

# Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois

## Stephanie Robbins Oral History Interview

Stephen Hansen, Interviewer

January 30, 2018

**Stephen Hansen (SH):** Okay I want to make sure that we can hear you so we can put it over here ah today is January 30th I'm Steve Hansen, and I'm talking with Stephanie Robbins and um, again, when we get done, we'll just go ahead I'll have the students transcribe this - it may take 6 weeks, before they get it done, and we'll send it to you, and you can edit it, and take out the "f word" if you want to, or insert it if you want. [laughs]

**Stephanie Robbins (SR):** Haha.

**SH:** So let's go ahead and um, tell us when you were born, and a little bit about your background.

**SR:** Okay. I was born in 1943, in Nashville, Tennessee where I think my family lived for about, I dunno, a few months after I was born, so I never really lived there. And this was during World War II and my dad was involved in what was called "Vital Industries" which means he didn't serve in the military. He was a chemical engineer, and so he was permitted not to go into the military because he was needed here, and he worked at that time for I think it was called Volcom or Vultee, and what they did was they - they mined and processed the stuff used in bombs. It was like phosphates or something. I don't know exactly what it was, so most of what he did was kind of hush hush, and so eventually he went to work - we moved to Oak Ridge, Tennessee where he worked on the atomic bomb, and he never discussed that, and they were told never to discuss it, so he never discussed it, but I remember starting kindergarten in Oak Ridge, which was an amazing place, I mean it just sprang up overnight. We lived in what amounted to flat top, prefab house up on, you know, it had wooden steps. The sidewalks were wooden there, everything was made out of wood. It was muddy, and we eventually moved into a real house. For a long time we lived in this flat top thing, and the locals all said trainloads of stuff come in, but nothing goes out [chuckles], and there's a really good book called The Girls of Atomic City that I read not too long. Again that's one of the first books I've ever seen about what was going on there - what they were doing and all this materiel that came in. The only story my dad ever told about it was that they had hired people, anybody, they can get, warm bodies, and these women came out of the hills, and he had to show them how to use indoor plumbing. They had never seen - they were standing on the toilets. They were breaking the seats on them, and he had to go in and explain to them - they had never seen indoor plumbing, so that's how primitive that part of Tennessee was.

**SH:** Wow

**SR:** And so after that we moved various times. I lived all over the South I didn't really have a hometown, and then, um, I wound up going to college in South Carolina, Furman University, and that's where I met Walker who was going to Wofford College. After graduating we got married and went to the University of Texas to do graduate work, and then, we had finish graduate work, in about 1970. He kept getting deferments, because he had done ROTC and was a second Lieutenant, and the deal was we got 4 years to

go to graduate school, and then he would have to go into the army, and when he started to go into the army, he had to go get a physical at Bergstrom Air Force Base, and they kept flunking him on these physicals, and even when he was in ROTC they kept finding heart issues. I mean he would be out in the field, and they'd drag him in and take his blood pressure you know. I think they actually found something then that they didn't ... they never were clear what it was, but there was some problem, so then the same thing happened when he started to go into the army, and they eventually said, you can, if you'll release us from it's expecting your benefits, then you can get out of the army. So in 1970 instead of going into the army, he was released from the military, and we had our first child thinking we were going to have this child in the army, so we had no health insurance whatsoever [chuckles] and so it was really kind of a mess. Anyway we went to the MLA, which is the meat market...

**SH:** Now back up now when did you go to college?

**SR:** I went to college at Furman from ... I graduated in '65, so '61 to '65, but I had never lived in South Carolina. I graduated high school in Alabama.

**SH:** What were you looking to - were you looking to pursue a profession at college?

**SR:** No, it's like everybody else. I read a study one time that said most liberal arts majors get to graduate school by what's called "drift"

**SH:** Yeah

**SR:** And that was me. Now Walker was very clear on what he wanted to do. I mean he definitely wanted to major in English, go to graduate school, and be a college professor.

**SH:** And?

**SR:** And I didn't -

**SH:** But you went

**SR:** Heck, sounds good to me!

**SH:** Did you go in English for graduate school?

**SR:** No, I went to I went in Spanish, so I have a Phd. in Spanish from the University of Texas. So we finished up those Ph.D.'s in about 1970s, and then we had to go look for jobs at MLA. Well, we had to take the best job. First of all I was pregnant. You couldn't tell, but when I was being interviewed, you know, it was a factor - back then it was a factor. You're not going to get a job if you tell somebody you're pregnant, you know. You just weren't - in fact, once, I when I was an undergraduate, I was put up for a Woodrow Wilson Scholarship ... Fellowship, and I had to go down to Atlanta to be interviewed. I took off my engagement ring 'cause you were not going to get a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship with an engagement ring on I mean. I mean people don't believe that, but that's true.

**SH:** Wow.

**SR:** And um, so, he got the best job. I mean I sorta half-heartedly looked for em, but I knew I was going to have to go wherever he went. And the best job was SIU Edwardsville, and of his colleagues, he had the best starting salary, of anybody - we were all looking together. \$12,000 a year, that's \$1,000 a month so we moved to Edwardsville, and so I've lived here ever since.

**SH:** And that was in?

**SR:** 1970.

**SH:** 1970.

**SR:** It was the last wave of hiring for SIUE, you know. They were staffing up, and I mean they were really staffing up in the 2 or 3 years prior, but by 1970, they pretty well filled you know, their spots, and so we were in the last little bunch of people being hired, and the locals weren't very happy about it either. [laughs]

**SH:** [laughs] We'll get to that in a minute, but what did you do then, did you teach?

**SR:** Well, I had the baby, so I stayed at home, and there was a professor in the Spanish department named, I think her last name was, Oseik. And I never met her, but she was in Spain and she got in a car accident, so they asked me to come and teach for one, and I think they were on trimesters then, they were on some kind of odd semester system, and so I taught for one trimester or whatever it was they were on, and I absolutely hated it -- just hated it, and I remember telling Walker, I said, I can not do this for the next 30 years. This is awful. First of all, stuck in the middle of the country; and there were very few Hispanic speakers around here then; there was no way to practice; there was little chance of travel, and I mean I had been used to the really heady atmosphere of the University of Texas, which was one of the premier places to study Spanish Literature and Language, ... has a phenomenal Latin American collection, library, you know. It had everything. I mean, Octavio Paz came through there, and all the big names - in literature, in poetry and politics - all flowed through the University of Texas, and when I got here I was like oh, my God, I'm going to be teaching - first-year Spanish the rest of my life, and so Walker said, why don't you go to law school? I never even thought of it, and I said, well, okay. [laughs] So he sold his little hobby car. He had this little MGB that never really ran very well, but he always said he sold it so I could go to law school. [laughs]

**SH:** [laughs]

**SR:** I used to have to go and gather up the baby and pick him up on the road into SIU because it would have stalled out there you know. [laughs] but um, but then I went to Saint Louis University. I went over to try and negotiate with them to let me go part time because I had a baby, and they wouldn't do it. They said no you can go full time or else, and at that time, Saint Louis U had done away with its night school, so there was no night option because frankly, the crime around there was so bad it just wasn't safe, and that was in 1973, I think, 1973, and so, I finally I got admitted there, and I did go full time from 73-76, and they were so proud of themselves because they had 15% women, oh, they were just so excited. It was just a landmark you know.

**SH:** What was it like being a woman, pursuing a graduate degree, was that unusual at the time?

**SR:** There was ... no, that was not - as long as you were in the liberal arts, that was not unusual. I mean there were plenty of women in grad school, um, but when you got to the professions. That was a different story. There were very few women in med schools and law schools, and um, so law school was a whole different kettle of worms, and I was lucky because I was older. I was 7 years old than the other young women. I mean if they went directly from college to law school they would have been what? 23 or so, but I was already - I had already put in 4 years at Texas, 5 years maybe, 4 years, 5 I guess. I was a little bit older than most of em', so I was able to handle the pressure, and, you know, the you-don't-belong-here kinda stuff. There was a little bit of that. In fact in 19... - my sister went to the University of Florida. I went down to visit her, and at that time, if a woman - this would be about 1960, eh 1963 - if a woman went into the law school library, everybody would start hissing. These men would all start hissing.

**SH:** Really?

**SR:** They were not welcome in the library there. Now that wasn't the case at Saint Louie U, but - and that was, you know, 10 years earlier? You know from when I started.

**SH:** Did you run into any particular prejudices?

**SR:** Mainly from my colleagues, you know, more from my colleagues than from my professors. They were all pretty good, but I remember sitting in these big classes, and we had one teacher, Vince Emil, who just legendary. I mean he was a wonderful man, but he used a purely socratic - what he called the Socratic Method - the same one you see in the "Paper Chase." I mean where you get called on and humiliated, and I sat between two guys, and for the entire semester these idiots would talk across me as if I weren't there - they would talk about whatever the case we were working on or whatever, and they would literally talk right across me as if I were not even there. And the way Emil operated was he would - you knew when your time was coming within a few minutes because he was going alphabetically down the rows, and we were seated alphabetically, so you knew within a couple of days when your number was up, [laughs] you know. So, the day our number was up, we had read this case, all of us in the whole room had read the case and we're getting ready to start class, and these two jokers are talking across me about me the case, and what they thought the issue was, and you know, cause they know they're going to get quizzed, and never asked me what I thought of anything, so Emil calls on the guy to my left. Ah, Mr. So and So what's the issue in the case? And he goes blah blah blah blah and he says - Robbins, do you agree? And I said "no," and he moves over to the next guy who, of course, who is agreeing with his colleague and just humiliates the hell out of these two guys and all I ever said in that class was "no."

**SH:** [laughs]

**SR:** I mean he saw that going on. He watched that dynamic going on and just decided to put these two clowns in their places. After that they're just all over me wanting to know what did you think of the case? I said well, the issue was this and this and this, and ohhh ohh after that, they all talked to me, but I mean that's how, you know, that was the mindset - that I was there, I dunno, as a visitor? [laughs] So I was really pleased because when we - that class graduated - a woman was number one in the class. She aced out this guy who'd been leading for the whole two years and graduated number one. Cathy Reilly and she ended up going to work for Brian Cave, McPheeters - big firm.

**SH:** What kind of law were you attracted to?

**SR:** Well, at the time, they had a really good EEOC clinic, employment discrimination, and I really enjoyed it because I got to go and work for attorneys working on EOC cases. They sent us out to McDonald Douglas to dig through their files, you know. There was all kinds of employment discrimination stuff, and I liked labor law, but there really wasn't you know, the chances of doing that sort of thing. You'd have to work for the government. There just weren't that many job opportunities. Because I was going to have to live here, I mean I wasn't going to be able to go somewhere else, and I also determined, after three years of driving across the Poplar Street Bridge, I'd never drive into Missouri for work. Driving back and forth, awww, - cause in my second year I had another child, and that one didn't sleep at night, and I would literally wake up in the parking lot at Saint Louie U not remembering driving over there. I mean it was that bad. I was so sleep deprived [laughs] so, when I got done... [clears throat] One year, between our first and second year... - we had a dean who had worked for Judge Moran - had clerked for Judge Moran on the 5th Appellate Court. He was from the East Side, and he would sort of look after the East Siders. Because here we were, you know, tracking back and forth whereas a lot of these kids were fairly well off, they lived in dorms, and they studied 24 hours a day. The rest of us had lives. We had other things going on at home, and/or jobs, or something, and so, he had came up with a little scholarship program where, if we would go and find the jobs, he would fund - how was it - he would fund somehow. The public defender's office could get three law students for the price of one to work over the summer. So Saint Louie U would pony up the rest of the money, and I remember he told me this. He said why don't you contact the public defender in Madison County, see what can be done, and at the time, the public defender was part-time, so Paul Reilly, was the public defender, but he was also in private practice. So, to reach him, I called his private practice. Well, he practiced with Dick Mudge; and, Dick actually answered the phone that day. I said I need to speak to Mr. Reilly about a job. "We don't need any secretaries," he says. [laughs] This is Dick Mudge, the liberal - the liberal light of Madison County. I said I'm not talking about being a secretary - so he kinda huffed and snorted and said I'll tell him you called. I couldn't get ahold of the guy. I couldn't get him. Finally I called again and said tell Mr. Reilly I have an offer he can't refuse - just thinking that would be enough. He was notorious for not returning calls. He finally called me back. I said Mr. Reilly I can get you three law students for the summer for the price of one. He said you can? I said yeah, Saint Louie, U will fund it - so, he finally bit you know. So, I and Steve Tillery, who later became the very famous P.I. lawyer, and another guy named Clark from up around Peoria, - we all went to work in the public defender's office. Meanwhile Paul had hired Judge Moran's daughter, who was also a law student but out in Kansas, so there were four of us. We were almost stumbling over each other. It was almost like not enough work to do, but it was a great experience. Kathleen Moran and I were the first women to ever go into the old Madison County Jail to interview prisoners because they were our clients, and the jailers thought this was hilarious. They locked us up in the bullpen with about 10 defendants there. All African-American, you know. And it was us, and we were crammed into this little space with these guys, in the middle of what is really was ... looked like medieval ... I mean it was, you know, iron bars. I dunno if you ever went in the old Madison County Jail, but it was it was primitive. You know? And they left us. They walked off and left us, and so, then these guys start making snide comments, and remarks and what have you, and because they now know that we've been left there with them, and I finally just stood up and I said. If any of you clowns want recog you'll sit down and shut up and answer our questions.

[SH laughs]

**SR:** Oh you a lawyer? Yes. Oh, we thought you were social workers [both laugh]. So they sat down and behaved, and it was yes ma'am, no ma'am you know, no problem. I mean, they were kinda just having us on, just having a good time with us, and finally the jailers came back and let us out, and we pretended like it was just a normal occurrence, and we were starting to cross the street, and Kathy says, "damn I was scared. If you hadn't of thought of that, I don't know what we would have done!" [laughs] I said, well, I said, it occurred to me they didn't realize why we were there, you know, so anyway we had a good time that summer. They let us do stuff we should have never been allowed to do because we weren't licensed in any way shape or form. They let us conduct preliminary hearings, well I mean there was a lawyer sitting right next to us, there was no way we could screw it up, but they let us actually examine witnesses, and it was just really a lot of fun, I really got a lot out of it, you know.

**SH:** So that's how you got interested?

**SR:** Yeah criminal law was just a lot of fun, so when I finished law school, I don't know what I did about - I'm not sure how active I was about applying for work, ahm, because I had these babies you know. At that time, you couldn't get like really good childcare, so I had one that was starting kindergarten, and then this littler one that was like, what was she, like a year old, a year and half old, and, um, so I applied to the State's Attorney's Office, and wound up getting a job. Well, you had to pass the bar too, so you spend the whole summer... I spent the whole summer in a closet studying for the bar exam, because I discovered if I went upstairs and got went into the sort of little walk-in closet in this tiny house we lived in - the kids would forget you were home. They'd leave you alone, cause they would lose track of the fact you were still in the house, so I sat in this closet and studied, and then we had to go to bar review courses at night, and Kathleen Moran and I would go back and forth to Saint Louis for these bar review courses - cram, they would cram - they were courses, they would just cram all this, and they sort of have insights onto what will be on the exam. I don't know how right they are, but you know, and then you have to go to Chicago to take it. It takes two days. It's just a nightmare. You're organized alphabetically, so Kathleen with an M was in another entire building from me. I was up at Northwestern at the Dental School or someplace for two days taking this exam. It was awful. And um, we I finished - finally the second day of it - I finished, and we had a train to catch at about 5:30 out of Chicago, so I finished and I got a cab and went down to the building she was in, and I look in the room, and it's empty except she's still writing, she's still in there with about three people still screwing around with this bar exam, and I just shook my head because I knew we're going to miss the train, and we did. She comes out of there and now we've missed it. She says, what are we going to do? I said well, I have some Aunts that live in Joliet, so we call my Aunts. They drove to Chicago and picked us up and took us to Joliet and entertained us, and, you know, put us on a train the next day, and so it was it was just really something.

**SH:** This was then then at the latter half of the 70s?

**SR:** This would have been in 1976. Um, and then you don't get the bar results. You take it in the summer, but you don't get them until October. So you wind up getting a job, sorta provisionally, if you get a job. If you don't pass it, the job's gone. So, I... Nick Byron was state's attorney at the time, and he had offered me a job. I mean he didn't offer. I applied, and he accepted it, and, I thought well isn't that farsighted of him. He's hiring the first woman Assistant State's Attorney. In Madison County. I discovered later the reason he hired me was because my maiden name is Malinoff, and he thought I was related to Kostoff and all the Madison County democratic powerbrokers, who are all Macedonian. [laughs] You know because

of the bar, you have your whole name spelled out on all this paperwork, so I was not the first woman Assistant State's Attorney. I was the first purported Macedonian Assistant State's Attorney [laughs]. My dad was Bulgarian. He was from Joliet, didn't have anything to do with these folks down here. [laughs]

**SH:** So, little digression, the Madison County Democratic machine politics you were coming in at

**SR:** The height of it, yeah.

**SH:** The heights of it?

**SR:** Well, it was at its... it was gonna decline shortly after but they still lugged everybody. The lug was a big issue - the lug?

**SH:** What was that...

**SR:** If you ran for public office, for a county - maybe any office, you paid the party 10% of your annual salary. You were lugged.

**SH:** And what did the party do with that money?

**SR:** Oh, god knows what they did with it.

**SH:** [laughs]

**SR:** They said it was, you know, to support other Democrats, blah blah blah. Evelyn Bowles was first one to refuse to pay the lug, the very first one. This was in 1974. I was still in law school when this happened. But it was an amazing story because she'd been in the County Clerk's office for 20 years as Chief Deputy, and when Ms. Hotz retired, she says I want Evelyn to run, and assuming the party would go along with it. I mean why wouldn't you? Here's an experienced person - of course, she was a woman, you know, and the only other woman officeholder was Dallas Burke, who was a coroner. But anyway, so Evelyn announced that she was going to run. Well the party got together, and they had the screening committee, and you would have to appear before the party, and they would anoint you to be the candidate in the primary. You wouldn't have any primary opposition, and you'd get lugged too - you know - and Evelyn told me one time that Ms. Hotz actually sold her car to pay the lug, I mean you know back in the day, and she said after she saw that happen she vowed she would never pay that. And because I mean - these jobs they pay let's say they paid \$20,000 you're talking \$2,000 to the party. So, anyway...

**SH:** So this committee would kinda screen

**SR:** Yeah they'd pick the candidates. It's a bunch of beefy guys in Granite City, you know?

**SH:** Who was it all?

**SR:** It was all men

**SH:** All men? But was it all kinda very ethnic in terms of - you said Macedonians, and

**SR:** Could be, well Madison was pretty well populated with Hunkies, Eastern European principally - I don't know why they're called Macedonians. They're really Bulgarians I mean, but it sounds better I guess, and there was a Bulgarian Orthodox Church. There was one. I don't know if it's still functioning, and um, so, she announced she was going to run. Well the party got together and picked a tavern owner in Granite City, Von Dee Cruse, and they put him up, and he was going to be the candidate. So now we got a primary battle between Evelyn and the party, basically. She knocked the piss out of em. She won by so much - they were buried, just buried. For 20 years she worked in the county clerk's office. She knew every precinct committeeman. She had - there are 122 precincts in this county - each of them has at least 4 or 5 election judges. Who do you think gave the trainings for all these election judges - Democrat and Republican? Which means a bunch of Republicans crossed over and voted in the Democratic Primary to make sure she got elected. I mean it was an uproar. It was a rout. And she didn't... you know, and then, of course, I don't even think she had any Republican - she didn't have any Republican opposition. They wanted her, you know. They wanted fair elections. They wanted her, so the next time she ran in 1978, the papers were calling her saying are you going to the screening? Are you going to the screening committee? Are you going to pay the lug? And the night of the screening committee they called her house and said aren't you going to the screening committee? She says, I'm doing my laundry. [laughs] And no, I'm not going. So, now, Kostoff, the chairman, they don't know what to do. They don't know what to do, so instead of endorsing her, which is what they did, they would endorse, the candidate. They recommended her. They endorsed this whole slate of candidates and recommended Evelyn. They didn't endorse her because she didn't pay the lug. And so, I was in the courthouse when this happened, Bosworth from the - at the time he worked for The Globe, or maybe he worked for the Metro East Journal, he's in - he's from Madison originally, and he interviews Chris Kostoff, and he says, well Mr. Kostoff I've heard of recommending or not reco- I mean endorsed or not endorsed but I've never heard of recommended. What does that mean? And Chris had this very strong accent. Chris says - [in accent] that means she gonna win anyway. [laughs] I mean he was - just - the archetypal political boss. His wife had been an entertainer in her earlier life.

**SH:** Is that a euphemism?

**SR:** Yes. Probably. And at the end of the day, they owned - they had a tavern down there and workers would come out of the Granite City Steel and they had to put money at the end of the bar. They just shook down everybody for everything. She, Mrs. Kostoff, was always selling tickets. In fact, the Kennedys came through - I don't remember which Kennedy, was it, John? Or was it the Schreibers? But there was a big parade for them down in Granite City. And they're all sitting up there. Of course she's sitting up there cause, her husband's the boss, and she's the chief precinct committeewoman or something and they said you could see her reaching into her pocket and to try to sell the Kennedy's some tickets [laughs] you know... but most of that was kinda before I was involved - I mean I was in law school during the time period that Evelyn was running. I didn't actually even know her very - I knew what was going on, because it was the talk of the town, you know that she was not endorsed and the outrage everybody felt about how the party was treating her, and so anyway, ah, I got outta law school, and Nick... Walker and the kids and I decided we would never have enough time to do this, so we were going to make a big trip - a big - it was the bicentennial year 1976, and we were gonna travel to Canada, up through Canada, and then back down through Maine and home, and we borrowed this Beauville - Chevy Beauville box van, from my dad. The thing was huge. It got about 10 miles to the gallon I guess, maybe; loaded the kids in there. One of them was 1 and the other one was 5, and car seats? Who ever heard of car seats? We had



this thing that we hung on the backseat only to get Jeff up high enough to see out the window, and the baby rocked around in a playpen in the back of it - so we went all the way up to Ontario, camped out there, and then we went across to Quebec, and the Laurentian Mountains, and the temperature turned cold, and we also had black flies which were supposed to be gone by that - it was September, early September, and those black flies bit my baby - and have you ever been bitten by a black fly? They make a little almost like a little cut, and you you have a little blood mark on the cut, and I said that's it - this camping thing is over so we threw all this wet soggy crap in the van and drove to Quebec to the first motel we came to. We pulled up underneath, and Walker says we can't afford this - this guy in livery, this kid in livery comes out to greet us. I said I don't care. We're staying here. I said do you have a room? He says yeah we have a room. And I said we've been driven out of the mountains by the black flies. He goes - "ahh.. the vampires of the North" [laughs] and this, and also the people in rural Quebec were very hostile. This was right when they were doing their French only, we're French stuff, and they were nasty to us. I mean if I tried to speak French, they didn't understand. If I tried to speak English, they would go - just French, you know. It was just impossible, and he said - Walker says well if you think the people in the country are bad, how do you think these people are going to be? They thrive on tourism. They were as nice as they could be. You know? So, then we came back through Maine. Meanwhile, Nick has accelerated the time I was supposed to come to work. I think they lost somebody, so instead of having a week when I got home, he says I need you to come to work right away, so, I went to the office, and he had an office manager named Dewey Van Dyke. Dewey was an old Marine, smoked a cigar and back then people smoked in the offices, you know, and, he says, oh! And Nick goes - find a desk for her! So Dewey goes okay - and he just puts me in the steno pool with the secretaries, and I said no, that's not gonna do. I need my own office. And he said all right, all right, maybe you'll find something back here. Meanwhile at that time the State's Attorney's Office was in the top of the Edwardsville National Bank which has disappeared, but it's where the administration building and Purcell Street ran between the courthouse and the bank, so the State's Attorney's Office had one floor um, Boroughs, Simpson, a big law firm, was on the top floor, and the sheriff's department was on the bottom floor, you know, down all the way to the basement and then there was this rickety elevator. They had an elevator operator, Clem, and this sliding, you know, accordion-type door and this crank you know that would run the elevator up, so it was [laughs] it was really old fashioned. And um, so Dewey finally gets me an office, lets me have a desk, you know, and an office, and, you know, they start trying to think of stuff for me to do. Then I got sick. I was sick from that trip. I really wanted to have a week to recover from it, and so I was out for a couple of days, and finally had to go see a doctor in Saint Louis, and when I came back, I go into my office and I got no desk. Dewey had moved my desk to the basement. I mean, to like the basement like underneath the building. [laughs] Dewey I'm going to need a desk - oh ah ah well ah - I mean he did it on purpose. I know he did. And so, every morning these guys - there were like 4 attorney's, 4 guy attorneys and Dewey would be in the backroom, and there was a dart board back there, and they'd go back there, and they'd bullshit about baseball and all this kind of stuff. I was never invited, didn't, you know, join this morning coffee clutch thing that they did every morning, so one day I thought I've had enough of this. I walked back there, and they were talking baseball as usual, and I looked at Dewey, and I said Dewey what do you do with an elephant with three balls? And he went uhh uhh he was thinking this was gonna be some kind of dirty joke I guess. He goes uhh uhh uhh. I said well, you walk him, and pitch to the giraffe. And he didn't really get it, and those other guys just started laughing and they were just rolling on the floor, you know? And after that I just went back there, I didn't care about talking about baseball, but I was not going to be left out, you know?

**SH:** Did they, when they - how did they assign cases?

**SR:** Well, they would start you in juvenile or misdemeanor. Everybody started there. So, they gave me misdemeanor cases to do, and I literally flunked misdemeanors because I wanted to try cases. I wanted to go to court. I wanted to have juries. I wanted to learn how to try stuff. So I tried everybody - anybody and everybody - including lawyers, which did not go over well. I had one lawyer who ran a stop sign. It's a stop sign that's at the bottom of, if you're going on 270, the drop off down there to get to Granite City. It used to be when you came down the hill, there's a stop sign there. I think that they've made that a little better than it used to be. Well, Leon Scroggins ran that thing, and the police stopped him and gave him a ticket. Well, of course, he just figured he'd walk in and we'd dismiss the ticket, and he says well then I need a trial. Well, it was a bench trial. We didn't actually have a jury for this. So, so I had an officer testify, put on all the evidence. It was pretty clear Leon had run the stop sign. The judge, however, found that, as a matter of law, the stop sign was in the wrong place. [laughs] So Leon got off. [laughs] We had, and then I got myself into a political thing accidentally. I was trying some hit and run case. A kid had hit a car. I mean it was property damage, and he'd left, and there was some political thing going on in Granite City, and these lawyers were all attacking each other, and I was in the middle of it. I didn't even know what was going on, and we wound up convicting - I wound up convicting the kid for the hit and run thing, and, um, then we discovered he was a juvenile. We didn't know he was only 16. You can't try a juvenile, and this was in front of a jury! It was a massive error at the time. So, like I flunked misdemeanors. And so, there was a rape case on Chouteau Island. Two girls were at a gas station in Ferguson, Florissant on the other side of the river, and these guys haul up, and it was a couple of carloads of em, and they say hey, you girls want to go to a party? And these two girls are kinda...um, conservatively raised I would say. I mean their - I think they went to Catholic school - and they said oh, it's not very far, just follow us and then you can go home when you want to. So they said, oh, okay. So they follow them across the river, and now these guys start turning here and there and pretty soon these girls are pretty much lost. I mean they're now stuck with having to follow these guys because they don't know where they are. They wind up on Chouteau Island. They wind up in that area, you know, between, you know, where the Chain of Rocks Bridge is out in there, and then it's gangbusters. It's a gang rape. And they pull them out of the car, they rape em, they take the you know, they drove their cars doing donuts around them on the ground in the mud, you know, making... coming as close as they can with the car to them, while they're on the ground, and I mean just terrorized them. Then these guys just all jump in their cars and leave, and these girls are left to kinda pull themselves together and get home, and they manage to get back across the river, and I can't remember - I think they were so freaked out they were speeding and they got stopped for speeding, and they told the police officer what had happened. He didn't really believe them. He felt they were trying to get out of a speeding ticket, and eventually the word came back that there had possibly been a rape, but I mean these are all guys, you know. These are all cops listening to this story, and so, our side of the river went out to investigate and sure enough, they found these grooves in the ground like the girls had said it happened, and one of these jokers had dropped his driver's license out there. Otherwise we'd of had no clue. These girls didn't know these guys. They'd never seen them. They could barely give a description of them. It was dark, you know, and so we managed to get the first one I think, and I believe he may gave us the name of a couple of em, but he didn't know all of em, so the first felony case was assessed by the person that handled it at preliminary hearing, which would have been - which was Don Weber. Don Weber says no evidence, no medical, no something else. He had a whole list of all the things missing from the case. He said give it to Steph. She thinks it's worthwhile or you know, she thinks it's something.

Case can't be won. Give it to Steph. She thinks it's important or something like that. So they gave me this case, and I wound up with two very experienced trial lawyers on the other side and me. And I had never tried a felony. I had never tried a felony jury in my life. I'd never picked a jury really, you know, and, Judge Clark was the judge. He was the only Republican judge at the time, and he was the most...how can I put it...dignified fellow. I mean he was ex- military. Jurors loved him. They just loved him. He looked every image of the judge, you know. He really did. And um, he started trying to pick the jurors, and at one point he'd called me up to the bench and he said - don't you think you need some help? [laughs] [whispers] No, I don't need any help. Of course, I needed help you know. Anyway, I was in that trial for 10 days, and people were starting to drop in to watch it. I was in it for 10 days, and it resulted in a hung jury, meaning no verdict at 3 am in the morning, the jury hung. I mean, I just felt like I've been through a meat grinder, and it was cold. It was in February, and we came out in the street, and these two girls are with me, and they said well what does this mean, what does this mean that the jury hung? I said it means that that the case can be tried again, and, of course, they didn't want to go through it again. I'm just not sure the county has the resources, and walking and marching along behind me was Don Weber. Yes, the county does have the resources, he says, and we're going to get these guys. By now he had become incensed, you know. What he thought was a joke, had suddenly become real, and we wound up hunting down all 10 of those guys, and we sent them all to prison. Unfortunately Judge Clark didn't give them very long sentences. He gave them like 4 years or something, which was ridiculous for what they'd done.

**SH:** Was that your first major case?

**SR:** Yes. It was and then after that they managed to give me all the rape cases, but I started researching rape cases in Madison County, and between 1959 and 1976 they had tried 3.

**SH:** Really?

**SR:** 3 cases.

**SH:** 3 cases from 59 to 76?

**SR:** They just dealt them away all of the time, so, then I got really involved, and by then SIU had formed a rape crisis center, um. Pam Klein and a bunch of women out there raised - they got this rape and sexual abuse care center it was called, and - they didn't have that really up and running when I had the two girls, ah the first case, but they had a seminar or something out there, and they invited me to come out and speak, and they all but threw rocks at me. They all but pelted me with produce because I was explaining the prosecutorial difficulties you know, and there these feminists thought that was just bullshit - you know. Anybody should be able to walk into a courtroom and get a conviction on these. At that time you couldn't get a conviction on rape without a nun with 6 stab wounds, you know. They would drag up the girl's past, her dating history. In fact, even in this case, the one on Chouteau Island, the girls had been carrying some LP's - some albums in the car, and it was ZZ Top's Backdoor Man, something like that you know. It has all these sexual references. I didn't know it - who can hear the lyrics to those things? I can't! They said well isn't it true you were carrying, I mean they just tortured these girls with these records that they had bought you know which was popular music at the time. Isn't it true this is what you had on your mind when you went with these guys? You went voluntarily with these guys? You followed them in your car over there? I mean, you know, these were two very good defense lawyers, and they were just nasty,

and I couldn't protect them from that kinda stuff, and but once the rape crisis center was up and running, then it wasn't easier, but it was easier from the point of view of dealing with the victims because they could deal with the victims. They could take care of them. They could prop them up emotionally. I didn't have to do that. I didn't know how to do that, you know. My job was - look this was the case, and this is what I'm doing, so I mean we turned into a juggernaut. AP-UP even picked it up. My cousin out in Arizona read an article and said that's Steph! We had a 92% conviction rate.

**SH:** Wow.

**SR:** And I tried like, over the period of three years, I tried 15 cases 13 jury 13 of them were jury trials, 2 were bench, and of the 13, probably 6 or 7 were rape cases. I mean, when you consider they'd done 3 in what, you know, like over 20 years, it was just you know, so anyway, we just started plowing through them. And then, we got the rape - there was a rape and sexual abuse committee of the State Legislature. They came down here and held hearings, and I rounded up... they said can you get us a cop, and a victim and blah blah blah - and these hearings were held at SIU. I mean we just raised the image of this kind of stuff, and then there was a police officer up in Chicago named Vitulo, and he had invented, so to speak, a rape kit for hospitals to use so that when we got them examined we would have more than a pair of panties to work with. I even got into a fight with St. Elizabeth's, which was Catholic. They didn't want to have anything to do with it. And they wouldn't ... they wouldn't take care of these girls when they came in. They thought rape was their own fault, that kinda stuff, and they wouldn't preserve evidence. I wound up talking to Sister Mary fucking Margaret who was running the place down there, and I mean I just... and then she says our position is no abortion, no abortion counseling, no nothing, but bit by bit I discovered that in the path lab there was a feminist NOW member and in the ER there were nurses that were interested, and they would call me surreptitiously to tell me that they had a rape victim there, what did they need to do, what should they do? And they would just go ahead and do it and save this stuff. Screw Sister Mary Margaret you know? And so we begin to get a whole underground network of people that would help us with these cases. One of them, one of the worst ones I had, the girl was dumped out of the car up headed up towards Staunton um. She'd been... she had hitched a ride with a trucker. They're not supposed to pick up people. She hitched a ride, 16 years old, had her cat with her. The guy had... he had tortured her. Well, he was coming from Indiana across the country going West. To throw her off the track he turned North toward Chicago and dumped her out up there. And this girl staggers into this gas station. They call... they called the police. They called the hospital. I think they even got an ambulance to take her to the Staunton hospital. They refused to treat her because she was a rape victim with no insurance. They transferred her down to Anderson Hospital, which also was gonna refuse to treat her because she had no insurance, no nothing. So I said give me the head of that hospital. I talked to him. I said do you know it is just a petty offense - there's actually a statute on the books you can't turn down not just rape vic...., you can't turn down emergency victims of crime or something like that - some little known, forgotten piece of statute. I said it's a petty offense. Do you know that a petty offense carries a fine of about \$100. But you know what I'm going to do to you in the press if you turn this girl down? I said your name will be mud. And he said but, but, but. I said you will treat this girl, and of course the rape crisis people were on his ass too, so it wasn't just me, and so they treated her, and she was in such bad shape rape crisis people had to have someone with her 24 hours a day. Someone sat in her room, and they had to cover up the mirror in the bathroom because her face was so beat up. They didn't even want her to see how she looked. The guy had crammed a fusee up her rectum. It's one of those torches, you know, that they stick in the ground when they're working on a truck. You know, it was awful, and when the

police interviewed her - Dennis Kuba was the detective - and she remembered that he had white shoes on which she thought was really funny cause it was winter and he was he had on these white loafers or something, and he had sorta greasy hair, and you know she gave them a description. Well, of course, they're looking northbound, for him towards Chicago. Then they said well maybe let's go back towards Saint Louis because he had said he was going to Saint Louis, but he had turned towards Chicago. Sure enough, they walk into that, about where that Circle K - that truck stoppy place down by Pontoon Beach, and there's a guy in white shoes standing there, and they go up and talk to him, Well, yeah yeah he had this hitchhiker, and, no, he didn't do anything to her, you know, denied everything, and they arrested him anyway, you know. So, and then we were off to the races after that, you know. He wound up, - his name was Ed Harbour - and um, he, I don't know how we discovered this, but we discovered that he had done a similar thing to 2 girls in Florida, but they had like gotten away from him. I can't remember the whole story on it. The law on evidence is you can't introduce evidence of other crimes committed by a person - unless, you can show a pattern as part of an MO. Like he always leaves a white glove at the scene of the robbery or something like that. So I flew with one of the state troopers down to Florida, and we interviewed the two girls, and sure enough it was a similar pattern. I mean he picked them up at a truck stop and tied them up in the same manner and blah blah blah, so I filed a motion to introduce evidence of these other two girls in Florida, and even though I knew I was flirting with reversible error, and we had a 4 hour hearing on it, whether it was similar enough and blah blah blah, and Judge Matoesian finally ruled that we could introduce the evidence. Then I decided I wouldn't introduce it because I could get the case reversed, even though I had the ruling so, when we - but we flew the girls up. Harbour said he never heard of these girls, never heard anything about it. When these girls walked in the courtroom he turns around and starts nudging his attorney. He had seen them before. He recognized them. They came in and sat down, and we're getting ready to open the trial, and so in her opening statements - Scottie Mormon was defending him so everybody thought this is great, catfight, you know that I was prosecuting and she was defending. So Scottie gets up and in her opening statement announces they will hear evidence of other girls that he, you know, might have raped in Florida, but I didn't put the evidence on, but it got out, because we tricked her into telling the jury. [laughs] Anyway the guy got convicted and Karen Malorny... - his defense was, for all the bruising and battery, - it was really pretty clever, was that she had epilepsy and had an epileptic fit in the truck and that's how she got hurt because she did. They asked for her medical records and they did discover she had been diagnosed with epilepsy as a child, and so they had an expert who was going to come in to say that these injuries could have been caused by an epileptic seizure. The expert was from Washington University. So I had her examined by a neurologist at Saint Louis University, and he was a little short fireplug of a guy who had never testified in court before, and so they put on their guy, and he testified that, yes, she had epilepsy and blah. He was a very dignified medical man, you know. And so in my case I had this little portly guy who was carrying a bunch of paper when he came in the courtroom, and, he'd never testified, and so I introduced him, and "Doctor do you have an opinion within a reasonable degree of neurological certainly as to whether or not blah blah blah," and he says - he looks straight at the jury, he hops up out of the witness box - he says not only does that girl not have epilepsy, she never had epilepsy. She was misdiagnosed and then he takes this EKG and flings it down the table, the counsel table I mean - and he tells the jurors and they're pretty much standing up [laughs]. I couldn't get him back in the chair [both laugh]. It was just - it was the most hilarious thing. I just stood back and let him go. So uh, in the closing arguments there was like a railing in front of the jury that was just about this wide, and so in closing argument Scottie Mormon gives her argument. She's laying out this EKG from her doctor that shows epilepsy, so she's got this kinda thing laying on the bench

there, so I get up there to give my rebuttal. So I scoop that stuff up and start putting down pictures of this girl with her face all beat up and just horrible pictures of her, and they're all just sitting there, but anyway, he got sentenced to 60 years, so Judge Matoesian was just horrified by the whole thing, and he just, you know... It was bad. In fact he got out just not too long ago.

**SH:** How would you characterize the judges were they - maybe that's not a fair question.

**SR:** Um, Madison County, unlike St. Clair County, was actually always very open and really, surprisingly, welcoming to outsiders. Now if I went to St. Clair County to practice law, there was a home-court advantage down there and a homeboy thing always going on. But up here they were always curious about outsiders, and they always sorta welcomed outsiders, and we had a diverse group, you know judges. Our judges were kinda different from each other, they were all Democrats, except for Judge Clark, and they . . . Judge Clark was such a dignified guy and I had so many cases in front of him, I don't know why, but at 3 o'clock in the morning he might have loosened his tie one notch waiting for a jury to come back, but I do remember one time him telling me, he says, "I know of course that I'm the whore at the picnic" [both laugh], so when they needed to put down a strike, a riot, at Shell, they would take it to the Republican judge. You know, that's what he meant. So he served the purpose. I mean, you know it was just the way it was and um, but when I first started practicing like Judge Matoesian, for example, he would say well, what should we call you? You know is it Mrs. or Ms. ? I said you could call me Doctor. I have a Phd. [both laugh], and Judge Barr who served in WWII and fought all through the Pacific as a Marine, was an amazing individual. He was a strikingly handsome man. He lived well into his 90's, and he was utterly delightful. And, but, but, when we were in the courtroom he would say, ah, Mr. Rungy? Steph? Stephanie? He'd call me by my first name, but he'd call the male attorney Mr. whatever even though he'd probably known him 20 years longer than he'd known me, but he was such a nice - I mean I couldn't get upset about it except finally in front of a jury I said Judge Barr you've got to call me something besides Stephanie. Counselor? I said that'll do that'll do. Calls us both counselor okay, and he would, and he called the objections, sorta like an umpire - balls and strikes, so if the other guy that had two objections sustained you knew it was your turn so you could just wait for anything to happen and to object, and you'd get the ruling in your favor. And Judge Clark, he had a court reporter, who ran the courtroom really, so you had to get on her good side, and if you needed a break, you'd go and tell her can we get a break? And she would raise her hand, and Judge Clark would declare a break and we'd all go, but like I said the jury's loved Judge Clark they loved Judge Barr too, but really they had some of that kind of stuff . . . You had to make them realize that they just couldn't call you by your first name because they know you.

**SH:** Were any of the judges particularly biased?

**SR:** I never found that the circuit judges were. They started off that way, but if you would kinda do a good job, they came around pretty quick. I just didn't find a lot of problem with them. Some of the male lawyers had trouble getting used to having, you know, women on the other side of them, you know, but by and large, they were always pretty darn fair. I never had as much trouble with them as I had with the office manager [both laugh]

**SH:** How is it that Madison County got the label as the "judicial hell-hole?"

**SR:** Well, when I was in law school it was the plaintiff's paradise. [both laugh] Um Madison County has been the plaintiff's paradise, so to speak, because of transportation - the railroads and the barges. If a guy falls off a barge in Louisiana, his case could end up in Madison County because it's all the river. It's all part of the river. That's, you know, the same with the railroads. There're so many tracks and what have you in here that the suits were principally against railroads and barges, and the laws very favorable to the the plaintiff for both of those. I mean those are very dangerous occupations. I only ever was connected to one railroad case. But that's where these big plaintiff's practices came from. They were wired to the unions. When a guy got hurt, he was routed to a specific attorney. Now, all this kinda got more and more out of hand when we had that - remember there was a Dioxin spill down in Sturgis, Missouri. Well, it was a railroad spill. The case wound up in Madison County, even though the spill was down there, but the case wound up here. And so, it was a venue issue. Over time, the law changed on venue, and you had to have more stricter . . . , but it used to be anywhere the railroad ran, you could litigate the case. Well we became fairly expert in Madison County, and we got pretty expert in complex litigation. It was asbestos... was another big area, and I think this judicial hell hole thing started during the asbestos litigation. I think that some of the plaintiff's lawyers pushed the envelope a little too far and the national - at one point the national president of the Chamber of Commerce came here to give a speech or something in the courthouse plaza there - I guess to tell us we were a judicial hell hole or something, and some lawyer got the idea we'll subpoena him. We'll take his deposition because to show something or other in some case that was pending. I don't know what, but anyway it's frankly an abuse of process and just brought the wrath of god down on them. This Madison County Record thing here is run by the Chamber of Commerce. They set up shop right in downtown Edwardsville, and we're going to trash this court system from now til who laid the dog, and didn't matter what happens. They would have a big headline: defendant moves to dismiss, you know. In every case, the defendant moves to dismiss. I mean that's not news, but that they, you know, they would take samples out of the motion from the defendant on what evil thing the plaintiff was doing, and they would just consistently trash the court system, and I don't know if anybody ever reads that Record, but sometimes it filters out into the general public, and then they would put out this Chamber of Commerce thing saying these are the judicial hell holes, so it wasn't really a judicial hell hole as far as I can see. Judge Barr is another example of that. There was a case - Paul Pratt was a big personal injury lawyer - he had a case where a guy was suing for millions of dollars for something, and I don't even remember what, and the jury returned a verdict in favor of the plaintiff for millions of dollars. I don't even remember the amount. And, the defense files a routine motion to enter judgment. It's called judgment NOV, judgment notwithstanding the verdict, that is the judgment is for the plaintiff for a million dollars. We think the court should override the jury and enter an NOV, a judgment NOV in favor the defendant. Judge Barr was about the most - in Spanish it's called "hombre recto," straight up guy. I mean he was a straight guy, and he got wind of some shenanigans involved in that case, and I don't even know what the shenanigans were, lying by witness or something and entered his judgement NOV, in that case. And that took guts. I mean this is against one of the most powerful personal injury lawyers in the county, and I went by, I went by the see him. I saw the attorney. He's skulking. He hadn't shaved. He looked like he hadn't bathed in a couple of days. He's wearing a jacket. He's just had a million bucks snatched away from him, and I went in to see Judge Barr, and I said what happened with Pratt's case? Me, I just ask him. He says, I just didn't think the evidence supported the verdict, you know, but something had gone wrong in there, and he knew it. You know I don't know what, but he was like the most honest guy, and he wasn't afraid of anybody you know, so, you know that's lets the chips fall where they may, so we had that kind of thing. It, you know, it wasn't corrupt really. I mean there were, you

know, you could get back roomed occasionally. That would happen, but basically it was a pretty darned good system I thought.

**SH:** What does that mean being "back roomed"

**SR:** Well, that's the judges are not supposed to have ex parte communication with either side without the other side being present, and, as Weber used to put it, sometimes we'd go to the bar meetings to protect the record [laughs], you know, because the judges would be at the bar meetings, the lawyers would be at the bar meetings. Everybody'd be drinking, and who knows you know what was going on. In fact, we would have fights at the bar meetings. There would be fights. [laughs] Everybody says "oh, lawyers do battle all day, but they are friends at the end of it." Well sometimes that, that spilled over and you know.

**SH:** Don Weber had quite a reputation.

**SR:** Yes he did. Don is somewhere to the right of Attila the Hun, and I don't know why we've always been friends because I don't see him for long periods of time, but we just have this history of being in the foxhole together you know, but um, essentially he just a right winger you know, right-wing guy. I think now he's like representing Prinzler off and on. But I was involved in an electoral board thing last summer, not last summer, summer before, and Don and I spent like about three weeks involved in that. He was representing the one side and somebody else was representing the other side, but the smartest thing they did was put me on that electoral board because we know each other, and I was able to cut back on some of the nonsense that would have gone on otherwise.

**SH:** How did you get involved in politics?

**SR:** Um, well, I ran for ...- that's how I got fired. Dewey Van Dyke eventually got me. He got me fired from the State Attorney's Office. But in 1979, I ran for um, city council, and I was still an Assistant State's Attorney, and so behind my back one of my colleagues in the State's Attorney's Office and Dewey, and probably Nick concocted an opinion from the Attorney General that said that to be an alderman and the Assistant State's Attorney would be a conflict of interest. I mean occasionally, the AG's office issues opinions. Now, Nick had been an alderman and an Assistant State's Attorney. Apparently it wasn't a conflict then...but you know so they came up with this opinion. Meanwhile I was running for alderman. I got elected, and between the time I was elected and the time I was to be sworn in, they issued this opinion, and Nick announced that if I took my seat as an alderman that I would be terminated as an Assistant State's Attorney. His hands were tied you know, and so there was – ah, Weber told me this- he said there were running, what was it? The odds that I was going to not take my seat was something like 10 to 1 that I would not take my seat as an alderman. I wouldn't get sworn in because I was going to lose my job. Oh bullshit. So I went down and got sworn in, and I didn't know what the drill was, but normally after the new city council is sworn in, everybody sort of adjourned to Rusty's. They used to go down to Rusty's, you know, go down have a few drinks and celebrate. I didn't know any of that. So Mary Hildebrand and I decided we'd go visit Evelyn, tell her about it. She lived in Dunlap Lake and Ms. Hotz was dying of cancer, and Mary said let's just go by Evelyn's and tell her about the swearing in and stuff. She'd be interested in it. Like I said I knew her, but I didn't know her very well. So we stopped by, and we visited. Meanwhile, people are getting drunk at Rusty's and calling Nick at home and calling him names and how could you do that? And how could you fire her? And you can't fire her. You were an alderman



and screaming at him. He loses the next election to Don Weber, so we have like, one of the few Republican State's Attorney's as a result of all that uproar of them firing me. I think they fired Don too. I think he ran for city commissioner whatever they are in Collinsville. It's the same concept, it's just ... and all of this was because Dewey convinced Nick that I would run against him for State's Attorney, which I had never intended to do – would never have done, so that's how I got in politics, and then in 1994 Evelyn announced she was going to retire, and I said well, I'll run for it, what the heck. If she backed me, you know I could probably win - little did I know - I got slaughtered. I lost to a drunk.

**SH:** This is for Clerk?

**SR:** County Clerk yeah. And um, in fact, the night of the election these reporters are saying what happened? You had Evelyn's backing. Evelyn was also running for the Senate, but she didn't have any opposition in the primary. And they said, what happened? You had Evelyn's backing. I said well, let me put it this way, whatever Evelyn has is non-transferrable. [laughs] And I was a terrible politician. I don't really like people much, and I don't like smiling, and, you know, I didn't like glad handing. I was no good at chit-chat, you know, Evelyn could have these - she was amazing - she could have these conversations with people who would have sworn they had good advice from her, and all she did was making sucking noise, but they would think they had a deeply heartfelt .... and she wouldn't have told them a thing, not a thing she didn't want them to know. You know people would say Evelyn I need to speak to you confidentially. They'd come to her office sometimes, and so she'd go out in the public and sit on a bench with them. And they said well, she wouldn't haul them back in her office and close the door, cause then everybody in the place would be looking - she'd go sit on a bench, you know, and have these incredibly private conversations when they were all in the courthouse there together, but whatever she had, it wasn't transferable. Plus I'd have to be County Clerk which is a really hard job, you know, really hard, so it was just as well that I didn't win.

**SH:** Did you go into private practice?

**SR:** I was in the State's Attorney's Office for three fun-filled years, and then I went to work for Earl Vuagniaux, and his office was right across the street from the courthouse. And so I worked for Earl for - let's see - from about 79... I worked for him for about 5 years, and then in 1985, Barb Crowder and I formed ...- we determined to be the first all-woman law firm in Southern Illinois. And, we went into practice together, and then we took in Gail Bader, so at one point there were three of us, and then, I like to say, Barb left me for her husband. She and Larry then formed a practice, and then Gail left, so I wound up practicing by myself for most of the time. you know, which was fine. I did share office space with Evelyn, so that helped on the rent you know, but um.

**SH:** And you were mostly... criminal law? Defense?

**SR:** Well I was a special public defender for most of that time, which was, you know, they give you \$20,000 to take all comers, kind of, and that means that you do a lot of juvenile work because you do what's conflict work. That is when a public defender has, say, two guys do a burglary, and one rats out the other. Well they can't represent both of them, so the special public defender comes in to take one of them. I wound up in that ... I wound up in a death penalty case doing that. And that was before all the death penalty laws had changed. For like \$20,000 I represented a guy in a death penalty, you know, - \$20,000

dollars covering all the other cases I was doing in the county, and, oh, it was a nightmare. Those things are life-altering experiences. They really are. Ah, the biggest help I got on that was from Billy Hahs. It turned out Billy had been a public defender in South Carolina, and he had done a lot of death penalty cases. I didn't even know him, and somebody said there's this guy, you know, that's new around here that's done death penalty cases. Why don't you talk to him, but then I realized that Sharon was at SIU, and he was just a really big help. I mean he just had a lot of good advice and whay have you. I mean of course I lost, and that was the only case that I was ever involved in that there was actually corruption, actually corruption on the other side. And of course I lost the case, but...

**SH:** Corruption in terms of? Bribing?

**SR:** Not bribing so much as hiding evidence, um, flaunting the law, ex-parte communication, between the judge and the... and the prosecutor uh. He had ... they had each other on speed dial, you know, and, I did some tricky motion into the thing to try to ... they had us tried together. There was another guy and my guy, and it is what's called a Brady violation well is it Brady? Anyway, I should have been given a severance, and they wouldn't give me a severance from this other guy who was way guilty. I mean way guilty! They had a lot of evidence on him, and nothing on my guy, and so what the whole plan was to smear that evidence over to my guy. Well, that's unconstitutional. You can't do that. And um, but the judge was an idiot. He kept allowing them, the other side, to do that, and um, so when that was over I had to do a post-trial motion. If you don't do a post-trial motion, you often don't preserve the error for review by the next court up, so the post-trial motion had to be a work of art. I think the thing was like 30 pages long, but I was nervous enough about it, that I went to the death-penalty - there's an outfit in Chicago that did nothing but death penalty work, and I flew up to Chicago with this post-trial motion before I filed it, and talked to the experts up there, and the only addition they made was - and this was pretty cool. They said there is a possibility that you were incompetent as counsel for this guy, and I said well that's kinda hard to raise in a motion, and they gave me the wording to raise that, where you even throw into the mix that you may have made mistakes. [laughs] But the big mistake was the refusal to give me the severance. That thing went to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court sent it back like a rubber ball, you know, N. O.! In fact, the appellate defender who handled the case won an outright reversal, and then he petitioned the court to hear the rest of the issues I'd raised in those 30 pages because he said that there was a good chance that they'd repeat themselves. [laughs] And they said get outta here. You've won already. [laughs] So I did some death penalty appellate work, but I just ... And so when it came back, the judges who I worked for as a special defender - I mean, you're appointed by the court - told me I had to represent this guy again. And I took in all of the time that I had involved in the case. I started keeping time records, not for the trial, but from the trial to the death phase. There's two phases, and I had done \$40,000 worth of legal work between those two. I took all of that in, all the research in showing that I should be paid more for this, and certainly paid more if I had to represent him again in another trial, and they said ah, forget it. And I said okay, I quit. I'm not going to be a special public defender anymore, and they just went apoplectic. Judge Matoesian thought that he could force me to keep the job. I said you can't force me to keep the job you, know. So they had to hire somebody else, and now the law was changing, and they had to pay em a fortune, and I was never allowed to discuss the case again because I went then from private practice into the State's Attorney's Office in 2002, and, so, they had a special prosecutor, no let's see I can't remember how it worked, but we had to create a Chinese Wall. I was never allowed to discuss it again. Ultimately the case settled for, I think, 40 years. And by then, um, Ramon, the client, had served half of that. He'd been in jail consistently since 1994, so, he'd almost served his whole term because at

that time you served day for day - 50% of the sentence. So he settled for 40 years, and when it was all over, the plea was entered, Dan says, I know we're not ever supposed to discuss this case, but Ramon said to tell you, thanks. He knew. He was like the best client I ever had. He grew up in the juvenile department of corrections. He was an excellent writer. He read. He was just a kid that never had a chance, you know. I mean, I don't think he killed anybody. It was a mass murder. It was the largest mass murder since the Indian raids - five people in one, you know. Oh, it was a mess, and they came up - it was supposed to be a drug robbery thing and the drugs weren't there, and the money wasn't there. They went next door to ask the neighbor and killed him. They almost killed the children in the house, but there was only one gun, and my client didn't have it, so I never did know who killed all those people, but I'm pretty sure mine didn't. And one of em is on death row. There were three of them, but you know, those things are just, you know, they're life-altering. They really are; they really are. And that's the only case I was ever involved in where - it was actually - I could tell things were going wrong behind my back, you know.

**SH:** Um, any I don't know how to ask this question Stephanie, but from your perspective, as a prosecutor and defender - defense attorney, um, is the system pretty fair? Is...

**SR:** It's as good as the people running it. You know? I mean you have good judges and bad judges, and it's as good as the people running it for the most part. I just happened to be in an era where we had really good people. I had all these like World War II guys, you know, on the bench. I mean there were no women on the bench, you know, um, and I admired many of them. Now occasionally we got people who were political, um, Judge Calvo, who just couldn't always separate himself from politics, you know. If it was somebody he knew, you know, or somebody he had been close to, and they were in front of him you just always felt like he would - he would do his best to overcome it, but you know, he couldn't always do it. He couldn't always forget that he'd been in the legislature, where backroom deals are a way of life. But by and large I always really liked the people that I had cases in front of. They had Clayton Williams, who was the token black on the bench. Clayton Williams was not necessarily the sharpest knife in the drawer or any of that, but he had this instinct for what's right. I mean they all seemed to have - sometimes they weren't that good on the law, they weren't necessarily - you weren't always happy with their rulings, you know, but by and large they wanted to do the right thing. Now that's in the criminal justice system. Things get a little more complicated when you're talking about money, when you're talking about people's livelihoods and lawyers, and but we had Judge Beatty, who went on to the federal bench. I mean he was just a really good judge um. We had him in criminal court for a while, and back then, you didn't have all these - all this data on these guys. They'd show up for an initial appearance [phone rings]. All you had were these little cards from the jail, if they'd been in our jail, you would have these little cards. For Judge Beatty to know anything about the guy, that the sheriff's deputy, that brought him in, would just hand him these little cards, you know, or they wouldn't have any cards. And I remember Judge Beatty looking one time, going "we don't get many five card guys" [laughs], but I mean he had a one on one thing with these ... I mean he would look them in the eye and talk to them. You know, nowadays we do it with ... there's a TV camera in the jail and then you see them on the camera here and there's none of that. But we even had some little criminals from Granite City who wouldn't talk to anybody but Judge Beatty, personally. They didn't need a lawyer. They'd just talk to Judge Beatty, and they would take their time you know? They could get the three years they thought -gone [laughs], but by and large they were really pretty good.

**SH:** Are there any jurist lawyers/judges that you thought were particularly really brilliant?

**SR:** Um, well James Beatty was pretty damn sharp, um. I think I'd say Judge Beatty was probably one of the most ... I mean he... I once saw him lecture a guy who was convicted of something. The whole room was in tears – “turn around and face your parents.” He made this kid turn around and look at his parents, you know, while he sentenced him, and he was really I think maybe the best one that I remember. Again, we lost him. He went on to the federal court. But Judge Clark, I tell you, he was the one that was just so funny. One time he said - somebody objected in the front of a jury- and he said “sustained I mean overruled,” and he looked straight at the jury and said “you know I always get those confused,” [laughs] and those jurors are going oh, we see how that could happen [both laugh]. He was just so but um, but mostly they were... they were mostly pretty good, you know. I never had many complaints. Now the associate bench was different. When you're like doing divorce cases and stuff, you really get on the wrong side of judges sometime. You just want to slap em [laughs] you know? But I dunno I enjoyed the whole thing and some people say well you know you had a Phd. why didn't you go on and teach law? Boring! I can't imagine anything more boring than teaching law. [laughs]

**SH:** Well, is there anything that you want to talk about that I missed that we didn't?

**SR:** I don't have a list of your questions, but that pretty much... I mean we've come a long way I have to say that we've come a long way for women attorneys, but you know, we still need more women judges, and, you know, that's... that's always going to be an issue. I mean we have one, - currently, one woman circuit judge who is retiring next year, and there's a woman running for that job, and I think she has a Republican opponent - Tea Party nutcake but um...

**SH:** Do you have any perspective or insight on the big cigarette settlement case?

**SR:** You mean the ads that they're running?

**SH:** No, the one that was tried here in

**SR:** Oh, the one Nick tried? You know that thing was so convoluted I never did understand what finally happened in all of that - it went up; it came back; the Supreme Court did something on it didn't they?

**SH:** The Supreme Court overturned

**SR:** Reversed it yeah? And I think Nick Byron was the judge, and it was a bench trial, and I never understood why it was a bench trial, I guess it was a bench trial because it was just about money, but I never understood why they went with a bench trial. I think that was Steve Tillery wasn't it?

**SH:** I don't know -

**SR:** I think he was

**SH:** I think you're right - I think Steve Tillery was the...

**SR:** I tell you a funny story about Steve Tillery. When the three of us were law students that summer, and they allowed us to examine a witness, you know, for some practice, and back then we had these probable cause hearings where the police officer came in, basically said I found him doing this, and this, and this,

and this is what I know about the case, and the court would find... and “we find probable cause and bind him over for the proceedings.” And they were really low key sort of things, but you got to ask a few questions. And I remember the first time we did this. Steve was going to take the lead. He was going to be the first one to examine this police officer, so we're sitting there, and the judge says “Mr. Tillery,” and Steve opens his mouth and nothing comes out, nothing. And so I said, ah, “can you state your name?” [both laugh] To this day they say this woman's voice comes out of Steve's mouth and yet he went on to be a millionaire personal injury lawyer, very talented. [inaudible]

**SH:** Well, I appreciate the time, Stephanie, this is ah, Dr. Robbins [both laugh] this has been great. What was it like being at SIUE back in the 70s? The department - the English department was heavily male, wasn't it?

**SR:** Yeah, well, I was only ... that one trimester I was in the language department. The chairman was Romani? His name was Romani. He's cousin to Chuck Romani, who was one of our judges, and, the first thing that happened was the book we were using for Freshman Spanish, or First Year Spanish, was one he wrote, and I had just come from University of Texas. I knew what was out there. It was the worst book, and I'm mimeographing - back then you mimeographed - Xeoxing, bringing all of these outside materials into the class to try to supplement this terrible book, and next thing I know I'm getting called into his office about the materials that I'm bringing in, that I'm copying materials and bringing them in. I said well, sure, I said cause that book is completely inadequate. Well, but, but, but... I said I know you wrote it, but there's other books. In fact, isn't it some sort of conflict for you to be making people use your book? I dunno you know? But, but, but, but you know? Next thing I know wound up in the Dean's office, and we didn't have the Dean. The Dean was on sabbatical or some place, so we had - the Dean was Runkle?

**SH:** Yes

**SR:** But he wasn't the Dean. It was somebody else was in his “place and stead”, and I'm not sure how I wound up in there. I may have complained... I may have complained about it, about the book, and we wound up there, and I said well, you know, the chairman here doesn't want me to bring in outside materials, and he's insisting that we use this book, and I don't understand why I can't bring in outside materials. Romani just started backpedaling, denying that he - Core. Core was the guy that was sitting in Runkle's place

**SH:** Chuck Core?

**SR:** Chuck Core, yeah, and Romani just started backing up and backing up and saying that he didn't say these things you know. I thought, oh, my god, these people are crazy. I told Walker they're nuts.

**SH:** So you found it more sane working for the prosecutor?

**SR:** Yes. I mean the level of professionalism was about that high you know. I wasn't used to that. I was used to, you know, really, people who were pretty serious about what they were doing and um, mmm. So, I said I can't work like this.

**SH:** Well, thank you again.

**SR:** Well, sure. How did you guys enjoy Africa? Did you go with ah?