City of Portland Oral History Program

Mike Lindberg Oral History Transcript

Interviewee: Mike Lindberg
Interviewer: Morgen Young
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Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

Morgen Young: My name is Morgen Young. I'm interviewing Mike Lindberg for the City of Portland Oral History Program. It is July 25, 2022, and we are in the Portland Archives and Record Center in downtown Portland. Good morning.

Mike Lindberg: Okay. Good morning. Are you going to use the outline, by the way, of questions that I came in terms of the sequence?

MY: Yes.

ML: Okay. Okay.

MY: We won't deviate from that unless you start talking about something, then I'll kind of follow that. So, let's start with your early life. Just tell me about growing up in Astoria.

ML: Well, the first thing I remember about growing up in Astoria is that I basically had a stepfather and I found out when I was age eighteen that there was a natural father that I really didn't know about. This kind of started in reverse order, but when I left Astoria to drive to go to the University of Oregon, I stopped to get my shoes shined. And I knew that shoeshine man. And we were talking. And he said, "How's your father?"

And I said, “Oh, he’s fine.”

He said, “No, I mean your real father.”

So, when I was eighteen, I found out that my real father’s name was Henry Mackie, who was Finnish. And not Eugene E. Lindberg, who was Swedish, who I’d been living with.

So, I drove back home and talked to my mom about it. And she said, “Oh, we told you when you were about two years old that you’d been adopted.”

So, that was all fine. I was kind of jarred. So, it led to really a story that was part of my life when I went to the university and on. And that was, who is my natural father?

So, my mom wouldn’t tell me his real name. And I talked to other relatives and realized that my mom had probably been married for a year or two and then she’d gotten divorced and remarried.

So, when I was thirty-two years old, I received a collect call, when I worked for Bell Telephone. And back in this era, if you got a collect call, you could hear the other party on the line. And I said, “Well, I may accept it. Who’s it from?”

And a voice came and said, “This is Henry Mackie, your real father.” And that was the first time I knew his name.

So, before age thirty-two, so I knew there was a real father. So, I had these visions. My imagination was working. Well, he was probably actually had moved to Texas and was a really wealthy oil man. And there was a TV show at the time called *The Millionaire,* where basically somebody knocked on your door who was Michael Anthony. And he said, “I’m here to deliver a check for a million dollars to you.”

But, as I found out from the call that came from Henry Mackie, he said, “Actually, I just got a job as a part time janitor in Salem, Oregon. But I realize I have grandchildren. And I’d like to come up and meet them.”

And I said, “Well, if you’ve been in Oregon all this time, how come you never contacted me?”

He said, “Well, I’ve been really busy.”

I said, “Oh, gosh, what’s been going on?”

He said, “Well, I go out every Saturday night to the grange. I love to dance” and a variety of things. But the end of the story was, I did reconnect with him. He did take a Greyhound bus to Portland. Met me for the first time that I was aware, and I introduced him to his grandchildren.

So that was a way sort of introducing to what life was like in Astoria. This was a place where you, I remember just a vast array of relatives that I was really close to, aunts and uncles. I was born in 1941

and my stepfather joined the Seabees to go to World War II. His first job was in Richmond, Virginia. So, I remember getting on a train when I was very young with him and with my mom and going all the way from Astoria to the East Coast. But didn't work out too well for really all living there. So, at some point in time, I got back to Astoria. And I lived with a variety of aunts and uncles during World War II.

And going way back World War II, what do you remember? Well actually, the north coast of Oregon was a place that they thought maybe the Japanese would attack. In fact, there were some shells that landed at Fort Stevens. And so, you had blackout curtains every night.

And then when I was really young, I remember the old-fashioned standup wooden radio where you'd listen to what was going on, you know, speeches from Franklin Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt during World War II.

The main things I remember about Astoria was the connection with nature. All of my relatives basically worked in something that had to do with fishing or timber. So, I spent a lot of time as a deckhand, for example, growing up, very young, going out across the Columbia River Bar. Fishing on a boat and gaffing salmon. Cleaning them, baiting hooks. I remember going up, I had an uncle that was logging old growth, unfortunately. But it really toughened you up. And a lot of my relatives were Finnish. And there was a saying called "Gut sisu," S-I-S-U. Which meant that you could overcome any adversity through your stubbornness and hard work and persistence. And so, whether it was being in the outdoors of going fishing or whatever it might be, by the time that I went away to college and entered the next era of my life, there was a toughness that had to do with my upbringing.

The last thing I'll say about Astoria, one of the aunts that I had was named Oney Camberg and she owned a restaurant in Elsie, Oregon, which is a town of about two hundred people. And so, for a short period of time, I actually lived out with her. And she was sort of a historic figure in Clatsop County. But all of the relatives that I had were very loving, supportive. But what I think the end result was not only that toughness of being out in nature, but flexibility and adaptability that later in life when you were shuffled sort of from home to home, that you could be prepared for anything.

MY: So, tell me about going to the University of Oregon.

ML: So, University of Oregon, of course like other people who went as a freshman, that was your first time away from home, there was the push-pull of all the attraction of total freedom. Quite a bit of partying that was going on. But also, just this great awakening intellectually. So, I had the good fortune to be accepted into what was called the Honors College. At that time, it was new. It was a whole different way of instructing university students where rather than taking separate classes in philosophy and political science and literature, all those subjects were taught in one class under professors that had small classes that, and it was just so stimulating, enlightening. We had things such as going up in the

MacKenzie River for a weekend. Getting into discussion about different philosophers and different English literature, different writers. So that was, I think, one of the things that really led me to be able to succeed later in life professionally is the Honors College really taught you how to think, rather than learning everything and being able to take tests where it was based on your memory.

And the other thing that I remember about that period of time that had a big impact on me was the importance of fraternity life on the University of Oregon campus. Not all for good. Because fraternities were sort of terrifying in terms of their induction ceremonies, the use of wooden hacks to discipline people that weren't following all the rules, the kind of rampant partying that went on that was sort of over the top in some cases.

MY: Did you join a fraternity?

ML: So, I joined a fraternity called Theta Kai. And interesting, so that was way back in the first part of 1960, and the people that were in that fraternity in my class actually have stayed in contact for what would be like sixty-two years and are even having a reunion. So, I was president of the class in the fraternity. And the people that were there, these lifelong friendships developed. People that helped me in my political campaigns later. It was quite an accomplished group that basically went on to become vice president of the university, that were world-class Olympic athletes, people on the football team. So those are just wonderful memories of the relationships.

But living in a fraternity itself was close to what would be like *Animal House,* the movie, where there was basically you know, things, I won't even go into the detail about it. But it was just kind of an unpleasant environment in many ways.

So, in the University of Oregon, there were two parts of what was happening with me. The first was that I was getting close to straight As when I was there. Because I had the good fortune probably with the way I was born to have a photographic memory at that time. So, when I'd take tests, for example, there was a book that I'd read in literature. Somebody would say, "Well, tell us the story of that book, or your interpretation." I was even able to say, of that novel, I remember that on page 343 that it said a certain thing and here's what my interpretation is.

So, I was doing really well academically. But at the same time, there was this other pull toward different pranks that I was involved with the university. And that resulted when I was in a sophomore or junior of invasion of a sorority where somebody thought it would be really funny to remove all of the furniture from the sorority at four in the morning, so when everybody got up, they would say, "Oh my gosh, what happened to our furniture?"

Well, that really is kind of insane. It isn't very humorous. But that resulted in being suspended from school. And the dean of students said, "You either have to go in the Army or work for six months and then you might be readmitted to the University of Oregon."

So, I went in the Army, Army Reserve, Fort Ord, Camp Irwin in the Mojave Desert. Came back. And there's nothing that is a greater motivator for academic excellence than being in that living situation in the army barracks.

So, when I got back, and again, it was straight As from the time. And I had just extremely good relationships and personal relationships with certain professors that made a difference the rest of my life.

My father in Astoria had been, stepfather, in the wholesale beer business. And when I graduated from college, he said, "If you want to, you can be a beer salesman. I'll buy you a distributorship." I think it was going to be in Eugene. "Or I can get you a job working in a brewery starting like at assistant to the president of Carling Brewery in Canada."

But I was so stimulated by the work that I was doing. And there was a professor named James Klonoski in political science who later became state chair of the Democratic Party who called me into his office and said, "Do you really want to sell beer for the rest of your life? Or do you want to do something that's more engaging intellectually?"

So, at that time, I basically was accepted to Willamette University Law School. But things happened. I got married early. Had kids early. And so, I basically took a job working for Bell Telephone. But that was a great opportunity in itself.

MY: And you were with Bell Telephone for about seven years?

ML: About eight and a half years. And I got tremendous management training, which really allowed me to get some jobs in city government later on, like director of public works and planning development, because I had that training. Also, I was able to go to New York City and work in federal relations at AT&T. And that of course opened up a whole new world of having a job where I traveled around the United States, gave educational sessions for Bell Telephone. There was a period when I was living in New York City alone for about six months and living near Washington Square and Greenwich Village. And I was able to go to every play that was on Broadway, off Broadway. So, it was a really profound experience for the two years that I worked for Bell Telephone in New York.

MY: What made you decide to apply for a job in Portland city government?

ML: So, I remember distinctly the day that I decided to leave Bell Telephone. So, Bell Telephone had a million employees. They had a monopoly. They really, it was not a very creative organization, so mainly they wanted to kind of hold onto the customers they had and keep anybody else from being any competition in the telephone industry. But I remember being in the elevator at the Lincoln Building with Pacific Northwest Bell. And I was going down. And there was a gentleman there that he said, "You know what?" He said, "If you can just hang on for forty years, then you won't have to worry the rest of your life. Just stay in this office and kind of do this work."

It was so shocking to my system, the whole idea of staying in that one corporation, whether it was that office or another one, of thinking mainly about security as the reason you work somewhere, that I went over and went to the South Park Blocks by Portland State. I sat on a bench and started thinking about it. And I looked down and there was a Portland State University newspaper called *The Vanguard* at that time. And there was an article that said, "Second Echelon at City Hall." So, I picked it up. And it said, here's a profile of all the people that work at City Hall for the city commissioners. And it said there was one person that was leaving City Hall. His name was Stan Amy. He now is one of the founders of New Seasons Market.

So, I said wow, that would be an interesting job. And I walked from the South Park Blocks over to City Hall into that commissioner's office, it was Lloyd Anderson, and said I would be interested in that. And got the job almost immediately. And made a change to city government, which I thought offered so much opportunity in terms of really being able to make a difference and live life with a sense of purpose that was really intellectually stimulating.

MY: So, talk to me a bit about working for Commissioner Anderson. And you also worked for Commissioner Connie McCready, didn't you?

ML: Right. I started off as an assistant to Commissioner Lloyd Anderson. And just kind of going from the corporate world, all of a sudden, you're in the public arena, in City Hall. And so, I was able to work for a person that turned out to be a mentor, a really close friend. Became very good friends with his family, Pauline Anderson, who became a county commissioner, was one of the great feminist leaders in this part of the state. And kind of an aside, but I ended up becoming so close with that family that I learned a lot about whitewater rafting down different rivers. And that relationship and that friendship went on forever.

So, anyway, as an assistant to him for the next couple of years, I felt I was like really in the midst of all these exciting things that were happening in the city. And that's the time that Harbor Drive was

closed and Waterfront Park was created and there was a new mayor, Neil Goldschmidt came in at the same time that I started with the city.

And then after about two years into that, Lloyd Anderson got a job offer to be the executive director of the Port of Portland. So that all was going to come to an end. But before he left, he basically said, "Well, I'll arrange for you a job in city government over in the Department of Public Works." Like assistant public works director.

So that led to the next era. And it taught me a lot about how life can change just basically due to some circumstance of somebody you might run into. So having gone to the University of Oregon, one of the people that I knew that was Neil Goldschmidt, who later became, he was mayor of Portland when I was in City Hall, and later went on to be governor and secretary of transportation for Jimmy Carter.

So, I ran into him at a reunion, the University of Oregon. And he pulled me aside and he said, "How would you like to be director of public works for the city?"

I said, "Well, it sounds like a really great job. But I'm not an engineer. I don't have any background in that area."

He said, "That's not a problem. You've had some great training at Bell Telephone. So, I'll take care of it."

So, the next thing I knew, I went from a tiny little office, and he had a position created of director of public works, which oversaw a thousand people in city government in sewers and streets and solid waste and garbage and street lighting and a whole variety of different things. And I had an office that was about eighty feet long and twenty feet wide at a pretty young age. I think I was about twenty-eight or thirty at that time.

So that was a tremendous opportunity then, because the budget was hundreds of millions of dollars a year. And I used the training that I had at Bell Telephone to start applying those things that I'd learned there in terms of budgets and strategic planning. And it led to some early successes of being able to present to Mayor Goldschmidt and the City Council a budget that had saved tens of millions of dollars in projects that probably really weren't necessary.

So, one thing kind of led to another. And then the next thing, I did that job for about two years. And I worked for Commissioner Connie McCready. And that was a tremendous experience. Because she was very detail-oriented, hands-on, had an outsized personality. Her husband was the managing editor of *The Oregonian.* And I learned a lot from her in terms of the way that City Hall works. It also was a time, my first time when I was director of public works, and spending more and more time at City Hall, where I could see the importance of kind of how all the City Council members worked together. The City Council members were Neil Goldschmidt, Mildred Schwab, Charles Jordan. And so, I could see that they really had to form coalitions to get three votes when they wanted to get things done. And also, I could see that you get to know the people personally. Connie McCready, for example. I learned that every

office had their refrigerator full of wine or they might have hard alcohol in their cupboards and stuff like that. And then the workday ended at five or six o'clock, it might not be the end of those relationships. And I might stay till seven or eight o'clock.

In fact, I remember Connie McCready saying once, "Can you give me a ride home?" And I gave her a ride home. And we stayed up till 4:00 AM kind of talking and stuff like that.

But it was a very important lesson in that in addition to being a good manager, you had to kind of go with the flow and get to know all these personalities and how they worked in City Hall to get things done.

So that led to, after a couple of years of doing that, again I got a call from Mayor Neil Goldschmidt, who said, "Well, how would you like to be director of planning and development?"

I said, "Well, that sounds really good. Except I don't have a background in planning."

He said, "That's no problem." He said, "If you have that job, I'd like to know what you'd do with it. Why don't you come over to my house tonight and tell me what you would plan to do if I gave you that job?"

So I went over to his house that night and in typical Neil Goldschmidt fashion, rather than ask for my ideas, he said, "Here's what I want to do in planning and development of the city." And so, for two hours, he laid out all of his vision for downtown and what he would do in various neighborhoods. And it was clear he'd already decided that I would have that job. The City Council, he created a position, the City Council approved it. So pretty soon I was over supervising a whole new area of bureaus that involved planning, the Portland Development Commission, traffic engineering, the Bureau of Building, city policy think tanks and that was probably the toughest job that I ever had for the next, anywhere, including the City Council, for the next couple of years. Because working for Neil Goldschmidt at that time, you really got the feeling that you were part of something that was historic. You were on the crest of the wave of all the innovative thinking that was happening for urban areas throughout the entire United States. I'm going to get a drink of water for a second…

MY: I want to start talking about when you became city commissioner. That's 1979. And you were the last commissioner to be appointed, right?

ML: Yes. So, what happened was that working for Neil Goldschmidt, I'll just kind of wrap it up to say there were a lot of trips to Washington, DC, making presentations to cabinet secretaries, getting different grants. I mean, it was basically a very high-pressure job. But you had this feeling there was a short period of time we were going to make a major difference in the future of the city. So again, after a

couple of years, all of a sudden, he had a job offer to be the cabinet secretary for President Jimmy Carter. And at that time, the four remaining members of the City Council voted on who would, there would be a vacancy, so, they'd appoint one of the people they'd agree upon themselves in the council would be mayor. But it opened up a vacancy. Well, they agreed that Connie McCready would be the temporary mayor until the next election.

And so, I started thinking well, it's kind of a long shot, but maybe I could be appointed to the City Council. Seventy-five people applied. The four members of the council would meet, go through the seventy-five names, get it down to twenty. They got it down to ten. And at that point in time, I was still on the list. And they said, "These ten will make a presentation to the City Council." Which I did. Then it got down to five, and then to three. And when it started getting down to five and to three, the remaining candidates were meeting individually with the City Council members that would decide who was going to be on the council. And to give the context, at that point in time, it was actually a much bigger deal in the community and in the media to be on the City Council. There would be headlines. In fact, I saved the newspapers. It would be about that thick if you were to be appointed to the City Council. The TV stations and radio stations covered all of the City Council meetings. You were probably on TV like about nearly every night being interviewed for something if you made it. So anyway, it would be a challenge to get the three votes, because it was pretty competitive to get that appointment.

Again, that was sort of a lesson learned. And what I realized is that with a team like the City Council, and whether it be a political body or in a corporation, it wasn't always your background that was important or what your plan would be when you got there. People on the City Council were looking for you, what kind of teammate would you be to work with.

So, for example, when I met with Commissioner Charles Jordan and made a presentation, I realized that matching up your values and the style that you would have on the City Council in terms of working with integrity and transparency and trust, that those traits would be just as important as what your background was or what your plan was for the city. So, I initially needed to get three votes. I had Connie McCready, temporarily Mildred Schwab, and Charles Jordan would be the third vote. And so, I outlined what my values were and what kind of a teammate I would be on the City Council. And that meeting went well.

Then at the last minute, Commissioner Mildred Schwab decided that she wouldn't support me unless I had the blessing of the statewide labor organizations who were meeting in twenty-four hours in Coos Bay, Oregon. She said, "If you can figure out a way that we can fly down there and they give the blessing, then I'll continue with my support for you."

I knew a person that worked for the city that had access to an airplane and was a pilot. And he flew Mildred and I down to Coos Bay. I met with the labor leaders. They gave their blessing. So, we flew back and the next day *The Oregonian* newspaper also endorsed me for that vacancy. So, then the deal was done at that point.

So, in late September of 1979, they had the final vote and the swearing in ceremony. And I have a lot of pictures of my kids there. And all the friends that we had. So yeah, it was a major point in my life in terms of a change in what I would do.

MY: Can you outline for me the role of the council? Or a general overview about city government structure for someone not from this area?

ML: So, there's a lot of publicity about it right now because there's so much consideration about changing the form of government. So, it was the only large city in the nation that ended up sticking with the commission form of government, where the mayor and four commissioners are elected citywide, but they also have administrative duties that are, so of all the bureaus in the city and the hundreds of million dollar in the budget, which of course the city budget is now up to 6.2 billion. And there were I think at that time about 5,000 employees. There's now about 7,500. So, it meant that a city commissioner ideally would have a management background to be able to supervise not only your own staff, which might include eight or ten people, but to supervise this vast bureaucracy.

So, what did the city commissioner do? Well, the city commissioner would, the assignments were made by the mayor and they still are today. So, you might be in charge of police or fire or emergency services or parks and recreation or arts and culture or environmental services, the sewage system or street maintenance. So, the form of government is very unusual.

MY: Did you ever have such a thing as a typical day or a typical work week as a commissioner?

ML: I would say it was a typical work week. And first of all, I'd say probably at that time, they were kind of like the glory days for the city of Portland in a way. We were recognized nationally as a well-managed city. We had a Triple-A bond rating. We were during that time considered the first city, because this is what was happening in our region of the state too, to have an urban growth boundary. To have really good city planning. To have detailed urban design. To have a downtown program. We were the first city in the nation to form an energy office, to have a detailed plan how to deal with climate change. We were in the top three in terms of promoting alternative transportation, bicycling. We were the first city in the nation to have a light rail system that was great. So, in the setting, say, is that—and also, we had a nationally recognized system of citizen involvement with about ninety-five different neighborhood organizations, which were very, very active.

So, a typical day, I would say a typical week, really, for a City Council member at that time would be probably to work about fifty to sixty hours. Because there were only five elected officials. And all the citizens were calling and writing letters about their different needs and problems. And I was going out to neighborhood associations two or three nights a week. And in addition to sitting in City Council meetings on Wednesday morning, Wednesday afternoon, and Thursday, we had informal meetings on Tuesday. And you had probably a hundred appointment requests a week from various groups to come in and lobby you or meet about different issues. And then you were managing the city bureaus.

At the same time, you were having invitations every night to go out to various banquets and meetings of all the constituencies. So, if it was the annual meeting of Basic Rights, the gay and lesbian community, the Oregon Women's Political Caucus, the League of Environmental Voters. So, there were meeting with all these constituencies, going to all their banquets and supporting them.

MY: You've ended up over the course of your career working for the city for about a quarter of a century under multiple mayors. So, we've already mentioned Neil Goldschmidt, Connie McCready. But also, Frank Ivancie, Bud Clark, and Vera Katz. We're going to talk about your role in specific bureaus. But what are some memories of working for different administrations? What is it like as a commissioner as a new administration comes in?

ML: So, one of the most vivid memories are of these various mayors and their style of working. And I started on the City Council with Frank Ivancie, who basically had a narrow range of advisors, who was quite enjoyable to work with behind the scenes. In the evenings we might go out to dinner or go drinking with him. He'd have grand ideas about, for example, selling our sewage/sludge to Boardman up in the Columbia Gorge. So, he'd call me one day and say, "Hey, let's take a plane up there tomorrow and I'm going to go present this idea to the Boardman county commissioners in that area." So, I'd go on, and go up in the plane with them. So, they didn't think it was that great of an idea to take our sewage/sludge and put it on their agricultural land.

But then he'd come in and say, "Well, you know what? I'm going to invite them into Portland. We'll take them to the Ringside restaurant. We'll wine and dine them" and stuff like that. And we'd do that. So, I had a number of experiences, I won't go into all the details, that were quite enjoyable with him in terms of his sense of humor. But in terms of his philosophy of operating the city, he would be considered sort of the last major conservative political figure. So, he only lasted one term.

And then in 1984 in that election, where I also had a tough election, Bud Clark ran against him. And then Bud Clark brought a whole new era of openness. And many of, some of the things that people would not know about him is that he actually had owned the Goose Hollow Tavern. So, he was very tough in terms of the city budgeting, very detailed, hands-on with that. And we had used up many of our

reserves before that. And he restored the financial reserves and made sure we had the Triple-A bond rating. Developed the first twelve-point program for dealing with the homeless, which was so well-recognized nationally that the City of Portland got a livability award for it.

But at the same time, Bud Clark was bringing some joy and whimsy and kind of celebratory attitude to the city. So, the things that he introduced were the Mayor's Ball that had probably more bands that were in one place inside than any other festival in the history of the United States. And the money first went to paying off his campaign debt, but then helped nonprofits.

Bud Clark, the first day after he was elected was out poling in a canoe on the Willamette River, so that was on the front page of the *New York Times.* Sort of an unorthodox mayor who was a person of the people. And he also introduced like Dress as You Please Day. To connect with rural areas, we might have the mayor of Hermiston bring a bunch of watermelons in at Pioneer Square to show the value of what was done in terms of rural areas to our whole economy. And then have a watermelon seed spitting contest or something like that. So, there were a lot of things that Bud Clark did that really brought some levity and joy to the city. And he was just an incredible person to work with.

MY: What about Vera Katz?

ML: Yes. And Vera came in. And that was the other person when I was on the City Council. Although I have continued to work with in a volunteer capacity with every subsequent mayor up until the current time. And I think I worked with about nine different police chiefs, too, during all this time.

So, Vera, who came in with a theme of "the city that works." So, she was quite more serious about the job. But she also used her experience having been the Speaker of the House of the Oregon legislature to figure out ways that you could work as a team, you could balance the city budget, and she was very innovative in terms of specific projects that were taken on during her time as mayor. For example, we did a lot with the East Bank Esplanade, getting the classical Chinese Garden going. The Pearl District was pretty much developed under her leadership, which required massive amounts of infrastructure. She was extremely personable and really knew how to work with each council member personally. Which her predecessor had done, Bud Clark, too, so it really wasn't much of a change from that standpoint.

But she, as an example, one thing comes to mind. In 1996, there was a flood in the city. And so, she called for, it looked like the water actually might come into the downtown through Waterfront Park. It was that bad of a flood. So, she called for volunteers to build up a plywood seawall there to keep the water at bay. And there was a thousand volunteers that showed up to really get that work done. And it was such a national story that Bill Clinton later came to town and congratulated the volunteerism and her leadership in the city at that time.

The irony and kind of the backstory was, is that I was working years before on actually taking down a seawall in Waterfront Park to make it so when you were in Waterfront Park, you could actually see the water and make it more enjoyable. But the Corps of Engineers would only sign off on that project if I would agree to keep these huge chunks of concrete. And if there was a flood of a hundred-year nature, that we'd bring those out of storage and put them up.

Well, when that flood of 1996 happened, I was still on the Council, I called the people and said, "Looks like it's time to put up that concrete, the seawall again."

They said, "Whoops, we've actually ground those things up and used it to pave the streets," or something like that. So, I really never mentioned it to her because I didn't want to take away the joy of a thousand volunteers and having the president come to town. But it was kind of a foul-up that it caused that, the necessity for having built a temporary seawall.

But Vera was also a big supporter of arts and culture. So, during that time, I had that responsibility myself, she was very supportive in getting a lot more money into the city government support of the arts.

MY: Let's start talking about all of the different areas that you worked in as a commissioner. You've overseen many bureaus. But tell me first how a mayor decides how to assign a bureau or an office to a commissioner.

ML: Of course, every mayor would do it differently. But generally speaking, when a new mayor came in, they would ask the different commissioners what they really wanted to have in terms of an assignment. And then the other variable was they would think about what kind of management skills and experience different commissioners had, which would basically allow them to do an excellent job if they took those assignments. So sometime you'd take the most complex and difficult assignments, which might be the Water Bureau, Bureau of Environmental Services, that would have a $200 million budget. There were some big problems to solve. And those assignments would be given to somebody who had the management experience to deal with it. But eventually what would happen is that there were probably like not only all the major bureaus, but liaison to Commission on Aging, the League of Cities, all these different things. So, there would be three-by-five cards that would be put out in the mayor's conference room. And people would come in, their staff, and say, "What are we going to do with these ninety different assignments?" And you'd take into, factor into what commissioners wanted to do with what you thought their capabilities were.

And I might add with that, the mayor had absolute authority to take all the bureaus under their jurisdiction. Or if they didn't like the job that somebody was doing, a commissioner, they could just

immediately withdraw that assignment, give it to themselves or someone else. I'm going to get another drink of water.

MY: Is it possible to say you might have had a favorite assignment over the years?

ML: There were so many good ones. Like I loved the Water Bureau and Parks and Recreation; I think the two that were my favorite. One was the League of Oregon Cities, which I thought just was fascinating. So, I asked for that assignment. I was on the board of the League of Oregon Cities for sixteen years. And so that's an organization that represents the 243 cities in the state of Oregon. And so being on the board that long, I also became president of the League of Oregon Cities. And was able to get to know mayors, City Council members and city managers all throughout the state. I traveled to many of those cities. I found out their distinct and unique needs that they had and developed just a tremendous respect for all the leadership that was occurring at a grassroots level throughout the whole state of Oregon. And also, it allowed me to represent the city's testifying before the legislature to get involved with the National League of Cities, where I also was on the board and chaired the Energy and Environment Committee and got deeply involved in national energy policy, testifying before Congress, traveling internationally to speak about global climate change and things like that. So, I always felt that a city councilor should do a good job with the assignments they had, but also really needed to look to the region, the state, and nationally in terms of getting the ideas and the support financially to make Portland a better city.

Then the second area which I found the most probably fascinating was arts and culture. So, when Bud Clark was mayor, I had a good relationship with him. So generally, if I asked for something as an assignment, I had a very good chance of getting it. I asked for arts and culture. The first thing that happened was the Performing Arts Center complex was just being finished and was going to be open in just a few months. But there had been no planning for the opening.

So, I pulled a group together in my office of people that were PR professionals and business leaders. And we planned the opening of the Performing Arts Center complex, other than the Schnitzer, which had already opened. And to draw attention to it, we hired Philippe Petit, who was a highwire artist, to walk without a net between the Heathman Hotel and the Performing Arts Center. And I think we had about 50,000 people downtown for that opening, so that was a real success.

Then the second thing was going in and looking at the amount of support that the city was actually giving to the arts organizations. And there were some crises at the time in that the Oregon Symphony was actually having such trouble that they thought that they might have to close for a season or two. So, the board called me in and not knowing where I'd get the money, I said, "I will come up with a solution to it." They needed a million dollars.

So, we went back to my office. And we said, we've got to find it somehow. And it's probably a good time to mention that none of these things that I was working on in any of the bureaus or the things I was able to accomplish couldn't have been done without a tremendous staff, which I had, always just had such remarkable people, people of achievement that had already been successful in other areas.

So anyway, we came up with the idea of borrowing from the golf fund. And the city owned all these golf courses and had a surplus at that time. So, the symphony people were really happy. And probably that was one of the reasons that when I left the City Council that my first job that I had was president of the Symphony Foundation. I always really loved that organization.

But just as important, really, was looking at the role of arts and culture being the soul of the city, being an economic driver, really helping with our tourism. And so, we started Arts Plan 2000+. It had eighty-six specific recommendations. Quadruple the funding for the arts. And all of that really led to Portland being recognized nationally as being very innovative in the ways that we were able to increase funding for the arts. Including an increase in the hotel/motel tax to help the facilities.

Eventually that led, and again, thanks to all the great staff work I had, I was able to be awarded by Governor Roberts to be the Oregon Arts Award for the person who did the most in the public sector for arts in Oregon.

MY: I believe one of your first assignments was emergency management.

ML: Yes. And that kind of was, well, emergency management does have to do with dealing with disasters. And within the first half year that I was in office, or nine months, we were dealt kind of a bad hand in terms of disasters that befell the city. The first thing was the largest snow and ice storm that had probably hit in about fifty years. So, one of the things that I realized just from my own experience in city government is the way that people in office—mayors, council members—handle snow and ice storms probably could result in what kind of fate you had in terms of being successful as an elected official. There were many officials that didn't prepare, for example, for major snowstorms by having enough snowplows or good weather forecasting. And whole cities would be paralyzed. And that would stick in people's minds, not only in reality to cause a hardship, but politically it would be devastating for the people in office. So, I really took great care in preparing for that major snow and ice storm, even though there might be a remote chance it would hit, by having enough snowplows and personnel ready.

And then the second thing that happened was that Mount St. Helens had a volcanic eruption in May of 1980, which I'd just been in office for several months. And again, I had the emergency services assignment and had to make decisions in that role. For example, was the ash going to blow in our direction? And I know the staff came in at one point in time and said, "Well, the ash is coming. You ought to make an announcement that we're closing down the city tomorrow. Nobody can even take

their cars and go to work or travel anywhere." But this was one of those cases where you kind of use your own judgment. And I basically thought that was too drastic and that people wouldn't mind a little bit of ash if it did hit, so we left the city open. But there was a lot of ash removal projects and a variety of things. And there were two different Mount St. Helens eruptions.

And one of them, by the way, I had a very good friend who was a nature photographer who was smothered by the ash when he was up there. He was one of my best friends and whitewater rafting buddies that had a dream of photographing volcanoes. And so, when that one happened, he went up there and passed away. But not before he had, even as the ash was coming his way, was able to take pictures of all the way and then bury his camera in the dirt so it could be preserved. I know, a lot of dramatic things that happened at that time.

MY: I'm going to talk about your work with the Water Bureau. You were involved in launching some water conservation programs. And that's another related to the drought, speaking of emergency management.

ML: Right. And it was actually another… I guess a lot of freak things seemed to happen when I was on the City Council, because in 1992—well, first kind of go back and say water was taken for granted in Oregon. I mean, look at all the water around us. You've got Bull Run as a source, main source of water. We've got a lot of rainfall. And so, the attitude has always been water in the Northwest that were operating from a philosophy of abundance. But the reality is things are a lot more fragile than that as we've found with time, as time has gone on with global climate change.

So, in 1992, for example, and we've got Bull Run Watershed in Mount Hood area, and that water coming in. And then as a backup, we've got wells that we can go to in the Columbia South Shore. Unfortunately, those wells can also have some contaminants because they'd been built when there was some industries above that had some pollutants that went into the ground. So, they had some limited uses. But that year we basically had to cut our water usage so much, and that was even in May of 1992, because there was such a bad drought. We had to ask people not to water their lawns.

And kind of a funny thing, because I remember myself, I said well, we've got to bring it to people's attention. So, I get in a car, and I think the press was with me. And we'd go out and see if we could catch people watering their lawn. I wouldn't really—I mean, there was a fine for doing it. But mainly I'd go up and knock on their door and say, "You really aren't supposed to be doing this." It was just to get attention to how drastic the situation was. But there never had really been, there was also a movement in the long-term water planning to go into the Willamette River, which some jurisdictions did. But it was my own feeling there were too many uncertainties in terms of the kind of pollutants that were in the Willamette River. So, it was not something that I really supported and it's not part of the city

plan now. Because if you take water out of the Willamette, you have to have very large treatment plants and filter plants to make sure you have, that it meets all the health standards. And my own feeling has always been that there are a lot of unknowns in terms of both groundwater pollution and what's in rivers. And there's things that maybe we don't even know about in a certain point in time which we later find out would have been harmful to our health.

And the other thing was promoting water conservation. Which the incentive in the past had been, rather than water conservation, people who ran the Water Bureau said it's really good to sell as much water as you can. Because the more volume you're selling, you can actually keep the water rates down lower for the citizens in the city of Portland. So, we did get a lot of different water conservation programs initiated.

MY: You were also involved in protecting the Bull Run Watershed, weren't you?

ML: Right. One of the great memories that I have, and again, all these things are never done without excellent staff work and support. And work from the agencies themselves is working with Congressman Ron Wyden to protect the Bull Run Watershed and ban logging in the watershed. It sounds like it would really make sense. But the logging had gone on for a long time. And the different city agencies had been working with the Forest Service, who actually would sell the timber and then give the City of Portland Water Bureau a certain part of the resources there. So, and most people felt, I think, in the Water Bureau that you could probably still do that and protect the watershed. My own feeling at that time, and I know Ron Wyden's feeling was, that it kind of was, it was better policy to not have logging there. Because if you have logging, it's just sort of, and I'd learned this from when I was a kid and my uncle was a logger outside of Astoria, I'd go up where they were cutting the old growth down. If it was too close to streams, you'd get silt and sediment. And that's the way I felt it was working in the Bull Run Watershed. And that silt and sediment would go down into the reservoirs there. And then you'd have to cut off that supply until it was acceptable.

MY: I'm just going to keep going through the parts of the city you've worked for, because you've worked in almost every bureau. But talk to me about Environmental Services, some of the projects you were involved in. You had mentioned Portland was ahead of its time with some of its environmental work.

ML: Right. And again, I want to make sure, that I always had a say in, in fact, at one point in time I got an award from Portland State called the Urban Pioneer Award for a lot of the things I worked on in the city.

But the first part of that speech, I said, "It's always 'we' rather than 'I,' because there's nothing that we achieve in this city without really great staff work and also working with citizens."

Environmental Services, when I first went to work for the city and was in charge of Public Works, it was just called the Sewer Department. And its main goal was to take care of like when you flush your toilet, everything went to the sewage treatment plant that is processed, it's discharged into the river. And then dealing with drainage when there was rainwater.

Well, as time went on, we realized that there were a lot of pollutants in the Willamette River. And we had both federal EPA requirements and DEQ requirements to clean up that river. So, what was happening, in fact there was a lawsuit that resulted in the court saying that we had to clean up 99 percent of the pollutants that went into the Willamette River. So how do those pollutants get into the Willamette River? When there are heavy rainfall, the sewage system did not have big enough pipes to handle both the sewage and the drainage. So, there would be sewer overflows many times per year that would then include the sewage that was actually going directly into the Willamette River.

So, in a collaborative process working with the Department of Environmental Quality, we came up with a program to get rid of 95 percent of all of the sewage overflows. And the reality, and that project cost $1.2 billion and involved substantial rate increases to citizens of Portland to achieve it. And one other thing with that, it was kind of a lesson learned, too, in terms of the courts and DEQ and EPA said we had to remove 99 percent. But that was maybe going to cost 1.8 billion. But if we did 95 percent, it might only cost 1.2 billion, let's say.

So, to get support for that, I traveled around the state and visited with all the environmental quality commissioners personally. We agreed to set up a model collaborative process between the City of Portland and the regulatory agency to hear a lot of scientific presentations to sit on a panel and see if we couldn't concur with them on something that would be more cost-effective, which was the 95 percent cleanup. It sounds like kind of an obscure thing, but it saved the rate payers hundreds of millions of dollars and ended up with, what is happening right now there's rarely a sewer overflow. And the end result of all of that is that not only is there more recreation and swimming in the Willamette. We just recently had The Big Float, that had thousands of people down swimming in the Willamette. And in fact, my interest in that area, after leaving the City Council I joined the board of, helped found Willamette Riverkeepers. And I'm now on the board of trustees of the Human Access Project, which encourages swimming in the Willamette itself and docks and access and really celebrating this wonderful river that runs right through the core of the city.

MY: I want you to talk me through some of the work you did at the city energy office. Because Portland was doing some early climate change sustainability efforts.

ML: Well, there I had the good fortune of we had the mayor Neil Goldschmidt having seen that energy was going to be a big issue, had gotten a grant from the Housing and Urban Development to have the city form an energy office and development the first energy policy in the United States. And so, that policy was adopted in the last week that he was in office in September of 1979. But it was something that I was highly interested in. So, all the time I was on the City Council, I had the assignment of the energy office, which started really with the adoption of that policy but then later really got into global climate change and sustainability.

So, we had some tremendous accomplishments. Getting federal grants, again, with the help of our congressional delegation and Ron Wyden, in particular, forming a nonprofit called PECI, which basically gave grants to businesses where we went in, did audits of how we could make all our businesses in the city of Portland more competitive, and to cut their energy use. That was very successful. And then we also really worked internally in the city of Portland to cut our own energy use. And we were able to save a million dollars a year in the city budget by reducing our energy use.

So, after we focused on energy efficiency, everybody in the, nationally, at least, not everybody, but the people who were, let's say again on the crest of the wave, way, way back, were recognizing that energy use was one of the things that created the emissions that caused global climate change. So, we started working with the United Nations Environmental Program and the US Department of Energy to try to see if we couldn't make Portland a model for dealing with climate change early on. What were the specific actions? So, we were the first city in the United States to develop a very specific climate change action plan of all the things we could do from recycling to transportation, to do our part to deal with climate change.

So, what happened was, and it's interesting, I just saw in the paper within the last week where that's updated and their city staff are still one of the leaders nationally in that area. We had, in fact I remember getting the letter from the head of the EPA, Carol Browner at that time, saying, "Congratulations, you're the first city to do this."

The interesting part was it was an opportunity for me, too, professionally to do some of the most exciting things. Portland was such a good model that we basically, we were asked to appear at the United Nations. And I can remember it specifically because I made a presentation in the chambers where the United Nations meet. But it was an international conference. It was on my fiftieth birthday. So, I'm eighty-one now. So, I can remember it was thirty-one years ago we were in telling the things that we'd done and should be doing in terms of climate change.

And also, that led to being involved with some international organizations. So, I went on a speakers' bureau and spoke in other countries around the world, in Portugal and Japan, other places, in terms of what Portland was doing. You might say we took the Portland story internationally, and it really helped our brand and reputation. And people started saying, wow, that's a city that is on, again, the crest of the wave in terms of innovation.

MY: I want to stick to this international thread. Because you were involved in making Portland a more internationally recognized city, as you just outlined. But also, you were involved in creating some sister city relationships.

ML: Yes. And again, the sister cities came out of, there had to be a desire on the part of citizens' groups that would form their own association, like the Portland Guadalajara Sister City Association. And one of the first ones, sister city program, was started under President Eisenhower way back in the '50s. And the purpose was, after World War II there was quite a bit of anti-Japanese sentiment, so he thought really what we ought to do is try to have a sister city program which didn't have economic aims at first. It was to promote peace and understanding by having citizens, average citizens, travel back and forth between these different cities. So, the Portland-Sapporo, Japan Sister City was one of the first ones that was formed in the United States.

So, when I went on the City Council, I'd ask the different mayors, whether it was Bud Clark or Vera Katz, whether I could focus some of my time on the importance of these relationships internationally. And so, I was able to go to Russia when we signed an agreement with Khabarovsk; to go to Taiwan, where we signed an agreement with Kaohsiung. And that led to them giving us a bunch of the first dragon boats that we had. I was able to go to, sent by Bud Clark one time. He said, "Can you go to China with a small delegation and look for the perfect sister city?" So, we traveled to several places with a small group and we ended up choosing Suzhou, China. Well, that had the blessing, because on that first trip I was able to go to a garden that the Lan Su Classical Chinese Garden here is patterned on. And because of the support of Mayor Katz really raising a lot of the money for that.

And then also on that trip to China, we went to Fuzhou, where we saw something that was like Salmon Street Springs. The director of PDC was on that trip. And I said, "We ought to go back to Portland and develop our own fountain that people can gather around. It would be great for building community."

And that was one of the things that I saw in these trips. Every trip, whether it be to Guadalajara or whether it be to these sister cities in China or Japan, I would always keep my eyes open for things that they were doing that might really be transferable to the city of Portland in terms of projects. Those projects might relate to energy efficiency. But frequently they were things like—

So, anyway, I went to something like seven sister cities, signed a number of the agreements. But it wasn't my initiative, it's important to know. These were citizens of Portland said we ought to have one with Bologna, Italy. The one with Guadalajara had existed for a long time to establish that close relationship between the Latino community in Mexico and in the United States. I actually had the honor

of even going to the one in Ashkelon, Israel, that needed some more cementing in terms of their relations, that resulted in a two-week trip through Israel.

So, all of these things I think added to what I'm going to call the education of a city commissioner. So, you had more of a worldview. In fact, that worldview is such at a certain point in time I was working nationally with a bunch of other elected officials. And we thought we ought to use the power of cities even toward more peace. And there was a, the United States at that time, under the Reagan administration, was supporting the overthrow of the Nicaraguan government. So, I went with a delegation to Corinto, Nicaragua. We established a sister city and had the mayor of Corinto, which it was the first time he'd kind of left that city, come and speak to the City Club here. And at least people develop a perspective of what it was like in these more undeveloped countries.

MY: Well related to Lan Su, I'm going to talk about your involvement as the liaison with arts and sports facilities. That' s an example of an arts and culture-related facility.

ML: Yes. First of all, let's me talk about the sports, first. Because I think, one of the things, that was of course a wonderful, if you're a sports fan, exciting assignment to have. The liaison to the Coliseum, which are run first by the ER commission and then by Merck and then the Rose Garden, which is now called the Moda Center. So, I was on the team working with Bud Clark to negotiate with Paul Allen, now it's Jody Allen owns that, or is the leader of that, since his death. So that was a tough negotiation that went on for months and had dozens of attorneys and everything to have the Rose Center built. So that was really quite an achievement for the city of Portland because it was a $262 million project at that time. And the city's share was only 34 million, which was actually paid back by bonds from parking revenues. So, the interesting part of that was, we had Paul Allen funding at that time, which was a state-of-the-art facility where there was really basically no city funds that weren't being paid back. And comparing that to other arenas that were built all around the United States, in the majority of cases, the city government ended up putting up most of the money to get new sports facilities. So that was good.

And then in terms of the arts facilities, there was the Performing Arts Center, which I mentioned. Which actually I talked about it being open, but what I didn't talk about is well how do you operate a performing arts center in perpetuity and keep it maintained, have rent levels which are reasonable for arts groups to perform. So that problem goes on to today. But I've spent a lot of time trying to work on alternative funding to make sure that those facilities were well-maintained and you had reasonable rent facilities. It seems like kind of an obscure kind of area. But if your rents are too high and the symphony or other theater groups can't really afford to perform in there, then the whole idea of that investment means that you've kind of wasted your money if you can't keep it open.

So that was just one area that I worked on a lot. I don't know what else to really say about it.

MY: Well, I just think about there are such Portland landmarks that you've been involved in. Another one is Pioneer Courthouse Square.

ML: Right. And that was when I first went on the City Council, I'd only been on for a few months, there had been planning that had been done and an international design competition to build Pioneer Square. And it would probably shock people right now because they'd look at Pioneer Square and they'd assume that was always something that was going to be done, that was easy to do. But as a matter of fact, it was extremely controversial. Because a number of people in the business community that owned property nearby were concerned about Pioneer Square being taken over by the homeless and transients and being kind of an eyesore rather than something the city could be proud of. So, they wanted an enclosed facility that you'd charge, that people would have to pay to get inside. It might be something like a botanical garden or something that would have bird life in it or something like that.

But working with the people who'd won the design competition and working with citizen groups—myself, my office—worked very hard to make sure that we stayed, the most expensive piece of property in the city, Pioneer Square, was one that would be totally open to the public and one where you could have events that would go on, two-thirds of the day of the year you'd be having music or festivals or something like that.

But that was quite a struggle. And it involved, I was co-chair of the campaign to raise the funds for it with Commissioner Charles Jordan. And also, we started the brick campaign, which ended up selling more than fifty thousand bricks. And once we started selling those bricks and you could see the city of Portland citizens were invested in that project, there was no way that it was going to be turned around at the City Council level.

So, we did have big hearings, and we had a vote. And eventually the City Council voted unanimously to go ahead with that design which people enjoy today.

MY: It was a parking lot before that, wasn't it?

ML: Yes. It had been the Portland, so what had happened historically it was the Portland Hotel, which was sort of the premiere hotel in Portland. That was torn down. And it had been a parking lot for many, many years. And that was kind of an eyesore. So, it was started under Mayor Goldschmidt getting federal funding. And then you had the federal funding and city funding and you had the brick sales and all of that coming together to make it work.

MY: I don't know if you saw in the questions, we had shared that *The Oregonian* described it as your first political battle and it represented your quest for social justice, embodied your value of public amenities, and provided an everyman's stage for the cultural life you love.

ML: Well, I wish I'd written that. That sounds pretty good. But I think it was the social justice aspect to it in that you take the most expensive piece of property in the city and it was going to be open to the public, rather than something you had to pay to get into. But it was a bigger battle than people remember.

MY: They were just showing movies there last night. They started that again.

ML: Oh, did they? Oh, good. Yeah.

MY: And they've got food carts. And I know that people use it all the time. It's a lovely part of the city. I want to talk about your work with Parks and Recreation. So, you mentioned East Bank Esplanade with Mayor Katz. I also have a note about Springwater Corridor, Waterfront Park you mentioned, renovation of the Park Blocks, and first park levy in forty years got passed. So, talk me through some of that, your work for Parks and Rec.

ML: So, in 1985, when Bud Clark became mayor and he said, "What assignments would you like to have?" I thought oh, gee, I'd love to work with Parks and Recreation, because I think it's kind of a joyous assignment. Well, one of the things that at that time we didn't know, you had a couple of things operating. One, Portland's economy was not that good. There were a lot of budget cuts. Ballot Measure 5 had passed, which meant that we had to have further budget cuts. The federal government cut revenue sharing. President Reagan had gone to one meeting where he spoke and he said, "I will never cut revenue sharing to the city" and everybody cheered. But a few months later, he did. And that meant we had to cut our budgets again. So, Parks was always under pressure.

But in spite of that, we were able to do some really great things; new parks out in East Portland, like Powell Butte, Ed Benedict Park, Ventura Park, preparing for Cully Park, which is happening today.

And then one of the I think big accomplishments was the East Bank Esplanade. So, when I was Parks commissioner, there was a lot of pressure of people saying well it's in such a bad location—excuse

me, this is, the water bottle is popping. So, we'll take care of that. So anyway, so in spite of the controversy with the East Bank Esplanade, where some people said it would just be a waste of money to put a park down close to a major freeway because nobody would want to be there if there was noise that was adjacent to it. And also, it was sort of a hangout at that point in time for people who, let's say, were homeless or something.

But as Parks commissioner, I made sure that we got the planning money so that we could have a design to do that. and then that followed, as it often happened with the projects I worked on, when Mayor Katz was mayor, she became mayor, she went down with the Parks director at that time or they kind of looked at it. And Vera Katz said, "We will get this done. It's just too beautiful not to have a trail and a park on that side." So that resulted in what we have.

And the same thing happened with actually the Springwater Corridor. So, when I went on the council, there was something called the Forty Mile Loop, which was really a 140-mile loop of walking trails and bicycle trails through the city that are all connected. But what wasn't connected was Springwater Corridor. With some great work on the part of staff people in my office, they were able to work with property owners and other jurisdictions to be able to get the final links so that the Springwater Corridor would connect with the East Bank Esplanade.

And there were a lot of other things that were done in the parks at that time. And some of the things are just so kind of crazy when I think of the stories that happened. Bill Naito was the chair of every election in my four elections in the city. And I had a very good relationship with him. He'd call me sometimes just to talk about what a glorious day it was, don't we have a grand city, or something like that.

But he called me one day and he said, "I've got an offer from a group in Japan to provide cherry trees for all along Waterfront Park, in the north part."

And I said, "That sounds like a great idea. I think we ought to do it."

And he said, "Well, there are a bunch of city ordinances, things that need to be approved."

I said, "Well, let's just go ahead and do it. Say yes to the cherry trees. We'll get them in." And then sometime when I drive by or I walk by and look at those cherry blossoms that come out at a certain time of year, I'm thinking, again, it's one of those things not that I did it, but it was somebody, it was basically Bill Naito working with people in Japan that got those donated.

MY: Yeah, it's part of that Japanese American Memorial Plaza.

ML: Yes. And that was another thing that was approved. When Waterfront Park was first approved, the idea was to really have more of a grassy park where you wouldn't have too many monuments, structures. You would have some, you know, festivals, like the Rose Festival there.

Well, as time went on, there were other things that came in. A police memorial. There was the Japanese memorial, which is such a phenomenal educational piece in terms of what happened during that era. So, we did start approving a number of different things that was going to make the city just like, again, it had to do with social justice, a knowledge of history, which a lot of us felt were so important.

MY: You've mentioned staff repeatedly. So, can you walk me through what your staff structure was like when you were a city commissioner? How many people were working directly for you?

ML: So, there were, in my office you'd generally have like about eight to ten people on the staff. And one of the things that I did was I figured, so I read about, in terms of good management, you'd try to hire people that were smarter than you were. So, I was able to hire people that really had PhDs. I hired people that had, Steve Lowenstein was an executive assistant that published books, had been in Ethiopia setting up a legal system, had been in South America doing that. So, it was clear like when I would interview these people, I'd say oh my God, these people are blowing me away. So, there were really dozens of people over those seventeen years that I hired.

And one of the measures of that is that not only were they outstanding staff people in City Hall, is how many of them went on to careers that were the head of the Energy Trust for the city, for example, one of my staff people. So, they basically ended up being very successful in their own right. It wasn't really something because they were working for me.

And I think that one of the things we did that was unusual is that I didn't just sort of hire people because they looked good on paper. But I had all the other staff people in the office interview anybody that was being considered to join that team. And the reason I did that is I kind of knew that it had to operate as a team. Filling in for each other, supporting each other. We had brainstorming sessions together. We had a lot of annual, semi-annual retreats to figure out what we were going to try to achieve. And if that wasn't working in harmony as a group, that the whole thing could really collapse.

MY: It sounds like relationships have been important throughout your life and your career, starting with your foundation of your family.

ML: Right. And you know, it is interesting in that one of the questions probably for a later interview has to do with the pros and cons of being a City Council member. But I'll kind of work it in now. Is that probably if somebody listened to this interview or looked at my files in the City of Portland Archives, which is something like 286 boxes of papers from projects we worked on, they might say wow, it seems like that job was all-consuming. Well at the same time you're working as a city commissioner, you have your personal life. You've got your marriage or marriages. You have your basically kids, grandkids. You've got your friendships to maintain. So, it's always kind of a really, kind of a push-pull situation where there's tremendous sacrifices that not only I made in terms of the time that was spent with my family, but what I would see in terms of other commissioners and mayors that I worked with. I could get a firsthand, kind of behind-the-scenes of the impact those jobs were having on their relationships, which were always kind of under pressure, frankly. And you kind of see that. You see people in politics that are, it used to look like it was glamorous at one point in time. Now people in politics are kind of under siege from citizens who are unhappy about what's going on. But I certainly saw a lot of people that went through a lot of challenges because of the demands of the job.

MY: You said in the beginning an average week was about fifty to sixty hours?

ML: Yeah, I think if you were, you know, the basic forty-hour week is something that never really happened. Because I would—in fact, one of the things I did when I left office, I actually spent some time figuring out how many meetings I'd gone to. It totaled up to 35,000. Because the City Council met. And then you'd have all these other individual meetings. And then you'd go out to all these banquets. And then you were working every weekend. And I kind of extrapolated that after doing a one-year study of what my schedule was. And so it would be, frequently those would start like at 7:30 in the morning and you might end up, your schedule would end about like nine o'clock at night. And then you'd have just a—and then at that point in time, too, and it's something I've talked with the current City Council members about, because I know how demanding the jobs are now, of trying to maintain that standard and have a culture of customer service. So, we had certain standards of we would return all phone calls from citizens within forty-eight hours. We didn't even have email when I started. So, somebody sent a letter to you or they had a phone call, you had to respond to those very quickly. Sometimes that meant staying till seven in the evening, coming down on a Saturday with the list of phone calls that needed to be returned. But I felt in that job there was a responsibility to get back to everybody.

And I think, too, and the city has grown, so the job, it's a larger city, it's more complex because of the nature of the problems we have. But I also felt a lot of the citizens deserved to be able to come and see me personally, or I should go out to their home or their business and look at what their issue or problems were. So, it seems kind of crazy maybe at the current time with the size of the city being it is now. But I would go out, if somebody said, "There's potholes on the street. The buses go over them, it

causes my house to shake." I'd say, "Oh, okay, well, I'll schedule to go out and see what it feels like sitting in your living room."

In fact, I ran into somebody the other day. They stopped me in the street and said, "I can't believe it. I really appreciated the races were going on out in North Portland at Portland International Raceway. And I remember that you came out and sat in my backyard on race day." Because the neighborhoods were complaining about the sound level, that it was affecting their quality of life out there. But that's just kind of the way that I felt that the job should be done. As I say, I'm not questioning the people now. They are working as hard as they can doing the best that they can right now with the current situation. But it made the job very personal in that way.

And probably realistically, I didn't think about doing it for political reasons, but it's probably also why I was able to get elected and reelected four different times. And by the time I left my last election, I had about 80 percent of the people voting for me. So maybe it did pay off politically.

MY: I think you were for a long time the longest-running commissioner. And you were surpassed—

ML: By Dan Saltzman eventually, that's right. Yeah. Yeah.

MY: What about media access? I tried to do some research ahead of our interview in *The Oregonian* since it's all been digitized. But there were I think 2,000 articles that came up with your name as city commissioner. So, it was quite a mountain to get through. Did the media follow you around when you were doing work?

ML: Yes, as a matter of fact. Well, when I started on the City Council, that whole situation with the media was different, as I mentioned, because all the TV stations were in every meeting. The radio stations were there. And in fact, interesting enough, that was one of the things that led to, the marriage I'm in right now is to a person that, Carolyn Meyers Lindberg was a radio reporter for KXL. And she was covering City Hall for several years and that's how I met her, which led to getting married.

So, people at that point in time, citizens, had a real close-up idea. So, I remember the time when it really started changing. And that is that the media became less interested in that and more of the evening news was spent on crime and pets and kind of interesting stories like that. And I do remember one time when there were two ordinances up. One was to adopt a budget of several billion dollars. And we did that at like nine thirty in the morning. And there were no TV cameras or anybody there. But then at eleven o'clock we had an ordinance that was basically going to make it legal to raise suckling pigs in

the city as a pet. So, all of a sudden, every TV station was in there, and the radio stations, because that's the kind of story that seemed more glamorous. Now I'm not criticizing the people who are in the media; I'm saying that is something that happened nationally in terms of the change in the phenomena. But yes, I think the thing that was so interesting there is that that accessibility could also be very exhausting. Some of the people I'm still in contact with now had worked in radio, for example, and started their shows at six in the morning. So, at 7:00 AM, they might call me at home and get me on live to talk about something that was going on in the city. And I just thought well that was something that we should do. I didn't think I should have a private, unlisted number and kind of be able to sleep in sometimes. They might call at 6:00 AM.

So, you had that. and then you had a much greater scrutiny when you were out after work, in the evenings. You're running into people. The media might call you at 11:30 at night, have a deadline for *The Oregonian* that was going to be published for the next day. So anyway, that's the way it was.

MY: Was your phone number in the phone book?

ML: Well, so I'm probably so old there was actually a phone book, right? Everybody had my number. Yeah, I think it was in the phone book at that time. Because I would get calls at home from citizens. It's funny. Because I spoke at the memorial recently for Bud Clark. And when I was looking historically through the archives as to what other mayors had done, he had referred to a mayor in the early 1900s that actually had, would take calls at home all the way up through the evening and everything like that. So, it was more typical. And I think for good reasons in terms of having some privacy, in terms of there, over time there were more security issues, too. And there were some when I was there where you basically had threats from different people, people following you around, maybe thinking that I saw you on TV and I know you weren't telling the truth all the time. And if I beat your head against the wall, you probably would. They might tell the police or something like that.

And we did have a lot of unfortunate adventures, because we also had a lot of hate crimes. It was a time where the skinheads were big. I remember being almost run off the road one time, a person tried to run me off the road because I had a "Celebrate Diversity" sticker on my bumper sticker. It was kind of like a rainbow. And I was driving down to Salem to testify. And a car followed me and I had to get up to 110 miles an hour to outrun it. And they tried to run me off a road. It was like kind of a painter's truck or something like that. Because of that sign.

And I did have to have the police put a button in my house and give me personal protection for a while. Because the skinheads had had a call to action against me when I'd had some City Council sessions that focused on hate crimes. I thought everybody really ought to publicly know just what every group from the Jews to gays and lesbians, Hispanic community were putting up with in terms of the

number of hate crimes that were going on in the city. But it got the skinheads all excited and they decided they had a call to action against me. So, we had to have some police protection there for a while.

MY: You were commissioner when Mulugeta Seraw was murdered.

ML: Right. It was right after that. So, because of Mulugeta Seraw, we really mobilized as a community to see, we're not basically going to be a place where we basically tolerate hate groups coming in and dominating the conversation and intimidating other people. That was during that time when the skinheads were sort of, I'm going to say prominence, but they rose to being a real presence in the city.

MY: And related to that, were you involved in, or could you be as a commissioner, work against Ballot Measure 9?

ML: Yes. Right. I was very involved in that. In fact, I can to this day see the visual of the group that was opposing Ballot Measure 9 coming into my office. And they knew I was going to be working, helping on their campaign. But they said, "Well, how much, can you make a contribution?"

I said, "Oh, I can, yeah."

They said, "How big's your credit card limit?" Or something like that.

But yes, I was very active in that. And then also ended up, as did some other council members, hiring a gay man, Keeston Lowery on my staff, who, when he was on my staff, there were certain people that demanded he be fired because our office was working on ordinances that had to do with domestic partnerships and healthcare and things like that. So, I kind of got in the middle of a lot of the things that had to do with gay and lesbian rights and what now we call transgender rights.

MY: I think that this is a good place for us to stop in this first interview. And we'll take a break for lunch. And then we'll come back and do sort of like a wrap-up of your time at City Council and then what you've been doing since. How does that sound?

ML: Sounds good. Thank you.

MY: Going back to what we discussed this morning, I'm hoping you can walk me through a few things that you brought up. And the first is campaign for reelection. How does that impact your job as a city commissioner?

ML: Well, in a very positive way. Because that's the way that you get feedback as to answer that question how I am doing. And I think campaigns are a wonderful way for people to refine their point of view in terms of their—and really develop in some detail as to how they would address problems in the City of Portland. And I think if it's a tough campaign, the tougher really the better that it is in terms of developing the skills of the candidate, which makes people a better city commissioner.

And I'll give you an example. I think I went through the toughest campaign in 1984. And had formidable opposition. But what that did was people kept saying, "Oh, this is really good for you. This is good for you." I was saying, oh, how? I've got to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars. I've got to go through stressful debates. I've got to work even longer hours.

Well, it turned out that it was good. Because what it forced me to do was to be more precise in terms of exactly what I wanted to do if I were elected and how I was going to get that done. It was good to really go back and help me to evaluate the things I'd done in my last term and take a hard look at myself. Whether I'd been, say, a strong enough leader.

But the things that happened then were I happened to have a person walk into my office who'd been the speech writer for former governor Tom McCall. And he said, "Oh, you haven't met me but my name's Carl Ritchie. And I'm volunteering my time. I've been kind of following what your views are and I like what you're doing."

So, I said, oh my gosh, the speechwriter for Tom McCall? He gave some great speeches. Yes. it was a volunteer job. And then I had to strengthen my public speaking ability. And so, I had the director of the Urban League, who was a friend, Herb Cawthorne, come in and really put me through grueling speech lessons, rehearsing speeches over and over, which he would critique, getting ready for debates. And that definitely made me a better candidate. But it also really made me a better city commissioner. Because what that meant is that when I had things that I wanted to achieve that I thought were good for the city, I was a better public speaker to go out and advocate for those ideas, to have a more prominent role in the community and in the media.

I also liked Herb. He was a friend. But it was free. All I had to do was to pay him in brandy. So anyway, that was good.

And I think going through the debates were really good for me. Because what that meant, you just had to be under really intense pressure. Those were on television. You had to be ready to fight for

what you believed in. So, I think that really strengthened me in terms of just personally, in terms of my own confidence in public speaking.

And then the other thing was, in terms of going out and raising money and getting volunteers, that also really helped me. Because that forced me to go out and let's say be more aggressive in presenting my case to people to see if they'd support me financially. And to see if they'd volunteer to do coffees or go door to door on my campaign.

I had the good fortune of having somebody that I'd gone to college with that I'd mentioned earlier was in my fraternity named Tom Moore who'd been a stockbroker. When I called him to ask for money, he said, "No, but I'll tell you how I became a really great salesman and stockbroker by selling stock on the phone. If you want to know my technique for raising money."

I said, "Come on into my office." And through that I learned how to have a smile on my face with a mirror, with a rose pinned to myself. To have condensed pitches. And did extraordinary things when calling people who I didn't know at all, were cold calls. I'd even go through the yellow pages and look up businesses and call the number and get a name and start talking to people. And was able to raise a lot of money. And all of that, I think, helped broaden my support. Meaning when you are reelected and there's things that you want to do, you've got a broader reach in the community.

MY: You were elected to four-year terms. And at what point in the terms are you starting with your reelection campaign process?

ML: Well, they say, when you're in Congress, they say you start the fundraising a week or two after your next election, and you probably set aside an hour or two every day. But in the Portland City Council, I think you wait till you get about twelve or eighteen months out. You kind of, if you're fortunate to have the money, maybe do some polling. You listen to some advisors who can give you a realistic view of what your chances are the next time. You try to survey the field and see who might be running against you. And taking all that into account, you might start twelve to eighteen months.

But you really are, in a way, working all the time. Because what you realize is that you can't just get money from people and then say, "Oh, see you again in four years." So, what I would do is get together groups of people who had been strong supporters with luncheons of four, six, eight people and do that frequently during the four-year term when I wasn't in a campaign mode to get their ideas as to how are we doing, what should we do in the city that we aren't doing now, and things like that.

MY: I want to spend the next few questions talking about how things changed during your tenure at the city. And you had mentioned learning to use email as one thing. So, talk to me about how that changed, email, computers, over your time.

ML: Yes. Well, since I went into office in 1979, and I think email came in in about '82 or something like that. So, what we were dealing with primarily were you're dealing with regular phones. We did have cell phones for emergencies, different kind of phones and beepers and stuff like that.

But what we were dealing with when I first went into office is standards that we set for responding to people who called the office or who wrote letters or who took the time to actually come by the office, which is another interesting thing. Because City Hall was such an open place at that time that people could just walk down to City Hall, say, "I'm going to go see a city commissioner." They didn't have to go through the intense security measures that they have now. They'd be able to go up to the office and say, "You think the commissioner would have a few minutes? If not, I'll leave you my number" or something.

So, you had letters. You had phone calls. You had people stopping in. But you also had people contacting you when you went about your daily life. So, in addition to the formal meetings in the evenings, when I went to a movie, when I went out to dinner somewhere, when I went to see a play, whatever it was, I basically took pencil and paper. And if people came up to me, I wrote down what their problem was and how to get a hold of them. And I would look into it.

MY: What about when email came around?

ML: Well, so then when email came around, we set up standards immediately for how quickly we would respond—forty-eight hours max, twenty-four. Even if we couldn't totally solve the problem, we wanted to make sure we could get back to people, knew it was something we were working on. And recognizing this is where a really good staff came in and also your bureaus. You recognize that a city commissioner cannot personally dig into every problem and get back to every citizen. So sometime I would say, call somebody and say, "I got your message. I've got a staff person that's working on it. And they're going to get back to you in the next couple of days." Or somebody from one of my bureaus were. The important thing was to make sure that people knew they had access to City Hall. Whether you were out walking down the street, going to, sitting eating lunch in a restaurant. So, I actually didn't set up the barriers to people. I said, you can approach me in a restaurant or line. Maybe not when the movie was going on in the movie theater.

MY: What about hearings or citizen testimony at hearings? Did that change at all during your tenure?

ML: Yes. I think during my tenure, but what I've noticed even more so is how much that's changed even after I left. So, one of the things that we've always prided ourselves on back in the 1980s and '90s was making the city easy for people to testify. So, people didn't even necessarily have to sign up in advance. They could come down. There was a subject. And they would just raise their hand, walk up to the microphone. First it was five minutes. I think by the time I left City Hall it was getting down to three minutes.

But what has happened since that time, unfortunately, and due to probably a larger city, more citizens, a lot of different factors. Sometimes not everybody gets to testify or they're asked to do it in two minutes. Or maybe not everybody even can use two minutes to testify. The mayor or somebody will say everybody that's on a certain side, put up your hand for or against. But it's become I think more difficult in many ways to provide input to the City Council.

MY: Can you walk me through an average council meeting? What are the protocols that have to be observed?

ML: Well, when I did go to, when I started at the City Council, they'd have an agenda. It was quite formalized. And no matter how much time it took, you just would start on the first side at Wednesday morning at 9:30 and you'd just kind of make your way through. If a citizen came down, they didn't even know what time their item might came up. So, one thing that I had introduced was something called time certain. And that is that no matter what was on the agenda, if we said a certain item was at 9:30 or 10:30, then it guaranteed that somebody wouldn't have to leave their work for hours and hours. They would come down to get on that item.

So basically, Wednesday it's usually from 9:30 to noon, from two to five. And Thursday afternoons. And the protocol is when there's an issue like a really hot-button issue before the City Council, usually what happens is the staff in the bureau that's responsible for that would make a presentation. And then City Council would ask questions. And then the citizens would testify.

Now the one thing that I found in my experience is there's just a tremendous amount of wisdom out in the community that citizens have. And it's extremely important to get all the input that people want to provide, whether they're providing it during that council meeting, whether they're sending you letters or emails or stopping you. You're getting your finger on the pulse of the community. And also having an opportunity maybe to influence a decision you're making another way. Like maybe you say

well I still think we ought to do X, Y, and Z, but maybe it should be modified based on what I heard from the citizens.

MY: One mechanism we have in Portland for citizens to get involved are neighborhood associations. Correct?

ML: Yes. And—

MY: Walk me through the role of—

ML: Yes. so, what happened was, and this is probably the advantage of being somewhat of an old-timer in that I went to work for the city in 1973. So, neighborhood associations were formed that year. And the Mayor Neil Goldschmidt really made that initiative. So, what happened was, I was on the first interview panel hiring the first director forty-five years ago. So, at one point in time in the last few years, I wrote a forty-five-year history of all of the roles of neighborhood associations, roles that they played in terms of their relationship with the council.

First of all, I would say that Portland had a nationally recognized citizen participation process. It's a city where it's easy to get involved. And neighborhood associations really have a goal of a place base, so that people can go in their neighborhood. And the one saying I used to have been, you don't have to move to make it a better neighborhood. You can just get involved and improve the livability of your neighborhood even by advocating improvements. Or maybe there's something that's planned, like a freeway to go through your neighborhood, where you could testify to have that project stopped.

So, they've been of tremendous value. And the other area that neighborhood associations are of value, whether it's somebody applying for a liquor license or somebody's going to have a business that locates in the neighborhood that could impact livability, the neighborhood associations can work on good neighbor agreements, which are basically between whoever wants to come into your neighborhood and build a liquor establishment or have a business that has buildings that are ten stories high, you have a chance to work out an agreement in writing. So, I think they're of great value.

As time has gone on, there's also been kind of a negative feeling about the neighborhood associations. That maybe they're dominated by the same people, only people who own homes. There isn't enough diversity. Neighborhood associations have tried to grapple with that. But I think the City Council's the ultimate arbiter. And the neighborhood associations shouldn't be the only input the City Council members get. Some people will say, well, neighborhood associations aren't relevant because

they aren't diverse enough in their makeup. Well, the thing is, the City Council has a responsibility in my judgment to listen to the neighborhood association. But to also listen to the business association, if there are different minority groups or associations that should have input, then they either meet individually or have those people appear at hearings. So, I'm still a strong believer in the role and value of neighborhood associations.

MY: Talk me through, this could be either broadly or specifically, some of the biggest successes you had working on City Council, and some of the biggest challenges.

ML: So, I think there were a lot of successes, and I've covered a lot of them already. But I do think one of them wasn't a project they built. It was really a culture and a way of doing business. And that is that citizens should feel that this is their City Council member. I mean, the city belongs to the citizens. They are the boss. And the City Council members and all the staff of the city should be providing service to the citizens. So, I think the culture we set up is to be accessible, treat everybody with kindness and respect and try to respond to their wishes. You know, their desires in terms of what they wanted to get done in their neighborhood.

So, I think that the other thing in terms of successes, they're the specific projects, what I mentioned in terms of Pioneer Square and Salmon Street Springs and the East Bank Esplanade and all the different park projects and global climate change and water conservation and energy conservation. And I think that trying to put Portland on the map, to have it be a brand as an international city and one that was very vital with arts and culture and a food scene and that was environmentally conscious, that was really open to all the diverse populations that live here. So that was really what I think.

MY: Any challenges?

ML: Well, every day, every week there were challenges. Because obviously what you're doing is not going to be popular with everybody. And I know one of the mentors that I had, a former mayor, said that if you weren't making some of the people mad, you probably weren't doing things that were bold enough. And I think that was true. Things like when we didn't build the Mount Hood Freeway, but we put in light rail instead, that was going against what a majority of the percentage of the population wanted to do. Seventy percent would have had more freeways. But it was up to the mayor at that time, Mayor Goldschmidt, to be able to articulate why in the longer term, rather than have a lot more freeways running through the city, it would be better with a lot lighter rail lines.

MY: What made you decide to not seek reelection?

ML: Exhaustion. I think the schedule that I mentioned, and I mentioned that I'd gone to about 35,000 meetings. Five thousand, five hundred of those were City Council meetings. Trying to balance out life between doing the work on the City Council and spending time with family, with kids, grandkids and friends. Getting out in nature, smelling the roses. I think the City Council job can just be almost too all-consuming.

And I think also after seventeen years, I really felt that there's a certain period that you should serve, but you should pass the baton to other people who might hit it fresh with more energy. They would probably be younger.

MY: Since you left City Council, you've served on numerous boards and advisory councils. Can you share some of the work you've done? I'm thinking the Aerial Tram, I believe, is a project, Blues Festival, Oregon Symphony Foundation.

ML: One of the things that happened that was kind of an odd thing, but I left the City Council and I got a call from an *Oregonian* reporter. And he said, "You know, we're going to publish how much you're going to get in your PERS, your annual retirement is going to be. It looks pretty good."

And I said, my quote was, "Well, I'm still going to be a citizen of Portland. And I'm not going to just run off to Tahiti and spend the rest of my life in leisure. I'm going to volunteer for a lot of nonprofits, things such as that."

Well, that was in the paper right when I resigned. And I think I started getting about ten calls a day to join certain nonprofit boards. So, I immediately took a job with the Oregon Symphony. But I was on the Symphony board, Symphony Foundation board. Then started helping Regional Arts and Culture Council to keep promoting the arts. Became chair of the Oregon Arts Commission. I joined the board of, helped form Willamette Riverkeepers. I mentioned earlier the Human Access Project, having to do with access to recreation on the Willamette River. And I became the chair of a small arts group, a choir group called Oregon Repertory Singers. At one point in time, I became vice chair and then chair of the Aerial Tram Committee, which turned out to be extremely controversial because so many people thought it was probably a waste of money to have a tram that went from down in the waterfront up to OHSU. And the initial cost estimates when I went into that were off. I think they'd had somebody come and say, "Oh, we just need a glorified ski lift." But when we looked at what was required to have an aerial tram

go up and connect to a hospital where surgery was done, where you had to have it so well designed that you couldn't even have any vibrations to the hospital building. And you also wanted something that was an internationally renowned design. So, we had an international competition. We ended up with something I think, you know, there's something like a million riders per year. Some people just ride it up there to get a view of the city.

So anyway, I think those were just some examples of things that I did from a volunteer standpoint.

MY: Did you also do consulting work?

ML: Yes. Well, and I probably forgot one. I did a lot of grassroots activities in volunteer, for example, setting up eco teams in my neighborhood so that on a block-by-block basis there was a way to recycle more, to save energy, to save water, to do a variety of things. So, I worked on that and tried to take that citywide. I'm sorry, what was the last one you asked me about?

MY: Oh, did you do consulting work?

ML: Oh, yes. So, then I also did consulting work part of the time with another partner. And then I joined a firm called Fleishman Hillard and did consulting. And then I just did some of my own. And I probably had thirty or forty consulting projects over the years, and only recently have retired from doing that.

MY: And was it in your capacity as a consultant that you were working with additional mayors after your time at City Council? Police chiefs?

ML: Part of my work was either as a nonprofit like on the Regional Arts and Culture Council, I would keep advocating for the arts. Part of the time I would be advocating for things that I believed in that had to do with parks. As an example, when I was on the City Council, my favorite form of recreation was hiking in Forest Park. So, after I went off the council, I saw there was a proposal that some people wanted to have throughout the eighty miles of trails in Forest Park allow mountain biking on all the trails, which I felt was too much. It ought to be preserved, most of it, just for hiking. So, I got involved with an advocacy group there. And in that capacity met with all the City Council members.

And that same thing happened with other projects that I'm involved in that have been more recent. Trying to preserve these South Park Blocks. Trying to preserve the elk and fountain that were destroyed during the protests. And other things like that.

So, and then over time, there were some people that were on the City Council that I got to know, I would help them on their campaigns. And I became personal friends with them, like Commissioner Nick Fish. And then I would socialize. And he would call every couple of weeks and we would visit about what was going on in the council, and he might get some advice. So that was enjoyable. Because when you retire, you still like to feel like, some of us say the wisdom of the elders is still valued for some of the younger people coming in.

MY: You sound like one of these individuals who got even busier in retirement in some ways. Your schedule seems just as packed.

ML: I think it has been just as packed, really. Yes.

MY: Tell me about how Portland has changed since you stepped down from City Council. Government or culturally.

ML: Well, I think several things have happened. Of course, Portland just keeps growing and has grown extremely fast. You know, when I went on the council, it was population 365,000. Now it's 675,000. And it's supposed to grow by 400,000 more people in the next twenty years. So, I think the significance of that is as you've had this growth it's presented all sorts of unique problems. For example, do we keep having more and more density in all the neighborhoods? And that's what the state law is and the city plan is, to build up, have taller buildings. Not many people have cars. If you live like in inner Southeast, you'll live, neighborhood streets will have six, eight-story apartment buildings, you know, right up to the sidewalk. People rely on buses more and bicycles than they do on cars. I think we've had a younger population move into the city. I think about 60 percent of the people in the city now are new to the area. They aren't really Oregonians. Which is fine. I think we ought to welcome the people who are coming in, whether it's New York or California.

But I think the way it's changed is that there are tradeoffs to growth. So, I think as we have buildings go up and they might cause pedestrian traffic concerns on the streets, they might block other people's views, that we have to face up to the fact that there's some livability tradeoffs. And we should

never, I don't believe, lose our strong feelings about wanting this to be the most livable city. So anyway, those are some of the things I think have changed.

MY: I think affordability, too. We're increasingly going up there with Seattle and San Francisco.

ML: Oh. I probably should have mentioned it first. I think the, when I started working in the council, and probably even by the time I left, you would think almost anybody that was working could afford an apartment, at least. So now, I mean, I've run into people, when I went to one event, I talked to a person that was pointing out where I could park my car that worked in an underground garage. And I had some extra time, started talking to him. What he did, where he lived. And he was working seventy hours a week and still living in a car. So basically, I think the, what I read is in Portland you'd have to work about seventy hours a week if you were making only like minimum wage to basically even afford the basic apartment. So, things become so unaffordable, it's one of the factors, of course, in terms of the number of homeless we have. And it's probably only going to get worse that way in terms of things skyrocketing, in terms of rents, what houses cost to buy.

So, we have to be more creative. And I work on one board of directors, Oregon Harbor of Hope, for example, where we promote the use of home share. That if you have, it would be like a dating site where you have match.com. Except you'd have, if you have a spare bedroom and you're, let's say, a senior citizen, but you don't want to have to sell your house and get out of it as you have limited income, you might be matched up with somebody that you don't even know that could rent that spare bedroom. And the sophistication on these match ups is such, it's worked in other areas, that there's probably 25,000 people that could be housed in the city of Portland that would be satisfactory to all parties by utilizing existing housing stock.

MY: Talk to me about Portland city government today. You mentioned a few times there might be a charter change?

ML: Right. So, every ten years, a group is formed to change the charter. There's a proposal now that's out that's going to be voted on in November. And I'm one, although as much as I love the commission form of government, all the years that I served and afterward, I have concluded that we probably do need, we definitely need a CEO or city manager. We need to unify the government in some ways to have leadership from the top, with a mayor, city manager. And I have concluded that we should change the form of government from all the positions that are elected citywide to one of districts. I vary in my opinion from what is currently proposed, that I think there should be districts like six, seven, eight, I'll

say, but there should be only one representative from each district. And that whoever wins the election would have to get the majority of the vote. So, I differ from what's proposed now. But that's democracy. There will be a good debate before November about the current proposals before the voters.

MY: And when you were on the Council, your constituents would have been from across the city.

ML: Right. And one of the reasons that I liked what are called the at-large, where everybody votes in an election for each position, is that it forces the people that are on the City Council to look citywide, and to try to not say my job is just to represent where I live. I live in inner Southeast, in Laurelhurst, and my job is to fight like heck for all the resources here. We had to stand back, look at the big picture, and see what would be an equitable distribution. But that, incumbent upon that, was to actually get out into all these neighborhoods, including far east side of Portland, and understand what their needs are and be responsive.

Now many of the cities, for example, in California, have a hybrid program where you might have five members elected by district, but two are elected citywide. And that seems to be I would say more of a trend in California. That seems to work pretty well for them.

MY: And when you were on council, you aren't affiliated with a political party. Correct?

ML: Well, it's kind of a bizarre thing and I didn't understand it when I first went into office. I was a Democrat. But when I went to the swearing-in ceremony, there were two things in there. One said, I'm not a part of any political party. It is nonpartisan. But the other thing said is that I have no other job or source of income. So, if you're a city commissioner, the idea to make sure there's no conflict of interest, you couldn't, for example, own a business and then also run as a city commissioner. It was kind of a fluke of the charter. And I don't even know if it's still in there, or whether it's in any of the proposal that came out. But I do think that having really strong, independent voices on the City Council that aren't either Republican, Democrat, is really a good thing.

MY: One thing we didn't talk about, and it just occurred to me, was the relationship between Portland City Council and individuals elected to Metro, or Multnomah County commissioners. How do they all interact?

ML: Well, that would be, your question actually leads to the point of they all should be enmeshed in one coordinated effort on the part of government. I'll give you an example. One of the complaints we get from citizens is there's always tax levies that are being presented. And we do have a very high property tax rate in the city of Portland. So, you might have something for childcare, you've got a library levy, you've got a Metro homeless bond, you've got a Metro greenspaces bond. The city's putting a parks levy on. There's a police and fire retirement fund. So, in my judgment, there should be sort of a regional way for people to get together—the city, the county, Metro—and say we have to, can only have taxes at a certain level. We have to figure out what the priorities are. And we should only put a limited number of these votes on over a certain time period. Not in a legal way, more of a cooperative, informal agreement among the elected officials.

MY: What are you working on these days?

ML: Right now, I do most of my volunteer work in Portland. But I have a house in Seaside that I inherited from my mom and dad. And Astoria was my hometown. So, I'm on the board of the Friends of the Astoria Column. And then I'm on the board of trustees of Human Access Project. I'm on the board of Oregon Harbor of Hope. And I am, there's one more Portland, I probably can't even remember. And then I have about five or six volunteer activities in Portland that have to do with the group that was working on preserving the South Park Blocks has now moved on to the elk and fountain. And now we're looking at policies on other monuments in the city. Should they be up or down? Or should they have more educational materials? So basically, and then I'm also involved to a certain degree with the charter change, in terms of hopefully make sure that the public knows what all the pros and cons are of the proposal coming from the charter commission.

MY: And I saw your name in the voter's pamphlet with some candidate. So, you're involved still—

ML: Right. And on occasion, not too frequently, but I will get involved with certain candidates. And in the last election I did get involved in two races. One I met a person about a year and a half ago named Vadim Mozyrsky, whose family had come from the Ukraine when he was eight years old. And he got a law degree and became an administrative law judge and moved from Texas to Portland long ago. And when I met him, and he said he was going to run for the City Council, he reminded me a lot in terms of temperament and his views of my friend Nick Fish, who'd been on the council. So, I befriended him and worked on his campaign. He did not make the runoff.

And then I worked on another campaign for Sharon Meieran, who ran for the Multnomah County chair. And she had a law degree and is an emergency room physician. And had such a strong record of really detailed work on the homeless that I was working on her campaign, too.

MY: Are there any questions you wish that I had asked? We had talked briefly before about some fun stories you might have. The bottling of Bull Run water, for example?

ML: Oh, that was pretty good. There's a lot of stories that happen behind the scenes that you usually don't mention when you're giving your oral history. But a lot of funny things that happened. The Bull Run water, for example. I know when the different delegations come from the sister cities, as a matter of ritual they appear in the mayor's office. They basically give a gift to the mayor. And then the mayor gives a gift back to the sister city. Usually, it would be like the mayor of Sapporo, or the mayor of Guadalajara.

Well, the delegation came from Mexico, from Guadalajara, to present their gift to Mayor Ivancie. But the advance work hadn't been done of what he was going to give them. So, he panicked immediately and kind of looked around his office thinking well, what can I give them as a gift? And he was involved in his own political campaign and he saw some campaign literature and he gave them that. And then the second thing, he saw some of that Bull Run water that had been bottled. And he said, "Well, I can give you some clean water." But realizing that saying "clean water" kind of indicating maybe in Mexico they didn't have clean water and I'll give you some to take back was kind of a faux pas.

But those were, you know, a lot of common occurrences where you'd have a lot of different things happen with the commissioners behind the scenes. There was quite a good social life and some very good friendships that I developed with other commissioners. And mayors, like Mayor Clark, Mayor Hales, with Commissioner Strong and Commissioner Fish, as I mentioned. And Commissioner Amanda Fritz, others.

And then last, I'd probably recognize one of the great joys of working in City Hall was the long-term relationships that were developed with my own staff. And even though it's been a long time ago, we're having a reunion. And I did want to give a shout out and recognition to the amazing work that was done by my staff. And I won't remember probably naming everybody, but they were people like David Judd and Ethan Seltzer, Kathleen Stevens Hune and Margie Harris and Art Alexander and Elise Marshall and many others that were so dedicated in their work to me that I have a tremendous feeling of loyalty toward them. Not just when they worked with City Hall, but for what goes on in the rest of their lives.

MY: Well, I know we only scratched the surface of your many years of contribution to the city of Portland, but I really appreciate you sitting down and talking with us.

ML: Thank you very much for the time.

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