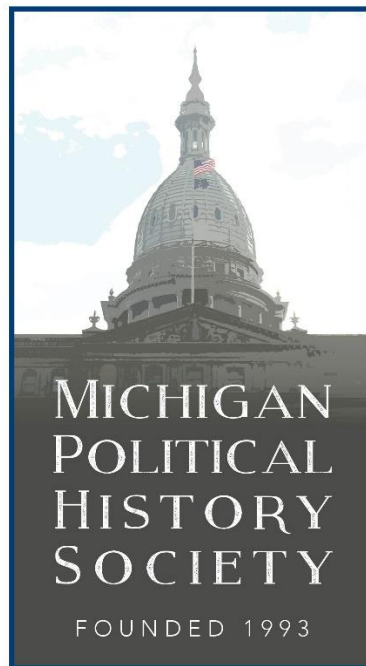


Bill McLaughlin

Interviewed by
Bill Ballenger
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Bill Ballenger: Bill McLaughlin, you were the longest serving Republican Chairman in the history of the state of Michigan. It's a great pleasure to be with you here today. I just want to start out by asking you, were you originally from Michigan?

Bill McLaughlin: No sir. I was born in Syracuse, New York.

Bill Ballenger: Well, how'd you end up in Michigan?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, I ended up in Michigan on June 1, 1951 when my parents moved to Detroit. I came out with them.

Bill Ballenger: How old were you then?

Bill McLaughlin: I had just completed my freshman year in college, so I was just coming on to 19.

Bill Ballenger: Why did your parents move to Detroit?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, my father took a job here, and we came out. I came here intending to go back to Syracuse, 'because I had started my first year at Le Moyne College. I got a job at the Ford tractor plant in Highland Park. I was gonna save the money and go back. Unfortunately, every morning at 9:00 during the hot months of June and July, they walked out on a heat strike. I never made enough money to go back, and so that's why I'm still in Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: And so, were your parents Republicans?

Bill McLaughlin: They never told me. My assumption is yes. My assumption is yes, but they never said.

Bill Ballenger: Soow did you become interested in the Republican Party?

Bill McLaughlin: I've got four or five memories that bring me up to getting interested. The first was in 1940, going across the street the day after the election, and getting a quart of milk and bringing it home, and my father saying Willkie lost. I remember being crushed. I don't know why. I didn't know who Willkie was.

Bill Ballenger: This was back in Syracuse?

Bill McLaughlin: This was in Utica, New York in 1940. Willkie lost. The next memories I have was in Erie, Pennsylvania, sitting in our sun porch on East 31st Street, listening to four days of the 1948 Republican National Convention. I remember the names of Bricker, and Dewey, and Vandenberg. Of course, Dewey was familiar, 'cause he had been the governor of my state in New York. When that thing was over I said, "God, that was exciting. I sure would like to go to one of those some day,"

never knowing that I'd be a delegate to four and an alternate delegate to one before I was through. My dream came true.

Bill Ballenger: Well now, the Democrats had a pretty exciting National Convention in '48 too, but you weren't listening to that?

Bill McLaughlin: No. For some reason.

Bill Ballenger: And you we're even sure whether your parents were Republicans. Well anyway, so you get to Michigan. What happened? You're working.

Bill McLaughlin: Well, what happened was in 1952, I was a great admirer of a guy by the name of Eisenhower. He spoke at Masonic Temple. I went there, and that was the night he said...

Bill Ballenger: In Detroit?

Bill McLaughlin: In Detroit. In Detroit, and that was the night he said, "If elected, I shall go to Korea." Very pivotal in the campaign and in history. I was there. In 1960 I got married, the later part of October, the 29th. We went to New York on our honeymoon. One day we were coming out of the RCA building and the cars and the sirens are coming by. They go flying by, and in the car was Dwight Eisenhower and Mamie, Richard Nixon and Pat, Henry Cabot Lodge, and Nelson Rockefeller. They were coming back from the ticker tape parade in New York.

Bill Ballenger: I remember that.

Bill McLaughlin: It was a day of campaigning in New York. That night we went to see My Fair Lady, and as we were coming home, walking back to our hotel, there's a whole mob of people coming down the street. It was the people coming from the coliseum where they'd had a rally that night. They walked to the Waldorf Astoria. We went with them, and they stood outside the place, "We want Ike. We want Ike." Some bald headed guy came to the window and they finally left. I don't think it was Ike, but they thought it was and they all waited.. So I came home, and the day after we got home, it was election day.

Bill Ballenger: The Kennedy versus Nixon election.

Bill McLaughlin: Kennedy versus Nixon. I went and voted for Nixon. Janet didn't vote. She wasn't old enough to vote.

Bill Ballenger: That's right, it was a 21 year-old vote then. She was still only 18.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. We were living in St. Clair Shores. It occurred to me, "Wow, I never saw anything about the Nixon race in the local papers. I was doing public relations at the time at the Music Hall theater Cinerama, maybe I should go and volunteer. That's what got me started in politics.

Bill Ballenger: How old were you then, 1960?

Bill McLaughlin: I was 29.

Bill Ballenger: 29?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so you got acting. How did you get acting. What did you do?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, I asked my brother, who was involved with the Young Republicans at U of D, how he could help me. He put me in touch with one of two people; Lyle Van Houten, who was then the state chair of the Young Republicans, or a guy by the name of Dan McKinnon, who was also active. I think it was McKinnon. He and I, and two or three others got together in the quote, "party headquarters", in downtown Mount Clemens one night in January, and formed the Macomb County Young Republicans. Now that was an exciting time. The first elected person in the family though was Janet, who was elected secretary of the Macomb County Young Republicans.

Bill Ballenger: Oh she was? Oh, she became a chapter officer?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah, I was just somebody else who was there, but Janet got elected.

Bill Ballenger: Well that's good.

Bill McLaughlin: This was in January of 1962.

Bill Ballenger: '62, okay. Well now, did you decide to run for office yourself?

Bill McLaughlin: Before the year was over I did.

Bill Ballenger: What, for state representative?

Bill McLaughlin: I did for state representative.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Was it a Mount Clemens district?

Bill McLaughlin: It was St. Clair Shores, East Detroit, Roseville, and Fraser. It was an overwhelming Democratic district.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, well the whole county was very heavily Democratic at that time. Who was the Democrat that you ran against, you remember?

Bill McLaughlin: I ran against a guy by the name of Joe Snyder. Joe Snyder was an organizer for the UAW, and had been a Constitutional Convention Delegate. This was before one man one vote. I was very proud. I lost by a million votes, but I got 20,000

votes, which is more than all but one Republican running in the state for the legislature.

Bill Ballenger: Well that's good.

Bill McLaughlin: I was very proud.

Bill Ballenger: Now what was the Liberty Amendment? What was that?

Bill McLaughlin: The Liberty Amendment, and it's where I got tagged a liberal in the party, was an amendment to abolish all taxes. I was asked to sign the amendment for that.

Bill Ballenger: Was this an attempt to have a statewide vote, a referendum on amending the Constitution to abolish taxes?

Bill McLaughlin: The Liberty Amendment was a national thing to abolish all taxes. I said, "How you gonna run the thing?" I said I wouldn't do it. I had to be a liberal then if I wouldn't sign the amendment.

Bill Ballenger: And you never got out from under that stigma?

Bill McLaughlin: I never got out. Even though I thought my philosophy was very conservative, I was immediately tagged a liberal.

Bill Ballenger: Well, now one other thing was going on at this time, in '61 and '62. A Constitutional Convention was being held. Did you have any involvement in that?

Bill McLaughlin: I did. There was a young school teacher in Warren who was running in a district. It was totally Warren, for the Con Con delegate. He asked me to help him, so I became his quote unquote campaign manager. I think basically I was just doing his public relations and stuff like that. Con Con became the tag word for the Constitutional Convention. There was a Con Con candidate seminar in Lansing. I went with Dick up there. We parked the car and I started getting out. A guy at the other car next to me opened and our two doors hit. I got out, and the man getting out of the other car was George Romney. That was the first time I met George Romney. Looking at old pictures from after years gone by, I was surprised at the number of the candidates in that picture that I finally got to know. People like Garry Brown or Jay Harold Stevens, and people like that over the years. But that was the Con Con. Then we got deeply involved the following year in working like crazy to carry Con Con and get it enacted.

Bill Ballenger: Right, in the spring of '63.

Bill McLaughlin: Three, yes sir.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Well okay, so we're forgetting or skipping over, Romney was elected governor in the fall of '62.

Bill McLaughlin: In January of '62 I believe it was. Well, to begin with if I may, I like to use my story for people who want to get involved in politics, there's no reason they can't get in. We formed the Young Republican club in January. In two weeks later or something, I went to the county convention. Got elected a delegate to the state convention.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: In January and I got active in the party to some extent. In January of 1962, I got called to a meeting with four, or five, or six, seven other people at the home of Barbara Hoffman on a Sunday night, a blizzard Sunday night. I went. The whole reason for the meeting was that the people who were running Macomb County for the Party had come in 1952 with Eisenhower, and they'd been sitting around to manage appointments, federal appointments. That's all they had done for years. "Okay, how do we upset Frank Lawson?", who was the guy's name. Somebody that night said we ought to start off by trying to get Romney to run for governor. That night we formed a Romney for governor committee. It was the first one in the state. Being the PR person, I called all the media that night and started telling them about what we had done, which became hot news the next day. As the contact, the next day my phone rang off the hook from people all over the state. One of the most important people that called me was the Chairman of the University of Michigan Young Republicans. His name was Steve Stockmeyer. From that time on, for years our paths were crossed, and we were allies for many years.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: That's what got me recognized for the first time on the state level.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, and it shows how fast you could get involved at a very high level in state politics if you really wanted to.

Bill McLaughlin: And anticipating the next question, within that year I was the Chairman of the Macomb County Senior Party. That's how fast you get involved, and probably still can get involved in politics and get ahead.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, 1962 George Romney is elected governor. Immediately in April, three months after he takes office, the state Constitutional Convention has to be approved by the voters. What was going on with you at that time?

Bill McLaughlin: In that time, I got elected. I got elected in early '63. Dave Wells, who was the Macomb County Chairman, who was a stockbroker, was dying. He was losing money, spending too much time in politics. He got out. I got elected the Macomb County Chairman.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so you're the Macomb County Chairman. Then you come into this very turbulent year of 1964. You're a Romney man, and you're the Macomb County Chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: That's a pretty good, or maybe mild description of it Bill.

Bill Ballenger: Well okay. You what, you were a delegate to the national convention that summer?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah. I got elected a delegate, representing the 12th Congressional District, which was all of Macomb County and Lapeer County. Each county was given a delegate. Ellen Buda Phalen was the county chairman in Lapeer. She got it and I got it. I was so excited coming back from that county convention. I'm going along, and playing on the radio was, I Left My Heart in San Francisco. I was now on my way to San Francisco. How great it was. How great it was. So yes, this became the focal point of my life, the 1964 convention.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so you're in the Cow Palace. What about the Goldwater delegation? What about the convention? Were you there for the speeches, Rockefeller being booed?

Bill McLaughlin: I was. I was.

Bill Ballenger: The whole shooting match, what happened?

Bill McLaughlin: As I remember, it was amazing. I'm still figuring I'm a kid. I'm still remembering the sun porch in Erie, Pennsylvania in '48. All of a sudden I'm at the Cow Palace. You go up and down the aisles and every newsman that you could've ever seen or heard of, there they are with their microphone, their headset, interviewing people. It was great.

Bill Ballenger: Was there a presence for George Romney there? Was there a demonstration for him of some sort?

Bill McLaughlin: Yes. One of the embarrassing things. For some reason on Sunday when I got there, Peg Little, who was Romney's secretary, asked me, I didn't even know she knew me, she asked me if I'd handle the Romney demonstration. Oh, I said sure I would. So what we did was we got a bunch of Romney girls. If you remember the Romney girls were all dressed up, a white sash and a white boater. We got them and I said to them, "You know everybody is dropping balloons. Why don't we do something different? Let's have balloons rise?" So we got them and when it came time for the Romney nomination, the 12 girls were lined up in front of the podium. They've all got dozens of balloons in their hands, ready to let them go.

Bill McLaughlin: Thurston Morton was the chairman. He said, "You've run out of steam. This is it." I said, "Okay, let 'em go girls," and they did. And they all fell to the floor. The

guy who was supposed to get helium forgot to get helium. They blew them up by hand and they all fell to the floor.

Bill Ballenger: Well, people probably noticed that anyway. Maybe people stepped on them and there was a lot of noise.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. That was the Romney Demonstration.

Bill Ballenger: Well, but was that a serious candidacy by Romney? Did he really have a chance to get the nomination? What was the story there?

Bill McLaughlin: He at one time was the moderate's choice. Everything was to stop Goldwater. Eventually Scranton became the focal point to stop him, who was the Governor of Pennsylvania. Dwight Eisenhower asked him to get in, and all of the sudden Eisenhower says, whoops, this is gonna be bad. Then he asked him to get out for party unity. It was very embarrassing. It was bad before we even got to San Francisco.

Bill Ballenger: Well but, so people were scrambling around for some moderate, any moderate to stop Goldwater. At that point, maybe the people that liked Romney said, "Look, let's put his name in nomination. Let's have a demonstration for him."

Bill McLaughlin: Rockefeller was detested by the Goldwater people because of what was called the Fifth Avenue Pact, or whatever it was, in 1960. Anyways, prior to that, the campaign, it was really vicious, and we started getting mail by the millions. Goldwater's campaign sent it out, but individuals were writing to the delegatin and they were such vulgar, vicious attacks on Romney or Rockefeller.

Bill Ballenger: Was this before the convention?

Bill McLaughlin: This is before we went to the convention. This was trying to help Goldwater. Goldwater came, I think it was on June 30th for a delegation meeting in Lansing. There was friction between he and Romney. Romney had tried to get an individual meeting with him to iron out their differences, and Goldwater wouldn't meet with him.

Bill Ballenger: Wouldn't meet with him?

Bill McLaughlin: And it became probably the most important meeting I've ever been to in my life personally. We came there, and after we were going through and he was taking questions,

Bill Ballenger: Well, how many people were at this meeting?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, it was a delegation meeting.

Bill Ballenger: The Michigan delegation?

Bill McLaughlin: The Michigan delegation

Bill Ballenger: to the National Convention.

Bill McLaughlin: to the National Convention. It was a pre-convention.

Bill Ballenger: which had not occurred yet?

Bill McLaughlin: Right. It was in the Jack Tar Hotel in Lansing, in a small meeting room, suffocating.

Bill Ballenger: Which is right across from the state capitol.

Bill McLaughlin: Which was, I guess it's a state office building now.

Bill Ballenger: It is the Romney office building.

Bill McLaughlin: It was a Romney office. Okay, Jack Tar was the hotel, the only downtown hotel in Lansing. We go, and Goldwater is taking questions. Finally, I'm nervous as the devil but I got up and basically I said, "Senator, the stuff that we're getting from your campaign is wonderful. But the stuff we're getting for those who are supporting you is just vicious." I had a stack over six feet tall I brought with me of this stuff. Basically I said, "This can't go on. It's not good." I said, "Will you please speak out and tell these people to stop?" He said, "I know just what you mean. I'm Jewish and they do that to me all the time." He said, "It wouldn't do any good." I said, "Well, why don't you try?"

Bill McLaughlin: "Well, nobody will listen to me." I said, "Sir, the entire national press corp is outside this room. Why don't you go right out here now and say this is no good." He said, "It wouldn't do any good." I noticed two men looking at me like, "What is this guy doing?" One was George Romney. The other was a guy by the name of Bill Milliken, who was also a member of the delegation.

Bill Ballenger: They thought you were asking the question they wanted to ask themselves?

Bill McLaughlin: Maybe. But somebody had the guts to facedown Goldwater, nervous as the devil I was. I went out of the room, and I did my first ever television interview with film, the whole thing. Ben Marshall, who was I believe with Channel 2 in Detroit. It was that time I said, "The answers I got from the senator make it impossible for me to support him."

Bill Ballenger: Well then you really got some hate mail.

Bill McLaughlin: So we go to San Francisco.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, well we all know what happened in San Francisco. Goldwater won. Rockefeller gave his speech.

Bill McLaughlin: The boos and the catcalls. When Scranton's name was put in the nomination, I can still see this little old lady. She's probably 75, 80 years old, sitting, enjoying herself and waving this Scranton sign. I don't know, she may have had a Goldwater sign and some young punk come over and just slugging her in the face.

Bill Ballenger: Slugging this woman in the face?

Bill McLaughlin: Goldwater had great control of his delegates on the floor. But the people supporting him in the stands were maniacs.

Bill Ballenger: Maniacs?

Bill McLaughlin: They were maniacs. They were running amuck.

Bill Ballenger: Well what was the big philosophical difference at that time between Goldwater supporters and the so called moderates in the Party like Rockefeller, and Scranton, and Romney. I mean, what did the real differences between the various factions in the Party appear to be at that time?

Bill McLaughlin: The famous Goldwater quote, "Extremism in defense of liberty is no crime," and moderation in defense of liberty is virtue, or something like that. Anyway, that was the whole Goldwater thing.

Bill Ballenger: Well I know, but were there any particular issues that people really disagreed on do you think?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, civil rights to begin with.

Bill Ballenger: Civil rights, okay.

Bill McLaughlin: That was the year that Goldwater voted against the Civil Rights Bill in the Congress. That was a big one. Well, the John Birch Society. The John Birch Society which was an extreme right-wing group.

Bill Ballenger: Right-wing group, and they were heavily in support of Goldwater.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. That's probably where most of my hate mail was coming from.

Bill Ballenger: Right. Okay, so you come back from San Francisco, and of course you've got other things that happened that year. You had the famous Baker versus Carr, Reynolds versus Sims, US Supreme Court decision, one man, one vote, one member, one vote. Or excuse me, one voter, one vote. That had a huge impact that year.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely. One last thing from San Francisco. We were in the Jack Tar in San Francisco. This was the Texas delegation, and the western Goldwater campaign

headquarters. We were the only ones in there. I remember coming back from the Cow Palace. I put on a Goldwater pin. I had Goldwater and I had Romney. I had some punk Texans come up to me says, "You can't wear both of those." I said, "I didn't know that," and I took the Goldwater off, and I never put it on again. I never put it on again.

Bill Ballenger: He forced you into it.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely. But yes, you're right. The Supreme Court, in the spring I think of 1964 decreed that in legislative and congressional apportionment and redistricting, you had to follow the principal of one man, one vote. I do believe, and this is from memory, but I do believe the whole suit had started with Gus Scholle, who was head of the AFL-CIO here in Michigan.

Bill McLaughlin: Okay, so we come back and it's one man, one vote. I was overjoyed with it. I had a theory that Republicans were not concentrated in high areas. They were around everywhere.

Bill Ballenger: Spread around, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: But the Democrats were always concentrated in one area so we go to work. The problem became, the whole process got so long, that it pushed the normal work in progress back. The primary elections had to be pushed back. The conventions that were usually held in August had to be held in September, and so the campaign was shortened. It was something that somebody ought to take a look at today. It wasn't the three year campaign.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, well it took that long to approve the maps for all these people running. So these are new districts. Nobody really understood or knew who the candidates were, where they were running. Had a very short campaign. Then you had this avalanche victory by LBJ over Goldwater in November. The result was what? Crushing defeat for the Republicans?

Bill McLaughlin: I think it was worse than that. I think it was worse than that.

Bill Ballenger: Why?

Bill McLaughlin: There was nothing left of the Republican Party after the 1964 election.

Bill Ballenger: Except George Romney. He survived. Were you surprised? Wasn't there a feeling that he was gonna get dragged down?

Bill McLaughlin: Everything said he was gonna get dragged down. But you gotta remember that as a party chairman during this election, you couldn't get a Goldwater person to touch a piece of literature or anything else with Romney's name on it. They were all convinced, they were the ones convinced that Goldwater will win. There was a silent majority out there, and they come out on election day.

Bill McLaughlin: Well, on election day, I hope nobody took arsenic, or cyanide, or something else that was a Goldwater waiting for the silent majority to come out. But yes, the Romney thing was unbelievable.

Bill Ballenger: Where was the Romney headquarters on election night? Wasn't in the Statler Hotel?

Bill McLaughlin: It was at the Statler. I remember I went down on the day after.

Bill Ballenger: In Detroit?

Bill McLaughlin: In Detroit, which was a great hotel at Washington Boulevard and Grand Circus Park. I went down and he was having a press conference in the afternoon. I went in there, and I was so flattered he recognized me and said what a great job you people did.

Bill Ballenger: Did he seem to be fairly confident at that point that he was gonna be able to survive this huge Democratic landslide that washed over almost every Republican for every other office? Or was he kind of fatalistic? Were his supporters thinking, "My God, we cannot withstand this Democratic avalanche, we're gonna lose too."?

Bill McLaughlin: His last campaign stop of the year was in Macomb County on Monday night. As he left I said, "Governor," I said, "we're gonna carry the county by maybe half a percentage point." Well he said, "You're optimistic." Macomb hadn't gone Republican since 1952.

Bill Ballenger: So he didn't even win it in '62 when he was elected to his first term?

Bill McLaughlin: No. In 1964, George Romney carried Macomb County by a half a percentage point.

Bill Ballenger: Wow.

Bill McLaughlin: That's how accurate our telephones were.

Bill Ballenger: Wow, that's a heck of a prediction.

Bill McLaughlin: Half a percent, and that's why he recognized me the next day with a big smile.

Bill Ballenger: I should say so.

Bill McLaughlin: I suspect that's where, between the delegation meeting of Goldwater and that day, those are the two things that propelled me to statewide party office.

Bill Ballenger: 1964, the Michigan Republican Party was pretty much obliterated, except for Governor George Romney and his running mate, Bill Milliken. New leadership of

the Party organization comes in 1965, Elly Peterson and Bill McLaughlin. What did you face at that time?

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sitting in Macomb County saying, "I'm just a newcomer to politics, but I sure could do a better job than Elliot did." I didn't know Art at that time, nor did I understand that nuances of trying to balance Romney and Goldwater, and everything. But I'm gonna think about running for chairman. Then the announcement is that Art is gone and Elly is gonna be the anointed one, which was fine. I didn't think any more of it.

Bill Ballenger: Well, there had never been a woman chairman before.

Bill McLaughlin: No, that's right.

Bill Ballenger: And if there was there had to be a male vice chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. So somewhere, and Bill I don't remember, my name got thrown in the hopper for vice chairman. The Romney forces and Elly forces, I was pretty well setup for it. I got to Lansing, and oh there's people messing around, and got me nervous as the devil that I'm going to have opposition and all this stuff. Well it never came, but I was nervous as the devil, as you can only get. So the next day, by acclamation, Elly and I were both elected. I was again so nervous, there was a platform, 'cause there was high podium, there was box to step on to speak from, and I forgot to step on it. That's how tense it was.

Bill Ballenger: Well, what did you know about Elly Peterson going into that? Here you were her running mate, and you're elected together. Did you know her very well? Had you gotten to know her during the previous year or two?

Bill McLaughlin: Elly, of course, was the candidate against Phil Hart that year for the United States Senate.

Bill Ballenger: In '64?

Bill McLaughlin: In '64. I met her when she came into the Party headquarters in Macomb County. Now Elly came into the Party headquarters. She was a little faster than a tornado. Elly was the most magnificent person in my life, with the exception of my wife and kids. Elly would come into a room and the whole thing changed. The first time I saw her, she came in to shake hands with the volunteers and everyone else, and it was like a whirling dervish, I mean, it was amazing. That's how I first met Elly, and I didn't know much more about her.

Bill McLaughlin: Until we went to the convention, other than trying to help it.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so at that point, you had a job what, in advertising?

Bill McLaughlin: I had spent a number of years in the theater business, I've been at the Michigan Theater and the music hall with Cinerama. Cinerama just opened a new Summit Theater in downtown Detroit. Most people will not remember the Summit Theater. Most people won't remember the Cass Theater. The Cass Theater is one of two legitimate downtown Detroit theaters, the Schubert and the Cass. The Cass was right across the street at the corner of Washington Blvd and Lafayette from the Free Press. Cinerama had taken it over and had redone the thing beautifully and it was the Summit Theater. I was managing that.

Bill McLaughlin: My boss was great enough to say, "Oh yeah, go ahead and have fun but you still got to do your job," I remember-

Bill Ballenger: That was pretty tough, isn't it?

Bill McLaughlin: It was. I remember one night standing outside on a spring night, standing outside watching the world go by and thinking, "How am I going to do this? I want to do a good job as vice chairman, how am I going to do the whole thing?" About a week or so later, we had a party headquarters on Lothrop Street by the Fisher Theater and Elly asked to meet me there.

Bill McLaughlin: I went there and Elly said, "Dean Dodie who was the executor head of the party is going to retire, would you like his job?" Well to make a long story short, I became not only the vice chairman and the executor director of the party and we made my title executive vice president.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, in other words, vice chair is an honorary position. You're pretty much serving at the pleasure of the party. It's unpaid.

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: Executive director's a real paid staff position day-to-day.

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: But it's up in Lansing.

Bill McLaughlin: It's in Lansing.

Bill Ballenger: If you're going to do that, you've got to commute and you were living where?

Bill McLaughlin: I was in St, Clair Shores.

Bill Ballenger: That was a long drive, wasn't it? What were you doing, driving every day?

Bill McLaughlin: Every day, I never wanted to stay in Lansing. My responsibility was my family. I had to at least let the kids see me shave in the morning so every day at six o'clock when I was leaving, I stop at the Mobil station or the Standard station at

Eight Mile and fill up the car. Gas was 25 cents a gallon. It took \$5 to fill up the car and it would use all five hours, and I finally said, "I can't afford this. I just can't afford this, we've got to move," so I decided, "Let's go to Plymouth, it's close to all the freeways."

Bill McLaughlin: We came out and we're coming out Seven Mile Road and we got to Northville Road and I made a mistake, I turn right instead of left. I was in downtown Northville and within an hour and a half, we bought the house.

Bill Ballenger: It's 1965, the Michigan Republican Party has been pretty much wiped out in the previous election except for the governor and his running mate Bill Milliken. What do you and Elly Peterson think in your mind you can do to get things turned around in the next couple years?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, it's an amazing thing that the two of us, we were gone 24/7. We were just on the road all the time and recruiting candidates and there's a couple funny stories. We had a field man down in the Detroit area who came excited one day to say he figured he had two excellent candidates for the Congress. One was in Livonia and one was in Grosse Pointe. Their names were Joe Schmidt and Ted Linzy. One was a hockey great, and one was a football and Elly said, "Who are they?"

Bill Ballenger: Well, she wasn't a sports fan.

Bill McLaughlin: I was excited. Joe Schmidt and Teddy Linzy, oh my God.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, they weren't too bad. They might have done well in politics if they'd run but you had to recruit people like Marv Esch, Garry Brown, Guy Vander Jagt, Phil Rupee, Don Riegler, Jack McDonald, all these people ran in '66.

Bill McLaughlin: They all ran in '66.

Bill Ballenger: You got them nominated and they had to in some cases, beat people like George Meter, the former Congressman and August Johansen, the former Congressman in a primary and then they had to knock off a Democratic incumbent in November and they did.

Bill McLaughlin: You're right and the interesting thing was, and this happened only because of the guts of Elly Peterson, I probably would have lost chairman, wouldn't have had it. She decided, Marvish and that George Meter could get elected. She assigned a guy by the name of Robert Teeter, Bob Teeter on our staff full-time to run the Ash campaign, and she made decisions along the way that we were going to help these people.

Bill McLaughlin: Keith Molin who was the field man and I in January went through the upper peninsula trying to find a candidate to run for whoever the Democratic congressman was.

Bill Ballenger: Ray Clevinger.

Bill McLaughlin: Ray Clevinger.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: It started snowing when I crossed the bridge.

Bill McLaughlin: It never stopped.

Bill McLaughlin: It was still snowing when I left Friday crossing the bridge coming south but we found a magical person who was out sniffing the waters, his name was Ropey, he was a banker from up there-

Bill Ballenger: He also had a brewing company.

Bill McLaughlin: And a brewing company.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Posh Brewing.

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah, he was so magical that we convinced him to run for Congress. He was so green that he says, "Yeah, but I'm not going to tie myself to that Romney."

Bill Ballenger: He said, "I'm not going to tie myself to Romney?"

Bill McLaughlin: "I want to run my own campaign."

Bill Ballenger: He's going to run his own campaign.

Bill McLaughlin: Everybody else was running Jones/Romney bumper stickers.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, everybody.

Bill McLaughlin: He doesn't want a bumper sticker, and that's what he did.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: That's how green he was to politics.

Bill Ballenger: Wow.

Bill McLaughlin: He said yes, he was magical. It was magical getting him. The whole group of people were just wonderful. Candidate Jack McDonald was a township supervisor.

Bill Ballenger: Redford?

Bill McLaughlin: In Redford. He was absolutely perfect for the thing.

Bill Ballenger: Right. It's early 1966, US Senator Pat McNamara Democrat of Michigan dies and George Romney appoints who, to take his place?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, he appointed a guy by the name of Griffin who was a Congressman from Traverse City. We did a unique thing, we had what we called a consensus meeting, where we got the party leadership together and there was a whole bunch of people who wanted the appointment. Leroy Augenstein who was a professor at Michigan State University, Dean Baker who was in business in Ann Arbor, Jim O'Neil who was also around from the Detroit area.

Bill Ballenger: Guy Vander Jagt.

Bill McLaughlin: I'd forgotten Vander Jagt.

Bill Ballenger: Guy Vander Jagt also, and you had it in the same Jack Tower Hotel where you'd met Goldwater, just about a year before.

Bill McLaughlin: No, sir, I will correct you, not that year. That year, we had it at the St. Clair Inn. It was at the St. Clair Inn.

Bill Ballenger: Really?

Bill McLaughlin: Yes, sir, it was at the St. Clair Inn.

Bill Ballenger: Okay.

Bill McLaughlin: The next in 1970 we had a consensus meeting at the Jack Tar Hotel but this one was at the St. Clair Inn.

Bill Ballenger: Okay.

Bill McLaughlin: Romney chaired the meeting and before it was over, Bob Griffin is who they wanted and he was able to sell himself and so that made it easy for Romney to appoint Griffin to the position because of the party's support early on and it worked out well.

Bill Ballenger: Right. Then all the other candidates all accepted it.

Bill McLaughlin: They did.

Bill Ballenger: Okay.

Bill McLaughlin: Who's going to fight city hall and George Romney?

Bill Ballenger: Right. I want to leap ahead a little bit, 1970, there was an attempt at a consensus meeting to pick somebody to run against the Democratic incumbent US Senator Phil Hart. Tell me why that didn't work in 1970 when it had back in 1966.

Bill McLaughlin: I was a brand new chairman, Milliken was a brand new governor. We had both come in, in 1969, he was a brand new governor. We had three meetings, the first one was the official state central committee meeting, again, at the St. Clair Inn in St. Clair, that was the first meeting. The next one we adjourned that meeting to the Jack Tar Hotel in Lansing, and the final one was also, the second one was in February 21st, and the last one was on March 7th. We had three meetings. The second meeting, we set the ground rules and all at the first meeting. Great flack came out and it was, I asked Milliken to chair the state central committee meeting because Romney had chaired the consensus meeting years before. That was interpreted, Milliken had no confidence in me and he had taken the thing over. He didn't. He didn't need us. I asked him to do it.

Bill McLaughlin: When we came down then to the ballot thing in the Jack Tar Hotel in Lansing, I didn't know I was so inept and I don't think Milliken knew what hit him. It was bad. I had an advisor and everything went wrong. What we didn't know until after, two of Milliken's operatives on their own, John Stalin, Emma Tracy, neither of whom ever liked the Romneys, were out there telling people Milliken doesn't want Romney on the ticket. It was great confusion. What should've been a slam dunk for people who were urging them in order to get in the race because all the polling showed that she had the best chance. We're getting confused.

Bill Ballenger: What about Romney himself though? Wasn't there a feeling that Romney was trying to pull some strings and get Lenore nominated and Milliken was somewhat ambivalent about whether this is really a great thing or not and especially when he knew there was opposition to a Romney and the ticket?

Bill McLaughlin: To the best of my knowledge, this was the stuff that was generated by Stalin and Tracy. The other thing, Riegle then became a serious candidate. George was never going to get into it.

Bill Ballenger: Don Riegle was a two-term Republican Congressman from Flint at that point.

Bill McLaughlin: Flint.

Bill Ballenger: Yes.

Bill McLaughlin: Two things, he never once committed that he would go. Number one, Harold McClure said, "I can't raise the money for you."

Bill Ballenger: Harold McClure was?

Bill McLaughlin: Harold McClure was a finance chairman.

Bill Ballenger: Alma Oilman.

Bill McLaughlin: Along with Max Fisher,

Bill Ballenger: Chief fundraiser.

Bill McLaughlin: Who were the big fundraisers.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: He leveled with them and said, "You can't raise the money." Riegler never committed but when the candidates were asked to speak at the Jack Tar, Riegler came up and as only Riegler could do, he did a barn burner of a speech. It had everybody. Lenore lost. Lenore was a magnificent speaker as first lady, she was wonderful. She was so dull and things, that started turning.

Bill Ballenger: Hubert spoke too of course and he was a real conservative Republican and he refused to get out of the race and he ran against Lenore in the primary.

Bill McLaughlin: Primary, that's right.

Bill Ballenger: Even though Riegler acquiesced and said, "Okay, I'll just run for Congress."

Bill McLaughlin: He got out eventually because he couldn't go.

Bill Ballenger: Right, and Lenore beat Hubert but barely. It was like 51 to 49%. She barely beat him and she was badly wounded I think in that primary and she never really recovered.

Bill McLaughlin: In my opinion, she never had a chance once we got out of the consensus thing, we forced the consensus so we shouldn't have. That was my mistake. I should've told the governor we're not going to get something, let's stop this and we didn't. She was so weakened coming out of that thing, that there was nobody that was going to help her. Don't forget, Phil Hart, who was the Democratic incumbent, one of the great ones, the Hart office building is named after him, he was going to be difficult to beat anyway.

Bill Ballenger: Right. 1966 was a hugely successful year to the Michigan Republican party. You won back almost everything you'd lost two years before, you got the governorship, you got all these Congressmen, you got a US Senator, you win control of the state Senate, you're tied in the House but then there was a special election in the spring of 1967 because a Democratic State Representative unexpectedly died in office. Tell me a little bit about that.

Bill McLaughlin: Denny Hammond was the Chairman of the 17th Congressional district and the Kowalski seat was in the 17th district, which is northwest Detroit. I had been the campaign coordinator in the '66 election, which was genius of Elly, not that it was I but she convinced Romney that all the campaigns had to run as one and so instead of Romney for governor, it was an action team for an action state. I was still in that position so Hammond called me and said, "I think we can win this thing." I said, "Denny, you're out of your mind." "No," he said, "I think I can. Don't forget, small turn out in general elections. I want to make a run for this." I said, "Okay, let's go."

Bill McLaughlin: We poured everything we had into that thing and we were down there four or five nights a week because he was a businessman from Plymouth I believe. He was a member of the Republican State Central Committee, no political experience really at all. We put together such a campaign and excuse me everybody for mentioning it, among other things we devised the first telemarketing campaign in history. With the help of Michigan Bell, we devised a system where we could call homes at night and George Romney when they picked up phone, George Romney would tell them, "This is Governor Romney, I'm asking you to vote for Tony Lakata." It was amazing.

Bill Ballenger: You think this was about the first time any political party had really done something like this anywhere in the country?

Bill McLaughlin: As far we know it, it is the first. We don't know of any other, nor did Michigan Bell. The Saturday before the election, the Democrats thought we were crazy, wasting all this money. Hoffa, he's coming he's saying, "He's the son of Jimmy Hoffa"

Bill Ballenger: Hoffa had one a multi-candidate Democratic primary.

Bill McLaughlin: Primary, right.

Bill Ballenger: Of course, one of the things the Republicans used against him was he really was not a native of the district. He had kind of moved into the district to run for the seat so you kind of used the carpet bagger charge against him, didn't you?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah, but on the Saturday before, I think there was 21 Republican legislators from all over the state. Romney, Senator Griffin, Lieutenant Governor Milliken, all of them came down. I think we knocked on just about every single door in the district asking people to vote.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: Well, come election night, Tony Lakata upsets Jimmy. It was great for Hoffa but you know what one more thing? Time Magazine, Newsweek, all the magazines picked it up, this was the magic of George Romney. He was the guy to carry the flag against the Democrats in 1968.

Bill Ballenger: Right, so it ended up being as big or more of a plus for Romney almost than it was for everybody else.

Bill McLaughlin: Romney than everybody else. Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: That gave the Republicans a 56 seat in the House so that they had a 56/54 edge rather than just a tie. Even though they had elected already the Speaker, his name was Bob Waldron, who was the State Representative from Gross Point. What kind of a staff did Bob Waldron have in those days?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, I love this. Bob Waldron had a secretary, her name was Nell Taylor from Charlotte, and he had a field man, guy who's name was Steve Stockmeyer, the kid from the University of Michigan who called me before for the Romney thing. That was all. Every legislator shared with two other legislators, a secretary.

Bill Ballenger: Three legislators to each secretary.

Bill McLaughlin: To each secretary. I mean that's what it was back in 1968 compared to the enormous number of staff.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, what it's grown into today, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Going back again just a little bit, Bill Milliken of course, won his second term as Lieutenant Governor with George Romney in 1966 but two years before, he not only been elected with George Romney, he was nominated at a Republican State Convention as Lieutenant Governor in a very close contest with Allison Green, the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Tell me a little bit about that election. How close was it?

Bill McLaughlin: The party was taking sides. It never was a vicious thing but it was a tough one. We want Green, we want Milliken. Milliken to me seemed to be the future of the party. Allison Green was a wonderful man, I think he was a farmer but I didn't see him 10 years from now being a party leader. I did with Bill Milliken. I had gotten the Macomb County delegation committed to him and told him that. The convention started on Friday. On Thursday my bride, Janet, delivered our third son, Timothy. I had to promise her that I would stay and watch the other two boys and so I couldn't go to the convention. I had everything lined up and I still I have a telephone growing out of my ear because Friday night, I was never off the phone talking to people.

Bill McLaughlin: There was all kinds of rumors that I didn't really want Milliken and so there was all attempts to hijack the delegation, they never did.

Bill Ballenger: The Allison Green were trying to steal the Macomb delegates.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely, and they never did. We held rock solid and Milliken beat Green.

Bill Ballenger: How close was the vote? Do you remember? Was it pretty close?

Bill McLaughlin: I don't remember but I assume it was probably close. I assume it was probably close.

Bill Ballenger: Maybe not as close as the US Senate race in Minnesota right now. At least in percentage terms.

Bill McLaughlin: Not that way. Allison Green was a credible candidate.

Bill Ballenger: He was. In fact, Romney appointed him State Treasurer.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: Which he was for years afterwards.

Bill McLaughlin: Friday night, there was rumors I'm told all over the convention that Romney really wanted Green.

Bill Ballenger: Mm-hmm. You think that's true?

Bill McLaughlin: He may have.

Bill Ballenger: He never said anything publicly.

Bill McLaughlin: Still he had Stalin and no, that was Milliken, no, you never can trust staff. They got their own agenda.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: I never believed the rumor and I told our people not to believe the rumor and they held solid for Milliken.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so you win this Lakata special election in the spring of '67 in Detroit, you hold the seat with Dave Serotkin, Republicans have control, what else happened in '67? What about money all during this time? I know money was always a concern in the party. Was it Harold McClure and Alma and Max Fisher in Detroit, were these the go-to guys that you depended on to raise money, did you have any other way of raising money during that time?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, the party was structured that it had to go through the finance committee. State finance committee, in Detroit there was a United Republican Fund, which was called the fundraiser down there. One thing, money raisers also want to be politicians and so they can really mess up. Milliken had his fundraiser, his name was John Stalin.

Bill Ballenger: He was a businessman from Belding.

Bill McLaughlin: From Belding.

Bill Ballenger: In Ionia County.

Bill McLaughlin: In Ionia County.

Bill Ballenger: For the State Senator.

Bill McLaughlin: Right. He and Milliken got close when they were in this, they were called the moderates in the Senate at the time.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: McClure made a deal with a legislator in '65 I believe that the party would raise all the money for them and if they had a fundraiser that came to the party so we could raise, the party would fundraise, which was fine in theory. It never was going to work. It never did work and therefore, the legislature always got mad at the party and if I were a legislator, I'd have gotten mad at the party too. It just wouldn't work.

Bill McLaughlin: Elly inherited a half a million dollar debt when she became chairman in 1965. When I became chairman, I inherited that plus \$400,000 from the Milliken campaign, which dumped on the party.

Bill Ballenger: That was four years later.

Bill McLaughlin: That was four years later but I mean it was a case of somebody always constantly rolling over and then people wondering why the party was doing things and it just had this enormous debt.

Bill Ballenger: One other thing that happened during this time that was kind of an innovation by Ellie and you was the action centers and a guy named John Martillo. Will you talk about that a little bit?

Bill McLaughlin: I would love to. Elly, she was a brilliant thinker. We both thought that the future of the party had to be in urban areas, that's where the people lived, you had to go after the vote. She came up with, I forget what it was, for a statewide thing of getting people to volunteer. Republicans to volunteer as Republicans to help people. In Detroit, she decided to open what she called an action center.

Bill Ballenger: Was that the result of the Detroit riot? Did she have that in place before the riot happened in the summer of '67 or was it kind of an outgrowth of the riot?

Bill McLaughlin: I believe it was there before the riot did. We used the 13th district headquarters as, no, she started this in '65-'66.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, okay.

Bill McLaughlin: It was before.

Bill Ballenger: Okay.

Bill McLaughlin: Because we recruited wonderful black candidates, Gene Beauregard and Willy Lipscomb who is now has spent 30 years a judge in Detroit. We recruited these young, black, beautiful people, enthusiastic people who wanted to go in this action center and the whole theory was how can we as a party help the people in the district? I remember stuff of helping Mother Waddles for instance.

Bill Ballenger: Right. Was the idea of volunteerism, organized volunteerism by the party identified.

Bill McLaughlin: Volunteerism, absolutely and we hired a young man by the name of John Martillo.

Bill Ballenger: He was from out of state, right?

Bill McLaughlin: He was from out of state. He lived in Grosse Pointe. He was out of state.

Bill Ballenger: Didn't he come from Boston? Wasn't he from Boston, Massachusetts?

Bill McLaughlin: He may have. I don't really remember.

Bill Ballenger: He's still active today, isn't he?

Bill McLaughlin: He still works with Joe Biden and managed most of Joe Biden's Senate campaigns.

Bill Ballenger: The Vice President, well, it's unbelievable so this is the same guy and he came here to run these action centers.

Bill McLaughlin: This is the same guy, he came here and organized the center and ran the center for us. We did a lot of good. They all folded after three years though.

Bill Ballenger: Why?

Bill McLaughlin: The rhetoric of Richard Nixon and Spiro Agnew just drove the people you were trying to attract to the Republican party. People like Martillo, you're trying to attract to the Republican party. It just disgusted him. The Gene Beauregards, the John Martillos, all said, "I've had enough," and they left, and that's where it fell.

Bill Ballenger: They left. Okay, so we get into 1968 and in 1968, running for the presidency, there's no Constitutional office on the ballot in '68, Lieutenant Governor,

Attorney General, Secretary of State, there wasn't even a US Senate race I don't believe that year.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. Thank God.

Bill Ballenger: There was the Presidential race.

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: You had Richard Nixon emerge from nowhere. People thought he was politically finished and win the Republican nomination beating Ronald Reagan actually. Ronald Reagan came as close to Nixon as anybody.

Bill McLaughlin: Reagan had come to prominence with a campaign and fundraising spot he had done for Goldwater in '64.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill Ballenger: Reagan's a nominee and Hubert Humphrey is the Democratic nominee, what happened here in Michigan? Emil Lockwood, the State Senate Majority Leader, was he running?

Bill McLaughlin: He was the Nixon campaign chairman in Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: What was your relationship with the Nixon campaign in '68? Was it better than your relationship had been with the Goldwater people back in '64?

Bill McLaughlin: I think anything would have been better than Goldwater I think.

Bill Ballenger: You weren't getting as much hate mail?

Bill McLaughlin: No, well, everybody was united around Nixon. Emil was good to work with as far as I can remember. The problems started in the National Convention in Miami when Nixon named the governor of Maryland, Spiro Agnew as his Vice President. I didn't think it was bad at the time. Agnew was recognized as a "moderate governor" he must be okay. Well, the first one to go ballistic was Don Riegle. Oh, he went crazy with his guy Agnew. Romney wasn't too happy, I couldn't figure out why and then Romney's name was, as I remember, was put in nomination also and Agnew beat him.

Bill Ballenger: Maybe Romney had gotten to know Agnew as fellow Governor.

Bill McLaughlin: Better than anybody else did. That's right. As not a governor, you couldn't figure out why he was upset with it. This was all in a turbulent year. There was a Presidential primary and I think it was '68, was it George Wallace won the Democratic primary. George Wallace, the far right Governor of Alabama won the primary at UAW State.

Bill Ballenger: Well, I think that was '72.

Bill McLaughlin: That was '72, okay.

Bill Ballenger: That was later. You had the Chicago Convention, Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated.

Bill McLaughlin: Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated.

Bill Ballenger: Hubert Humphrey was a nominee.

Bill McLaughlin: Martin Luther King had been assassinated.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: It was a turbulent time. The anti-war, the hippies, everybody else descended on Chicago and they had what ended up being a riot in the park across the street from the Chicago Hilton. The interesting thing is as we're doing this on videotape in 1968, the only thing was film. You shot the film. The TV cameramen shot the film, and somebody raced the film by hand to a TV station to put it on the air. The riots broke out and they were devastating. It was disgusting and on TV it looked terrible. By the time, some of the riots were already over, but by the time it hit the television, it was also hitting the floor of the Democratic convention and the delegates of the convention were going nuts. Democratic party was devastated by this stuff. In fact, in my opinion, our political process today is still affected by the riots in the park in Chicago in 1968. The Democrats, after it was over, appointed a committee under the chairmanship of George McGovern, it was called the McGovern Committee. It was to redo the things so this never would happen again.

Bill Ballenger: The delegate selection process.

Bill McLaughlin: The delegate selection process. And of course the process had to be that everybody had to have a say, whether they knew what they were doing or not. So they so restructured the thing that in 1960 and '64, and I think probably '68, three states had a primary of any significance. It was West Virginia, it was Wisconsin and California. Now you have every state having primaries, et cetera. It all resolves out of the attempt by the Democrats to rewrite the rules on delegate selection out of that '68 primary.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, I think you saw a lot of reference to that last year in the fight between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama for the Democratic nomination.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. That's right.

Bill Ballenger: The unit rule, so to speak, where winner take all in some cases gives somebody a big advantage when they only won 51-49 to get all the delegates.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: And that all grew out of it.

Bill McLaughlin: That all grows out of that. And I've always said, I was in a lot of smoke-filled rooms. A lot of smoke-filled rooms gave us Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower. The smoke-filled rooms couldn't have been all bad. But out of this we got the McGoverns, we got the McCarthys, and all of the other people who almost brought the Democratic Convention and Jimmy Carter almost brought the country to a ruin.

Bill Ballenger: Let me ask you this. Did you have any experiences early, as '68, with some of the people around Richard Nixon? Like Bob Haldeman, did he ever come into Michigan?

Bill McLaughlin: Nixon came to Grand Rapids and was speaking in the hall in Grand Rapids. I walked into the room and a guy, this crew-cutted guy standing by the door next to me. I don't know who this guy is, but if they put a brown shirt on him, he'd have done good in Berlin. I never changed my opinion. That was Bob Haldeman, he looked like a Nazi Stormtrooper. And that was a prelude until four year's hence.

Bill Ballenger: In 1960, Richard Nixon lost to John Kennedy here in Michigan for the presidency by a pretty narrow margin. But in '68, even with this horrible Democratic National Convention, which was a disaster for their party, Hubert Humphrey managed to carry Michigan by a bigger margin over Richard Nixon in '68 than he had, where the Democrats had, eight years earlier. Why did that happen?

Bill McLaughlin: I don't remember enough of '68 'cause I was Vice Chairman but I remember '72 so well. We had come to the conclusion by '72 that Nixon for some reason hated Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: In '68 you don't even remember him really campaigning here very much?

Bill McLaughlin: He totally ignored the state.

Bill Ballenger: He ignored it, yeah. Well that must have been touch on Lockwood, his campaign manager in Michigan when he wasn't even here.

Bill McLaughlin: It had to be. It had to be. And if I can jump ahead and make a comparison to '72, in '72 I knew we could carry this state. But I didn't think he did, so I went to Washington and sat down with the people in the White House. Specifically a guy by the name of Fred LaRue who went to jail over Watergate, and Jack Gibbs a former executive director of the State Party was appointed as their staff person in Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: Of the Nixon campaigns?

Bill McLaughlin: Of the Nixon campaign in Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: I said to LaRue, I said, "I will carry the state for you, but you got to let us run the campaign." And they did. And it was a different thing because there's no problem with politics if everybody is on the same page. Jack Gibbs was like another guy, like Larry Lindemer and we all got along great together and ran a campaign that meshed.

Bill Ballenger: Probably Gibbs being from Michigan helped a lot, don't you think?

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Well of course, Nixon carried just about every state in 1972 against McGovern. There was that factor as well.

Bill McLaughlin: That helped also. But we got through with a lot less turmoil because of working together. That will lead into another major subject we'll talk about, I'm sure, when you're ready.

Bill Ballenger: Well let me ask you this, 1970, which is between '68 and '72, and we've already talked about it to a certain extent with the Lenore Romney candidacy, but that was the year that Milliken who had become governor because George Romney went to the Nixon administration in Washington as Housing and Urban Development Secretary, was running for a full term for the first time.

Bill McLaughlin: Milliken was, yes.

Bill Ballenger: Milliken was running, Romney had left and Milliken had been the acting governor, whatever you want to call it, for two years '69, '70, with no lieutenant governor because he'd been the lieutenant governor. He had to pick a running mate. What about Jim Brickley, where did he come from? How important was that to Milliken in the Fall of 1970? What do you remember about that race? Because by that time, you Bill McLaughlin, you're party chairman. Elly Peterson has gone to Washington with the National Republican Committee and you are the Party Chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: In, I want to say, 1967. I'm guessing, maybe it was 1969, but I think it was '67. Elly Peterson, Joyce Braithwaite and I came to Detroit and met with a guy by name of Jim Brickley. Jim Brickley had been a Detroit City Council person. I believe he was also US Attorney.

Bill Ballenger: He was Assistant US Attorney, under Bill Cahill.

Bill McLaughlin: Assistant US Attorney. That's right, he was Assistant US Attorney. We talked to him about trying to run for office. It was a wonderful meeting and he said, "No." I really lost track of him until he became Milliken's running mate.

Bill Ballenger: Were you surprised when he became Milliken's running mate?

Bill McLaughlin: I was overjoyed.

Bill Ballenger: I know you were happy, but I mean did you expect it? Because there were people running around the state like Bill Hampton, the state representative, and others who wanted to be Milliken's running mate. And all of a sudden Milliken just announced, "Jim Brickley's going to be my running mate."

Bill McLaughlin: I have no recollections of it. I don't know if I knew in advance or not, but I was overjoyed with it. Because I had a great admiration for him. I remember Jim Brickley when he was on the City Council.

Bill Ballenger: So what do you remember about that campaign in 1970? Obviously it didn't go well for Lenore Romney against Phil Hart. It was not a good year for the Republicans. It was a good Democratic year. But Bill Milliken survived against the Democratic nominee, a State Senator named Sander Levin.

Bill McLaughlin: Levin, who is now a member of Congress.

Bill Ballenger: Who went on to be a long serving congressman.

Bill McLaughlin: Who had been, at the time was the Democratic State Party Chairmen.

Bill Ballenger: The State Party Chairman, right.

Bill McLaughlin: When Sandy ran for governor, I went, "Well if he wins, at least there's hope for former State Chairmen."

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, you might get elected or something, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: I might get elected. Anyways, I think General Motors was on strike, so the economy of the state was in turmoil. Things I remember, I remember the fallout from the consensus thing with Lenore was terrible. The split in the party with Lenore and Hubert was terrible. I remember by the General Election it was complete and total apathy in the party. I remember leaving this house on Halloween and taking Mike, Pat and Tim around to do their trick or treating. It was a rainy night. I remember I was so low. I was convinced he was going to lose. My thought was, "What am I going to do for a living next year?" And then to dupe it all that we had a bizarre case of election-itis in Detroit where George Edwards, a former Democrat legislator I believe, was the County Clerk. He was introducing punch-card balloting, which is effect is the early form of computer ballot, voting.

Bill Ballenger: Right, supposed to be a really high-tech innovation.

Bill McLaughlin: High-tech. Since when the election came and went we found ballots in Detroit that fell out of trucks and were in puddles and found the free press for instance. The thing was so badly mishandled. Our election night came and went, and came and went. It was almost 48 hours later when we knew the final result. I happened to be standing in the governor's office about two o'clock in the afternoon and Sandy Levin came in the office to concede.

Bill Ballenger: To concede?

Bill McLaughlin: It was that long. As down as I was during Halloween night, election night I knew Milliken was going to win. The reason was, in the black precincts, he, Milliken was running ahead of Romney's base in '66.

Bill Ballenger: Whoa, really? Why was that do you think?

Bill McLaughlin: The magic of Bill Milliken.

Bill Ballenger: Well, I mean had he already put in place. Remember he did things like dividing up the proceeds from a bond issue that had been on the ballot in '68 to get more money.

Bill McLaughlin: He was an urban governor.

Bill Ballenger: ... to urban areas. He was an urban guy, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: He was an urban governor from a rural county. He had people like Jack Dempsey who run these things.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, there was one other very important issue on the ballot that November that was a factor in the governor's race and that was Parochiaid.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: Remember Parochiaid?

Bill McLaughlin: Yes, I had forgotten about.

Bill Ballenger: Milliken backed Parochiaid and he did tremendously well in many Roman Catholic precincts that ordinarily were Democratic.

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: Remember Levin opposed Parochiaid?

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: Then he waffled at the end, and the MEA, the Michigan Education Association of Teachers Union, which had supported Levin, got very unhappy with Levin at getting weak-kneed at sticking to his guns, and so Milliken looked like a guy of principal who at least really stood for something. Of course, anybody, not just Roman Catholics but the Christian Reform Community in West Michigan, and everybody else who wanted to save private schools, they were all for Milliken. So he won by about 44,000 votes.

Bill McLaughlin: Well, you just hit the magic of Bill Milliken. He was principled.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: It was that simple. But Keith Molin and I kept seeing these results come in and we said, "He's going to win." Our thing was, you got to know the territory. While everything else looked gloom, we saw in the key precincts that we had, it's like he was running ahead in many areas that he needed to ahead of Romney in '66. And if you were running ahead of Romney in Detroit you knew you were going to get a Wayne County vote that was going to be big.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, absolutely.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: So Milliken survives. You have the George Edward's punch-card voting fiasco. What about after that? Nixon is still President. You've got legislative reapportionment coming up in 1971, '72, that kind of thing.

Bill McLaughlin: And congressional redistricting.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: It was now a one man, one vote. The Democrats frankly had all the computers and all the staff they needed from Solidarity House that was in their district. We had no staff. At the office and here, I brought all the stuff home. I remember over Easter I brought home the one adding machine we had in the Party Headquarters. I sat in my den downstairs and worked out a plan. I didn't find out later, until much later, when I was ridiculed in court that the adding machine I had was not accurate. I was off a little bit, more than I thought. I had a perfect balance, except I didn't have a perfect balance when they ran my figures on the computer. I was off.

Bill McLaughlin: Anyways, we went back and forth and massaged figures, and they massaged figures, and argued in court the one man, one vote. Come time for the legislature to approve the congressional redistricting plans, I was standing in the balcony of whichever house was considering it. Jim McNeely, oh, it was in the Senate. It was in the Senate and I was standing in the balcony in the Senate. Jim McNeely, who was the Democratic State Chairman came up and shook my

hand. He said, "I don't know how you did it, but you've won." Then, as a roll was called, a Senator by the name of Tony Stamm who went on to a district to beat Garry Brown and become Senator.

Bill Ballenger: He said that he could take on the incumbent Garry Brown and beat him.

Bill McLaughlin: And beat him, right. Then Charlie Zalor in Southwest Michigan wanted the same thing, to get Ed Acheson. They both voted No. While McNeely still had my hand, the Democrats prevailed and we lost.

Bill Ballenger: They snatched victory from the jaws of defeat. They snatched victory. You saw defeat snatched from the jaws of victory by Stamm and Zalor, yes.

Bill McLaughlin: Then we get to the Supreme Court and Tom Brennan, one of the members of the Supreme Court, again, we thought we had the votes to do it, and Brennan voted with the Democratic side. And then wanted to be our candidate in years to come. Over the years, the result Stamm and Zalor has cost the Republican Party in Michigan dearly. Because what should have been redistricting in the favor of Republicans became the redistricting in favor of Democrats.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, but wouldn't that have been pretty much wiped out in 1982, 10 years later. They would've had to do it all over again anyway, and they did. They came up with a plan then, Bernie Apol that most people think was kind of neutral. It probably hurt for a decade, there's no question about that.

Bill McLaughlin: Well 10 years is 10 years, Bill.

Bill Ballenger: Well it's not forever, it's not forever. We're in 2009.

Bill McLaughlin: Well 10 years is 10 years.

Bill Ballenger: Well, it was during your tenure.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: That's why you were you were Chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: Obviously, but that was why we lost the redistricting in '72, because two people wanted their own thing to get in.

Bill Ballenger: Right, absolutely. What about busing? You remember that as an issue?

Bill McLaughlin: Busing, there was a court decision that would allow, to achieve equality in the racial balance of schools, the busing across country, across district lines.

Bill Ballenger: Across school district lines, to achieve racial balance. Throughout the country.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely, yeah.

Bill Ballenger: There was a big backlash against it everywhere.

Bill McLaughlin: There was an attorney in Oakland county who was representing, and all of sudden I've got a blank of the woman's name.

Bill Ballenger: Irene McCabe?

Bill McLaughlin: Irene McCabe, and the attorney's name was Brooks Patterson.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, we've heard that name.

Bill McLaughlin: First time we heard of Brooks Patterson, who is now the Oakland county executive, was representing Irene McCabe. Bob Griffin got involved in it. It was a hot issue, oh it was such a hot issue. Every parent, I suppose including myself feared the thought of putting my kids on a school bus and busing them someplace else to achieve racial balance. That was one whale of a deciding factor in that election.

Bill Ballenger: Same time that Nixon was running for reelection against McGovern in '72. You had the legislature up for grabs, House and Senate and so forth.

Bill McLaughlin: And I must say, I suspect that the majority of people who were raising Cain about busing were more Republican than Democrats.

Bill Ballenger: Probably, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: It was benefiting the Republican party more than the Democrats.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, and also Patterson ran against the incumbent prosecutor in Oakland county, a guy named Plunkett and beat him.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: Basically on the busing issue, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: On that, and started his career.

Bill Ballenger: There was another important contest in 1972, and that was the US Senate race between Bob Griffin trying to win a second term and Frank Kelley the Democratic Attorney General running for something other than Attorney General the only time in his life. What do you remember about that campaign?

Bill McLaughlin: I remember Griffin was a good candidate, but he was an old lady at times. He was an old lady. I remember a photo shoot for a commercial on at Northland Center. I never heard of a man using hairspray.

Bill Ballenger: Hairspray?

Bill McLaughlin: Not in those days, men didn't use hairspray. You know what I mean? He went and bought a can of hairspray. We were doing a shoot outside and he lacquered his hair down, he was all set. He was all set. A wind came up and the whole-

Bill Ballenger: The whole, his combover?

Bill McLaughlin: Whatever it was.

Bill Ballenger: He had a combover.

Bill McLaughlin: It was straight up in the air.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah? He looked like a rooster maybe.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. I remember Bob Griffin learning to campaign back in 1966. Where a governor by the name of Romney took him by the hand and introduced him to campaigning. I remember, I think it was the Fourth of July. No, it was Labor Day. Labor Day, they came down and they crashed the Democratic Party's Labor Day Parade in downtown Detroit. They jumped the fence and went to-

Bill Ballenger: Jumped the fence, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Jumped the fence and went to a Democratic UAW picnic in Flint.

Bill Ballenger: Right, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: I mean George Romney taught Bob Griffin how to campaign that day and he retained it and he was just as intense in 1972 in campaigning that way. Unfortunately the only specific thing I remember is the hair going up in the air.

Bill Ballenger: Well let me ask you this, do you think he only beat Frank Kelly in '72 because of Nixon's victory at the top of the ticket, and coattails?

Bill McLaughlin: It didn't hurt. He and Nixon were close personal buddies. They were close personal friends. I believe they were both freshman in the House at the same time. Anyways they served together in the house, were very close friends. I'm sure that Nixon had strong coattails. I mean the history of '72 is absurd, Nixon was such a overwhelming favorite and helped everybody.

Bill Ballenger: Going back to '66, when Griffin was running against G. Mennen Williams in a race that I mean, after all this was the undefeated champ of Michigan politics. Soapy Williams had won a record six times as governor the last time in '58, but he had not run in eight years and he had been out of the country. He'd been an Assistant Secretary of State in Africa, he's been an ambassador to the Philippines. He came home, the Democrats thought, to reclaim the seat that

they thought should rightfully be theirs that Pat McNamara who had died had held. All of a sudden here's this obscure Congressman from Northwest Michigan appointed by Governor Romney to fill the seat. They thought, "Well we're going to knock him off easily." But it didn't happen. Why? Because George Romney, basically the Romney magic at the top of the ticket, the Romney Griffin bumper stickers carried Griffin? What happened?

Bill McLaughlin: That, and the genius of Elly Peterson. Elly Peterson somehow unbeknownst to me came up with a thought and went to Romney with it. It was to have a coordinated campaign with everybody working together and nobody pulling apart. She suggested, and Romney bought that I become a State Campaign Coordinator. I stay as Vice-Chairman but I almost full-time over head the campaign. For instance, one week we had 72 requests for Romney for speaking. Romney couldn't make 72 speeches. But we could send Milliken, we could send Griffin, we could send all, Asher.

Bill Ballenger: So you covered everything?

Bill McLaughlin: And so we never missed, or rarely missed sending somebody to represent us at every request we had. We shared office space. There wasn't extra cost. We did TV. I shouldn't say "We", I was one of the people, but the people like Walt De Vries who was one of Romney's smart people had worked out a system where we would cover every single media market every single day with somebody making some kind of news, totally dominating the televisions of all over the state. All I did as a coordinator was to make sure it all worked and have a weekly meeting. Romney's representative, I think it was John Bannington was his campaign manager. Mary Browder was an assistant of Lenore. She was the first lady, she came. Griffin, I think Keith Mullen was running the Griffin campaign. Marge Griffin was also represented by him. The Secretary of State and the Attorney General Jean Backus was a party worker from Shiawassee County, I think it was. She ran the state Attorney General. There was somebody else who was looking at all of the things, whoever was running for State Board of Education was part of the thing and was rolled in. The trustees at Michigan State, the regions of Michigan and the governors that way. They were all rolled into this thing.

Bill Ballenger: It was the Romney action team.

Bill McLaughlin: It was the action team for the action state.

Bill Ballenger: The action team. And even the bumper stickers had Romney with other candidates.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: One in blue, one in red, on a white background.

Bill McLaughlin: Which makes Phil Ruppe saying, "I'm going to run by myself, "Remember what I said, but I think that after August he was part of the action team.

Bill Ballenger: He'd probably gotten the message by then.

Bill McLaughlin: It was the genius of Elly who thought of it. The strength of George Romney who could swallow his own pride to roll himself in to all of these lesser people.

Bill Ballenger: Also wasn't he trying to show the national media and everybody else that he was a team player?

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Because he'd gotten criticism just two years before as being Lonesome George, remember? Running away from Barry Goldwater. He didn't want to be associated with other Republicans. So he's saying, "Wait a second here. I can run with Republicans. We're all in this together."

Bill McLaughlin: It was an ideal campaign. Looking at the final results of five new Congressmen, the legislator, the House and the Senate and all.

Bill Ballenger: Absolutely, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: It was just wonderful. That was what I think propelled him past Williams.

Bill Ballenger: We're up to '72. In June of 1972 of course, something very important happened, Watergate. Did you have any feeling at the time that this would turn in to be the disaster for the Republican party and for President Nixon it turned out to be in '73 and '74?

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely not. To begin with, I couldn't believe that Nixon or anybody connected with Republican party had anything to do with the break-in. I mean Nixon was a mortal lock to be reelected. He had been to China. Only Nixon could've opened the door to China. My only concern was, when reelected he was so brilliant in foreign affairs, when he turned that brilliance to solving the problems of the cities. I believe that he was the next Franklin Roosevelt who would turn the Republican party into the majority party for the next half century. I couldn't believe anybody was so stupid to have been involved in a break-in in the Democrat party and I looked at my own headquarters. I said, "If somebody broke in here tonight, what could they possibly find except old bills that we owe that would be of any value?" There was nothing in a party headquarters that should make any sense.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: So, no, we had no thoughts of doom, although, it became my nightmare for the next year. There was no sense of any doom with a break-in.

Bill Ballenger: Did you have any speech that you made to a convention, or the rules committee at the National Convention in 1972? Which would've happened after Watergate.

Bill McLaughlin: I was a member of the rules committee.

Bill Ballenger: What does a rules committee do?

Bill McLaughlin: I was a member of the rules committee of the Republican National Convention. I wasn't a member of the rules committee of the convention. But the Republican National Committee had committees of themselves that mirrored the committees of the convention, like a platform committee, and a rules committee. The rules committee really writes the rules for the governance of the party, and the governance of the convention. Getting involved in the rules, one of the heated things was there was no debate in convention in Miami in 1972. Nobody was going to challenge Nixon and there was no platform. Nixon was going to write the platform, so the focal point became the rules. Under rule 29 of the rules committee was a proportion of delegates to the national convention. I got involved thinking, and part of another group of real young people, thinking that the big states were getting screwed. We weren't getting a fair proportion, so we started to try to write rules to make it proportional to the thing.

Bill McLaughlin: When we got to the convention, that became the focal point in the rules committee of the convention. The rule 29 debate. I testified on behalf of our side with others before the committee. The committee rejected our arguments, and when it came to the floor, and I was the clean-up hitter for the change side. A guy by the name of Reagan, who was the clean-up hitter for keeping it the way it was.

Bill Ballenger: The other side? Oh, really.

Bill McLaughlin: Even though California would've benefited by 10 or 15 more delegates under our size.

Bill Ballenger: Wow. Why? Because the way the rules were written, they were stacked in favor of probably the southern states, and states that were overwhelmingly Republican rather than states with big populations, which were marginal or whatever?

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely, and I really don't remember the specifics of it anymore, but the naivete of me, even after having been around.

Bill Ballenger: So you were going up against the gipper?

Bill McLaughlin: I went up against the gipper and I got my butt booted like he booted the football in Knute Rockne, All American.

Bill Ballenger: What about Clark Reid?

Bill McLaughlin: In the 70s, it turned out that the leader of the moderates in the national committee immodestly I'll say was myself, and the leader of the right wing was Clark Reid, who was the Chairman of Mississippi. By the way, his executive director is now the Governor of Mississippi, Haley Barbour.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, Haley Barbour was his executive?

Bill McLaughlin: Haley Barbour was Clark Reid's executive director and I don't know if he was state chairman, but he was the national committee and was the governing force down there.

Bill McLaughlin: And that's what the rules thing boiled down to was Clark versus myself.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, and was there a women's federation of Michigan controversy or not? WFM?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah. I made a speech to the Women's Federation. Again, I suspected the Jack Tar when they were having a fall convention, and I think the mistake I made, I said with crime being the big issue, and Phil Hart having voted against the crime bill, I said something to the effect that "How can people who are against crime be voting for Phil Hart?" And I can't think of the phrase I used now.

Bill Ballenger: You probably suppressed it.

Bill McLaughlin: No, but it was a phrase that I remember from my childhood. I got back, and I think it was Tim Jones from WJR that called me, and he had missed the thing. And what did I say? And I made the mistake of saying, and whatever I said was wrong, and that's what got publicized. So, God, Tom Gordon was having a coronary. Tom Gordon was Milliken's executive director, and so before the day was out, I had to send a telegram to Phil Hart to apologize profusely.

Bill Ballenger: For saying that. Like he was soft on crime.

Bill McLaughlin: He was, and what I was right, and I wouldn't take it back, but I couldn't remember what I said to Tim Jones, and I said the wrong thing.

Bill Ballenger: Who was Barbara Franklin?

Bill McLaughlin: She was part of Watergate and the convention. Barbara Franklin ended up being the Secretary of Commerce, I think, for Reagan. She was an advisor in the White House. I talked to her. I talked to everybody I could think about by saying, "Now, we're going to wage this battle on rule 29. We won't do it if the President doesn't want us to do it." Barbara Franklin said he has no problem. Other people I talked to said he has no problem. What I didn't realize until the wee hours of the morning at the convention when John Ehrlichman came to reason with us

that we had been setup. They didn't have any problems. They wanted to get the moderates just crushed, and I think somewhere in the Watergate tapes, we got evidence of this was all a setup. Barbara Franklin, who I thought the world of, said, "No, he doesn't have any problem with it."

Bill Ballenger: But they were lying.

Bill McLaughlin: They were lying.

Bill Ballenger: They had it set up so that you'd confront the forces that would beat you, and you'd be crushed and humiliated.

Bill McLaughlin: And the moderates would be wiped out, and this was all part of it.

Bill Ballenger: What about Chuck Percy? Where was he in all this?

Bill McLaughlin: Chuck Percy was on our side. He was one of the people.

Bill Ballenger: He was a US Senator from Illinois.

Bill McLaughlin: He was a US Senator from Illinois. Mack Matthias was a US Senator from Maryland.

Bill Ballenger: You had maybe Clifford Case. You had Tom Peeples.

Bill McLaughlin: From New Jersey. Tom Keene from Jersey. All of these people, they assigned staff people to work with me to draft into all the work. There was a friend of Elly's who worked for her in Washington, Pam Curtis. The people working with me on this fight were all Tom Rails backed, the congressman from Illinois. These were the people who were part of us. We were so enthused, and they were doing a great job, and I remember I was still trying to make up my mind what to say in the speech as a wrap-up to the thing, walking, pacing underneath the thing when I got called up, and Jerry Ford introduced me as the Chairman of the Convention. And I basically took a page out of something somebody had did years ago. We fought the fight. We fought the good fight. You probably mostly made up your mind, but I hope you made it up the right way, because we're the right way. But when all is said and done, we still have to go from this convention. We have one job to do, and that's to reelect Richard Nixon as President of the United States. So I wouldn't let them totally embarrass us that we weren't party people, but we found out afterwards that we had been set up to be crushed.

Bill Ballenger: Well, at the end of 1972 of course Elly Peterson left the republican national committee I think in somewhat disgust of what she had witnessed over the previous four years. George Romney left HUD. What do you remember about that period, was there a lot of disillusionment?

Bill McLaughlin: The whole Watergate thing by the end of that cycle had come to understand that it was more than just a couple of Cubans breaking into the Democrat convention to get Larry O'Brien's whatever, or tap his phone, and I'm sure George Romney was starting to get disillusioned with the thing. My initial reaction in '68 of Bob Haldeman having a brown shirt and being in Berlin was not far off the mark, and the more you worked with the White House, the more you were convinced they ran it like stormtroopers. By the time of the Nixon thing it was amazing how bad this was.

Bill Ballenger: Your chairman, Elly Peterson, has left for Washington, there are two other women who come into the picture to help you at the Republican State Central Committee, Nancy Chase and Ranny Riecker. What can you tell me about them?

Bill McLaughlin: Ranny is maybe the best volunteer the party ever had. She is out of Midland, she was Vice Chairman, and she drove from Midland to Lansing and back every single day of the week, and worked full time without pay as the Vice Chairman. I think it was 1973 she was elected the national Committeewoman taking Ella Koeze's place. Ella Koeze was a long time national out of Grand Rapids, and when she was elected that, Nancy Chase who had been the county chairman in Washtenaw county, Ann Arbor, came in as the Vice Chairman, and Nancy drove from Ann Arbor every single day to be the full time.

Bill Ballenger: So did they both continue through the rest of your regime as chairman pretty much, up through '79?

Bill McLaughlin: No, Nancy only lasted a couple of years. My final Vice Chairman was Mildred Dunnell, who had been the party chairman in Macomb county.

Bill Ballenger: In Macomb, your old county.

Bill McLaughlin: My old county.

Bill Ballenger: Absolutely.

Bill McLaughlin: She was interesting. Mildred was one of the people that we overthrew in the 1962 primaries and she was part of the group that had been holding on for so long.

Bill Ballenger: So she came around to seeing things your way?

Bill McLaughlin: Didn't take long. Didn't take long.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, tell me about the ERA, the Equal Rights Amendment for women.

Bill McLaughlin: Equal Rights Amendment, and it was passed by the congressman, it had to be ratified I guess by two thirds of the states to become a law.

Bill Ballenger: 38 states.

Bill McLaughlin: 38 states, and so it came to Michigan and the legislature had hearings on it. I remember two people testifying on it, one was Elly Peterson, no three people. One was Elly Peterson, one was Helen Milliken, the governor's wife, and one was a young legislator by the name of Bill Ballenger. And Bill, your testimony that day stuck on mine all these years.

Bill Ballenger: Maybe I was the only male that showed up.

Bill McLaughlin: I was in the audience, I was there, and I chose not to testify, although I was strongly for the ERA. I chose not to testify because I was a lightning rod, this was in the middle of the Nixon stuff and all that. I didn't want to get people incensed against the ERA because I was for it. So I told Elly, "I'm for you, but I just don't think I should testify and get people upset." So I didn't.

Bill Ballenger: Well, we ratified it here in Michigan, but unfortunately we couldn't get 38 states to ratify it, so it died.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: Of course that was an issue for a long time. Now, a very important thing that happened along about this time was congressman Don Riegle, one of the great victories for the Republicans in 1966 when George Romney won his third term, switched parties.

Bill McLaughlin: That he did, that he did.

Bill Ballenger: Exactly what do you remember about that?

Bill McLaughlin: I remember sitting about five feet from me right now, getting the phone call, sitting trying to reason with him but I knew it was futile. It was interesting. He got involved in the Republican party because of a guy by the name of Nixon, and he left the Republican party under the same guise of Nixon, although I think Don switched because there was no future for him in the party that he could see. With Romney, with Milliken still, Milliken was becoming more dynamite every year, he just didn't see a future for him, so he switched parties. I tried to reason with him but I knew I couldn't.

Bill Ballenger: Were you blindsided when you got the call, or had you seen it coming?

Bill McLaughlin: I guess I probably saw it, I don't remember, but I guess I saw it coming, because I can remember sitting on that step over there taking the phone call and not being shocked. So it wasn't some, "Oh God no, you can't do that." I must have seen it coming, I don't think I was blindsided.

Bill Ballenger: In June 1973 a beleaguered Spiro Agnew came to Lansing, what can you tell me about that?

Bill McLaughlin: Vice President Agnew came to Lansing, he was speaking to probably the Chamber of Commerce or somebody in Lansing, I don't remember who. I know he had a noon speaking engagement at the Civic Center. I got a call the morning, which was a Monday morning of the thing, or maybe it was a Sunday. Anyways, he came in on Sunday night to play cards, as I understand, with old buddies of his. Bill, I'm sure you'd be shocked, because I got a call from the press said, "If you had him here, what would you have done with him?" I said, "I don't know, we thought we could use him for fundraising or something like that."

Bill McLaughlin: Well, that was in Monday's paper, Agnew was incensed, and I got orders to meet the Vice President in a meeting room in the Civic Center. So I went to the meeting room in the Civic Center. I don't think it was a kangaroo court, there was a chair here and there was a chair there, much like with you and I, the Vice President sat in one and I sat in the other and all his thugs or henchmen, or whatever they were, staff were in a semicircle behind him and he started reading me the riot act. I finally blew up, frankly, and I said, "Mr. Vice President, I don't give a darn what you do when you come, but if I don't know about it and I'm called blind by the press, I'm going to answer honestly and we would've used you for something. I don't care if you ever come to Michigan, frankly, but you're here and I would have used you had you given us the chance."

Bill McLaughlin: Well he started yelling at me, I finally got mad and I said probably un-nice words and I just walked out of the room.

Bill Ballenger: Well, four months later he wasn't Vice President anymore.

Bill McLaughlin: No, but this is the guy who had become Nixon's hatchet man. In Iowa at a Republican National Midwestern conference I was asked to look over the press and the Vice President came there and gave a speech that became famous as the 'nattering nabobs of negativism'. Beating up the press unmercifully, which was the start of Nixon's campaign to discredit the press. So frankly, by the time he came to Lansing I couldn't care less, and then four months later on my birthday I received the best birthday present I ever had. I got a call from Ab Hermann, who was one of the top staff people at the National Committee in Washington, to tell me that the Vice President was resigning and would I please, as everybody else on the National Committee was being asked, offer the President some names for him to consider. Well, I was dumbfounded. Agnew was going, thank God almighty, there was still a hope for the party in the world.

Bill McLaughlin: So I was very smart, I got a hold of Ranny Riecker, who was the National Committeewoman, Pete Fletcher, the National Committeeman, and we submitted three names; Nelson Rockefeller, governor of New York, William Milliken, governor of Michigan, and Robert Griffin, US Senator and minority whip of the US Senate to Nixon. About an hour later I got a call from Bob Griffin. He said, "I think if I were you I would amend that. You should take my name off

and put Jerry Ford's name on it." "Oh?" "Yeah Bill, I think you should put Jerry Ford's name on it." So I did what he said, I amended it, said no Griffin, put Ford on it. Well, that night Ford was nominated by the President. So Bob Griffin was so smart in Washington. He saved me an embarrassing face.

Bill Ballenger: We found out everybody else that the others from Michigan had recommended had gotten calls saying, "You better amend it."

Bill McLaughlin: I guess so.

Bill Ballenger: Because you all left Ford out, right?

Bill McLaughlin: That's right, and the interesting thing is Jerry Ford was a congressman from Grand Rapids. Who would have thought of Ford as a Vice President or a President? I mean it just wasn't in the yeah. But I did it that night that Ford was nominated. Thank you to Bob Griffin for saving my face.

Bill Ballenger: After Jerry Ford became Vice President, what did you here in Michigan do to honor your native son?

Bill McLaughlin: In the House of Senate, the final confirmation, he was sworn in.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: Again, the genius of Jerry Roe, who was my executive director at the party. We had set up in advance and had reserved the Capitol Hill Club, which is the Republican club, if you will, in Washington. We reserved it for a Michigan reception for the new Vice President. Jerry Ford left the capital, came to the Capitol Hill Club, a club that his picture had hung in ever since he began as the minority leader of the house. He came in the door and the first person to greet him was Jerry roe, a political collector. Jerry Roe had the program from the night and Mr. Vice President and Jerry Ford signed the Vice President things, and so that was the first autograph he gave. We probably had five, six other people in the Capitol Hill Club all to pay tribute to our now favorite son, Jerry Ford.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, Saturday Night Massacre. October 20th, 1973.

Bill McLaughlin: 1973. On the 22nd I guess it was, I was exhausted.

Bill Ballenger: Here in Northville?

Bill McLaughlin: Here in Northville, this very house. We turned off the television, the radio, and everything else. I was sound asleep. The next morning around 8 o'clock the phone rang. I picked it up, it was the assignment desk at Channel 7 in Detroit. A crew was on their way out to talk to me about the Saturday Night Massacre. "Okay, what's the Saturday Night Massacre?" And as I said that, bang, bang, bang on the front door, it was Doris Biscoe from Channel 7 and the Channel 7

crew came in, and I sat in the very chair you're sitting in as they talked to me and told me the Saturday Night Massacre, which was Nixon had ordered that the Attorney General fire, the guy's name was Cox, who was the Special Prosecutor was it?

Bill Ballenger: Right, Special Prosecutor.

Bill McLaughlin: Okay, Special Prosecutor in the Watergate thing. Elliot Richardson, a good friend of mine, was the Attorney General-

Bill Ballenger: Was the Attorney General.

Bill McLaughlin: And he said no one resigned.

Bill Ballenger: And Bill Ruckelshaus.

Bill McLaughlin: Bill Ruckelshaus was the assistant of the Attorney General, another good friend of mine, and he was told to fire Cox, and he said no.

Bill Ballenger: To fire Cox.

Bill McLaughlin: So they finally got down to a guy named Bork.

Bill Ballenger: Bork.

Bill McLaughlin: Bork, who was another lightning rod when he was nominated for the Supreme Court, and Bork of course said, "Yes, Sir." And he did, fired Cox. It to me was the most devastating moment of my life. I mean, I couldn't believe, this guy Nixon had to have lost his mind doing some of the things he was doing. But that was the Saturday Night Massacre, and of course I'm sure I said the wrong things because I was in the paper the next day and everyone was upset with me.

Bill Ballenger: Well, so you believe at that point Nixon had to resign himself, did you make a statement to that effect?

Bill McLaughlin: I never said, I said I think it's time for the congress to uphold the constitution and begin impeachment proceedings, or start the whole impeachment process.

Bill Ballenger: You didn't necessarily call for Nixon's resigning, at least at that point.

Bill McLaughlin: No, I didn't, I didn't.

Bill Ballenger: Okay.

Bill McLaughlin: I didn't call for that, no.

Bill Ballenger: What about the governor's conference in Memphis, wasn't that about a month later?

Bill McLaughlin: That was in November, as I remember it.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And I went to most of the National Governors conferences. So we were down there, it was a three day thing, and I think it was Tuesday, the last day of the convention. Nixon appeared before the governors, and he told the governors, "Everything's out, it's going to be out, there is nothing more. Don't worry, get about our business." Milliken came out of the room, he looked so relieved. He really was happy. Thank God that's it. Jay Van Andel was, of the Amway Van Andels, was our State Finance Chairman. He had his plane there, he flew the governor and I from Memphis to South Bend, Indiana where at Notre Dame that night John Connally was having a fundraiser raising money for Indiana and Michigan. We went there, and then when we left there he flew us back to Lansing. Instead of my traveling, getting in the car and going back to Northville, the governor said, "Please, just stay overnight."

Bill Ballenger: In the governor's residence?

Bill McLaughlin: At the governor's residence. I don't like staying over night but I said okay. So I went to bed, slept. I got up the next morning and I went into the living room and there, I think there was a fireplace, standing before the fireplace looking as white as a sheet was Bill Milliken. I said, "What's wrong?" And he told me that they just found out that there was 18 and a half minutes missing out of the tapes.

Bill Ballenger: Tape, the Rose Mary Woods.

Bill McLaughlin: The Rose Mary Woods who had to have an arm 17 feet long to do the erasing, but whatever it was.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And I do believe that was the moment when Governor Milliken's faith in Richard Nixon was ruined forever. I lost faith in Nixon some time ago. I think the governor was such a nice person, never would betray anybody.

Bill Ballenger: That did it.

Bill McLaughlin: That did it, yeah.

Bill Ballenger: There were two crucial special congressional elections in Michigan in 1974. One to replace Jerry Ford, who of course had gone on to become Vice President and President, and the other to replace Jim Harvey, a long time congressman in The

Thumb area, Bay City in Saginaw, who had been appointed a federal judge. What do you remember about those two special elections?

Bill McLaughlin: We started out in Grand Rapids, we got the best candidate we could possibly get; Bob VanderLaan who was the majority leader of the senate, an outstanding public servant and a good campaigner. So we're in great shape. The Democrats nominated, I think he's an attorney, Vanderveen was his name.

Bill Ballenger: Richard Vanderveen, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Richard Vanderveen was his name. Anyways, if I had to do it all over again Bill, I would not change one thing we did. Probably the best party organization in the state was in Kent County. The district was Kent County and Ionia County. Some of the best leaders in the state were out of Kent County. They did everything under the sun the right way. The election night returns were held, we got them in what was then the Pantlind Hotel, which is now the Amway Grand Plaza, but was in the Pantlind Hotel.

Bill Ballenger: Right, Amway, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: I was upstairs with VanderLaan in a room, and came in we couldn't believe our eyes. We lost the district. I came down the elevator and went through the ballroom where the rally was, get my car because I had to ride back to Northville. As I went through somebody said, "What happened?" I used to think I was a professional, not stupid, but I was stupid that night and I told them what happened, and what I didn't know, there was WXYZ Radio in Detroit microphone there and I said, "Watergate killed us." And just kept on going.

Bill Ballenger: Well, you were right.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm on the freeway to get to the Lowell exit and I think you go around a [inaudible 00:17:37].

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: The CBS evening or midnight news comes on and ah, di-di-da-da-da. "Watergate kills us says Michigan Chairman."

Bill Ballenger: William McLaughlin, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And I don't know whether I should stop and call Milliken or not, but anyways, I continue on home. By seven o'clock the next morning I think every news organization in the nation was calling me. Well, I believed it.

Bill Ballenger: Well, nobody could really fault you.

Bill McLaughlin: But, but, of course nobody agreed with me. George Bush said it was a lousy party organization, he was National Chairman.

Bill Ballenger: Alright.

Bill McLaughlin: And a guy by the name of Ford said, "I know that seat better than anybody. The party didn't do a good job. It's the party's fault." Well, thanks people. We ran an after election poll. The after election poll said we got Republicans out in record numbers, but 50% of them voted for the Democrat. What else could it be? It had to be Watergate. So Watergate killed us.

Bill Ballenger: Right. Well, now, that could also be said about the other special election in The Thumb, right?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, you talk about mirrors. And sometimes I just wish, yeah, I'd let nature take its course instead of getting so involved. But I literally moved to Saginaw, the Holiday Inn in Saginaw for the six weeks of the campaign with Sparling. Jim Sparling was the executive director, the right arm of Jim Harvey, who had been appointed as the incumbent congressman, and he was running for the office. He was a pretty good candidate. Bob Traxler was a member of the legislatures, I remember, and he was running for the Democrat's side. A number of things happened.

Bill McLaughlin: We got a poll three quarters of the way through the campaign that showed if we could keep Nixon out of the debate, Sparling was going to win. I didn't know the day before the poll came that Sparling had called the White House and invited Nixon to come in to campaign for him.

Bill Ballenger: Right, right.

Bill McLaughlin: Good gee whizz.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: So I immediately started arguing with Sparling. "Jim, you can't. Here's the numbers, you got to get..." "No, it's too late. I've already invited him." Well, I think it was that weekend that the Midwestern Republican conference was being held in Chicago. So I went with poll in hand and met with George Bush, and he brought in a guy by the name of Dean Burch. Dean Burch was a great guy, he was Coldwater's campaign manager in 1964.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, I remember him, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And I laid it all out before them. "Here's the results. Nixon's going to kill us, keep him out of the district." The stuff hits the fan. I subsequently learned after the election what had happened. A friend, I can't remember which one now, of a national reporter invited Janet and I to dinner one night, and he said what really

happened is Teeter, Bob Teeter who ran the poll, confided in Dierdorff, John Dierdorff, who was a political consultant, had worked for Rockefeller and John Lindsay in New York.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: And they had told Jack Germond that I was trying-

Bill Ballenger: Who was a national columnist.

Bill McLaughlin: Well, then was working for the Baltimore Sun.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: And they had told him, so that finally after years explained why Jack Germond was the first one that called me to say, "Are you trying to keep Nixon out of Michigan?" And of course I'm not going to say. "No, no, no." I really wasn't, it was up to Sparling to say.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: But anyways, I left home, by the time I came home on the lawn outside this window there was 11 cameras waiting for me. It was just national that I was trying to keep Nixon out. Well, Sparling got his way. Nixon came in, had a marvelous day with the President. We greeted him at the airport in Saginaw. I've got pictures still that he looks like death warmed over, his beard is worse than it was in the first Kennedy debate in 1960, and he's shaking hands, he goes by me, and "Mr President, Bill McLaughlin, welcome to Michigan." He goes on two more and he stops in his tracks and he says, "I've heard of you." Oh, I've got to ride with this guy for the rest of the day. So anyways, the trip included a motorcade through Saginaw, through Bay City and through the entire Thumb. It was a magical day, the people were out in droves, it was festive, the whole thing. I'm sure it was the best day in the rest of his life that Nixon ever had, but what people didn't understand was, they weren't cheering Nixon.

Bill McLaughlin: They were cheering the office.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: We got beat bad in that republican district. Again, the after election polls showed republicans voted in records they never had before and they all voted democratic.

Bill Ballenger: Did you have another face off with Ronald Reagan over this whole situation with polls?

Bill McLaughlin: The next day from George Bush, for showing him, and Dean Burch the poll, I had picked up word that Ronald Reagan, who was the keynote speaker at the Saturday night banquet, was going to again blame the party. I got a hold of some of the people and said, "I need to sit down with the governor. I don't want him to embarrass himself." I came into a room with Reagan and all his people there and I, "Governor, here's the story." I laid out and went over line by line, by line. I might have even had Teeter with me, who did the poll, for authenticating it. Watergate killed us. I had hoped we had convinced the governor of California. I was sitting at the head table and I was just as shocked as he read his speech ripping the party for losing the two seats. The poll meant nothing to him. I then became disillusioned with the people from California.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, he stayed on message in other words.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: His cue cards had all been written. He wasn't going to change the cue cards.

Bill Ballenger: What was the reaction of the Michigan congressional delegation, at least the republicans, to the impeachment proceedings against President Richard Nixon?

Bill McLaughlin: Most of the people in the Michigan delegation were close personal friends of Richard Nixon. They were like Bob Griffin. Bob Griffin, after Nixon resigned, cried. I used to go at least once a month, or not more, than those times to meet with the delegation at a breakfast to bring them up to date. I brought the polls. I brought everything else. People like Al Sederberg, in the 10th district, Charlie Chamberlain, in the 6th district, they just wouldn't believe me. They wanted to believe their boss, the guy in the White House. As a result they lost their elections. They shouldn't have. Had they only listened and governed themselves accordingly they could have overcome this, but they didn't and they paid the price.

Bill Ballenger: When Nixon resigned what was your feeling then? Ford is president and only a month later comes the pardon.

Bill McLaughlin: Well, the night Richard resigned is the most memorable night of my political life. The primary had been on Tuesday. On Thursday we went to Mackinac Island to meet with the governor, to plan campaign strategy, get ready for the state convention and all that. Rumor came out during the day Nixon was going to be on television. I don't remember knowing in advance what he was going to do. We went to the hotel. We had dinner at the Grand Hotel and Dan Musser, the general manager of the hotel, the owner of the hotel had a private room for us off the lobby with a television in there to watch and so we went in and we sat and watched. I know I was stunned when he said, "Tomorrow at noon I shall resign as the president of the United States."

Bill McLaughlin: We got up and I think there was Milliken, Mrs. Milliken, Joyce Braithwaite, Doris Weeks and myself and a state trooper were the only people in that room. I was the closest to the door. I got up and we walked out. Usually the Grand Hotel was abuzz with noise. I walked out and on the carpet you could have heard a pin drop it was that quiet. I looked up. There had to be 600-800 people lined up looking in our room by the windows. There had been television sets setup for them to see it. I walked out and, "Wow. I wonder what's going on?" Milliken came out of the room and it started quietly, and it started down the line to a crescendo. Television lights came down to the stairs halfway through the lobby that leads to the ballroom. I saw people, like the Jimmy Harringtons, the Tim Skubicks, the real good guys.

Bill Ballenger: Really? No kidding.

Bill McLaughlin: I knew that night. Sander Levin, was going to stand on the lawn next to me at the inaugural because Bill Milliken, despite anything, was still going to win that election. It was amazing. I can't tell the story to this day without tearing up. It was that emotional.

Bill Ballenger: In other words just the reaction that they had somebody that they could be proud of, a governor that they loved, who was everything that Nixon wasn't.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm not sure Bill is from Michigan, but the contrast between Bill Milliken and Richard Nixon was so great at that moment it was just a magical moment. I've never forgotten it.

Bill Ballenger: That's a great story. What about the Ford pardon?

Bill McLaughlin: I never have a television on here in the morning. For some reason I had a television on in the kitchen. All of a sudden the president is on there saying he's pardoning Richard Nixon. The phone started ringing the television crews on our own and I'm oh my God. I had just gotten a letter back from Jerry terHorst one night, who was a former reporter of the Grand Rapids Press, who Ford had hired as press secretary. I had just gotten a letter back from him thanking him for my letter of congratulations when this thing hit. Two days later, Jerry terHorst resigned.

Bill Ballenger: Resigned.

Bill McLaughlin: Everybody figured there was a deal in there. I never did. I wished he hadn't done it, but history proves that one person was right. It was Jerry Ford. Washington in those days were obsessed Nixon. People would get up in the middle of the night to get to the Washington Post to see what was going on with Watergate. You know it was going to go on for ad infinitum, until something was resolved. We got to hang them, we got to shoot them, we got to put them in jail, we got to do something. Ford was spending so much of his time on Nixon that he couldn't do the job of the president, and so he decided to do it. It was a profile in courage,

but it was the right thing to do. It shocked me that day and it was blamed for his loss at the polls. I thought there was other reasons other than that. He could have overcome it.

Bill Ballenger: Another development in 1974, Jim Brickley, who had been lieutenant governor, decided to take the presidency of Eastern Michigan University. Bill Milliken picked Jim Damman, a state representative from Troy, to be his running mate. Then some unpleasantness occurred just before the election. Can you tell us a little about that or what happened?

Bill McLaughlin: Jim Damman was, I thought, an ideal candidate. I had a routine that I always did at the end of a campaign. During Monday through Thursday I went out and visited every county in the state. "How is the county doing? What was your poll?" It was not doing anything. It was just something to do. It was to pump up the troops. On Friday and Saturday, Elly and I used to go around and hit every headquarters in the tri-county area. Of course it was lonely when I did it by myself. When Elly did it there would be millions of people there to see Elly. She was magical.

Bill McLaughlin: I was in Alcona County on, I think it was Thursday, maybe it was Wednesday. Whatever day it was and Karen Laymen was our county chairman. She told me that Joyce Braithwaite needed to talk to me desperately, so I got on the phone. Joyce said, "You need to get in your car and get back here immediately." This was three o' clock in the afternoon. "The governor needs you at a meeting at seven o' clock tonight." "Oh." "Well, we got problems with Damman." "Oh." "I'll tell you about it later." Now I'm driving the three four hours wondering what the problems with Damman is. Well, I get into the house and there was probably seven or eight people. There's Weeks and Braithwaite. There was Larry Lindemer and I don't remember who else was there.

Bill Ballenger: Dave Dykehouse.

Bill McLaughlin: Dave Dykehouse was there. He was an attorney and insurance commissioner at the time. The free press had come out with a story that Damman, when he was on the planning commission in Troy,

Bill Ballenger: Before he ever became a legislature.

Bill McLaughlin: Before he ever became a legislature he was on the planning commission or the city council. One of the two or both, had voted for a measure, which would have benefited him from something..

Bill Ballenger: Financial.

Bill McLaughlin: Whatever it was. Well, we get to the meeting. In the year of Watergate this is just what you need. This is just what you need. I know I, at one time, and I think about everybody in the room, "Let's get rid of him." I kept thinking back a few

years when McGovern had the problems with Eagleton and tried to recruit everybody in the world for vice president and made a mockery of himself and everything when he finally talked to Shriver. I got to thinking, "Oh my God. This is only five days before the election. What are we going to do? What are we going to do?" Well, we were lucky. There was two very cool heads in the room that night.

Bill McLaughlin: The governor had asked Larry Lindemer, who was a former state chairmen, who was a legislator, who was a Supreme Court Justice, and I think at that time was probably on the board of regents of the University of Michigan to do an investigation for him. Larry Lindemer was very cool, calm and collected. Bill Milliken was just Bill Milliken. Cool, calm and collected. We finally decided that nothing was going to be done. None of us were to say one word to the media, that Larry was to continue his investigation and advise the governor and the governor would keep in touch with us. I guess the governor had picked up the phone and called Damman and told him, "This is what we had decided. Just be quiet and sit tight."

Bill Ballenger: Hadn't the free press written a story on this already?

Bill McLaughlin: They had. Yes, they had.

Bill Ballenger: They called for Damman to resign.

Bill McLaughlin: Yes, they had. Yes, they had.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so you were working against this backdrop.

Bill McLaughlin: Against the story. Reaber Tyson, ran the story. Joe Strout, who was the editor, had written the other story. Everybody agrees nobody is to say a word. We go out of the governor's mansion and it was a pitch dark night. We walk out. It's blinding. There must be 100 television lights out there and nobody said a word. I drove home. I expected to be in Alcona County that night. I drove home. Janet's surprised, stranger coming in the front door. Friday goes by, nothing. Jim Damman lost me forever on Saturday morning. The news comes out and there's a picture of Jim Damman sitting at his kitchen table.

Bill Ballenger: I remember that.

Bill McLaughlin: He's got a black shirt on. He looks like a hood.

Bill Ballenger: He hadn't shaved.

Bill McLaughlin: He looks like a hood waiting for his convict numbers to go on him. PRY is the worst. Larry had done enough work and did enough work and had met with Stroud and Tyson and Shawn, all this stuff. It's not what has happened, what has

seemed to happen, happen. He was innocent and everything else and so the retraction came out on Sunday morning.

Bill Ballenger: That in and of itself was a major breakthrough for the major paper in the state to retract an editorial and say, "We were wrong."

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Damman doesn't have to get off the ticket as far as we're concerned.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely. To me, I've never forgotten that picture on the front page of the paper where we're all trying to behave and keep out of the limelight. I was incensed. Damman stayed on the ticket, but it was a nightmarish time.

Bill Ballenger: Okay. What about Jerry Ford coming to Michigan as president?

Bill McLaughlin: I was on vacation. I was in Seattle visiting my brother, got a call from Roe. "Ford is going to be on Mackinac Island. They want you back here." "I can't come back. The party is broke. How am I going to afford airplane tickets from Seattle back, but all right." Fortunately I had a motor home we were at my brother's house and I said, "If the kids, if we all stay in the motor home can you watch them for a couple days?" I got a plane and I flew back to Detroit. From Detroit I drove to Mackinac Island. Ford was there and Betty was there for a couple of days. They didn't really need me but I got some beautiful pictures downstairs. Taken on the porch of Mackinac, porch of the governor's mansion and stuff like that. The interesting thing was it was nice. It was warming up with the president. We had lunch in the governor's mansion. I remember Herry Ford, who played football at Michigan, chatting with Max Fischer who played football against him at Ohio State University.

Bill Ballenger: At Ohio State, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: That was the thing, and I flew back to Seattle and came home. Jerry Ford knew how to relax. He and Betty played tennis. I don't know if he played golf or not, but I had to come back for that.

Bill Ballenger: You liked Jerry Ford, right?

Bill McLaughlin: Jerry Ford is an interesting man. He grew with the job. He was a pain in the derriere as far as I was concerned. Haughty if you will, when he was congressman. He got much warmer when he was vice president and he was almost like a kissing cousin when he became president. I thought with the growth he was an amazing man and he grew with the job. He grew with the job.

Bill Ballenger: Well, on the other hand you weren't too happy with the people that he surrounded himself with as he prepared to try and get nominated and win a full term in 75, 76.

Bill McLaughlin: You know me. I know everybody. I know everything better than somebody else, but yes. I was in Seattle driving some place with my brother. The radio was on and I heard the news that Ford had appointed Bo Callaway as his campaign chairman. Now, Callaway was an old congressman from Georgia. Bo Callaway was a rock rib Goldwater person. I thought, "Are you out of your mind? What are you doing that for?" He, as much as anybody in my opinion, cost Ford the election just as much as the pardon. He was a Reagan man at heart. In my opinion Ford should have gone out and said, "I'm the President of the United States. You want to come against me? Fine, come and get it. Let's get it on." Ford was always defensive not wanting to offend any Reagan people, et cetera. I think the whole part of the early part of the Ford campaign was undermined by Reagan people working for him.

Bill Ballenger: You think that probably hurt Ford as much as, let's say, the Nixon pardon in September?

Bill McLaughlin: In my gut I do believe it.

Bill Ballenger: Didn't Bo Callaway have some kind of relationship, maybe with your old buddy Clarke Reed?

Bill McLaughlin: I, for months, had been trying to get a meeting with Bo Callaway to talk about what was going on. I kept being put off, put off, put off. Finally set one up, some meeting, it was the Marriott Twin Bridges Hotel. We were to meet him in the bar.

Bill Ballenger: This was down in Washington?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, it's actually across the Potomac.

Bill Ballenger: Arlington.

Bill McLaughlin: Arlington. We were to meet him there. Ranny Riecker and I sat there for over an hour no Bo Callaway shows up. Finally, he comes into the bar on the arm of Clarke Reed, from Mississippi, who is rock rib breaker guy. He comes over to the table and apologizes profusely as his good southern charm, but he had to take care of the important states first. "I'm sorry Mr. Callaway. I happen to represent the president's state. I have twice as many delegates as Mississippi does," et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. If this was going on all over you knew it wasn't being run right. I was infuriated. I was infuriated.

Bill Ballenger: You had these problems and you got to a point where did you call for some kind of a showdown? I think maybe some people called it the Mother's Day Massacre.

Bill McLaughlin: The Mother's Day Massacre. I had been complaining to the governor and to Griffin and everybody else. It was as Reagan was pulling off victory after victory.

More and more the Wallace people were going into the Republican primaries and voting for Reagan. I got a call on a Friday afternoon from Joyce Braithwaite. She said, "We're meeting. The governor and Griffin have called for it and we're meeting with his staff at two o' clock on Sunday afternoon," which was mother's day, "At Metropolitan Airport. Will you put together a campaign plan that we can tell him that we want to do?" Oh they want me to run a presidential comparing in 24 hours. Well, I grabbed Jerry Roe, my right arm and he came in the office and we sat down and we did just that. When the national convention was to be held in Kansas City, Jerry and I had gone out to advance Kansas City. What were the hotels like, the whole thing. We had a few minutes and we went to Independence, to Harry Truman's museum. Here was the caboose from the "give em hell" campaign of 1948.

Bill Ballenger: 48, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Jerry's mind clicked and he said, "Let's do a whistle stop."

Bill Ballenger: Whistle stop.

Bill McLaughlin: We put together a campaign; Whistle stop, plant tour, on and on. With the exception of the whistle stop we reinvented the wheel. We did everything that we always did in a Michigan election. We go into the airport on Sunday. Rogers Morton, who was the national chairman.

Bill Ballenger: National Ford chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: National Ford chairman, Red Kavany, who was head of advance for Ford.

Bill Ballenger: Bill Seidman.

Bill McLaughlin: Bill Seidman, who was on Ford's staff and two or three others.

Bill Ballenger: Dick Cheney.

Bill McLaughlin: Dick Cheney, who was then Ford's chief of staff.

Bill Ballenger: Maybe Peter Fletcher the national chairman

Bill McLaughlin: Peter Fletcher and

Bill Ballenger: Joyce.

Bill McLaughlin: And Joyce and the governor and Griffin and Ranny Riecker were all there.

Bill Ballenger: Jim DeFrancis.

Bill McLaughlin: And Jim DeFrancis, who was Griffin's right arm.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: We sat down and the governor asked me to explain what we wanted to do. I laid out the thing. Well, the first thing Red Kavany says, "You can't do a whistle stop. You can't do a whistle stop. There's not enough time for the Secret Service." I said to Griffin, "Senator, will you call the president and see if he wants to do a president stop before we nix this thing?" Kavany backed off. Anyways, it was a massacre because in effect we, Milliken, Griffin and myself, took over the campaign. Had I been willing to bet I would have bet the day before that Ford was going to lose Michigan.

Bill McLaughlin: If had lost Michigan there was no way he was going to get the nomination. It was that bad, Bill. Between the Reaganites in the state with Jack Welborn, all the Wallace people who had won the democratic primary, it would have been a disaster. They let us take it. We did it and magic was on that Saturday. We got on the train at Durand. We picked up every stop along the way, which was in Durand, Flint, Lansing, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Niles, Sturgis, the whole bit. People riding on the train with us. I have a treasured picture of it. There was a guy named Bo Schembechler, who was a Michigan football coach, and Johnny Orr, who is a Michigan basketball coach.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, really? Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And a girl cheerleader and a man cheerleader from the Michigan cheerleading squad. At every stop we brought Media on and they rode to the next thing. They had lunch with them. Everybody had exclusives all along the way. We got to, finally I think it was Niles or Sturgis, was the last stop. We got on a chopper and one of the Marine Corp choppers, and flew to Holland to end up with the Tulip Festival Parade.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: The next morning, we were on Air Force One, thrill of Randy and my life, as we flew to Saginaw to do a big rally at Tri-Cities Airport.

Bill McLaughlin: There wasn't a Sunday paper that didn't have 100%, not a line less than 100% Gerry Ford and the Saudi campaign.

Bill Ballenger: Wow, well-

Bill McLaughlin: Every television station in the state carried 100% the Gerry Ford campaign.

Bill Ballenger: Wow.

Bill McLaughlin: As a result, we knocked the living daylight out of Reagan two days later.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, absolutely. This was May of '76?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Right?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah, yeah.

Bill Ballenger: You saved the President's bacon.

Bill McLaughlin: He would've lost.

Bill Ballenger: And even then, you still had some doubts going into that convention in August.

Bill McLaughlin: Oh, absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: It was close.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Right? So what happened?

Bill McLaughlin: And he lost Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, he would've been finished.

Bill McLaughlin: It would have been done, he would've said, "I'm not going to run." He would've been Johnson '68.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Okay.

Bill Ballenger: After that tremendous Ford victory in Michigan in late May over Reagan, what do you remember about that period leading up to August at the National Convention in Kansas City?

Bill McLaughlin: Elly Peterson was working with Ford in Washington. She asked me to come in. I said, and she brought in a young man by the name of Jim Baker who became Secretary of State.

Bill Ballenger: From Texas.

Bill McLaughlin: From Texas. He was the first guy I didn't feel was a Reagan man. I was ecstatic to meet him. What I did, my job was to go through the entire state by state what I knew of the delegations, how they were going and where the feelings were, and I briefed him, because he was going to be in charge of vote counting for Ford.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Griffin was named the floor manager for Ford. I met with him and DeFrancis, who was his right arm, and they asked me to put together a plan to anticipate any parliamentary problems they could foresee. We were going to have problems on the platform, credentials, and everything else, so I did.

Bill McLaughlin: They were astounded when they got my report. I'm a thief. I got Clif White's, Clif White was the architect of Goldwater's win in 1964.

Bill Ballenger: Mm-hmm.

Bill McLaughlin: He wrote a book, Suite 2301, or something like that. Whatever, I don't know what the suite number was. I read that from cover to cover, and I stole every idea he had and put it down for him. There wasn't a test that came up that we weren't at least ready to rebut, you know? The fight became the rules fight.

Bill McLaughlin: John Sears, who was Reagan's national campaign chairman, wanted a, I think it was called 16-C was the rule. It was a rule to make the Vice President choice known before the nominating process, because he had already, Reagan had already said Senator Schweiker out of Pennsylvania.

Bill Ballenger: Pennsylvania.

Bill McLaughlin: He wanted to force Ford into making his choice. There was another part of that thing was, that the person nominated, named as a nominee as a contender could address the convention before the convention. Now, the last thing he wanted was the great orator making bumbling Jerry Ford look bad. And so, that became the test-vote, and it was a brutal two, three, four days. It was a brutal, two or three, four days.

Bill McLaughlin: As usual, Clarke Reed was playing coy. Clarke Reed had told Ford he was supporting him. He had told Reagan he was supporting him, although everyone knew he was supporting Reagan. Anyways, the roll was called. Clark, when we got to Mississippi, Mississippi passed, figured he'd be. Well, at the end, we'd already overwhelmingly won it by 899 to something, and all I could do, although he didn't hear me, I went, the train just left the station Clarke, and we beat him down on that.

Bill McLaughlin: That was the big benefit of the thing.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, wasn't Jim Baker's role also to try and hold onto that to Pennsylvania delegation for Ford?

Bill McLaughlin: I don't recall that.

Bill Ballenger: Because Ford had the Pennsylvania delegation, and Reagan's picking Schweiker was an attempt to get those people to break from Ford and go with him.

Bill McLaughlin: He may have been. I was so concentrated on the rules.

Bill Ballenger: Sure, no, that's fascinating.

Bill McLaughlin: We had put together a floor plan, and I think we had, six or eight floor leaders of which I was one. We all wore white coats and had a red hat. Mine is in the closet there, autographed by the President. Our problem was, as I foresaw it, and it worked, somebody from Coldwater wanted to go to the john. There may be a vote coming up, you gotta stay here, wet your pants you gotta stay here!

Bill Ballenger: Mm-hmm .

Bill McLaughlin: Really. We had U.S. senators, we had governors, and all were floor leaders.

Bill Ballenger: Yup.

Bill McLaughlin: And we each had 6 states. I had 6 states, I don't remember which they were. We had to keep everybody in their seat in case we had a vote coming up. And we did.

Bill Ballenger: What about the decision to let Reagan give a speech at the end, and he gave a speech which was well received. What was the feeling going out of the convention, you think? I mean, did people feel pretty good? Did you feel that the party was unified? Had Reagan been conciliatory enough in defeat or not? Or, what? Or did you feel you had a divided party, to a certain extent?

Bill McLaughlin: I must have felt okay. Even the Jack Wellborn's who was the Reagan chairman of Michigan. He came away saying "let's go home and work for Ford".

Bill Ballenger: Well, it sure beats losing.

Bill McLaughlin: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: Right?

Bill McLaughlin: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: Anyway, and you did a heck of a job to pull it off.

Bill McLaughlin: A state chairman wants to get 1 thing out of a convention, he wants your troops to have a good time, he wants your troops to go home happy because they're the ones that are gonna have to win the election. And so I felt that with Wellburn's support we were ready to go.

Bill Ballenger: Did Jerry Ford himself play any kind of direct role that you can remember in the nomination process at the convention?

Bill McLaughlin: The President called me after our delegation was chosen and before we went to Kansas City. My secretary, I think it was Libby Otis, came in and said "the President's on the phone." Oh? Geez.

Bill McLaughlin: Well I went and got the phone call and it was Ford, he wanted to meet. Cause we had split up, there was gonna be so many Ford delegates, so many Reagan delegates. You know, let's get our people into the Reagan's thing so we got him on the platform and stuff like that.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: I said, "Mr. President, I can't do that. As I've told your staff, we wrote these rules to protect Reagan's people from doing it to you. And so we don't control them."

Bill McLaughlin: Well you could tell he was mad. And he hung up. Bill, I had gone through their staff, their attorneys and everything else, tell them "we can't do it because we've written the rules to protect you!"

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: We could see Reagan coming. So I can't name a Ford delegate from Battle Creek if they're not for Reagan. They would go to vote for Reagan he wanted, but he wanted him on the platform. I said I can't do that, so he was pretty upset at that. Although not that upset, 43 years or whatever ago today, I met him at University of Notre Dame on St. Patrick's day, he was making a speech, so I called the Southwest Michigan West and Southwest Michigan county chairmen came down there and he talked to them.

Bill McLaughlin: Another memorable thing I had in the general campaign, or before the convention, was pulling together probably a dozen or more of my friends from around the country; state chairmen and some committee people, to the White House for him to talk to them about their support. And this was almost as indelible as Bill Milliken and Mackinac Island.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sitting in the- we must have been in what's called the red room cause all I remember is all the windows are red. And there was a long window I could see and he was silhouetted against the long window. In the distance was the Washington Monument. It was sunset, it was a beautiful day, I looked and thought, "Jerry Ford is the President of the United States. Wow. Wow."

Bill Ballenger: Mm-hmm. Wow.

Bill McLaughlin: Wow.

Bill Ballenger: It is amazing.

Bill McLaughlin: Yes, it is.

Bill Ballenger: What about the choice of Bob Dole?

Bill McLaughlin: Amazing. When the convention was over, there was an old tradition from times before telegraphs or wires or anything else, that the convention pulls together a committee to go to the nominee to announce to the nominee that they've received the nomination. I'm sure in Lingan's time there was great and it took 5 or 6 days for somebody to go from Chicago to Springfield or something or wherever he was to tell him.

Bill McLaughlin: But you know I'm sure Ford watched every second. I was named to the committee to announce to the Vice President. So we went from the convention forward back to the Crown Plaza which was to his suite. I was still wearing my red cap from the floor and my white jacket.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: First thing I walked into the door I said, "Mr. President would you mind" and he so he autographed my peak and my red cap. Which I treasure to this day.

Bill McLaughlin: Until about 3:30am we talked about Vice Presidential people. Teeter was there, Bob Teeter who was the pollster was there.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: We talked the pros and cons and everything. I don't remember Bob Dole's name, ever being announced. We talked about Richardson, we talked about Ruckelshaus.

Bill Ballenger: Ruckelshaus, yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And I think when I left, I thought Ruckelshaus was probably the leader. Went home, got up the next morning and he announced it was Bob Dole. I love Bob Dole, Bob Dole was chairman on my watch. He's a great guy I think he's a whit.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. How do you think he came to be, did you ever hear any stories how he came to be picked?

Bill McLaughlin: I think the thing is, that he went to bed, woke up and said it's gonna be Dole.

Bill Ballenger: Just a gut thing?

Bill McLaughlin: Teeter never knew it.

Bill Ballenger: Wow.

Bill McLaughlin: So I think it was just the gut he says it's gonna be Bob Dole. And it was great because the year before when he was still in Congress, before he was the Vice President, he had Bob Dole for a fundraiser in Ionia County. And I have a great picture before the buffet table, it's somebody's house and in Ionia County of Bob Dole and Jerry Ford, neither one of whom knew what was gonna come in 2 or 3 years.

Bill Ballenger: Okay. If there's anything more you wanna say about Carter versus Ford, that fall in the election, the general election. As you know Ford carried Michigan, but he lost narrowly nationally, about 51-48% and Carter was elected.

Bill McLaughlin: Well he probably lost because of the gaf on one of the debates, where he said Eastern Europe wasn't under the thumb.

Bill Ballenger: Freed Poland.

Bill McLaughlin: Freed Poland, yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And that was almost as bad probably as George Romney on Lou Gordon's show in 1967 say he was brainwashed in Vietnam. He probably was brainwashed, he was given bad information. Ford just made a gaf. And instead of the staff making him the next day say "Whoops, I misspoke myself", he never did and carried that burden till the end.

Bill Ballenger: Mm-hmm.

Bill Ballenger: Well okay, the election is over, Carter is president, Democrats control both the house and senate here in Michigan.

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: They actually have a majority of the congressional delegation because of those terrible special election loses that we discussed back in 1974.

Bill McLaughlin: Plus Sederburg and...

Bill Ballenger: Well Sederburg was still there. He didn't lose until '78.

Bill McLaughlin: Oh okay.

Bill Ballenger: We're talking after '76.

Bill McLaughlin: Okay.

Bill Ballenger: Certainly after '77, you have been chairman for 4 terms.

Bill McLaughlin: 4 terms. Yes sir.

Bill Ballenger: And at one point, when Nelson Rockefeller, whom we have not discussed, had been selected by Ford to be his Vice President and then couldn't get confirmed, you I think, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, were rumored to be in line to maybe join the Rockefeller team down in Washington or whatever. If Rockefeller had been confirmed but then he wasn't, so Ford had no Vice President until you know, well he never had one. Because he served out his term and Carter took over.

Bill McLaughlin: Oh that was the other thing that I'm sure that Rockefeller, I believe that Rockefeller would have won the election for Ford had he stayed on the ticket.

Bill Ballenger: There ya go.

Bill McLaughlin: But it was the Bo Callaway's of the world that got him off and finally he said "To heck with it, I don't need this stuff".

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: So he got off.

Bill Ballenger: So he got off the ticket.

Bill McLaughlin: I honestly believe the Ford/Rockefeller ticket would have won away the election.

Bill Ballenger: Would have won, yeah.

Bill Ballenger: So he was Vice President, appointed just the way Ford had been but he got off the ticket cause there was so much blow back from the right wing.

Bill McLaughlin: Right, right.

Bill Ballenger: So, okay. So Rockefeller's out, Ford is out, everybody's out, but you're running for a 5th term.

Bill McLaughlin: Yes sir.

Bill Ballenger: To set the record as longest serving chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: What happens? You get opposition, and why?

Bill McLaughlin: I got opposition by a young, I guess he was young, State legislator from Flint, Bob Edwards. Who was backed by another legislator, John Engler. And another

guy by the name of Spencer Abraham who would go on to become the Secretary of Energy eventually in Reagan's cabinet.

Bill McLaughlin: How do you ever know why? I want the power. I mean I started first thinking about running against Howard Elliot many years before because I thought I could do a better job. The problem with these 3 people were, they were looking for power, and they had a great campaign issue. These were sharp people who knew all about computers. They wanted me to do this elaborate computer thing. We didn't have any money to do computers, I was running with a broken adding machine.

Bill McLaughlin: But doing the round robin on Friday night was when I was convinced that I would never run again. Milliken wanted me to run, so I was running. I had a delegate and one of the district meetings get up and saying "I don't think you should be elected, actually I think you should be fired. You people are getting higher monies and you're not doing any work!" I almost teared up, I left the room. Jerry Roe and I had had no expense money for over 6 months at this time, we both lost our credit and our credit cards and everything else. Half the time we weren't getting paid, and to get accused of not working hard enough?

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: That night I decided, I never said anything to anyone, I will never run for this thing again.

Bill Ballenger: Well, let me ask you this: even though your 3 enemies here led by Bob Edwards who was the actual candidate, were ambitious and wanted power and etc. Was there any kind of an ideological split in the party? People like Jack Wellborn, the conservative state senator you mentioned before who'd been on Reagan's side, did some of these people John Engler, Spencer Abraham, were they more conservative than Governor Milliken and yourself, and Elly Peterson and Joyce Braithwaite.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sure they were.

Bill Ballenger: And so they tried to pick up a lot of support from the conservative elements of the party?

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sure they were. Before that convention became an anti-Milliken convention. I wanted to remind people duh, get wise.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sure there was. I just remember the personal attacks on myself. I remember promising to go to Flint, sit down with my opponent.

Bill Ballenger: Bob Edwards?

Bill McLaughlin: Edwards.

Bill Ballenger: Yup.

Bill McLaughlin: I went to Bob. He didn't have any new ideas. We had a nice pleasant lunch, he never offered any ideas. And I never heard from him again, I never heard from him again. But, John Engler had ambitions.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Well there was a secret ballot. And you won...

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah, they were gonna get me, they knew a secret ballot, they were gonna win. They were gonna get me when we had a secret ballot, and I won very handily on the secret ballot.

Bill Ballenger: I think it was 118 to 690, right?

Bill McLaughlin: I'd suggest that was rather decisive.

Bill Ballenger: That's good! Yeah that's good.

Bill McLaughlin: There was something else, I forget. But anyways, they tried all kind of parliamentary things and it didn't work.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so then, it's 1977. Bob Griffin, who was depressed at the fact that his buddy, Jerry Ford, had failed to be elected to a full term as president. And he himself had lost the minority leader's post. He had been the whip, was down in the dumps about his experience in the senate and he decided "I'm not gonna run again".

Bill McLaughlin: That he did.

Bill Ballenger: And that lead to a chain of events during '77 and '78. Do you wanna go through that a little bit?

Bill McLaughlin: I'd be happy to. I'm trying to think of the year, one of the 10 years I didn't have a crisis.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, there's always a crisis.

Bill McLaughlin: That became a crisis. Because all of a sudden Brooks Patterson, Phil Ruppe, and a half a dozen others wanted to run for the senate.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: Again, I ran polls. The number one chore was to re-elect Milliken, and the strongest ticket was Bob Griffin. I ran a state-wide recognition pole. I put my name in it because frankly, immodestly, I'd been on every crossroads in the state for 8 years and Ruppe had never been out of the upper peninsula, and Esch had never been north of Ann Arbor. I mean it wasn't they weren't household names, and with all the publicity I got I think I hit 8, 8% recognition factor.

Bill Ballenger: 8% name recognition.

Bill McLaughlin: I did that to prove to them hey, it still costs a lot of money.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Anyways, I kept going to Washington, meeting with Griffin and tell him, "Senator, you were down after 4 losing, weren't you premature in saying I just don't have the fire in my belly anymore"?

Bill Ballenger: You were trying to get him to change his mind.

Bill McLaughlin: I was trying to get him to change his mind.

Bill Ballenger: And others were working on him too.

Bill McLaughlin: Oh of course. I'm sure they were.

Bill Ballenger: Ranny Riecker?

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah, oh absolutely. So eventually comes late in the day, I sat on the telephone right here on the end of the line was Griffin and Marge, Governor Milliken, George Weeks, and Jim DeFrancis. The conversation went for better than 2 hours. Senator, you have to say "I was down, I've changed my mind, I have new enthusiasm and all"...

Bill Ballenger: Newly enthused - I've got my energy back and I'm gonna commit.

Bill McLaughlin: Where did it go?

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: And he refused. He had to get in only because the party people pulled him back in, which he did when he announced. All of a sudden, the Books Patterson's, the Phil Ruppe's, everybody under the sun figured it was me that got him back, and Milliken. So we both were the bad guys, and it wasn't. And because he wouldn't do it, he lost the election. Had he just done that, I think he would have been a legitimate candidate.

Bill Ballenger: Because you think Carl Levin and the Democrats were able to use the argument effectively, this is a guy who said he was finished.

Bill McLaughlin: Absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: His passion was gone, and now he's saying the only reason I'm agreeing to come back and run is because these people are begging me; I'm not really that committed.

Bill McLaughlin: Basically, that was it. And they did use that against him.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: They did use that against him.

Bill Ballenger: And meanwhile, it kicked off a chain of events dealing with the Lieutenant Governor's position, because Jim Damman was one of the people as Lieutenant Governor who announced he was gonna run for the Senate.

Bill McLaughlin: That's right. He had, yes.

Bill Ballenger: And Brickley is off at Eastern Michigan University for four years. You had this kind of limbo. Then you had this famous announcement, everybody was waiting for Governor Milliken to select who was going to be his?

Bill McLaughlin: Actually, he made an announcement for the Senate was a blessing.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Bill McLaughlin: Because I don't think there was any desire, after the problems we had before, to have David back on the ticket. One of the great times of my life was Milliken had scheduled a press conference in the Governor's office in Lansing, in the capitol.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: To announce for Governor, and for the first time in history the Governor's going to announce what his choice for Lieutenant Governor is.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Bill McLaughlin: I always at a press conference stood in the back of the room. I knew what was coming. This day I wanted to sit up in the front of the room. I could see the faces of Bill McDermott and Tim Jones and Tom Green, all the people. Milliken announced, "I'm going to run for Governor. I'd like you to meet my Lieutenant Governor candidate"and opened the door and out walks Jim Brickley. The jaws just dropped.

Bill Ballenger: Stunned.

Bill McLaughlin: It was dynamite. It was absolutely dynamite.

Bill Ballenger: Of course, it completely cut off Damman because Damman had said, "I'm out", and so Milliken had an excuse to say, "Hey, Damman says he's out. He's running for Senate."

Bill McLaughlin: It was magic.

Bill Ballenger: Ruppe was trapped. He could have gone back and run for his seat, but he said I won't do it and he let Bob Davis the state Senator succeed him.

Bill McLaughlin: Right.

Bill Ballenger: So that was a shocker. Then Milliken, you're right, in your view that Milliken was very popular, even in '77 when the party faithful agitated against him at the State Convention, because he won his biggest percentage victory in '78 against Bill Fitzgerald.

Bill McLaughlin: I hate to tell you my role.

Bill Ballenger: What?

Bill McLaughlin: I tried to talk him out of running.

Bill Ballenger: Why?

Bill McLaughlin: I just felt that after so many years in office things get tired. I saw him more and more relying on Joyce and George and myself for decisions. The circle was getting smaller. I think after a while it's time to turn it over. I was wrong. He won his biggest victory and got out, but I was worried that he'd have a disaster. I was worried he'd have a disaster.

Bill Ballenger: How much in advance of the election was your counsel to him that maybe he ought to pass up another term?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, this was early in the year.

Bill Ballenger: So there was a long way to go.

Bill McLaughlin: Yeah. It just was meeting at his house, and I kept saying, "I think" ... and that's long before we ever talked to Brickley.

Bill Ballenger: Remember the PBB scare?

Bill McLaughlin: Oh, yes. Yeah, sure. All those things. I worried about his legacy.

Bill Ballenger: As it turned out.

Bill McLaughlin: It turned out magnificent.

Bill Ballenger: Magnificent. Okay. One thing more, and you could probably say this is the crowning achievement of your tenor as the Michigan Republican Party Chairman, and that is the 1980 Republican National Convention in Detroit which you fought to win for Michigan the only National Convention held by either of the two major parties in the state of Michigan in all of American history. Tell us what you can about everything leading up to that momentous event.

Bill McLaughlin: I know a little about the Detroit Convention Bureau. I had been a member when I was in the theaters. A guy by the name of Len Ralston had gone to Houston years ago. I wanted to put my name in for the presidency. Dick Helmbrecht who had something to do at that time with the Convention Bureau as a representative of the Governor on the Advisory Board or something, advised me not to and I pulled my name out. Anyways, early in the process some hotshot sales representative from the Westin Hotel came to me and said, "I want you to know I'm going to get you the Republican National Convention." I said, "You are?" "Yep, yep, yep." I said, "Young man, before you go and screw up the works you don't do anything without myself and our National Committee. We make the decision, so keep your nose out of it."

Bill McLaughlin: That conversation must have gotten back to Detroit. Basically, I got a call from Ron Stephens who was president of the Convention Bureau, and I got to get with him. Make a long story short Ron was farsighted. We got not only the Republican Convention here, we also won the Superbowl within a month of the Republican Convention.

Bill McLaughlin: The thing was, Ron put together a magnificent 12-machine slide presentation about Detroit. He had a guy that was somewhere in radio in those days by the name of JP McCarthy narrate the thing. We convinced Coleman Young.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, Coleman Young.

Bill McLaughlin: That it might be good to have the Republicans in town. We put together a magnificent thing. We flew to Washington and made the presentation. I believe it was at the Sheraton Park Hotel. The key to it, I believe, was that all the people on the Site Committee, who is members of the National Committee who are responsible for recommending a site, were chaired by the National Committee man out of Wisconsin, a friend of mine, and of Elly's, named Odie Fish.

Bill McLaughlin: We got the Site Committee to town and you do all the stuff. We had a party at the Ford House. We had this, that and the other thing, but we had the tour of the hotels. I wanted to take Odie to Canada because his reluctance was having a National Convention in a foreign country just won't work. We went over and I

think we went to the Richaud Hotel. They were offering us rooms at \$25 Canadian which would have been like \$20 US. Wow.

Bill McLaughlin: As we were leaving the Hotel Richaud, Odie, who smokes cigars, stopped at the cigar stand and got himself a pocketful of cigars, got back in the car, lit one of them up, gee they were from Cuba. Ooh he was enjoying it. As we were going, we pass the Holiday Inn which is on the Detroit River and Odie said, "You know. That would be a great headquarters for the Wisconsin Delegation." I knew that we had a chance.

Bill Ballenger: It's the Cuban cigars. Nobody knocks tobacco.

Bill McLaughlin: I do believe it got Odie, who was such a good friend, an ally in all the rules, all the convention fights of mine, to really push harder. They made a decision on a Monday at a National Committee meeting in Washington at the Sheraton Park Hotel. I remember it was a Superbowl Sunday where the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Dallas Cowboys were having a great fight.

Bill Ballenger: Yep.

Bill McLaughlin: I sat in my room all day and one press person after the other, I didn't know anything. I really didn't. The next day Odie gets up before the Committee and moves because of all the various ... that Detroit ... Well, the Reagan people on the Committee went bonkers. I can remember Frank Fahrenkopf. He's a guy I love. Frank Fahrenkopf was the Chairman out of Utah. He got up and said, "There'll be turning cars sideways in the tunnel so people can't get to the Convention." All the horror stories they did. Well, we had a floor fight. The only floor fight I ever remember in the National Committee.

Bill Ballenger: What were the other cities? The big contenders?

Bill McLaughlin: Well, there was Dallas and Minneapolis. It really was a fight between Ford's Detroit and Reagan's Dallas. That's what it all was. Peter Fletcher got up to say and I grabbed his coat tail. I said, "Sit down and shut up. Don't say a word." I didn't want him getting up and using big words and getting involved. It was known at that time that I was leaving. I was going to be Director of the Department of Commerce. I got up and finally thanked the Committee for the kindnesses over all these years and their consideration today, and I said, "I'll be gone, but I want to promise you this. If you come to Detroit, I'll make sure you have a good Convention."

Bill Ballenger: And they did.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sorry.

Bill Ballenger: And they did.

Bill McLaughlin: And they did.

Bill Ballenger: And it was a great Convention and it was a great way for you to go out as a great State Chairman.

Bill McLaughlin: I'm sorry to get emotional, but that was one of those things.

Bill Ballenger: It's a good way to end it. You've given a tremendous interview. You had a whole series of highlights during your tenure. Thank you very much Bill McLaughlin for these moments with Michigan Political History Society.