might be too serious for them. But at any rate, on July 12th, I'm going to do that lecture on Islam. Again, shooting off my big mouth. Actually, it's just a primer. It's not taking sides. It's just saying this is what Islam is about. Let's understand it. But I think I'm preaching to a bunch of people who already knows it. [laughter] Where I need to preach it to – preach understanding of Islam is in some other church someplace, but not ours. But at any rate, there's a lot of things that probably a lot of people don't really know about Islam. I thought, "Well, I'll go in there and share with them what I know about it." Again, it's a very broad-brush outline of that faith. The fact of the matter is there're going to be, by 2050, which isn't too far away, as many Muslims as there are Christians in the world. It's the fastest growing religion. Some of these, I'm going to call them

boneheads, pardon my language. But some of them say, "Wipe them all out, nuke them." Oh, come on, how in the world could you possibly even begin to do a thing like that? Even if you really, truly wanted to, you couldn't pull it off. It's just so amazing that people would say that kind of thing. I guess Hitler said it, and he couldn't pull it off either. So, well, at any rate, and let's see, we're in generally good health. I got AFib and a little shaky hand. But other than that – and I take my Coumadin to take care of the irregular heartbeat, but cut the grass today. [laughter] So, that's my story. Like I said, I think I'm an interesting fellow. I believe everybody's got a great story to tell. I really believe that. I was able to meet at the top and at the bottom. I've been in the White House five times for meetings. I think to shut me up one time when I was county executive, they put me on a committee to rewrite the New York State Mental Health Code, the law. I didn't belong on that committee at all, but they were closing these psychiatric centers in Oneida County. Most of those people weren't even from Oneida County, most of them were from down in New York City. They sent them up there out of sight, out of mind, so to speak. I complained about it, and I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you can't – you're releasing them from the backwards to the back alleys. This doesn't make sense. Stop doing this, this mass releases of people." They were throwing them out there on what? Halcion and (Prolixin?), I don't know, whatever were available in those days. But feeding them pills and throwing them out. They had nowhere to go. They were winding up in our jail. It was a pretty sad thing. So, I complained pretty bitterly because I think we were getting hit the hardest of most of the counties in New York. They called me down to Albany for a meeting with the governor. The governor had a guy – Governor Hugh Carey at the time, an Irish guy, and he had an Irish friend who was a doctor. The doctor, he walks in the waiting room where we were sitting, he said, "Look, this is good politics and it's good medicine," and he walked out and never came back. We're sitting there a half hour late. So, what the hell's going on here? Pardon my language, I'm sorry about that. So, at any rate, we got up and left. Then a couple weeks later, they put me on this committee. So, I used to go down to New York City to the World Trade Center and go up in the midway up in it and go to these meetings. Most of that stuff was way over my head. These people were true professionals. They are the people who should have been rewriting a mental health code, that knew what they were talking about. I didn't have a foggiest idea how to go about doing something like that. But it's an interesting story. A part of my time in public office, which was, I guess, except for my family, I guess, that's my greatest moment of glory. But I've had many glorious moments in my life, and I'm very, very fortunate. I talk too much. [laughter] You got any more in there?

PJ: Well, let us take a little break and then begin.

WB: Yes. How about some cookies and iced tea?

PJ: Hold on. Carrie?

CNK: Yes.

PJ: Should I turn this off or stop?

CNK: Yes. Let me stop.

[recording paused]

Bill Bryant: I was going to show you, this is the Roosevelt Room in the White House. Every once in a while – this is a conference room not too far from the Oval Office. This is Vice President Mondale. I'm not so sure who that is, but that he kept kicking me under the table, and he says, "Watch it, buddy." [laughter] This is the one I was telling you about saying a prayer with the cardinal here. I was looking down at my notes, I'm sure. This guy was the first Black four-star general. It wasn't Colin Powell. This guy's name was Chappie James. Chappie was also one of the Tuskegee Airmen. But we were at some sort of function there. Do you know who this is? He's an entertainer.

Pat Jacobson: Oh, that face looks so familiar, but I have forgotten.

BB: Guy Lombardo.

PJ: Oh, really?

BB: [laughter] Yes. Guy Lombardo was there. This guy was running for lieutenant governor. He was a...

PJ: This was where?

BB: In Long Island, someplace. At County Executives Association, we would get together periodically and exchange stuff. Oh, this is Ramsey Clark, and I shared on this. When you have a petition, you have to name a group of people who would come together to name a replacement if you couldn't actually run. Let's just say something happens, heaven forbid, to a candidate that they can no longer run, although they were maybe leading in the polls and everything, but they appoint a committee. I was on this committee for Ramsey Clark. He was running for the United States senator. There's a couple of names on here that are really important. Ted Sorensen, he wrote the "I Have a Dream" speech for President Kennedy. Then there's Helen Gahagan Douglas. That's the lady that Nixon went after and knocked off in the U.S. Senate race in California. Her husband was an actor by the name of Douglas. I can't think of his first name. But anyway, he labeled her a communist, a pinko. She was very famous. Arthur Eve was the secretary of state. Kenneth Clark was, I believe, a big educator. I'm not sure who some of these other folks are.

PJ: Go over Ted Sorensen one more time. What did he write?

BB: Ted Sorensen wrote the "I Have a Dream" speech, Jack Kennedy's inauguration speech. He said, "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." That was Ted Sorensen. I got to know him. He also ran for the Senate. In fact, his wife spent the night at our house one time when she was out campaigning for him. One thing that really annoys me is that people say all politicians are crooks. That's nonsense. That just isn't true at all. I believe Ted Sorensen and Helen Gahagan Douglas and Ramsey Clark, especially Ramsey Clark. Oh, this guy is so pure, it's ridiculous. An incredibly honorable man. These people who say that all politicians are crooks or on the take, no, that isn't true at all. Not true at all. Let's see here. I

got a couple of other little things here I wanted to show you. That was a Christmas thing. There she is with her babies with the labor and delivery nurse. There I am in front of, I guess, that's a high school. That's when I was substitute teaching, apparently. Yes, around here. Norm Mineta was a good guy too. He was a congressman from San Jose. I got to know Norm, and he also was – when I went to California, I got involved. I didn't get out of public life after I got done as county executive. What I did, I got caught up in a bunch of groups, different ones at different times, that were activists. Oh, we marched for everything. We marched against nuclear weapons. We marched for homeless people. Let's see. This is only a part of the little stuff that I kept around. I got in one group. The head of a whole bunch of groups had their presidents meet, and I got to be the president of that group. In San Jose, it was primarily homeless people. We had some church leaders involved in that, as well as a number of other people. Homelessness is an incredible issue in California. Back here, as far as I can tell, it's only handled by the Salvation Army. I know there's a soup kitchen in Wheeling, but I don't know of too many other people. So, I haven't tried to get involved here. COTS is the Committee on the Shelterless, or something like that. This was not Palo Alto, but here. What I'm trying to say here, up in Petaluma. I wrote for them a five-year plan. I'm proud of that. Well, I co-authored it. It's another guy who put quite a bit into it. So, I got involved in all these homeless groups of people. So, I'm only showing you this stuff, so you don't think I've been making this all up as we went along [laughter]. That's my son getting his Eagle Scout. Oh, I like this picture of me sitting on the county building. It's kind of interesting. Again, McGovern. There's a county executives meeting. Oh, you don't want to read that [laughter]. Remember I told you about the bumper sticker? Some of these people put what they're running for and some kind of slogan. No, no, no, no, no, you just want to impart the name. I'd love to be able to tell people how to run a political campaign, but there's too many people out here already doing that. Anyhow, that's about it. This is Ed Koch, who was mayor of New York. He was kind of a famous guy. This is Krol. Cardinal Krol was interesting. He was from Philadelphia. This cardinal, they say, brought the U.S. church with him. I don't know. We got five or six cardinals in the United States. He brought all of them behind John Paul, the first Polish Pope. Krol, of course, was Polish. They gave him a lot of credit for helping to elect. But he was only there one night, and well, he did stand talking. He'd get to talk to these people, rub elbows with these folks. He and I were talking, and he had a Manhattan in his hand. Ladies kept coming up to him to get their picture taken. He had to keep putting his drink down, and he says, "I wish they'd let me finish my drink." But they had the Catholic hierarchy from the area. There was a bishop, and then there was some monsignors, and then there was the elderly priest, and then the lower-ranked priest, and down at the bottom, the brand-new priest. But they were lined up by rank. I thought it was the funniest thing, and he did too. He pointed it out to me. I didn't point it out. He says, "Look at that. Look at the way they're all lined up over there." [laughter] So, he had a sense of humor, this guy did. He talked about the pact, but his talk was about the pact between the German foreign minister and the Russian foreign minister to divide Poland. It was a very knowledgeable person on the subject. Von Ribbentrop, I think, was the German foreign minister. I forget who he negotiated with in Russia, but anyway. So, anyhow, that's all that stuff is about. I've led a very, very rich and interesting life, as you can tell. [laughter] I don't mind sharing it from this perspective. If I didn't tell you, you wouldn't have known about it. [laughter] But again, I come back to everybody's led an interesting life. Even if they haven't moved ten miles from home, they have done interesting things in their life. I think they're worth sharing with other people because you never know, again, unless you talk to them about their story. I bet you got an interesting story,

Pat.

PJ: I might. I do not know [laughter]. I guess it would be up to someone else to decide.

BB: Yes.

PJ: Yes. But your story is quite fascinating, really wonderful. Thank you for sharing.

BB: Well, [laughter] again, I'm kind of ashamed of myself for going on and on about it. But it was wonderful experiences, every one of them. As I say, I got to talk to people at the top and walk with people at the bottom. I'm glad I got the chance to do that. I remember going to San Jose City Council, and [laughter] the mayor always put us on at the end. They were all sitting up there and looking down at us in the well. The speakers at the council meeting were only allowed to speak at the end – well, our group, because we were pushing for redevelopment funds for homeless shelters. They promised us \$20 million on a big redevelopment plan for downtown San Jose, and they took it back. I was mad, and I was screaming at the mayor, and big mouth bell going off again. [laughter] Went to try to see her other times, and other times we could go to the office and see him, she wouldn't see me [laughter]. So, I blew it at that particular moment. But I went back, and I'd stay there until midnight, 1:00 a.m., and they were falling asleep in their chairs because if the public wanted to talk, they could talk at the council meetings. It was held at the end. Of course, we wanted to talk. We wanted to keep in front of them this incredible need. One time they had a sleep-in all night outside by this grand hotel they built in downtown San Jose. It was a copycat of the one in San Francisco, and I can't think of the name right now. You'd know it. It's like a Waldorf Astoria in New York, but it's a big name. What the homeless committee decided to do was sleep out [laughter] all night. I didn't sleep out all night, but I did take them five dozen donuts in the morning [laughter] out of pocket. But I had to go to work the next day. [laughter] Just a lot of moments like that, met a lot of terrific people, met some not-so-terrific people too. But overall, it's been a great experience. But one thing, and maybe this is the ultimate pat on my own back, it was almost instinctive. I never sat down and brooded about it a lot. One time, a bishop, an episcopalian, came by and stopped in and we visited, and a lot of great visitors came through there. Marlo Thomas came up and saw me. Oh, I'll tell you this other story in a minute. But anyway, he says, "Who do you talk to?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Who counsels you?" I said, "Nobody." [laughter] I said, "I just do it." [laughter] So, like I said, it sounds like an ultimate pat on the back. But I did meet Marlo Thomas, who's a terrific person, and a number of other people, entertainers, and sports figures. They had one guy come by, and I'm trying to think of his name. He was a congressman at the time, and he got all over Lyndon Johnson. Really big time got all over Lyndon Johnson. He got McCarthy to run against him in the primary in New Hampshire and almost beat LBJ in [19]68. Then when he did that, that's when Bobby Kennedy decided to run for president and jumped into the ring. It made a lot of liberals mad, "Hey, where were you when we wanted you? This other guy, he's plowed the ground for you, and here you show up late." But at any rate, Bobby beat him and all the primaries. But this guy, and his name is right here, but he'd come to my office one time, and he said, "There were more people involved in Sirhan Sirhan and the murder of Robert Kennedy. I said, "Can you prove that?" He said, "Yes, I think I can." I said, "Oh." He said, "I'm looking for people to sign up with me to help me do that. Would you sign up?" I said, "Yes, you're darn right, I'll sign up. I love Bobby Kennedy. Yes, count me in." He was a lawyer

down in New York. A client of his came in and killed him, murdered him with a gun. So, that whole effort just fell apart right then and there because he was the only thing who was really driving it at the time. There's still been talk. There's a lot of talk that there was another person involved, and there was a conspiracy involved in that crime, although they could never prove it any more than they could prove – I'm certain that there was a conspiracy involved in Dr. King's death. I don't know about John Kennedy. I don't know if there was a conspiracy involved in that one, but I'm absolutely convinced there was in Dr. King's death. Let's see. What else can I tell you about? Oh, this is an interesting story. They had this mayor of Utica when I was running first time for county executive. He had been elected as Democratic mayor. His name was Dick Assaro. He had all these celebrities coming in to help him get reelected. He had a guy, John Lindsay, who was mayor of New York City, come up. He also had a guy named Ed Muskie. Muskie was a senator for Maine and also was a secretary of state and he was running for president. Everybody thought Muskie was going to win. Then somehow somebody said something and he cried on television, and that was the end of Ed Muskie. But before that happened, I kept pushing and pushing, "Hey, wait a minute. I'm running for the biggest office in the county, three times bigger than the mayor of Utica, and I can't get near this guy? I want to sit up next to him." I was driving hard to do that. No, no, no, no. But Muskie shows up, and he makes a point to say hello to me, and I appreciated that. But I didn't stay at that dinner. I went on up to Rome, New York, something that was going on up there at the same time. I let Dick Assaro have his little gang and his party. Well, election night comes, and Dick Assaro has got his headquarters all wired for Muskie to call in and congratulate the mayor on his reelection. Dick Assaro, the Democratic mayor, got beat. But they said, "Oh, that other guy who ran for county executive in the Republican County, he won." So, they scrounged around and found my home phone number was listed in the phone book. [laughter] They called up and we were out. We had rented a room in a motel to see how the returns were going to come in, and I did all of that. There was nobody there but my son. Well, the next-door neighbor answered the phone. He was babysitting. He handed the phone to my son, nine years old, and he talked to the senator from Ed Muskie. [laughter] We always laugh about that. At the time, Eric got to talk to Ed Muskie, and I didn't. [laughter] So, there were some real fun times, and it was an incredible era – the [19]60s, and [19]70s. Oh, just incredible era. Unfortunately, I almost think the country is regressing today. I thought we had made such monumental movement forward in spite of the assassinations, and now I don't. I'm troubled by a lot of what's going on, especially the guns. That's just a terrible thing. I wrote an article on guns, got published. I think I did hear from one guy on that. My take was, "Okay. Are you serious? You want to solve the gun problem? Here's how you do it. First thing you do is disallow anyone, any family, from owning more than a rifle and a shotgun. That's it. No more. The shotgun is for home defense. The rifle is a single shot for hunting, for the hunters. We're not going to stop that, okay? There's still some people who hunt for food, so we'll allow that. Then we're going to change all the ammunition. So, the old guns that are already in existence can't get ammunition for them. Once they use what bullet they had, that's it. We're going to change the ammunition so that only the new rifle and the new shotgun works." I said, "Now, if you don't do that, you're just talking about change." Change is not going to happen. That was right after Sandy Hook. I got a letter to the editor who published on guns. It just astonishes me what happened just here. I'm glad you read that letter. I was going to ask for a moment of silence if you hadn't read the letter, but I'm glad you did. That was so good. How did you find it?

PJ: The letter I read was from a group called Standing on the Side of Love. A minister from Charleston, South Carolina, the Unitarian Church there connected with Standing on the Side of Love, and they published this letter.

BB: Okay.

PJ: I am on their mailing list, so I got it.

BB: Okay. That's great. Carrie, what do you do?

Carrie Kline: I do what Pat is doing, I catch life stories for a living.

BB: Oh, do you? What do you do with them when you catch them?

CK: I weave them with other peoples with different viewpoints to do what we call talking across the lines.

BB: Do you publish it?

CK: We mostly leave it in audio format.

BB: Okay.

CK: Although when we were living in Wheeling, we did publish it in the local newspapers.

BB: Do they print it?

CK: Yes, we do a series.

BB: Okay. I've never tried to put anything in *The Intelligencer*. The opinion page of *The Intelligencer* makes me so angry. I just don't like that newspaper. I don't know about the afternoon paper. I don't know if it's just as bad as it on the opinion page.

CK: It was the other one when there was another news register.

BB: The others don't longer exist? Oh, it's just one paper now. Oh, I didn't see. That's how up-to-date I am on the Wheeling press.

CK: This is your time, though. We can talk about us when the tape is not running. [laughter]

BB: Okay.

PJ: Carrie, I was wondering if you had anything you would like to ask Bill.

CK: Well, I just was very moved by all that you have said.

BB: Thank you.

CK: I am newly back here. I have not been here in a long time. Since we lived in Wheeling in the nineties, I come periodically.

BB: Where are you back from?

CK: Frankly, I am amazed. Central, West Virginia. I am not used to this kind of undermining of the land that I am seeing with the pipelines and the well development and compressor stations. With all your political involvement, I wonder if this is something that you reflect on as well.

BB: I do. In fact, one of my stories that did get some response was I wrote an article called "Dirty Coal," and it did get published. I really did take Bob Murray to task in that article. I was astonished that they published it because this *Times* leader has been such a hero, or considered Bob Murray a hero. But I am really worried about the cracking plants. I have this desire to hope that somehow we can extract this gas safely, harmlessly, because it's better than coal and oil as far as the atmosphere is concerned. I think we're too far away from wind power. I don't think that burning garbage is going to be the answer, converting that to fuel. Biofuels, I think they call that. But yes, I feel very strongly that we got to be careful. This community, when we came here in 2000, was wonderful. It's changing very rapidly, very, very rapidly, as far as traffic, as far as congestion is concerned. They keep saying that the population is decreasing, but I don't believe that for a moment. Look at these three major hotels that are going up. North Dakota has an enormous petroleum reserve up there. It's changed that whole state. The whole makeup of that state has changed. I believe the whole makeup of the upper Ohio River valley is going to change dramatically. Shadyside, this little walled-in community of Stepford wives, no more. No more. They put in that crack plant down there, Shadyside is gone. It's going to be a different kind of place. It might be like steel, where there's a boom period and then it's going to be a big drop off, although I don't believe that. I believe that we're into gas and fracking for at least fifty years. I could be wrong. I don't see any presidential candidate even uttering a word. A lot of people like Hillary, I don't for a whole bunch of reasons, money and Wall Street, Bill and his girlfriends. I just don't want him in the White House. I just don't. I don't want to be having to deal with what he's saying and thinking all the time. Not that he wasn't a bad president or a prude or anything like that, I just don't want him there. But on the other hand, Hillary hasn't come out against the Xcel Firestone. Is it the pipeline? Is that the name of it?

CK: Yes.

BB: She hasn't come out against it. In fact, when she was secretary of state, she was pushing it. I just think she's caught up, and then she's going to be caught up in the Middle East. I want somebody that's going to say no to the Middle East. We don't want to be in the middle of that. That's a thousand-year-old war going on between the Shias and the Sunnis. Let's get out of the middle of that. What are we doing there? We're just aggravating it. We're pouring those weapons in there. What are we thinking about when we do stuff like that? Well, anyway, we don't need the oil apparently from the Middle East anymore. I'm just hoping that somehow we can do this other development of energy in a smart, rational way that is environmentally safe. But I just don't know.

CK: When you say this other...

BB: This fracking and the gas and pulling the gas up out of the ground as this substitute energy source. I don't know if it's going to work or not. If they could find a way to put down chemicals that aren't harmful, to bring up the gas that doesn't foul the groundwater, and the gas is half of what carbon coal oil is, well, that's a good deal. It's a good deal while we're working our way forward to solar and wind. But I don't think it's a good deal. I think it's going to be nasty chemicals and environmental disasters, and it's what I'm afraid of. I could be wrong, but that's what I know about it. I'm not really tuned in too much to it. I should be, but I know you are. I know you're a leader in the community for that, and you should be congratulated for doing that.

PJ: Thank you.

CK: Thank you so much.

BB: How about some iced tea?

CK: Thank you very much.

PJ: Thank you, yes.

BB: Thank you for allowing me to be a blow hard. I don't mean to be, but – yes.

PJ: So, this is the end of the interview with Bill Bryant.

[end of transcript]