

**University of Texas at San Antonio Archives and Special Collections**

**MS 317. Archives for Research on Women and Gender Oral History Project**

**Bonnie Reed Transcript, July 17, 1997**

Tori Beckman-Wilson: This is Tori Beckman-Wilson, it's July seventeenth, nineteen ninety-seven and I'm in the home of Judge Bonnie Reed, and we're going to be talking about childhood and educational experiences. What was the date of your birth?

Bonnie Reed: January the fifth, nineteen fifty-one.

TBW: Where were you born?

BR: In Saint Louis, Missouri.

TBW: Who were your parents?

BR: My parents are Edith Glassberg Reed and Harry William Reed, they live in Houston Texas.

TBW: How did you end up in San Antonio? Did you grow up here? Did you grow up in Saint Louis?

BR: No, my mom was originally from San Antonio. She went to school at Stevens College in Missouri. My father was from Chicago. And when they first got married, they made the decision to move to Saint Louis because somebody my mother knew could find them a job in Saint Louis kind of thing. My father didn't know what he wanted to be when he grew up. So, just by luck, I was born in Saint Louis. But within six months, my father made a trip to San Antonio to see her parents there and they also made a trip to Houston. He decided that Houston was where it was going to happen and he went and got my mom and me and I grew up in Houston, lived there since I was six months old.

TBW: Do you have any siblings?

BR: Yes. I have, or I had, two sisters. One of my sisters, Sandy, died about four years ago of an aneurism. It was very sudden, she wasn't sick or anything. Just one evening my sister and she had dinner, and the next morning they were supposed to meet for breakfast and Sandy didn't come. It's been

very tough on my family. But we are very, very close. None of the three girls ever got married, so the entire family is very close. My sister, Robin, and I went to Russia just about two years ago so that she could adopt a baby. And so we now have a little girl named Haley, I'm her super-aunt and we call her the heir, because she's the only child. She is, of course, extraordinary, and I'm not biased at all about this. But that's my entire family, my mother, my father, my sister Robin, Haley and me.

TBW: Do they live here in San Antonio?

BR: All of them are in Houston.

TBW: So I'm sure you get over there quite frequently.

BR: As often as I can, yes.

TBW: Did you go to public schools in Houston, or private schools?

BR: Public schools.

TBW: And your university? Where did you go?

BR: I went to University of Texas in Austin and took a year off in the middle and lived in Israel for six months of it on a kibbutz. Part of the time in Ramada [view?], which is a suburb of Tel Aviv. Then graduated from the University of Texas. I had a break, when I was trying to figure out what I was going to do, I had several jobs, then went to law school at Saint Mary's University. I had one semester at Oxford in England.

TBW: That must have been a great experience. And so you had two international interludes in your educational career. What was it like on the kibbutz?

BR: Oh, it was great. I went at a time when kids from Texas weren't doing that. It was not something that was a part of every kids' experience. I only knew one other person who had ever been to Israel but the reason I went was at the time, I don't know if it's still true, but in order to graduate from the University of Texas, you had to have four semesters of language. And if I had to have it in Spanish, I told my father I was never going to graduate. And I'd heard that there was this program that you could

go to Israel and they had, it's called an Ulpon, where they completely immerse you in the language and that in six months they will teach you the language and at the same time, provide you room and board and you work part of the day while you're there. It was a way for me to get out of the country to sort of do this program abroad, Israel sounded exotic and it wouldn't cost my father anything. All my room and board would be provided, and they gave me an allowance and medical care and everything else I needed while I was there. He thought it was a great deal. [laughs] He just waved goodbye at the airport. But the program was supposed to last for six months, and after six months, I wasn't finished with my experience. I had a girlfriend who was studying in Paris at the time, and our parents were also friends, so arrangements were made for us to meet in Paris, and we traveled for a couple of months in Europe. I got homesick and I went back to Israel. I stayed there for another few months before I finally came home for the new semester to start.

TBW: What kind of work did you do?

BR: On the kibbutz? They had us doing all the grunt work. I picked fruit, they had a packing house on the kibbutz and I worked in that a great deal. Worked in the kitchen, washed pots and pans, served food. There were a lot of clean-up things, like if there was an old classroom that they wanted to renovate, I would help clean that up and get it ready. It was their grunt work on the kibbutz. But it was a great experience, because number one, I figured out what I didn't want to do when I grew up. Which was to pick apples. But also, you really lived among people that were from another country. It wasn't like just superficial visiting somewhere. I actually lived there. They assigned us, they were very creative. They assigned us to families, each of us had someone who was sort of our family on the kibbutz that we had attachments to. As a group of students, they would take us traveling to see different parts of Israel. And then, of course, we had this allowance, and our work schedule was such that sometimes we could travel off the kibbutz to go see other parts of Israel, too. It was a really good experience to get to know a place. The reason that they have these programs is it's a way to assimilate new residents. A number of

the people who were in my program were people from a variety of different countries that were there to be permanent residents of Israel, who were assimilating and learning the language and all that as part of their experience. Some of them remained on the kibbutz after the program was over and are still there. Then some went to do military service, I mean, there were any number of different things that happened to people. But it meant that the people in our group, the dominant language was not English. People really did come from everywhere, so Hebrew became the central language for us, which is a great way to learn.

TBW: How quickly do you feel like you picked that up?

BR: I was a complete idiot. [laughs] I'm terrible at languages, but the good news is that I've learned at least enough to be able to come back and do really well at the University of Texas, so my father was very pleased with that result. But for me, just the total immersion in the language and the culture of the place. Of course, Israel is so odd, because the particular kibbutz I was on was dominated by Polish families, so you also get a lot of Polish stuff, in addition to whatever Israeli stuff. But it was also an extremely left-wing kibbutz, it came out of that early movement and they had gone through a number of different social experiments on the kibbutz, which was also very interesting. And for me, became the reason I became sociology major when I got back to the United States. I was so fascinated by the social experimenting that had taken place on our kibbutz. For example, the kids that were my age that had grown up on the kibbutz, lived in separate housing from their parents, but it was also at that time, as a part of the experiment, they put the girls and the boys together. The result was that when they got to be marrying age, they didn't want to marry each other. So at great expense to the kibbutz, they were sent to the cities, to try to meet somebody to marry to bring back to the kibbutz in order for it to perpetuate. Well, by the time I got there, they still had the kids living separately from their parents, however, they now segregated the boys and the girls. When I went back recently to visit the kibbutz, they are now building homes large enough so that the children can live with their parents. Because they had decided

that children had an unrealistic attitude about marriage, because they only saw their parents at certain times of the day and they weren't there all night with them.. They were having a lot of problems with these kids being able to be successful in marriages. It was a very interesting experiment. And it's still going on.

TBW: I read a study on that very thing. That the boys and girls living together created these kind of sibling relationships, so it's like the last thing you want to do is marry one of them.

BR: You know too much. There's no mystery. I found the whole experience there really fun. Also, I had a boyfriend while I was there, and that's one of the reasons I went back after I had my time traveling with my girlfriend for a while. I really missed him and I wanted to get back to be with him for a while. But for me, it was a great experience. I was so far away from home that I had to really take care of myself. I got very ill while I was there, and the doctors didn't take me seriously and it was really the reason why, I psychologically, anyway, never felt as though I could live in Israel. I always felt that going back to Houston meant getting well. And that did happen. It turned out that I had some kind of amoeba that was lodged in my intestine and it left me quite ill for a very long time, because I had been sick for such a long time with it. It's one of these sad things, they might have had a new immigrant if they had a doctor who didn't say, "Oh, yeah, all Americans get this," and gave me more Kaopectate.  
[laughs]

TBW: How old were you at that point?

BR: Oh, twenty, twenty-one.

TBW: So you came back and graduated from UT as a sociologist. What did you do then?

BR: Well, you can't do anything as a sociologist. [laughs] Actually, I did do something quite interesting, completely by accident, that's my life. I got a job, my very first job was working at a poverty program that was really the beginnings of head start. It was a day care program which was in East Austin, which is the poorest part of Austin and I was the teacher of four-year-olds. I had the job for

nine months, cutting out pianos and guitars and automobiles and things out of construction paper. On three hundred dollars of month, which, by the way, I thought was a fortune, it was more than my allowance had been. I also got to live in Austin, which, at that time, was a great experience, I don't know what it's like now, but it was wonderful to be able to stay in Austin. I worked in the program for nine months. After nine months, the supervisor of my particular day care center had a meeting with all of the teachers. I can close my eyes and see this meeting. Where she told us that the city manager of Austin had recommended to the city council that this program not be funded. I didn't know anything about how the program was funded up until then, but as it turns out, it was a program where a portion of it was paid with city funds and then another portion was a matching funds program with federal government monies. If the city money went away, the federal money went away, the entire program went away and it meant that day care for five hundred children in Austin's poorest section of town would go away. As this teacher is explaining this recommendation has been made and whatever, and it may mean that within a period of months that the center will have to close down and she wanted to make sure that we knew that in case we needed to start looking for other jobs. I was, by the way, the only college graduate that was involved in this program. Most of the teachers were hired right out of the community and had no educational background or a degree beyond high school. Some of them had a couple of hours in college. So I was actually teaching with people in the community. It was a great experience for me, to be able to completely immerse myself like that, in that community. They were very welcoming, which was very nice. Anyway, I didn't know what all this meant. At that point, I was not very political. I was at the University of Texas during Kent State, I had been tear-gassed, I was involved in protests and all that sort thing, but in a very naïve way. I somehow knew that this was wrong, friends of mine going off to die in a war that none of us understood, but I really was completely stupid about political things. I didn't actually know who the mayor of the city was. The only newspaper I read on a daily basis was the Daily Texan, which was the University of Texas paper. I mostly just read

that so I could keep up with Doonesbury and I knew what time movies started. I was not what I would call really political. So I didn't know what it meant that a city manager recommends, et cetera. I had a friend, Ted Siff, who was a law student at the University of Texas at the time. He and I had been dating since high school, on and off. He's a real bright, political kind of guy, and I called him up. "Ted," and I repeated the phrasing, "the city manager has recommended that this program not be funded. What does this mean?" And what he told me was it meant I had a week. [laughs] And he explained that they were in the middle of their budget process and that the city council was going to vote within a week on the ultimate budget and that all this was a recommendation. And that it didn't mean that the city council had to go along with it at all, and what had to happen, if this program was going to survive, was that the city council had to be convinced to vote contrary to this recommendation. Well, that was really easy to understand, but I didn't know what to do. And neither did Ted, actually. But he said, "What I want you to do, I want you to call a friend of mine, his name is Sandy Kress." Sandy was, I knew that name immediately, had been the president of the student government at the University of Texas the year before and was a very popular president. I didn't know exactly why he was so popular, but I just knew he was, because I read the Daily Texan. But he was also a law student, along with Ted and was very political. See, Ted and Sandy had been very much a part of things like getting permission for the different marches in Austin. You had to get permits and all of that, so these are the sort of heroes of all that during that period, and I happened to know Ted. So I called up Sandy Kress, out of the blue. I said, "Hi, I'm Bonnie Reed, I'm a friend of Ted Siff, he told me to call you. Here's what's going on." And he seemed very upset by this. I didn't know who Sandy Kress really was, but he seemed very upset about it. He said, "O.K., here's what I want you to do. Every morning for the next week, I want you to call me at eight o'clock in the morning. I'm going to give you a list of names and phone numbers. I want you to call every single person on this list and tell them exactly the story that you've told me. Five hundred kids, below the poverty level according to federal standards, day care disappearing, parents are

working and will have to—you tell them exactly that story and they'll know what to do. But before you hang up, you tell them you want three more names and phone numbers, and you just stay on the phone all day and all night and call me the next morning and I'll start you again." So, sure enough, the next morning, at eight o'clock in the morning, I called him, Sandy Kress reads out to me slowly eight names and eight phone numbers and I start calling. I have no idea who any of these people are that I'm calling, but they are very upset when I tell them what is happening. They never heard of this program, they are thrilled to know it exists, they're very upset about the fact that this funding is going to be cut, they know exactly what it is they're going to do, and please, call this person, this person and this person. They gave me the three names and I just stay on the telephone all day and all night. I took a leave from work and just worked on this entirely. By the end of the third day, I started getting phone calls from the local press, word was out that I was the point person on this thing and they wanted to know what was going on. So the Austin-American Statesman is calling me, TV networks are calling me, they want to know what's going on. By the fourth or fifth day, I started getting the same names, when I would say, "Give me more names," they would give me a name of somebody I already had. I had to say, "No, give me another one." I started realizing that I was making the circle. But also, by that time, the fourth or fifth day, I had gotten the supervisor to call a meeting of all the parents of all the kids in all the programs and had them meet in one place. I told them that it was still a saveable program, but that it was not going to be saved unless the city council was convinced that they were concerned about their own program. They needed to get on the phone to city hall, and I gave them the phone numbers and the names of each of the council members, and that they just had to start bugging those people. From what I understand, you couldn't even get a fire department call in, because we tied up the lines until the actual meeting took place with the parents calling in, bugging these city council people. This is pre-COPS, nobody knew about grass-roots stuff. Not only that, the meeting that was scheduled for the ultimate hearing on the budget, was usually done at city hall. They had to actually change the location, because they suddenly

realized that they were going to have a packed place, because of all these people coming to protest the city manager's recommendation that this program be shut down. And sure enough, I show up at this meeting and it's literally packed. There are people with bill boards saying Child, Incorporated. People were coming up to me, saying, "Hi, I'm Mia Schwartz, I'm the president of the National Organization for Women, and we just want you to know how really glad we are that you've put this together and made us so aware." And, "Hi, I'm with the Women's Political Caucus," and "Hi, I'm with LULAC," it was like, whoa. It was like starting a political movement of some kind. Well, of course, the program got their funding, and more. They actually got twenty-five thousand dollars more than their initial request. And the program continued. But what was even more important was that in the next election, one of the members of the board of the organization used the same network that I had put together and got himself elected to the city council. And then another member got elected to the commissioner's court. And ultimately, one became a state senator and another was a state representative for a period of time. So I knew the program, from that point, was safe. And it's still there. But that was my very first experience, obviously, doing anything like that. And when it was all over, on Monday I go back to work, my supervisor said to me, "I don't want you here anymore." I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "You need to get out of this place, you need to go do something else." But I think it's a perfect example of just an ordinary person, and the power that each of us has. I think it's wonderful to live in the United States, because, I'm a perfect example that the system can be made to work in your favor if you just have the energy and a good cause, and I obviously had a good cause. As we talked and talked about what my options were, and it just so happened that within forty-five days, the legislature was going to be meeting in Austin, I didn't actually know that happened. [laughs] It's like, "That is interesting, what is that?" I called up my dad and said, "My supervisor says that I need to go do something else. And I've been thinking of maybe getting a job working in the legislature would be a good experience for me. Do you know anybody?" And as it turns, out, he kind of did. It was so close

to the time when session was going to begin, that most of the people in the legislature had hired their staffs. My timing was bad. But, a friend of my father's was able to get the attention of two senators, one from Galveston and one from Pasadena. And they both had a little bit of money left, and they put together a position for me, and they actually put me in one of their offices. In Chet Brooks' office. Babe Schwartz and Chet Brooks both paid my salary. And it just so happens that they shared certain committees and other responsibilities, and they were both liberal Democrats. So it was very easy to work for both of them. They gave me a sort of job description, and, I don't know if you remember Babe Schwartz, but he was like the most charismatic, flippant kind of person—the perfect person for me to work for. He put his finger in my face one day and said, "Listen, we're just paying you a part-time salary," it was actually five hundred dollars a month. For me, it was an increase. But, for him, his feeling was, that this was a part-time salary and you need to take advantage, as much as you can, and do other stuff. "You should be sitting in on as many hearings as you can, getting to know as many people as you possibly can, take advantage of the fact that you've got a phone and a place to sit here." So he didn't think that when I was off somewhere doing something other than my job description that I was goofing off. His feeling was that I was absolutely bound to do those things, because he wanted me out there meeting and greeting as many people as I possibly could. They put me in charge of legislation having to do with prison reform, because there had just been an interim meeting over the period when the session wasn't meeting that was studying prison reform. There were a lot of problems in the prison system, in terms of medical care and a lot of abuses, you know like, people who worked in the prison system having their swimming pools built by prisoners and things like that. And a lot of other things, so they needed to put some legislative safeguards in there, so it was a lot of hearings having to do with prison. I was there to help make sure that witnesses were there on time and monitor those meetings and make sure that the legislation that was developed out of that committee got through systematically. And then, they also put me in charge, ironically, of child care licensing. It was the very first time that the

State of Texas was going to license daycare. This was nineteen seventy-four. I was there, right at the beginning of all that. Having to deal with all these ministers who had these bizarre daycare programs being offended that the state was going to be able to look in on what they were doing to children. There was all of that stuff, and I got to witness it all. The point of the story is I had this wonderful educational experience, getting to know a whole lot of state senators and state representatives, and I know now how the system works and what committees are about and I know real well about—and I knew who all the players were, and I mean, it was a wonderful experience. But when it was getting near the end of the session, it was Babe Schwartz who took me to lunch one day and said to me, “You’re bright and you have a lot of really good ideas, but you look like you’re sixteen and you’re a girl, after all. Who’s going to listen to you? You need to go to law school. Because then, you can carry a briefcase and people will listen to you.” That was the first time anybody had ever even planted an idea like that in my head. At that point, I had never actually met or seen a woman who was a lawyer. However, I did, and this is the interesting part of this whole deal, was that I joined the Women’s Political Caucus, because they had been so wonderful in helping me with this daycare thing, that I felt a tremendous obligation to them, but also, I saw how effective they could be. This is a time when people like Ann Richards were just members. Sarah Weddington would show up to the meetings. In Austin, to go to a Women’s Political meeting was a very heady thing, but it was a wonderful education and these women had a vocabulary that was so advanced in comparison to mine, that just being in their presence was an educational experience for me. But the only, those were the only women lawyers that I had ever seen, and all of them had some kind of a nervous tic, or they smoked non-stop or something. It was really, you wouldn’t want to grow up to be any of them. Because it was a politically charged time, these women were right on the cusp, right on the edge of everything that was going on in the universe, as far as I was concerned. I had this girlfriend, who lived in Houston, who was also thinking about going to law school, and we heard about a program going on in Pennsylvania that was like, “Women and the Law” conference that

was going to be going on. We decided to sign up and go to see what the women looked like. They weren't on television, they weren't—it's hard to think of a time when we didn't have images of what women lawyers looked like, or how they behaved, but we didn't really know what they ate for breakfast and, particularly, it was not anything we were raised to believe that we could be when we grew up. All my friends went into nursing or education or they graduated with these degrees like sociology, where there were no jobs really out there, but it was also a time that pretty much if you graduated with any kind of college degree, you could get yourself a job. So there were still a lot of people taking social sciences because it didn't make any difference. These high-tech, MBA kind of programs were in the future still. And it wasn't as competitive out there, yet. We went and looked at them, and figured out, we could do this. And I even had a friend, actually, two friends that I had met in the legislature who were in law school at the University of Texas. They actually arranged for me to go to classes with them a couple of times, so I could see and understand what was happening. These guys stayed my friends all these years. It's great. It's Sporty Garcia, Ernest Valdez. They were big players in this too. [end of side one]

[beginning of side two] Law school was expensive, so I had to get my dad's support. But it was my girlfriend who was the one who sat down with him. She took him on without me knowing about it. I didn't find out until later. She said, "No, no, really. Bonnie ought to go to law school." And so that was how that started. I had a number of odd jobs up until I actually got accepted. I was the assistant to the Rabbi at the Hill-El, I taught needlecraft at Marabee's, because I was having a hard time kind of finding my way. Working legislature is a really very heady thing, but immediately after the session was over, there's all these people unemployed, all of which have more training than I had. It was a time in Austin where everybody was desperate to stay there, so lawyers were taking jobs for eight hundred dollars a month, where the qualification was a high school education. It was just very weird. But for reasons I still don't know, Saint Mary's University did accept me to a special program that started in the

summer. And that's how I got started. Is that what you wanted? That's my education up until that point.

TBW: Yes. I love that story about the daycare, that's wonderful. What an introduction to local politics and how things work.

BR: But also, what a very heady experience that could be. You really do get a sense of your own power and what you also learn is that power is a matter of the perception of others. For example, very soon after that when people were start to run for political office, they would call me to ask me for my endorsement. Who was I? I was this kid that lived in Austin, I was renting an apartment. Who was I? Yet, they wanted to list me on their endorsement list? I thought that meant that they shouldn't be elected. [laughs] Are you an idiot? It's a very interesting, power is a very—it's all illusions and you kind of learn that part of it, too. I learned a great deal about things, by virtue of having all that experience. I went to law school with the idea that I was going to change the world. Most people go to law school because they think it's going to be a career choice, or this is how they're going to make a living. I went because I thought it would give me the tools to actually change the world. It made me stick out a bit at Saint Mary's, which, at the time, particularly was not a place for political activists or anything. It was a very bread and butter law school.

TBW: How many women were in your class?

BR: Well, I was in a very strange class, because it was a summer program that doesn't exist anymore. I don't think it even existed after we did it. It was meant to be an accelerated program where you could get through law school in two years, three months. See, since I've been out of undergraduate school, for about three years at that point, I thought I was going to be like the oldest person in law school. As it turns out, I was like the second youngest in my class. It was full of a lot of people like me, and a lot of people who were retired military, that stayed in San Antonio and people that were looking at second careers. There were other women in my class, I think there were nine or ten of us, it wasn't a very big

class, anyway, there was only about fifty or sixty of us. All of the women were older than me, because they had raised families, they've had other careers and were now going back to law school. And most of my classes were made up of people who had had some other type of career, with a couple exceptions. They were in a hurry to get through law school.

TBW: that must have been a good experience as well, going through with older students.

BR: When the next semester started, we were blended with the regular class to some extent, but we always felt like the oddballs, I mean, we work on this weird track, and lot of us made friends. I mean, it really was this kind of oddball class. We all sort of, were characters. Which made it much more interesting. You can imagine a class filled with a bunch of kids who just came out of college, how boring. We were far from boring.

TBW: What was your plan after law school? Did you have one? What kind of law did you want to practice.

BR: You never, when you're doing something so original, since I never saw a woman lawyer, you can imagine that it's kind of hard to have a plan. Most of my life has been like that anyway. I just perceived that I would have this private practice, which is ultimately what happened. It's hard to work for somebody else and also have an agenda. Ultimately, that's really what happened. I had, by the way, a very interesting experience before I graduated. In my last semester, I got a call from a law student from the University of Texas at Austin asking me if I would be willing to sit on the committee to work on planning the next Women and the Law conference. The very conference that I had attended when I was in Philadelphia. So here I am, years later, I'm getting through law school and I got this call. The way that it worked was the University of Texas was going to sponsor it. However, it was taking place in San Antonio, because San Antonio could better accommodate a conference of that size. And they wanted me to be the local coordinator of logistical things in San Antonio for the conference. They took care of getting all the speakers together, and all the registration stuff and all that, but I had to do all the housing,

for all of these women who were coming from all over the country, provide daycare if they needed it, all of the logistical stuff for San Antonio. It was a fascinating experience, because for a year, I was driving up to Austin at first, like every other week, then every week for these meetings with everybody else and updates. So I got to know a lot of the professors at University of Texas, the women professors and a lot of the students up there. They were far more radical, politically, than at Saint Mary's, or anybody was. I got the backing of the Saint Mary's University's law school dean. Even Saint Mary's University ultimately gave him a lot of grief over it because abortion was going to be discussed. It was very conservative and very Catholic. His thing, which was, yes, it's going to be discussed, but to his credit, there were a lot of things people said about the dean at that time, but to his credit, he did defend me on that, he provided me with space on campus. Because the University was going to get credit for their participation in this, and there was a lot of benefit to the University for it, but it was a very strange thing to be involved in, and a lot of my friends helped to organize it to make this thing happen in San Antonio at that time, and I got to, of course, be at all the sessions the following year. It was really fun. That was a wonderful experience. But when I got out, as far as having a plan, not much. I did start a law practice with one of my friends from law school, and she'd been my study partner, Carol Harris. But also, I started with two other friends something that was called the Women's Law Center. In my last semester of law school, there was a woman that came down from Dallas, I believe, they had just started a Women's Law Center there, and the idea was that there were a lot of people, women and men, who had problems that were legally connected but they were intimidated by the legal system to the point where they would not seek help for their problems until they became emergencies. And that if we could guide them to the right information ahead of time, we could essentially avoid this problem. The way that it would work is that they would pay a minimum of five bucks or ten dollars or something to have the opportunity to sit in a setting that was a lot more user-friendly than a law office and actually talk to a lawyer about their problem, then the lawyer could tell them, within certain parameters, I mean, they

couldn't actually give them very much legal advice, but they could say to them, "Look, this is a legal problem, and you need to see this kind of lawyer and you need to take care of this." Or, "This is a legal problem, but this is not, and this you can solve yourself by calling the Social Security office and this is the phone number that you need." And we would help them to solve a lot of their problems. For three years, the first years of my law practice, I was the volunteer that was there on Wednesday mornings. Every Wednesday morning I would go in, and usually they gave me the women that were battered. I don't know why they did that, I guess because I had some skill in being a good listener and giving them guidance about what it is they need to do. And what help we could get for them that was free, and what was not free and what they had to do for themselves and what the legal system could do for them. I heard all kinds of problems. Women that, whose husbands had died and they'd never paid a utility bill. They didn't know where their bank accounts were. You know, just terrible things. But also men, that were intimidated by the whole idea of coming to a law office, would come to speak to us, too, because it was a very friendly place. People were not scared. You're talking one on one, but at the same time, you're providing a service that wasn't available anywhere else. People are so much in the dark about things, and where to go to get help, and what it's going to cost them. All kinds of things. We could really give them some guidance. It was very important work, I felt. Obviously, because I did it for three years. Every Wednesday. It had to be done.

TBW: Do you think that that was kind of the beginning of your awareness of the problem of domestic violence?

BR: I think on a one-to-one basis. I was beginning to know a little bit about it. But there weren't all these made-for-TV movies about it. And nobody was talking about the size of the problem. I didn't have any sense that this was a part of something really big. I just meant that individually, there seemed to be a lot of women who were being beaten up by their boyfriends, their husbands or their children. Which, by the way, is a problem that is not discussed very much. But I had, unfortunately, had to hear

that a great deal. You learn an awful lot, individually, about the problem, but I didn't have the vocabulary about the cycle, that if it's happened once, it's going to happen again kinds of things. I just knew that these women had to get out of these dangerous situations or they at least needed to understand that they didn't have to stay. So many of them thought that if they left their home, they lost any right to any of it, of if they left without their children in the middle of the night, that meant that they could never go back and get them. So it was very important that they have the legal information to know, no, you can leave, and if you need for your safety to get out without your children, you may go back and get them later. And because they were staying in very, very dangerous situations, because they didn't know what their rights were, and because they'd been told, incorrectly, what their rights were, even more sinister. The men had essentially defined the law for them and they believed it. It wasn't until I became a judge that I began to get the other vocabulary and realize what a very big problem this really was. Now I can stand back and see the big picture, where I was immersed in it every Wednesday, and I'd come out of there, I just wanted to go eat chocolate. You have no idea what it's like to see one woman after another after another. It was very hard on me, emotionally.

TBW: And yet you continued for three years.

BR: Well, somebody has to. I also, during that time, I was doing a lot of things. I was doing a lot of work for Planned Parenthood, I started doing that sort of stuff at that time. And I was already starting to become very involved in the community during that period. Getting involved with the Temple, getting involved with a lot of other civic things. I don't know if you know how many things I'm involved in now. Some days I just can't believe I am. But that also started during that time, when I was being asked more and more to—I started my work with the Avance program at that time, but there were just a number of programs that I began to feel a real affiliation. I also had another experience, very personal during that time. Personal and professional. I was a lawyer that took a lot of appointments from the courts because I was just this kid lawyer that needed income. One of the cases I got appointed to was a

juvenile case where I was representing a young girl who was accused of certain status offenses and was being kept in the detention center and I would go to visit her quite often at the detention center because we could not figure out where to place her, her mother did not want her. I felt like I was responsible for her, so I kept visiting every day. Finally, her probation officer sat me down one day and said, "You know, I think you may be the only person she talks to." And he said, "Once we do find a place for her," I found a grandmother who would take her, he asked me if I would be willing to join an organization called Volunteers in Probation. It's like a big sister big brother program, only it's run through the juvenile probation department. It would allow them to sort of be an umbrella, and I would be a volunteer for them, but assigned to her to be like a big sister to her once she got placed. I did that with her for a couple of years, but I stayed in the program up until about two years ago. I was a constant volunteer and I had contact with one girl after another. Which was really important. I've always felt that, in doing a lot of this volunteer work, to just sit in board meetings and make these heady decisions about how money's going to be spent and policy-setting and that sort of thing is very important work for people who are skilled at doing that sort of thing, but they have to have some relationship to the real community. Through these kids, I've gotten an awful lot of information about what was going on out there, Joanne, I got all kinds of information. She was an extremely troubled child, so all these resources were called into the harness to try to help her. So I got to know all of these players, but also, because her grandparents were not very capable—usually, when she got in any trouble at school, I got the first phone call rather than her actual guardians. One day, I don't think I'll ever forget, I get this frantic phone call at the court house, and this is cellular phones, that was science fiction, they somehow tracked me down at the court house and said, "You need to get to Edgewood right away. There's an emergency out there." Joanne had gotten out on some kind of a ledge on the third floor of the school, and had said she wasn't coming in until Bonnie Reed showed up. [laughs] It's like, "Holy cow!" I'm out there to

the school. I love going down the halls at Edgewood where the kids say, “Hey, you know my uncle? He’s in the penitentiary.” You learn a lot through the kids.

TBW: Was she your first one?

BR: She was my first one. The last one was Roseanne. I still have a little bit of contact with her.

TBW: Did you stay in contact with most of the girls you were with, when? Until they got out of the system?

BR: No, usually because some incident occurred that—a lot of these situations were completely hopeless. I should tell you that. I’ll give you a real good example. Tracy Crosslin, who was one of the little girls I was involved with for a period of time, we had to sever the relationship because I would go to a lot of trouble to make the arrangements for what we were going to do on a particular Saturday. I would call her sometime during the week and say, “I’ll come and pick you up at nine o’clock, this is what we’re going to do, this is how you should be dressed,” whatever. Or sometimes, I’d just call and ask what she would like to do, then make the arrangements and call to tell her. Right before I’d leave the house, she lived about forty minutes from here, I would call again and say, “I’m leaving now, I’ll be there in about forty minutes.” I’d get there and she’d still be in her pajamas. I’d look at her mom, like, “What’s going on?” “Well, Tracy changed her mind, she’s not going now.” I know what my mom would have done, my mother would have made me get dressed, and it didn’t matter what I wanted to do, this volunteer is here and you’ve got to get dressed. But Tracy’s problem was that her mother didn’t make her do things like that and the result that she kept skipping school. Her mom was actually a party to her missing school, because her mom’s attitude was, if I drop her off at school she’s not going to go anyway, and I won’t know where she is all day. But if she stays home, I know where she is. It was very weird, her mom’s whole thought. But the thing was, even though our relationship didn’t seem as though it was making that much progress, when Tracy had a problem when her mother died, she called me last year. It’s like I’m still there, still very much a part of, but what had finally happened, I had to call the

agency and say, “Look, I think you need to assign me to somebody I’m actually going to be able to be with on a Saturday.” That had happened about three times. But it didn’t mean that it wasn’t somehow affecting Tracy, it just meant that it wasn’t a very successful marriage. Roseanne got pregnant, the last child I was with. I had to call the agency and say, “I can’t, in good conscience, continue this relationship with this child, because I’m so angry about the fact that this has happened.” I felt very betrayed. She had started running away and it was during one of her episodes when she ran away. She was not running away from me, she was running away from her mother. She kept in contact with me, but she was running away from her mother’s home. But she did get pregnant and was going to have the baby, no matter what.

TBW: How old was she?

BR: Fifteen. It was hard for me, but what the other point was, how can she be with me, she’s got to be home taking care of a baby. So that wasn’t going to work, so that was the end of that relationship. I had another little girl, just before Roseanne—Roseanne and I were together almost three years. The little girl before her, Sharon, and I were together for over two years, almost three years. She got raped. And her mother did not do the follow-through that was charted by the Rape Crisis Center for her to do, and the child started having such emotional problems that she ran away to California to be with her father. Well, that of course, ended our relationships.

TBW: These are really tough situations.

BR: That’s what I’m telling you. It’s not what people think. If they could just have exposure to someone like me on the weekends that somehow their lives will be better, it’s like, “No, you don’t understand. They’re only with me for this period of time and during that period of time, I can make their lives better.” But that doesn’t change the fact that they’re going home to absolute chaos, and they always were. Roseanne was the best example of just complete craziness. Her mother, her priorities were such that she never had money to spend on eyeglasses for Roseanne. Her rationale was, well,

she'll just lose them. How can I affect this situation? But I did. I went around, I found a place that would donate the glasses, so her mother could get them for free. So, O.K., if she loses them she can go back next week and get another pair.

TBW: But the basic attitudes and the state of the home—what you could give them on a Saturday was a glimpse of what is possible.

BR: And actually it could be more than that. Because Roseanne came to me one year and said, “Can I work as a volunteer in your offices?” We actually set up a sort of employment contract, where she was to come in three times a week, and she had a certain job description and she was to arrive at this time, and leave at this time. None of this for compensation, it was all volunteer. She came early, she left late, she even supervised other high school students. She answered phones, and this was a child that only, up until this time, wore black and her bangs down to where they covered her face and was Miss Doom and Gloom. When she started working, she put a little bow in her hair, she wore these little sundresses. We didn't recognize her. She took such pride in the work that she was doing. Of course, my staff was telling her how terrific she was every single day and how they couldn't live without her, and she was just on top of the world. And then all hell broke loose. Even then, I was only with her for eight hours a day. I don't know. These problems get so complicated. But when I went to jail, Roseanne was calling every single day to the office to make sure I was O.K. Nobody worried about me more than she did. They're still out there somewhere, it's not like they've ever gone away. I'm not going to tell you that there isn't any such thing as a bad kid, because I've seen some, but they don't have bad hearts.

TBW: What organization was that?

BR: It's called Volunteers in Probation, it still exists. It's run through the probation department. I'm on a hiatus now.

TBW: You started that while you had your own practice and continued?

BR: All the way through the time I was a judge.

TBW: How many years were you a judge?

BR: Ten.

TBW: How did you decide to do that? I'm a new resident of Texas and I think it's a bit different here than in California.

BR: Everything's different in California, dear. [laughs] I'm sorry. Texas is special, too. Everything is different in California. Actually, it was kind of weird. I didn't ever intend to be a judge, I didn't even think it was a good idea for me. I wasn't all that happy in my private practice, I never was really making any money. I only ever represented poor people. It wasn't like I was making mega-bucks. I earned enough to support my secretary. I worked for her, really. Still my best friend, I just talked to her for an hour yesterday. I got a phone call one day from Sue Hall, who had been one of my professors at Saint Mary's, but also is very involved in things in San Antonio. She's a very capable family law lawyer in town, and she is the only woman that's ever been president of the San Antonio Bar Association. She called me up and said that she had been at a meeting of the Family Lawyers and that Tobe Biggers, who was the County Commissioner at the time, had taken her aside and said, "There are going to be two new benches created by the legislature. Maybe three. Probably one of them for a woman. Tell the women to get their ducks in order." What it had come from was two years earlier, there had been two benches that had been created by the legislature and at that time, San Antonio only had three women that were judges. It had been the same women, we never had any others. Carol Haberman, Caroline Spears and Rose Spector. And those were our three, and they had all been elected at the same time, about eight or nine years before, and we had never gotten another woman judge. There have been other women that have run, but had never been able to successfully pull off a campaign. Even then, only a very few had run. When these two benches came up, the press and the women's groups made a big noise about the fact that it was only right that when the commissioners had the opportunity, that they should appoint a woman to one or both of these benches to make up for this inequity that women were not being elected.

It would give a boost to somebody who wanted to be a judge and be appointed, then run as an incumbent. But what happened was, as so often does happen in these cases, was before the legislature ever created the positions, they had already been promised. There were political favors that needed to be done out there, and it was already a done deal. And so when the two men did get the appointment, the newspaper made even a bigger noise and the women's groups made even a bigger noise about it. So now, it's two years later and the commissioners know they don't want to go through that again, and so they're already feeling that they have an obligation to appoint at least one woman to one of these three spots. Also, when there was not a woman appointed two years earlier, the response of the women who were lawyers in this town was pretty profound. And the Women's Bar Association started in response to that. And, in fact, there was only one woman that had ever been asked to participate in any kind of leadership with the San Antonio Bar Association and that was Sue Hall. We were doing a lot of the grunt work, chairing a lot of the committees, organizing law day, doing all those kinds of things, getting very little credit for it, of course, but never being nominated for any of these positions, much less elected, if that would actually be possible. There weren't that many of us. We were always going to be outvoted, if it was going to be based on women voting for women. This is the old days in San Antonio. So the Women's Bar Association got organized. I was their second president. When Sue Hall got this message from Bickers at the meeting, she called me to tell me that this had happened. [end of tape one] [beginning of tape two] I got on the phone and I called the women that we were pushing for the benches two years earlier. And who also was qualified, I mean, there weren't that many women who had been lawyers for five years, which is the minimum requirement to be a sitting judge at the county court level. And who would be electable? There may be women who would be qualified by virtue of being a lawyer for five years, but they'd never done anything in the community where anybody knew them or they didn't have any—it was just... And I started calling every woman that I respected and knew in the community, and every single one of them had some reason why this was not their time. I'll never forget

Peggy Butler saying, because she was one we were really pushing at the time, “No. I really, something else is happening in my life right now and this just isn’t my time.” “Well, O.K.” I can’t believe it. Here they are, they’re almost telling us that a woman will be appointed and I can’t find one. And what was even more frightening, is what if it’s the wrong woman? You know, I know that sounds terrible when there are really so few of us, but still, it was always a problem. What if they appoint, number one, some idiot that’s going to embarrass us and there won’t ever be another woman judge in the universe. Or that what they would do, which I suspected they were going to do all along, which was to appoint somebody that they knew was not going to be electable, but they could say they’d done their job, they’d get one of their best friends to run against her, we’d lose the position and never to get it again. There were a lot of things that I was scared about, what might happen. I’m driving home that night, thinking through all these problems, and then, it was kind of like, “ooh.” So I called up my best friend Pat Pellmans, and I said, “Before you answer this, let me lay this all out for you and you tell me if you don’t think this would be the craziest thing you’ve ever heard.” And she thought that was the best idea. It was like, “Of course, do this!” And then I called my parents. And my father, after I laid it all out for him, this was an appointment and I’d have to run for election and all that, go through this whole scenario with him. He said, “Let me make sure I understand this. An appointment doesn’t cost any money, does it?” And I said, “No.” He said, “Then go for it.” My mother, wouldn’t answer. “Mom, really, I can’t do this unless I absolutely have your support in this, because there’s no way I can do it. You have to tell me what you think.” And she said to me, “Well, Bonnie, if you become a judge, who will you date?” Hey, you know what’s the worst? She was so right. [laughs] It’s just a complete disaster. And I hate that when she’s right. But that’s how it all started, then I made a call to Jane Macon. Because I have always felt that no woman who is in her right mind, who really has any true political ambition should do anything without calling Jane Macon. Then I called Kim, who was my secretary and said, “Here’s the deal, this is what we’re going to do.” And I started putting together the effort to get appointed. It took

forever, and there were all kinds of problems with it, because the men, of course, already knew who they wanted. That was a done deal, the women had to compete among themselves, and we never knew from minute to minute, really and truly, what the commissioners were going to do and you have to go and have all these interviews with them and you have to do—none of the men did that. The two guys that got appointed the same time I did. They just got a call from their buddy saying, “Do you want to be a judge?” It was even worse. Tony Jimenez, who was one of the judges, the legislator who carried the bill was Tejada. And Tejada made a deal with the commissioners court, that he would only carry the bill on the condition that his roommate from college, Tony Jimenez got one of the appointments. It was a done deal before it’s creation. The other deal was that they used to have an agreement among the commissioners about who got the next appointment, and they would rotate it. It just so happens that it fell to one of the Republicans and Mike Peyton was kind of due the appointment, he was kind of next in line. And they just called and asked him if he wanted it, and he said, “Let me talk to my family.” And called back the next day and said, “I’ll take it.” So it was just a matter of when it got passed, he would become a judge. The women were having to send in resumes and go in for interviews and do all this other bullshit. Bullshit is now a part of my archives. [laughs]

TBW: What were those interviews like?

BR: I don’t know, they were stupid. It was mostly just formalities. You just sensed the whole time that it was really going to be done politically, anyway. They just wanted to know if we had the minimum requirements so that they wouldn’t be embarrassed. They didn’t ask these guys if they had the minimum requirements, even. It really came down to who is going to push for you. And I just, I had done so much work in the community at that point, I mean, just, most people who are lawyers don’t do anything. And I had been doing all this. I was still just a kid. I’d just been a lawyer for five years and I was on so many different committees. I knew a lot of people in very powerful positions, and I called on them. I asked them, “Would you mind very much writing a letter?” “Bonnie, I wouldn’t mind at all.” And

letters started stacking up. People who don't even talk to each other, people who are Democrats, people who are Republicans—when I do my volunteer work, it doesn't have anything to do with political parties. Or political affiliation. We believe passionately in whatever we're working on at the time, and we agree on that.

TBW: Were these appointments partisan?

BR: Yes. Very. Here I was, this longtime Democrat. Although the people at the courthouse didn't believe it, but that's a whole other thing. I was not really a courthouse lawyer. I had my own private practice and I only went to the courthouse when I needed to, I wasn't one of the people that just hung around the courthouse. And here I was, going to be this criminal judge, and most of the criminal lawyers hang out at the courthouse, it's their venue.

TBW: Between cases? All day long?

BR: They just hang out. That's how you get appointments, and you work the system. And you hang out and schmooze with the judges. But see, I never did any of that stuff, because it wasn't a part of what my practice was about. And so when all of the sudden I got appointed, it seemed to them to be out of the blue. Here I was on a criminal bench and it was like, "Obviously she slept with somebody."

TBW: That's always the first thing.

BR: But actually, what it was with me, because I wasn't that, I was cute, but I wasn't that cute was that people thought my father bought it for me. Although my father doesn't live in San Antonio, and wouldn't actually know who to purchase it from, even if he could have purchased it.

TBW: It's too bad you couldn't tell them what his first response to your idea of appointment was.

BR: But there was a recession going on in Houston at that time. It was the beginning of the real estate collapse. My father is a real estate agent in Houston. The last thing my father could do was to buy a bench for me. But it was just presumed that I was Jewish, so I must come from a very wealthy family.

Because people didn't have a clue who I was. It was interesting. Outside of the courthouse, a whole lot of people knew who I was. Inside the courthouse, they didn't have a clue.

TBW: That's because they spent all of their time hanging around the judges and each other.

BR: One of my favorites was that I was really not a Democrat at all, that I was a Republican, because I was from a wealthy family, and that I changed in order to get this appointment and would change back, once I got in. If they knew anything about me, I worked for Hubert Humphrey when I was in high school.

TBW: And the kind of work you'd been involved in through the years.

BR: They just didn't have a clue to what I was about. But it also made for a very hostile atmosphere when I came on the bench. Because I was not a player, I was not one of the guys, I was not a part of all of this stuff. I've always thought that people would just naturally like me, it seems to me that's the way the world created me, they met me and they liked me. And here I was in this hostile place where people presumed a lot about me, so they weren't going to like me no matter what. And [unintelligible first name] Rivers, that was the strongest of all said what a bitch I was. You can see that that's hardly the truth. And so, what happened was, lawyers wouldn't come and talk to me about things, they didn't—it was very weird. I was sort of suspended in their reality and it was just not a very welcome place. For a while, I tried to make adjustments to try to get along in it. Then I realized that it didn't matter. It was really Carol Haberman that sort of sat me down one day and said, "Bonnie, it just doesn't make any difference how courteous you are, or whatever it is you're going to do, they're going to put it through some kind of filter. They'll interpret it that you're weak, or that you're a bitch or whatever. It just doesn't matter." There was even one lawyer, who was assigned to my court through the district attorney's office who, one day, said something that just really startled me. He came in just ranting and raving. I said, "Gee, Vic, calm down. What is it?" And he said, "What? Judge, I was in another court before I came to yours, and Judge Ferot says exactly the same thing to the lawyers that you do, the same

tone that you use. And they walk out of the courtroom and they talk about what a great guy judge Ferot is, and they walk out of your courtroom and they say what a bitch you are.” He was angry about it. I had gotten so used to it at that point, I didn’t even hear that voice anymore. But it was a very weird place to be. It got the point, fairly quickly, really, that I began to realize what I did anyway, so I might as well go on and change things the way I wanted them to be. So I went ahead and made some fairly big changes. I started slowly, I had a whole list of things I wanted to do, but I started slowly. And I started initiating things like people who were arrested for alcohol-related offenses had to go to alcohol treatment programs. I know that’s a radical idea, and sounds very far-fetched. [laughs] But see, In Bexar County, that was completely out of the norm. Because their feeling was that people drink and they get in trouble, and that’s kind of the way life is. And my feeling was that no, as a judge, I should do something to try to fix it. That would be something miraculous, so they don’t ever make this mistake again. Well, of course there weren’t any alcohol treatment programs in Bexar County, because who would they serve? Remember, we’re in a city that at every major festival there’s a lot of drinking going on. There’s about one a week here. We’ve got Fiesta, which is a major drinking event.

TBW: That blows me away. There are all these people staggering around with about twenty empty cups in their hands.

BR: Right. And there were no alcohol treatment programs. It’s just guys out for a good time. So I went to—I have networks everywhere, and I went to people that were in the psychological world, psychology professionals, and we started putting together these programs to provide the service for my court, and then we also utilized AA, a really radical step. Then there was a part of the law, the legislature had put in place, that allowed judges to assess community service as part of punishment. And in DWI’s, particularly, I felt that the punishment did not fit the crime, that just putting somebody on probation for a period of time and making them go to alcohol treatment programs was not really punishment for them. So I made it a rule that people that were convicted of DWI in my court were

going to do a minimum of fifty hours of community service work. We started a whole program within the probation department getting non-profit organizations to let us know what their needs were in the community and my probation officers assigning people to tasks in the community with these non-profit organizations. We started the community service program out of my court.

TBW: What was the reaction?

BR: Oh. They went ballistic. Why should the punishment be different in your court than it was in the other courts? You can't believe the reaction to this. Ironically, in a matter of just a few years, the legislature did exactly what I was already doing and made it mandatory that you assess a certain amount of community service hours for DWI. It was like, come on, this is not—it was just weird. Really and truly, DWI was not thought of as a very serious offense. Even though MADD was still very much alive and well in San Antonio?

TBW: Is it considered a serious offense now? I get the perception that it is not treated with any seriousness whatsoever. I don't know if it's the whole state, or San Antonio.

BR: At the time, it was not treated at all. Now there are certain things that legislature have done, where it's just unavoidable. You know, alcohol treatment is an everyday thing at the courthouse. All of this stuff that was completely weird, and people thought I was some nut. And mean, really mean. I was making these people do these things and they had to pay for them.

TBW: That must have been hell to have to work in that kind of environment, to have the lawyers walking in like that...

BR: And they were all hostile. Bonnie Reed is a bitch, and she's completely out of touch with reality and she doesn't understand about the people we represent, that they're good guys and they drink occasionally. It was the culture of the place. But the culture of the place is that they don't want change, no matter what it is, even if it makes life easier for them, they don't want it. It was bad. But then, when I started the thing with domestic violence, that's when all hell broke loose. I mean, it was bad, I was

already getting a lot of grief from this other stuff, but when I started on domestic violence, that was really the final straw.

TBW: Not dropping the charges if the other person didn't press them?

BR: Right. And putting into place programs that had to be paid for by the probationers and pairing it with the alcohol treatment programs and the rest of it. And for the more serious offenders, putting them in jail for long periods of time. That all really shook the system to its core. About the time when I became a judge, the usual scenario was that I would show up in the morning about thirty minutes before my docket was called, and I'd get buzzed by my court that a lawyer was in my office and wanted to come back to my chambers to talk to me, did I have a minute? Sure. The lawyer walks in, says, "Judge, I represent John. He's an old, old friend, he and I bowl together. Every Thursday, we've been on the same bowling team. We go to the same church, he's a good provider for his family, he loves his wife, he loves his children. The other night, he did have a little bit too much to drink and when he got home, she was right in his face. And she was screaming at him, calling him names because he was home a little late and he was intoxicated. He did what any man would do..." Got it? And "She's out of the hospital now. She has forgiven him, they've made up entirely. She loves him, she does not want this case to go forward. She's scared that he's going to lose his job if this case goes any further. He has promised me, that he will never, ever do this again." When I first became a judge, I would get that scenario even for drunk drivers. That it was a parked car that he hit, insurance is paying for it, he's promised me he'll never, ever do that again. But the mentality of the courthouse had changed so because of MADD mothers. They were no longer doing that. The mentality of the courthouse became if you dismiss DWIs, you can't get re-elected. And Judge Samples, who was on the bench at the time when I first got on, had gotten so much harrassment in the press from the District Attorney's office and the MADD mothers, that no one was politically going to make that mistake. But when it came to women being unsafe in their own homes, that's something that the lawyers absolutely did not

understand. They really thought it was something that should be forgiven. And they did not think that I understood what it was like to be a marital relationship, that sometimes, these things just happen. But I will tell you this, Charlie Gonzalez, who at that time was a county court judge, absolutely understood what I was doing and was very well-liked by the other judges. Unlike me, who was this complete outsider, the only woman, I was just out there. And even though I would go to the other judges and say, "Look, I've got this great idea about community service, would you work with me on that?" "No." It was like, and then they'd get mad because I'd get credit for it. It was just weird, I tried constantly to bring them in and they didn't want anything to do with it. At any rate, Charlie Gonzalez calls me up one day and he says look, we've got a mess on our hands with these domestic violence cases. The District Attorney's office had set up a special office within their office to deal with all kinds of domestic violence cases, abuse against children and spouses. It was a special unit, it still exists, it was set up during Sam Millsap's period. Supposedly, the philosophy behind it was they were only copying what had been done in some other jurisdictions. These needed to have special prosecutors that were specially trained in how to prosecute these cases. Knew how to talk to juries, knew how to prepare the cases, knew how—they'd be a special unit, of specialized prosecutors and all that. And Sam Millsap did so well on the felony level, but on the misdemeanor level, did a very sloppy job. And what was worse, what they did was they specially marked domestic violence cases on our dockets and there was this one prosecutor, eventually there were two prosecutors that had to go to all nine courts every single morning to deal with all the domestic violence cases that were in those courts, and none of the other prosecutors could deal with those cases, because they were specially assigned to that unit. And there was no way that one or two people could cover all these courts in a single morning. So Charlie came up with this idea to consolidate all the cases into two courts, and that he would be willing to take one part of the cases if I would be willing to take the other. And I said, "Brilliant idea." Because then, we could just assign one prosecutor in each court and they'd be there every single day taking care of these cases, we

could get rid of them as quickly as possible, which was a very important issue, to resolve these cases as quickly and as close to the incident as we possibly could, because we didn't know what was happening in that family. As far as the cycle and what was happening and all that sort of stuff. Also, what he knew was that I was having a series of meetings with the leadership of the Women's Center, who, at that time, were the people who had the most information. They were giving me a lot of stuff to read. And I was passing it on to Charlie. It was about the cycle, how domestic violence worked and what you had to do to break the cycle. I was beginning to, at that point, get a vocabulary and begin to understand what role a judge would play and was already starting to have this philosophy about no drop. I don't care what she wants to do, this case is not going to be dropped, it's going forward. And that was already starting to be in place. But the other judges weren't paying attention to it, for some reason. They didn't understand, they just knew that Charlie had this idea and they didn't want these cases on their dockets anymore, because they had a problem with this one prosecutor dealing with them, never really getting them done. They were languishing on their dockets and clouding their statistics and they wanted these cases off their docket. If Bonnie Reed is stupid enough to take them, let her have them. But what happened was, of course, is that Charlie and I both immediately put in place an official no drop policy. With me, it had always been there, but it wasn't official. Now, it was official, these cases were not being dropped anywhere. And it sent a ripple through the courthouse that you wouldn't believe. And who got all the grief? Not Charlie. It wasn't even my idea. This bitch. There I was. Meanwhile, we were able to be far more efficient about getting these people into programs and monitoring them, whatever it took. It became a much more efficient way to deal with these cases. And it meant that I had a prosecutor who really was going to be able to try some cases. As it was, all they were able to do is get a couple of pleas every once in a while, but they were never able to try anything, because how would they ever have time to prepare for an actual case? Now, we were able to actually get trials and whatever, and so once you are able to get prosecutors who can get ready for trial, then we had even more

pleas. We went from almost a huge number of dismissals, to all of the sudden, about ninety-five percent of these guys started to plead guilty. All these programs started to fill up, to where they had waiting lists. It was incredible. Of course, they're all going to alcohol treatment programs, and they all knew the bus schedule. We were getting better at it, constantly, we were getting better at it. Well, this program isn't as good as this program, and I want it to be a longer period of time, six weeks isn't enough for a batterer's program, it should be more like eighteen. We were getting more and more knowledgeable, because so little was known at that time, and we were trying desperately to get as much information as we possibly could to be state of the art. And we had professionals, who were counselors, who wanted to have state of the art programs, too. That's when the women's shelter really got on board, and they put together even a better program than the Women's Center had. We were really getting very sophisticated in how we were dealing with these cases. Then eventually, as you know, the legislature got involved and started funding these programs, started making it easier for judges to make the referrals.

TBW: That must have been a vindication of sorts.

BR: No, because you see, it's still completely discretionary with judges. And when you have judges who are completely hostile to this idea, and I started getting some notoriety for the fact that I was doing it, that pissed 'em off even more. So it seemed like every six months there was some challenge by the judges that they wanted these cases back. I was constantly having to fight with them. And thank goodness, by that time I had people that understood exactly what I was doing and could be an advocate. I had very few friends there to help me.

TBW: That must have been a horrible ten years.

BR: That's just it. People think that my stress just came at the end. It's like, "No, it was from the minute I arrived." Oh, listen, it was worse than that. From the minute I arrived, it was before I arrived. Even before the interviews. It was weird. Even before I became a judge, they had a shortage of space.

We were only in one courthouse at that time, we didn't have both courthouses. And what they decided to do with my docket was to have me share with Judge Ball, who's a probate judge in this court. He had what is now the presiding court of Bexar County, it's this magnificent old court room, and he was like the senior judge in the county court level. Very loved and respected. I just loved Judge Ball. This is a sweet man. But he only held his docket on Tuesday mornings and he had this big court room. Without even telling him, they assigned me to his court and they moved one of the clerks offices out and made that into my offices. The thing is, Judge Ball was six four or six five, and weighed about two hundred and fifty pounds. When I would sit in his chair at the bench, my feet did not touch the ground. And springs in the back of the chair were so bad, if I sat back at all, the chair just went completely back. And because I couldn't put my feet on the ground, I couldn't pull myself back up. So I had to call the guy who was in charge of the logistical stuff at the court house and say, "I have to get another chair for the bench." He said, "I'm sorry, one bench, one chair." I said, and explained the problem to him, he said, "Sorry." I had to go to commissioner's court, I had to get on the agenda and ask for a chair. [laughs] It was just a terrible place to work.

TBW: How did Judge Ball react to your presence?

BR: Judge Ball? He and I already had a sort of friendly relationship, and I was very apologetic about the fact that I did not ask for this, they put me here against my will. And let me tell you, it got worse. Because after I had been there for a while, they made a decision that they were going to shift us all around again, and they were going to take that court room away from him entirely. And they did not have the courage to tell him. This is all John Longoria, by the way. John Longoria is in charge of all the logistics stuff at the court house. So my problems with John Longoria were from the very start. They did not tell him, but I knew about it, because I had a coordinator who always had his ear to the ground. He came to me and said, "Judge, this is what's going to happen. They're going to move you down here and they're moving Judge Ball." "Do you think Judge Ball has been told?" "No, I don't." So I had to

go to Judge Ball and sit down and tell him, "Judge, they're taking your court room away from you."  
[stops speaking for a moment] I'm sorry, but it was terrible. You know he committed suicide. And I still think the treatment he got at the very end was all pretty much a part of all this. It's a mean place. It wasn't just mean to me. It's just a mean place and how Carol Haberman and Carolyn Spears and Rose Spector put up with all that for such a long time, I just have no idea. But they used to talk to me about it. Carol Haberman said when she first got on the bench, the judges would check up and see how long she took for lunch. You know how women are. Of course they weren't monitoring any of the other judges, when they took off in the afternoon to go play golf or any of that sort of stuff. But then there's that whole thing about how women have to work harder and longer? It's absolutely the truth. I mean, at least it was at that point. Maybe there are enough of us now, some of the standards have changed.

TBW: Did it change for you at all during that period? It was still just as...

BR: The good news though, is there were some more judges that were women and so it made things a little bit easier for me. And of course when Susan Reed got on the bench, I was no longer the most hated woman at the courthouse. It didn't mean that they let off the pressure or anything like that, but she was definitely more hated than anybody in the courthouse. We're not in the least bit alike. That's what I find so interesting, even I think that she's difficult. [end of side one] [beginning of side two] They were given an entirely different category of treatment than what the women are. They're sort of cloaked together in a way.

TBW: I just don't know if I could have put up with that for ten years. What made you stay?

BR: I was on a mission from God. [laughs] And I was being paid very well for it. There are a lot of things that make you stay in situations like that. A lot of it ego. That they can't kill me. And because I was doing the right thing, I was constantly being—when the legislature keeps copying what I'm doing, it's hard. And the respect I was getting in the community for it and the amount of change. I was pretty revolutionary while I was there. There's a lot of prestige that goes with the job outside of being there.

That is very intoxicating. That's not just for me, that's for anybody. You get called Judge Reed everywhere you go, and that's a very intoxicating thing. There were also fun things about it. Listen, remember me the sociologist? Think of what I got to see and hear every single day. I learned so much about what was going on in the community and I tried so hard to be a really good ear and to really get some kind of grasp on what changes and shifts were going on, to try to make adjustments in how we did things to adjust to those changes. But also to really understand what the real needs of the community were, so that I could go to the other non-profits I was working with and say, "We have a deficit of services in this particular area, and if we can take care of this then..." I created the clientele for so many of the non-profit organizations that are serving this community. On the east side, on the west side, on the south side, on the north side, all over town. It was a great revolution in services being utilized. Also think about how many volunteers everybody got. I mean, we became a part of the financial budgets for the non-profits all over San Antonio. They knew there was a certain amount of work, and it was going to be done for free. I mean, that is, all of that, was part of what I was doing. So even though the courthouse was pretty horrible place, I had this whole other thing going on outside the courthouse. By the way, which has been always what saved me, through everything. The fact that I live so many different lives. Most people that work at the courthouse only have one life. Everything is about what is going on at the courthouse. As a matter of fact, they couldn't even understand that I have this life outside the courthouse, they had no comprehension of what it is to have a life outside the courthouse. It was so bad that I remember, at one point, there were two rumors that were going around about me simultaneously. One was that I was dating my clerk, and the other that I was dating my coordinator. One is a man and one is a woman. [laughs] That also tells a lot about speculation about—but the most telling is how could I have a relationship outside the courthouse? People only have relationships in the courthouse. That was the biggest joke of all, was that they thought that's all I knew were these clerks and this coordinator? It was like, wait a minute. And they couldn't understand how come they couldn't

beat me at election time. They never left the courthouse. If they had just gone two feet outside the courthouse they would have known that I was the only judge people knew in Bexar County. Because I was out there, I was doing everything and I was doing everything before I became a judge. It was never about politics, it was always that's what Bonnie does, this crazy person who does things and she does them for free, apparently. But it was a very strange life. But the best part is to say I'm thrilled I have this wonderful network of very close friends. They were people that were not only good friends, but people that I really loved and respected and admired. Some days I would just pinch myself and say, "Can you believe that these people are my friends? God has kissed me on the forehead." And I have probably one of the most interesting lives of anybody I know. I love to sit down and tell people, let me just tell you what happened this week. I just lucked into so many very nice things in my life. A lot of it has been because I do so much volunteer work in the community. It's something I recommend to everybody, get out there. The nicest people you'll ever meet in the world are the ones you'll meet out there. But see, a lot of people, the most generous people in our community are the least able to give. That's probably the most touching at all, and all it does, is it motivates me even more, because I am so lucky. But I will constantly be amazed by how generous people are. I think it's a part of their nature. I saw it constantly when we would assign community service hours. One of the things that really haunted me was that after we had the program in place for about a year, I had a meeting with my probation officer. They said they had something they wanted to talk to me about, but they couldn't explain it. And what it was, was that they thought that somewhere between a fourth and a third of the probationers were doing more hours than they were ordered to. And we didn't understand what was happening. The next week, I had a man who was in front of me who had been arrested for a number of DWIs and usually they'd gotten dismissed, it was under the old system. But he had been an alcoholic, obviously, for years. He was in his fifties, but he looked like he was in his seventies. Sort of a walking prune, had that sort of sunken look. And now he didn't have a driver's license. He was a housepainter by

profession and was alone in the world. Didn't have any family. I had ordered him to do fifty hours of community service work and he had done seventy-five. And I had my chance. I said, "Why?" He said, "Judge, I'm a painter by profession and they sent me to a parish in my neighborhood." Of course it would have to be, because I took his driver's license away, he had to be a place where he could walk. "They needed someone to paint the classrooms for the kids in this parish and I couldn't finish the job in fifty hours." What you have to know is every day he was showing up, they gave him cookies and milk and made sure he had lunch, and they thanked him and complimented him on what a good job he was doing. Every night, when we walked home from whatever bar he was drinking at, he could walk by this church and with great pride, know that he'd painted the classrooms that the kids were enjoying. It connected him to the community and made him feel important and cared about. That's what I mean by the fact that it's in all of us, to do the right thing, just not all of us have been given the opportunity to give of ourselves. We all want to, we just don't know how. Many times, me assigning community service was a way to show them how. We had some miraculous things happen. We'd get newsletters from some of our organizations saying that the volunteers we sent over—volunteers—were now the volunteer of the year. The funniest was when I went to the JCPenney Golden Rule Award lunch one day and I was invited because I think Harriet Marmon was being honored nationally for her literacy thing and she had her friends there. I'm sitting there, and there's some guy that's being awarded for like these two thousand hours that he's donated to the San Antonio Library. He just seemed so familiar. So I wrote down his name and went back to the courthouse and said to my clerks, "Do you remember this name?" They said, "Yeah, that sounds familiar to us, too." One of our probation officers was there and said, [makes tapping sound, as if on door] "Oh my God, Judge?" And it turns out that he had been put on probation with my court, and we had sent him over to the library to teach adults how to read. He'd gotten so involved in the program that he racked up all these hours and now he's honored, nationally, by JCPenney. But we knew that there were these stories going on everywhere, but it's the perfect—this

was not somebody that you would have predicted—but I really think everybody wants to do this kind of work, but they just don't know how to get started. There were things that—I got to go to work every day and hear these stories. And I got to know a lot of these people, and I got to see the changes in their lives, and I got to hear from some of their families about the good things that were happening to them. And sometimes I didn't hear what was happening, sometimes things got worse, but that doesn't make it any less interesting. And then sometimes there were just funny things that would happen. These were great storytellers. They're just—they don't even know how to tell the truth when it doesn't matter. They just lie all the time. I get great stories. "What did you steal?" "Well, Judge, I didn't steal anything. I was just in the store and I was with my kids and they put some stuff in my purse and I didn't know it was there. I walked out of the store without paying for it. And I know it was wrong, but Judge, I really didn't know." I'd think, God that's terrible. And I'd say to the prosecutor, "What did she take?" He said, "Well, a TV..." [laughs] They just, and she actually leaned forward and said to me, "You know, my purse is usually very heavy." She just could not tell the truth for a minute. Every day. Would you miss a chance to hear stories like this? Massive people. I was disposing of, by the time I left, I was disposing of almost seven thousand cases a year. So, I'm seeing every one of those people, and it was just phenomenal, this wonderful parade. People of all different sizes and shapes and incomes and, it was a phenomenal experience and it meant that every day I had the chance that I might actually change somebody's life for the better. What kind of a job is that? So no matter what this other noise that was going on in the universe, that was making my life a complete hell, there was this other thing happening, and I loved it?

TBW: How much contact did you have with criminals, because when you did your family violence, when you heard those cases, you worked with the same prosecutors, right?

BR: Pretty much, but the prosecutors would change because they would come and go.

TBW: Did that take the whole day, or did you designate days to do that, or did you have domestic violence cases in the mornings or for part of the day?

BR: There was always this huge morning docket. On Mondays and Tuesdays, the domestic violence docket was only part of that, but anybody who had been arrested ten days earlier, their case was up. That was the way it worked was that when you get arrested, you get released from jail, they give you a notice that says you're due in jail in ten days, or you're due in court, and they assign it based on this system that the first case goes to county court one, next one to two. Because I was hearing other cases, other than domestic violence. And then those cases would be specially tagged and they would all come to either my court and initially Charlie Gonzalez, but somebody else had his bench after that.

TBW: What I'm trying to figure out here was how much time did you spend facing these lawyers who were extremely hostile? Was that daily? Were they prosecutors for the domestic violence cases? Were they really a problem?

BR: Sometimes, but only because they didn't take their job seriously. But pretty soon, the District Attorney, Fred Rodriguez or Steve Hilbig, began to realize that you really need to put a good prosecutor in with Bonnie Reed or otherwise they'll make life hell for everybody. I would complain. I'd say, "Look, your stats are going to be bad, you need to get this person out. This person does not care about this docket, this person is doing a lousy job, I want them out of my court room." The thing is, as a judge, I could complain because they weren't prepared, but I couldn't complain about certain things, because I'm supposed to be neutral. But if they weren't prepared, I can say to the District Attorney's office, "You need to get somebody more efficient in here." Because we're moving on. And every once in a while, I'd have a prosecutor who would be disrespectful. And that was the worst. And I wasn't the only judge that had problems with prosecutors. That's a universal problem. All of us, periodically, would call the District Attorney and say, "There's a personality conflict here." And it's not in the state's best interest to have a prosecutor that the judge doesn't like, because we rule on a lot of stuff all day

long that can not go their way, so the DA wants to know that we've got a little problem down here. There were things like that, that we did all the time. But as far as the defense part, there wasn't anything I can do. But there were times when I would take a lawyer into my chambers and sit him down and say, "Look, let me tell you something. You got a case here on the docket, but if you attack me one more time on the bench, the jury's going to turn against you. And they're going to turn against your client, and you won't be able to win no matter what the facts are. So you have a choice." And sure enough, any lawyer that attacked me during the course of a trial lost. It was universally the rule. Juries loved me. I had a way of talking to them that made them feel like they were guests in my home, I treated them—my staff that was part of their job description, to make them feel very welcome, very much at home. And I was extremely respectful to them. And I was very, I'd talk in very plain language, and would explain to them to reduce their anxiety, what exactly their responsibility and their role was and try to simplify everything as much as possible. And my demeanor was such on the bench, that when a lawyer attacked, rather than me attacking back, I just sat there quietly and let the jury hear it. Without exception, if they attacked me, the case was lost. And so it was just one of those things where you just had a learning curve. There was a time in Bexar County that it would be completely unheard of for a lawyer to attack a judge. But during the time just as I was coming on the bench, there was a new philosophy among certain lawyers, they called it "Rambo lawyering." Where it was actually a tactic that was being taught to lawyers, to make attacking the judge part of your case. What you would do is create an atmosphere where the jury would think the judge and the prosecution were working together against your poor little client. And that that could be a ploy which could be beneficial to your client. The problem was, it did not work in my court room. Because I never looked mean. [laughs] If you have a big man like Judge Ball, maybe. Or Judge Machado or whatever, you could make a male judge look like intimidating, but never me. And I kept trying to tell the lawyers that this may work when you're in another court, but it isn't going to work in my court. I'm sure it's a really good tactic, I but I don't want

you to think the lawyers were doing this just to me. It was something that they were actually taught in their courses to do. And they actually—when we would go to judges seminars, we were actually being taught how to deal with a Rambo lawyer. Your job is to keep control of the court and a certain demeanor. It was a complicated thing for many judges, it wasn't just a problem in my court.

TBW: If you have a natural affinity for people, they're going to side with you, and you don't even really have to say ything.

BR: No, I'd just look startled. And I would say things like, "You're going to have to lower your voice." And if they did it again, I'd lower my voice even more. [laughs] Very motherly.

TBW: It sounds like an absolutely fascinating job.

BR: It was, it was. So many people say, "How did you put up with that." It's like, "Oh, God, I love it, are you kidding?" Because there were so many wonderful things. As long as I could tune out this other noise as much as I could, then everything was great. There were also things, too, that I notice about myself. I have bursitis in my left hip, and over a period of time, I have learned to walk in a way where it doesn't hurt. And I think my whole life became like that in the court house. That I would kind of adjust so I didn't run in with these people. I would avoid talking to the judges, I would just leave and got to lunch. The minute the court was out of session, I was out of there. I didn't hang out at the courthouse, I didn't go drink with the guys after work, I got out of there. So I wa able to sort of build a life where I would avoid confrontation with the staff, as often as I could. Of course, some of it was just unavoidable. And there were always stresses. And then, of course, there are these elections that come every four years. Are you going to get an opponent, are you not going to get an opponent.

TBW: What was that like? What is campaigning like? Did you find it fun?

BR: Certain things I just loved. It's really funny, because I give lectures to people who are judge wannabes all the time. And a lot of what I tell them is I say, "Look, I've always had this theory that I have to meet about two thousand people before I make one really good friend. And really good friends

are what I value most in the world, aside from my family. And what happens during a campaign, is you accelerate the numbers of people you're going to meet, so the possibility that by the time the campaign's over with, the chance that you are going to have some really good friends that you did have before is enough to get you through this. If you keep the focus on the prize, which is the opportunity to make a really good friend by the time this is over with, that's worth the whole thing." And that was kind of the attitude I took. But I was a different kind of personality than other people at the court house. And so campaigning for me was my normal life. I was already going to all these dinners. I also have a hobby, that I do theatre. I've been performing—I started at the San Antonio Little Theater from I guess within a matter of months after graduating from law school. I was bored to death. I only had four clients, and they didn't want to talk to me every day. I'd broken up with a boyfriend, and I didn't want to wait at home to see if he would ever call or anybody would, so I started doing theatre stuff, I'd never done it before, and I went and auditioned for South Pacific and got cast as a nurse and doubled as an Islander. And I kept getting bigger and bigger roles, and there was a period during the time I was in private practice, that I was in a show or a rehearsal for a show almost solidly for like three or four years. When I got the bench, it became difficult because my obligations to do other things were huge. But I still managed to do a show about every other year. I had a huge number of people who are a part of a big part of my circle. I know all the people in the arts community, and the theatre community, and that's a big, big part of my life. I'm on the board of the San Antonio Symphony, I know all the musicians there. I have all of these interests. And I'm also performing. San Antonio Little Theatre is three hundred and fifty people every night. And my name's in the program as Judge Bonnie Reed. There were those kinds of things that were great. I'm very involved in Temple Beth-El. I just had, already, a huge number of people to draw on as my friends, to help me, so campaigning was so much easier and less expensive than for other people, because I didn't have to do a lot of those expensive things to get my name out. So many people already knew who I was. Meanwhile, I made a lot of speeches. That's something I do rather well. I

have always been in demand, and so I'll speak at Rotaries, at Lions Clubs, Kiwanis and all the women's groups at different times. I've sat on different panels, I've done every kind of venue you can imagine. Annual meetings of Jewish Family Service, I was always somewhere speaking or doing something. I was doing that all year, so when campaign came, my life really didn't change that much. Maybe I had one or two more things to do in the evening, or I was always out in the evening already. It didn't change all that much. And see for a lot of these judges, all of the sudden they're thrust into this foreign matter and they are just completely out of touch and for me, it was just a constant flow. But what was really interesting is how few people that lived in the court house that knew all about this other stuff. They had no clue. So they would run against me, thinking that this would be a cinch, and because Bonnie is so disliked in the courthouse, as if that's the world. They'd get murdered in the campaign.

TBW: What were the percentages? They were probably fairly large, I would imagine.

BR: It varied with circumstances. Like when I ran the first time, it was the very first time that Fred Rodriguez ran for District Attorney. And at that time, that was the highest ranking Hispanic in a race. The Hispanics came out the Democratic primary in the largest numbers in the history of Bexar County. They've always been there in reality in numbers, but they've never voted. And so in the year that I ran, the numbers of Hispanic voters were sixty-five percent in the Democratic primary. I was the only Anglo that won and had a Hispanic opponent. So even though my numbers weren't real big, it was like fifty-six percent, which, by the way, is a very big margin, it was huge when you think about the fact that I'm the only Anglo who won, because there was this huge massive vote because of Fred Rodriguez heading up the ticket. The next time I had a major opponent was when the Republicans made a big sweep, and there were only two Democrats that won, and I was one of them. Me and Bill Hartberger. Again, it's like, we try to tell them, we try to say, "You don't understand. You're making a big mistake. Move to another race. I'm telling you this as a friend." Nobody, they just didn't understand it. When Al Aceveda ran against me, from what I understand, he ran against me in the Democratic primary. He

came from a very well-known Hispanic family, he's one of the Sepulvedas that own Handy Andy. If his family voted for him, I mean you can't believe how large his family is. He as a very formidable opponent to have, but he knew that he could not win. We just could not make him see it. He spent, we think, it's not even recorded because the way he did things and his family did so much for him, but we think he spent somewhere between a hundred and a hundred twenty-five thousand dollars trying to beat me. We spent fifteen. And beat him by fifty-six percent. I want to say, I think it was more than that, I think the numbers were in the sixties. I just can't remember. It's not that important. What was important to me was that I had my job the next day. After I beat Al, I had somebody that was from the Christian Right running against me. And that was really spooky. With Al, he was somebody I didn't respect very much, and if I lost to him, it would be a personal humiliation. If I lost to this religious right guy, it would have been a different kind of defeat. But we really smooshed him, so it's O.K. But it's always stressful

TBW: And so you had how many elections? Three?

BR: Yeah. I had the very first time, after I had gotten appointed, I ran. Four years later, I didn't get an opponent. And then last election, I had an opponent in the Democratic primary and then I had one in the general elections, a Republican. It's always stressful, just because you don't know the outcome and you don't have control of the outcome. Not only that, we were never scientific. There were always these people doing polling and all that that they spent a lot of money on. We never did any of that. We were not scientific, so I never knew what our numbers were going to be until the actual night of the election, so we never knew how to gauge whether we were doing well or not doing well, I'm just a little county court of law judge. We spent fifteen thousand dollars. There was no room in the campaign for that. I'd hire Richard Gambetta to run numbers on our campaign, sometimes we would piggyback, there would be another campaign that was using our numbers, they would let us know. But for the most part, we never knew until the night of the election. It's always going to be stressful. It drove my mother nuts.

TBW: So did she ever come around to...

BR: No, but what can you do? She's stuck. Here I am, a judge. It's certainly impresses her friends.

TBW: My daughter, the judge.

BR: My dad loved that.

TBW: I am right at the end of this tape.

BR: Did I talk too much?

TBW: No, you didn't. But I'll have to come back.