ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

JUDGE VIVIAN SUE SHIELDS

JULY, 2006

QUESTIONS BY DORIA LYNCH

ANSWERS BY MAGISTRATE JUDGE VIVIAN SUE SHIELDS

DL: The following is an oral history interview with Judge Vivian Sue Shields, Magistrate Judge at the United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana on July 14, 2006 by Doria Lynch, Court Historian.

DL: If you could, tell me a little bit about where your family is from.

VSS: I don't really know a whole lot, surprisingly, and I don't know why I don't, but I don't. My mother was Virginia Ballard, and her mother was Marie Ballard. And her mother and father were divorced, I think perhaps before I was born in 1939.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Because I remember him stopping by occasionally to visit, I'd say maybe once or twice, but they were never together. And so on Mr. Ballard, I really don't know because my mother and her sister were raised by her mother, who I think probably wasn't a registered nurse as such, but at that time I don't think that was that important.

DL: She just did nursing?

VSS: Nursing. And then at some point in time my mother

then went to college down at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, which is a Methodist Church college. And that's where she met my father, Ralph Blodgett. Mom was born in 1916. Dad was born in 1903, and he was born down in Switzerland County, southern Indiana along the Ohio River. He was the oldest of seven boys. His mom and dad, they were all predominantly tobacco farmers because that ground down there is pretty poor. They'd raise some corn, but tobacco farmers, and they had some cows.

And at some point Dad went to Purdue for a couple of years or something. I'm a little vague about that. I don't know where he actually finished college, but he had to do that before he went down to Wilmore because he was in seminary. Now, he may have actually finished his undergraduate degree at Asbury, I don't really know, but he did get his divinity degree there.

So that's where he and Mom met and were married. Dad then became a minister of the Methodist Church, the Northern District Conference, and they would have different churches. At that time the Methodist Church was pretty strong in allowing a minister to only be at any particular church for a few years. When they were first married during the Depression,

I think what cash they earned, they got by selling some kind of waterless cookware. Of course they had a parsonage which was provided for them, but other than that, I think there was a lot of payment with food and stuff, which was just fine.

And then I was born in Wilmore, Kentucky actually. I had gotten the impression that my mother went down there so that her mother could help take care of her because they had no family around, and at that time my grandmother was operating a boardinghouse for students at Asbury. So I was born at home, in her home in Wilmore, and was named Virginia Sue. But the doctor didn't get around to registering my birth in the county seat for some weeks apparently, and when he got there he forgot my first name, so he renamed me Vivian.

While my folks originally called me Ginny, after my mother, Virginia, when they got the copy of the birth certificate, they started calling me Sue.

DL: The one consistent name.

VSS: Yes, yes, yes. So then at that time I think my dad and mom were actually living perhaps in the Winchester/Markelville area. I don't know. And we moved around. And then at one time I know we moved to Goshen, Indiana, and that would have been in

1942. I was born in '39. In '42 we were in Goshen because my middle sister, Becky, was born in Goshen on August 17th of '42. And then I think from Goshen, we went to Markle, Indiana.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Which is in Wells County, south of Honey Creek. And it was during that period of time that I remember a couple of things. One, Dad tried to get in the Navy. But he had bad varicose veins, so he had to have those varicose veins worked on before he could pass the physical. He did pass the physical in late '44, and that's when he went in the Army as a chaplain.

My mom stayed a teacher at the Markle school. That's where I actually started grade school. In the elementary school, there were two classes in one room, so that's why at the end of my first year of school, I actually was ready for the third grade because I did both classes.

During that period of time only a couple things stand out. Ms. Benson, my teacher, I remember her vividly. And then I remember there was a north/south state highway that ran through Markle, and our house was on that highway. I remember a classmate of mine getting run over by a tomato truck

and killed out in that highway. I just remember that and that they kept all the kids that were out away. I remember that event.

And the other thing I remember is Dad coming home from the service after being away at training. The house backed up to the school, so when he came in, he would go out and hang a white towel on the clothesline, and that would let Mom know he was home when she was in school. I remember one of those, and of course she was a schoolteacher. Dad was in the ministry there for a while, and we were living in a house that had a tin roof, and some of the kids at Halloween put an outhouse on top of that tin roof. I remember that now. I love tin roofs because I remember the rain falling on it.

Anyway, at the end of that year, Dad was assigned to Fort Mason, California, which is in San Francisco. He was on transport duty, troop transport specifically. So we moved out there, and we lived in San Francisco for a while. I started third grade there, and I'm not sure exactly how long we lived in San Francisco, but not too long. By '47, when my youngest sister was born, we were living in Richmond, California, which is across the bay.

From that time I have memories of living in what I suppose was really a housing project with all the apartments looking out and a common area in the middle where you would burn trash. I had a friend there, a young man by the name of Douglas Kirk. Douglas and I would go to the Saturday shows together. They would start, I think around nine and you'd have three full-length movies and I don't know how many serials, but gobs of serial stuff.

Basically you were there from maybe nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. We did that every Saturday. That's where I developed my love of movies, I guess. And then we would come home up around the trash area and look for cigarette butts and smoke a cigarette butt. I remember Douglas very fondly for that entertainment.

And then I remember when my sister was born, November 15th of 1947. She was born in Presidio in the army hospital. I would have been almost nine, but I stayed at home and took care of my younger sister. The two of us stayed by ourselves for the week or so that Mom was in the hospital until she could get home because Dad was out to sea.

Dad got transferred from Fort Mason to Fort Houstus, which is a transportation center in Newport

News, Virginia. We went to school there. There were three girls then, and Mom was teaching. She was always a teacher. And there, fairly uneventful. I know that's when we had our first African American lady help take care of us because we went to school and Mom was working. Her name was Carrie.

We were there for a couple of years, and then Dad was transferred to Germany. We could not follow him immediately. It was going to be six to eight months before we could follow, so Mom and Dad decided it would be better if we moved down to Florida where her mother, my grandmother, was in St. Petersburg. We went to St. Petersburg and I remember Mom asking Carrie if she would like to go with us and stay with us because Mom would use her there, and then she could come back home if she wanted to. Carrie said yes. She thought that was pretty great.

This was probably the first time that I had ever become aware of anything like racism because traveling in a car down to Florida at that time, they had tourist cabins. They didn't have hotels. We would have to hide Carrie in order to get her a cabin because they would not let her stay there. I remember the filling stations with water fountains

that said, "colored only." It was funny because I had never -- racist didn't mean anything to me.

I went to two junior high schools while we were there because we bought a house actually and lived there for a few months, and then had the opportunity to sell that house. We were scheduled to go to Germany so we moved in with my grandmother and I went to another junior high school. By that time I'm on my sixth school, I think, and then we went to Germany.

We got processed out of the Air Force Base at Tampa. You know, I don't remember how we got to New York, whether we went by train. Probably by train. I just don't remember. Anyway, we shipped out of Fort Hamilton in New York and went on a ship that we ran into hurricane. Normally, it would have been a fairly easy trip, but it took almost twice as long as normal to get there. But, you know, I was a kid; I didn't care.

There were troops on board the ship, too. There were very few dependants. We were only on one deck, and I remember during the storm the soldiers were only allowed out. So it was a long time. Everybody was seasick. I mean, it was just godawful. My mother was sick. I don't think she ever got out of

bed. She lived on crackers. And the kids, none of us got seasick. There were several kids on there, and we had a gay old time. That's where I learned to play Canasta.

But you would be sitting in the observation deck, and you would see nothing but sea over here, and nothing but sky over here, and vice versa. It was really rather an exciting trip.

We landed in Bremerhaven. Dad met us there because his base was a town called Sonthofen, and we had housing in Obersdorf down in southern Bavaria. He met us in a Renault. I'll never forget that because how he got three girls, his wife, and himself -- of course he's a fairly petite man -- with all the stuff we were traveling with into this Renault, I'll never know. He's always been a very, very famous packer.

We drove from Bremerhaven down to our new home in Sonthofen, and he was the chaplain, as I say, there. Well, we lived in Obersdorf. He was the chaplain at Sonthofen at the (inaudible). It had kind of been an R&R facility perhaps or at least a training facility for some of the (inaudible) troops. It was a beautiful area right in the middle of the Swiss Alps. It was just gorgeous.

My two sisters went to the local elementary school, and Mom taught there. By that time I was in ninth grade, so I went to school in Munich. I commuted to Munich American High School. There were three girls from that area, and we would go by train Sunday night to Munich and then take the cab to the school. Then on Friday afternoon, we would do the reverse and spend the weekend at home.

We did that for a year, and then the outfit that my dad was associated with was divided. It was a 434th Replacement Battalion. Half of them went to Kaiserslautern and the other half went to Bremen, so we moved to Bremen. By that time I was a sophomore, and I went to Bremerhaven American High School. Jo Cross, one of the girls I had gone to school with in Munich, her dad was also transferred, and we rode the train daily from Bremen to Bremerhaven for school. That school was unique. I think in the entire school, there were 24 students from grades 5 through 12, but you had a full offering of classes. It was rather nifty.

After a year there, Dad got transferred to an outfit that was stationed in Rosenheim, a little closer to the Austrian border. I think Rosenheim is still in Bavaria. I went back to Munich then for my

junior year of high school, at least for half of my year there. That's when I had a great deal of fun because I got braces, and to get braces you had to go to Eschborn to the hospital. At this time it must have been '53 and I'm fourteen. Whenever I had a dental appointment I'd get myself on a train. It was a sleeper, and I'd spend the night on the train. I would get off the train, take a cab or whatever to the military place, have the dentist work on my teeth, get on the train, and come back. You know, you think of fourteen-year-olds doing that now, you'd be horrified.

DL: Yes.

VSS: But, you know --

DL: You'd take a speed train now, too.

VSS: Yes.

DL: Get you there in a couple of hours.

VSS: It wasn't then, but right. It was fun. So then the middle of my junior year, Dad got transferred back to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. By that time his time in the military was coming to a close, so rather than move there, and since Indiana was his home, Mom thought she would start teaching here because she still had an Indiana license. She started teaching at Mount Comfort, and we lived in

Irvington.

Because I was transferring in the middle of the year, the school that I would have gone to didn't have the same classes that I had, and I would have lost credit, so I went down and lived in Switzerland County with my grandmother. That would be my dad's mother. And then I had an aunt who would drive me from Bennington, which is where my grandmother lived, up to Cross Plains, which is in Ripley County, because at that school I could get the same classes. I lived with my grandmother that semester and finished Cross Plains junior year.

My senior year Mom and Dad bought a house out in Philadelphia on 40, and so I started my senior year at New Palestine while Dad was still in Fort Leonard Wood. We lived there through my senior year of high school, and then I went to Ball State undergrad in August of '55. Somewhere along in there Dad was released from the service and came back and took a church at Wannamaker. I lived there on weekends, and then he was transferred to Willow Branch.

DL: Okay.

VSS: While he was in Willow Branch, I finished college and started law school. Mom, in the meantime, was teaching and became Dean of Students at Woodview

Junior High School in Warren Township.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I guess Dad retired first from Willow Branch Methodist Church, but would come back frequently. They bought a house in Willow Branch and lived in that house for a while until they decided to move to Noblesville. By that time I was a judge up there, so there was some stability while the other kids were moving around. They moved up there a long time ago, and they sold the house in Willow Branch.

Mom drove for a while from Noblesville to Warren Central, and then she retired. Mom died in 2001. She was born in 1915. She was 85/86. Dad is still living, and he will be 103 in March.

DL: Wow.

VSS: Yes. He does quite well. He lives by himself, and he has a driver's license. He had a lady friend that was a lady he dated before he met my mother. She's 96 and she lives down in Millar. He used to drive there and spend a week every month or so because she needs help. But he's getting really tired, and he hasn't been there for a month or so.

My little sister, Becky, owns an insurance agency in Breckenridge, Texas called the Black & Downing Insurance Agency. She went to Ball State

and married a young man that she met there from Delphi who lives in (inaudible). He spent most of his Air Force years in Texas going through pilot training and so forth or in Vietnam. At some point their marriage dissolved, and sometime later she married a Texan who eventually worked in the life insurance business. He's a retired CEO of National Farmer's Life or something like that. Anyway, they're Texas bound.

My younger sister went to Asbury and met a man that she married there who was a ministerial student, Dick Dowdy. While they were married she went to Butler and got her teachers license because she didn't have that. They had some issues, and they were divorced. She then went and got the courses that she needed to sit for the CPA. She became a CPA and was working for an insurance company in Kokomo as their financial officer. When the wife of a former neighbor died, one thing lead to the other, and they're now married.

DL: What's her name?

VSS: Judith Elaine Purvis.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Her husband's name is Dave Purvis. He's retired from the high school there.

DL: Okay.

VSS: And then my middle sister is Rebecca June.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Judy, after her calling to be a CPA, was called in ministry and went to CTS. Subsequently, she was ordained as a Methodist minister and is now the District Superintendent for the Vincennes District of the Methodist Church.

I finished my coursework for a baccalaureate degree at Ball State at the end of the summer session of '58. I was short one credit of gym, physical education, so I couldn't get my degree. I started out there taking a year of pre-nursing, and I decided that I didn't want to be a nurse. If I was going to get into medicine, I would want to be a doctor, but I was smart enough to know that I didn't have the scientific gift for that.

I became a history and government major with a French minor, thinking I would teach. I made it to participation first and thought, "No, I don't think so." I was getting ready to graduate really without a degree that was marketable. I wanted to go to the Maxwell School at Syracuse, and I wanted to get into some type of foreign service.

DL: Yes.

VSS: That or the military was probably my goal, but I did not have the affinity for languages that I needed to be successful there. One day, God bless them, a couple of professors from IU Law School were visiting at Ball State, and I went to see what was going on. There was Val Nolan and Harry Pratter. First of all, those two gentlemen said the right words. There were opportunities for scholarships. Secondly, they said I would be very welcome, and I would get a good education, even though I wasn't sure I wanted to be a lawyer. I could train for whatever, so I applied and submitted and got the scholarship.

That August I started down at the law school, and after my first year, I went back to Ball State and took my gym credit, so I could have a real degree. I loved law school from the first day I walked there, I guess. I certainly had no intent of going there, but by whatever fate there is, I ended up in the right spot.

While I was at law school, I did a lot of different things. I babysat for Professor Oliver and Professor Nolan to help my way through. I worked at a bookstore across the street as a cash register clerk. I was the secretary to Tom Holley,

who was then the prosecuting attorney. I proofread Professor Hall's book on jurisprudence. I just did whatever opportunities were there.

The first year I lived in the grad center, which I enjoyed since I met a lot of students, most of whom were not from the area. I had one friend from Latvia who was a chemistry major. I'll never forget her because her family worked their way out after World War II before the Russians really had solidified. Here she was a doctorial student, but still carrying gold sewn into her clothes. She could make very good potato vodka, by the way, too. There were just a bunch of interesting people.

The second year it was just too noisy for what I had to do, so I rented a trailer from the university.

DL: Uh-huh.

VSS: I lived in a trailer park. The third year a friend of mine from Ball State was down there to get her masters in French, and she and I rented a house together.

I finished IU in May of '61. I wasn't able to go through graduation. Professor Borkenstein was developing his drunkometer, and it was going through the testing phase. I was a volunteer guinea pig for

testing one or two Saturdays a month. I would go to the State Police headquarters there in Bloomington, and I couldn't eat anything after a certain hour Friday night. They would feed me a measured amount of something, and then I would drink a measured amount of alcohol. I would spend the whole day blowing into this machine. It was not good alcohol, and I wasn't a drinker either. But anyway, it paid 50 bucks which was pretty good money.

One time just before graduation -- in fact I think it might have been the last time I was to do it before finishing school -- I went out and my car had been stolen. I couldn't leave until I tested zero, so that was fine. Nevertheless, the State Police reported it stolen. They called the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, the Bloomington Police Department, and the IU Police and gave them all the details of my car.

I had mixed emotions because actually I had a lot of stuff in my car, and I would rather have had the money than the stuff. The insurance wouldn't pay off for 30 days. On the 29th day someone found the car. It had been parked at the student union, and it had 29 parking tickets on it. Obviously the IU police didn't pay a whole lot of attention. I

couldn't go through graduation because I had parking tickets, and I wasn't going to pay parking tickets on my stolen car. Eventually it got worked out, and I think the insurance company paid the parking tickets, and then I got my diploma or my degree.

I stayed down there most of that summer studying for the bar, living with various friends. I had a job starting in September with the Internal Revenue Service in Cincinnati. In the meantime though, I had met my husband. I met him my last year of law school, which would have been his first year of law school.

We were married September 30th, and he was commuting. That just didn't work out well, so I took a leave from the IRS. I couldn't transfer to Indiana because it was considered my home state, so I worked with them a very short time until December. Then in January of '62, I started with Ed Steers in the Attorney General's Office.

Bill is from Lafayette, Indiana. He's adopted, and he has an older sister who was also adopted by Albert and Nellie Shields. He doesn't know anything about his family. He graduated from Lafayette Jeff in '51. He went to IU Business School and graduated in '55. He then went into the Air Force, and did

his duty in the Air Force. He was not exactly an air traffic controller, but something like that doing intercepts in some remote site in Japan. When his time was up, he got out of the Air Force and decided to work for Warner (inaudible) as a drug detail person in Chicago.

He wasn't particularly happy with that, and about that time his father died. There was just enough money to help him go to law school, so he came to law school. That must have been in the fall of '60. We met when I drove a group of guys down from the law school to the courthouse to watch the Emmett Hashfield's murder trial.

We moved to Bloomington, and I commuted. While Bill was in law school, I was working for Ed Steers doing trial and condemnation work. Bill was still in the Air Force Reserve and got called to active duty for the Cuban crisis. That would have been his third year of law school, and because we were living in student housing and he was no longer a student, we had to move. We moved to Bakalar Air Force Base in Columbus.

He did his time there, and I just drove from Columbus up to Indianapolis. I think he stayed a little bit longer than most because of his job. He

was about 12 weeks on active duty, and he missed a semester. Rather than moving back to Bloomington, we moved to Indianapolis, and he did his last semester at the night school over here. That gave him the opportunity to get a job with Crawford Parker, who had been the Lieutenant Governor of the state, but was then the head of the Indiana Manufacturer's Association.

Bill's job was to follow legislation in the General Assembly that would interest the Manufacturer's Association. He was over at the legislature, and going to school at night. I was still with Ed Steers until the end of '64. Bill finished school, and I was reading an article in the Indianapolis Times written by Irving Leibowitz.

DL: Yes.

VSS: He recited that there was a small town in Hamilton County that just lost a lawyer. They were looking for a lawyer to move into the town, and the local bank would give six months free rent or whatever. Bill was getting out of school and didn't know exactly what he wanted to do, but knew he didn't want to work with a law firm. He got the paper and showed it to Crawford Parker. Crawford says, "Oh, my very best friend lives out there, a fellow by the

name of Lyle Wallace. I'll make arrangements for you to go out and talk to him."

We went up one weekend and talked to Lyle and his wonderful wife, and we ended up moving to Sheridan. Bill opened his practice in Sheridan as a sole practitioner. 1964 was a fairly interesting year when a fellow by the name of Goldwater ran for President. While this was a very strong Republican state at that time, Goldwater pretty well polarized a lot of people. I was very concerned whether I was going to have a job.

In May of '64 a new judgeship came to be in the Hamilton County Superior Court, and the only way to really advertise as a lawyer at that time was to run for office. I said, "Bill, this may have to be Shields & Shields next year if Steers is defeated. Do you want to run for judge or do you want me to run for judge?" Well, he really didn't want either one of us to run for judge, but I did anyway. I thought it was a way to get out, let people know what was going on, and who was in town.

I put posters around the county, but I never put a picture on anything. I was not advertising that I was a female. Obviously people knew it. But anyway, I ran very hard. I really ran hard. I

called on people. By this time we had been living in Sheridan for a year, and we had friends that helped us stuff envelopes, mail stuff out, and all that.

At the May primary though, you'd have to say I was a total dark horse. I will never say that I won that election. I'm known to say that the fellow against whom I was running lost it, not because he wasn't a good candidate, but because he was in his 60s. He had had a heart attack, and his primary practice had been in criminal law and divorce. That didn't earn him a lot, but he was a very fine lawyer and very fine man.

Lo and behold I woke the next morning, and I was elected. This is May of '64. I am 25 years old, and scared shitless. Because I was running as a Republican, I didn't have any opposition in November. In fact, that primary was the only time I ever had any opposition.

I became a judge January 1, 1965 and had two employees. They were both great, but one was particularly wonderful. Her name was Charlotte Stewart from Hortonville. Charlotte had been a court reporter for Judge Tom White, who had been a circuit court judge for two terms. She was also the

court reporter for Judge Charlie Ardary, who was a circuit court judge for six years, so she had a lot of experience, knew the bar, knew the lawyers, and knew the procedures.

So while there was a new circuit court judge coming in by the name of Ed Knue, I grabbed Charlotte as a my court reporter. Having her was very critical. She helped me an untold amount. My other employee was a bailiff/probation officer.

DL: Yes.

VSS: By the name of Bill Bundy. Bill Bundy was a good soul, good with people, and probably was perceived as my political appointment. He had worked hard on my election as opposed to Charlotte, who was not particularly political.

Our first day we started court in the water closet because that was the only space that was available.

DL: Oh, no.

VS: Oh, it worked until they got the courtroom done. They were building a new area that was in the library. We started there, just the three of us, and we continued throughout the thirteen years I was there. We added a couple other staff members, and there were about five of us, I guess.

We were busy. Most of the legal business in Hamilton County at that time was change of venue because it's a big business town. In fact I think in number of cases venued, we were second in the state. It was wonderful. We had a lot of major trials, a lot of major lawyers, you know, the cream of the crop. We did on venue both criminal and civil.

DL: Can you tell me some of the specific cases that you remember?

VSS: Oh, I remember one. Well, I remember several, but one that was kind of interesting: Dailey versus the State of Indiana. It was a gentleman who was on call as a truck driver that had an accident and was killed. His family was suing on his behalf. The State was the defendant because it was a design issue of the highway. If my recollection is correct, she received a verdict of $400,000, which at that time was probably one of the biggest verdicts in the state.

Because it was against the state, there was a little issue of how the money was going to be collected. At that time the Governor's mansion had been the house that's on the east side of Meridian Street that has the brick (inaudible).

DL: Yes.

VSS: They were getting ready to sell that house because they had purchased the other house. I sent an order seizing the proceeds of the sale of that house, even though that was just gratuitous. Really we could go out and seize four hundred highway trucks or something, but there was a cash op, and that kind of got the state's eye. That worked out well for that lady and her family. There was nothing unique about the trial other than it was a fairly large verdict and the ability to collect.

There's others that I remember that are tragic. In fact I was talking to someone about this not so long ago. It was a change of venue from Hancock County. It was a young girl, and I recall her being six or seven at the time. She was playing in a shelter at the Greenfield Park at a large family outing. The kids were jumping off the picnic table and popping out the window.

DL: Yes.

VSS: The trouble was that it was a corrugated metal shed, and they had cut windows in it, probably just using a saw. Somehow the little girl got twisted, and it just sort of cut off her nose. The case came to trial several years later, and my recollection is

that she was about thirteen by that time. They had to do a lot of work, and it was kind of interesting. I guess the skin in the neck is the skin that's closest to facial color. Because of the disfigurement, they didn't want to do that, so they cut two slits in each arm.

DL: Yes.

VSS: And then they rolled the slits into a tube and sewed them. When the blood started through there, they cut one and took that end and gave her nostrils.

DL: Wow.

VSS: Of course they took bone from her hip bone, but they couldn't complete the job because they had to wait until she was --

DL: Fully grown?

VS: By thirteen when we saw her, her nose was like a pig. It was like a snout. It was just heartbreaking, and I have never quite forgiven the doctor, who was not a certified plastic surgeon, but happened to be on call. He did not lack in self-confidence, and he sat up there and told the jury that by the time he was done with her, she would look like new. Well, I'll bet that never happened.

Anyway, the jury came back with a verdict. It was so small because the psychological damage to

this girl was just --

DL: Enormous.

VSS: Yes. She was thirteen and getting ready to go through so much. There was all kinds of testimony to that. There was also testimony about what a close, warm family it was, and how her family was financially poor, but they would go out every Saturday and make sure they did something as a family. They would go eat at McDonald's, and they made sure she always went. They made it look like a dream family in a way. I do not remember what the verdict was, but it certainly was nothing like it should have been.

After it was over I went back to the jury and just asked what they thought and so forth. They said that they didn't want to give her too much money because they thought it would ruin the rest of the family as a unit, and the siblings would be jealous. The picture backfired.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I learned something later on because my youngest sister was still married to her first husband, who was a minister at a church in that area. This family went to that church, and the husband was having an affair. I've often wondered what happened

to that family.

DL: And that girl.

VSS: And that girl particularly.

DL: Wow.

VSS: That's one of the two cases where I was really extraordinarily distressed with the verdict. Then we had a real interesting criminal case. There were three young juveniles, young black men. It was really sad. They had to be over sixteen because they were waived in criminal court. Cade, Banks and Adams.

DL: Yes.

VSS: And they were somewhere on the near north side of Indianapolis one evening and went in to commit a burglary. Unfortunately they had a gun, and the elderly couple who lived there came home and surprised them. They shot the man and killed the wife. The husband survived. They were in their 70s or 80s, and one of their children was a mayor of a substantial town out in California. Because of that it received a lot of publicity.

I tried two of them, Banks and Cade, and the trial went on for five or six weeks. During the trial we had a humongous snow storm and ended up having to bring the jurors in by helicopter. We

couldn't just let the trial wait. I think the state police provided helicopters and went out to the rural areas and brought the jurors in.

The jury was out 24 hours before they reached a verdict, but they convicted both of the men. If I recall it was life because they didn't have the death penalty then. Several years later I was serving on the Indiana Lawyers Commission, and I was looking at correctional institutions in the state. I was up at the state prison in Michigan City, and I saw Cade, who I believe was the taller of the two. He was playing basketball out there. I recognized him. I don't think he recognized me.

DL: Wow.

VSS: I don't know if he's still there or not. It certainly was a life wasted on both sides. Oh, we had a lot of interesting cases over the time. I was there in '65 until July 1 of 1978. In 1969 my first son was born, Greg, and then in '71 my second son was born, Bradley. By '77 they were beginning to become active in school and things. Being a trial court judge, I didn't have a lot of control over my life. Plus I'm ambitious. No question about that.

An opportunity came up to apply for the Indiana Supreme Court. One of the justices resigned, so I

applied. That would be 1977, and this was the first time that a vacancy would have been filed by the tradition of commission from merit selection (inaudible) Constitutional Amendment. I was interviewed, and there were two of us selected out of the three names that went to the Governor.

DL The following is a continuation of the interview by Doria Lynch with Judge V. Sue Shields on July 18, 2006. If you wouldn't mind, let's go back to when you were a kid. Do you have any recollections of World War II?

VSS: The only thing I remember about World War II is as I said, Dad coming home on leave and hanging out the towel. That was the personal aspect of it. I don't remember whether it was the end of the war in Europe or Japan, but we were down at Wilmore at my grandmothers, and a bunch of kids were out in the street hitting (inaudible) dish pans.

DL: Right.

VSS: Parading up and down. That's all I remember.

DL: Okay.

VSS: See, it was over, and I was six at the time.

DL: So you were still pretty small?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I remember rationing.

DL: That was going to be my next question.

VSS: Yes, I do remember that.

DL: What did you make of that when you were small?

VSS: Well, we were fortunate because as a minister Dad had unlimited -- I can't remember if it was an E or an A or something, but it was gasoline.

DL: Uh-huh.

VSS: And because of that, up until he went to service, it didn't mean much to us. Plus we were living in basically small Indiana towns until we moved to California.

DL: Right.

VSS: And it just didn't use gasoline much. You know, I told you I loved movies and I watched all those news reels with the RKO.

DL: Uh-huh. Between the shows?

VSS: The news of the world. I know it was very dramatic, and the logo would go around. Anyway, I remember the movie news. I don't remember much as far as on radio, listening to it or anything. I suspect in many ways, the war wasn't really real to me. Now, I do remember when we were living out in California, being afraid, and I don't know really why. Surely it was after the war, but I do remember being afraid

of being bombed.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I don't remember. Maybe it was watching the news or whatever, but I was uneasy about going to sleep.

DL: Okay.

VSS: We must have had a blackout because --

DL: Right. Yes.

VSS: Yes.

DL: It probably was the coming of the Cold War as well.

VSS: Yes. Oh, yes.

DL: And being on the Pacific side of things.

VSS: I still remember coming back from Germany in 1954 and seeing my first TV.

DL: Really? Oh, wow.

VSS: It was a little thing like this, and had a little brown picture. It was weird. But I don't have a whole lot of childhood memories. It's kind of interesting that I don't. I've thought about that a time or two.

DL: Uh-huh.

VSS: But I don't have a lot of childhood memories. I've always thought that maybe part of it was the fact that I've always lived in today and tomorrow rather than yesterday because of moving so much.

DL: Right.

VSS: You didn't ever become attached to anything.

DL: Right. To any one place or --

VSS: Or any one thing or --

DL: Or any one person. Right. Okay.

VSS: So you just emphasize the day.

DL: Right, and who you're with each day.

VSS: Yes.

DL: Okay. While we're talking this history stuff, what about Korea and the Cold War? You would have grown up in the heart of the coming of the Cold War and the heightening of the Cold War. Do you have any impressions?

VSS: Well, remember I was in Germany right after the lift.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I remember that and living that close to occupied Germany if you will.

DL: Right.

VSS: That was always on your mind. When did the wall go up?

DL: 1961/1962.

VSS: Yes. Somewhere. I was back when that happened. It's just the air lift we were there.

DL: Right.

VSS: That was in the late 40s, early 50s.

DL: Around then, yes.

VSS: I never got to visit Berlin because it was off limits to dependants because of having to go through the Russian zone to get into Berlin.

DL: Yes.

VSS: So we never got there. We never got to visit France because in the early 50s, French communism was very active.

DL: Right.

VSS: With the communist party. Of course we were driving military cars and so forth and had military ID.

DL: Right.

VSS: So we were discouraged from going there. But as far as Korea is concerned, I was aware and so forth, but I don't have any particular recollection other than seeing the ungodly sights that I saw on television.

DL: Yes.

VSS: Of the snow, the soldiers, the infantry marching.

DL: Right.

VSS: Of course without any basis for it, I was a pretty big MacArthur fan. Why, I don't know. Of course, I wasn't privy to all of the ramifications, but I was very upset about Korea in the sense that I felt that if you're going to enter into an agreement, then you live by the agreement, and then you fight to win.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I thought that was the first war we never fought to win. I felt very badly for the soldiers, but I still can't talk about Vietnam and the way we treated our solders there.

DL: Even though you moved around so much growing up, did you have any first jobs, summer jobs, that sort of thing?

VSS: I think the first job I ever had was as a camp counselor in Germany at a military young people's camp. That's all I remember. I don't know where it was, and I don't know anything about it. Probably my first real job was at a truck stop on 40. We were living in Philadelphia. I think it was after my senior year of high school. I worked briefly as a short-order cook at a truck stop on the nightshift. You should laugh because I had never cooked a thing in my life. I wasn't cooking much, thank God, but I made great milk shakes because I used lots of ice cream. I didn't work there long, and then I got the opportunity through a friend to work as a waitress at the Teepee at the fairgrounds.

DL: Right.

VSS: I believe my next job was at the old (inaudible) it was a savings and loan, but they also had a Morris

Plan charge card.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I worked on a proof machine. A merchant would send in the day's receipts. He would have the total, and then he would have the individual charges. I would put the total in the proof machine, and then take the individual charges and use them as a credit against that total. As I did it, I would file them in alphabetical order.

DL: Right.

VSS: And that's how you would check it out. After that I think most of my jobs were then with the (inaudible) I worked for (inaudible) a (inaudible) over there.

DL: Okay.

VSS: That kind of work.

DL: When all was said and done, you had gone to fourteen different schools in about ten years?

VSS: Yes.

DL: And skipped two grades?

VSS: Yes.

DL: What was it like moving around so often, and I imagine you were mighty young for your classes?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Being the new kid constantly and a lot younger than the other kids in your classes, how did you deal

with that?

VSS: You know, I think that's one of the memories I don't have. Or at least I don't have any recollection of it being bad.

DL: Right.

VSS: I only have a recollection of anticipation of moving and what was ahead. I was always fortunate because in the high school years, I was in the military school, and everybody was in the same base. Then I lived in a dorm, so that gave me some support. When I came back here again, both schools I went to were very, very small.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I have a lot of very good memories about my senior year at New Palestine because as I said, there were 24 in that class. I came in and nobody knew me from a hole in the wall, and they really accepted me. I turned out to be valedictorian of the class, so they had every reason to hate me.

In fact I was talking about this to the gal who was the salutatorian at our high school reunion. She said, "But for you..." She had been the leader all the way basically since first grade. I think because I was in small schools, it was a lot more intimate.

DL: Right.

VSS: People kind of took you for what you were.

DL: It can make it a little easier.

VSS: I have no bad recollections. The only thing it left me with is an absolute love of traveling.

DL: When you were in Germany you were going to American high schools and you lived within the army community?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Did you have a lot of exposure to the German language?

VSS: No. In fact I'll never forgive myself. I had no reason. I transferred to Germany at the end of six weeks of ninth grade.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I was going to Mirror Lake Junior High School in St. Petersburg, and they had an introduction to foreign language. It was going to be French, Spanish, and Latin, and I had gotten through six weeks of French. When I went to Germany they taught French and German. Well, for some reason I selected French. Why, I have no idea because I never did learn it well, and here I was with the opportunity.

We lived in a home that was in a German neighborhood, and my younger sister, who wasn't even

in school yet, spoke German as well as she did English because of her playmates.

DL: Right.

VSS: I was so isolated going to the American school that I never did learn. I could probably buy something or order off a menu, but I was never fluent.

DL: You mentioned moving around when you were young has really instilled in you a love to travel.

VSS: Yes.

DL: Do you still do a lot of traveling today?

VSS: Not nearly as much as I would like. I didn't travel at all for years after we were first married. We were always tied down.

DL: Right.

VSS: Not tied down, but busy with work and so forth. We didn't have the money to do much of anything. It probably came up more recently, actually, when I came over here. I had the opportunity through a good friend of mine, Betty Barteau. She and I had been on the Court of Appeals together, and then she resigned to become Chief of Party of the Russian American Judicial Partnership based in Moscow. Her charge, among others, was to talk about the rule of law and establish judicial education in Russia.

Just before she took that position she and I

traveled together to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to be part of a group that was going to present seminars to Kazakh and Kyrgy judges. I was at the height of my euphoria traveling over. We traveled separately. I went early and flew into Athens and backpacked. I went to (inaudible) and some of the islands.

DL: Oh, wow.

VSS: I just had a ball by myself. I didn't mind because I always wanted to go to Greece. Then I went to Istanbul and met up with her, and then she and I flew together into Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. That wetted my appetite, and when she became Chief of Party she had me over to different areas of the old Soviet Union five or six times. I had the chance to go to Moscow several times and sit in on a Bolshoi ballet, which was just one of the most fabulous experiences I've ever had.

DL: I can imagine.

VSS: And about in Red Square. I think of the years and years and years that I never dreamed that I would ever be standing in Red Square and touring the Kremlin, if you will. I got there several times. St. Petersburg (inaudible) the Far East, a couple places in Siberia. That's what I consider traveling.

DL: Oh, yes.

VSS: In the years earlier, we went of Cozumel, Italy, and places like that to take a week's vacation or whatever, but not really the real travel.

DL: What years did you go to Kyrgyzstan?

VSS: Probably in the mid '90s. I've got that some place.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I've got the dates because I had to report it, but I don't know that I can find that now. It was basically between 1996 and 2003 or 2004 that I made most of those trips.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Then she retired. I really was very upset with her. I don't know if I'll have a chance to do anything like that, but I would really like to.

DL: When you were growing up and going through school, you mentioned before that you had an African American woman who traveled with you down to Florida?

VSS: Yes, Carrie.

DL: Carrie. Right. Did you have any impressions about the desegregation movement and civil rights movement when you were growing up?

VSS: I also, by the way, had an African American roommate in Germany.

DL: Okay.

VSS: In the dorm. Her father was stationed in Germany, too. Did I have any impressions? Probably just following it in the news. I remember vividly when the three young men disappeared in Mississippi. I can remember the oratory of people like (inaudible), and I remember seeing on TV the National Guard and the young black woman who was taken to the University of Mississippi.

DL: Yes.

VSS: It's just recollections like that because it wasn't as apparent to me in the military. I think I had my eyes shut because there was segregation in the military, too, but it was not apparent to me. You've got to realize that most of my contact with the service would be the PX, the movie theaters, or the chapel, and there was no segregation there that I ever saw or was aware of.

I don't think I told you, I also spent some time with Dad in Japan.

DL: Oh, really?

VSS: But I was already in college then.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I just went over for the summer. He was stationed at Yokohama at an army base, which allowed me to see

a little bit of Orient. We were going to take a trip over to Hong Kong, but never got that. Not too long after I got there, Dad's chapel was burnt by arson. They had investigations, and Dad really couldn't get away very much, so we just took short trips. We could have gone to Hong Kong or we could have gone to the Philippines on kind of an R & R type thing, but we never got that done.

DL: Did they ever get to the bottom of the investigation?

VSS: Not that I know of. I went back to college, and Dad never talked about it, so I don't know.

DL: Okay. You went to Ball State?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Why did you choose Ball State?

VSS: I went to Ball State because I originally went on a nursing program.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I originally thought about going to Memphis because they had an RN degree. But you had to be twenty-one for the nursing exam, and in three years I would have only been nineteen.

DL: Right.

VSS: I decided to go to Ball State just because it was four years, not realizing the significance of the BS

in nursing as opposed to the RN.

DL: Right.

VSS: That would have made me closer to the age to sit for the nursing exam.

DL: Okay.

VSS: So that was why, plus I got a scholarship there. I don't know that I ever considered anywhere else.

DL: Okay.

VSS: It seemed to be the place to be and the right spot.

DL: So you pushed from nursing to government and history?

VSS: Yes, with the idea of getting a teaching degree.

DL: Yes.

VSS: It was Ball State Teaching College at that time.

DL: Yes.

VSS: The progression to get the teaching license is participation, something else, and then student teaching. I just went to the participation, which basically means I went over to the high school a couple days a week to observe and work in the class a couple hours a day. It wasn't much, but it was just enough to convince me that's probably not what I wanted to do. I dropped that and graduated with a straight degree.

DL: What kind of degree?

VSS: A BA degree, I think it was.

DL: Okay. And then on to law school. You said you had come across the recruiters?

VSS: Yes.

DL: And also scholarship money, so you really couldn't argue with that. When did you know that you had made the right choice?

VSS: I don't think I ever had any doubts. Once I got there and got to the classes, I just really liked it. I really liked it. I didn't know that I was going to practice law necessarily, but I liked law school.

DL: Right. Okay.

VSS: I don't think I really knew what the practice of law was, to tell you the truth. Really I didn't. I had never met a lawyer.

DL: Wow.

VSS: I didn't know until I started working for Tom Holley as his secretary, and he was primarily a Prosecutor.

DL: Okay. You were the only woman in your class?

VSS: There was a Chinese girl that started that semester.

DL: Really?

VSS: But she quit right away.

DL: Okay. You did your next three years the lone female?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Did that ever cause any problems for you?

VSS: No, absolutely not.

DL: You were just doing what you do?

VSS: I had my study groups, and I had some good friends down at the law school. We got along just fine. I was probably lonely because a lot of the people who were my friends were returning Korean veterans, and they were older.

DL: Wow.

VSS: They were married, and they had families. As far as any social life with them, I did not have any.

DL: Right.

VSS: As far as being part of the study groups, things in that order, and friends, I certainly felt included. I felt excluded not because of my gender, but an age differential. When I went down there I wasn't old enough to drink. I was nineteen or twenty when I started.

DL: Right.

VSS: That was the difference as much as anything else.

DL: You met your husband, Bill, while you were in your last year of law school?

VSS: Right.

DL: It was his first year?

VSS: Correct.

DL: How did you meet? Did you have classes together?

VSS: No. He lived at an apartment complex a couple blocks from the law school called (inaudible) Farms. He roomed with a fellow he knew from undergrad school, and through that friend they met another law student there by the name of Roger (inaudible). There was a girl living in that building by the name of Peg Stahl, and she was in Bill's class, also. Well, the women all kind of knew each other.

DL: Right.

VSS: Peg and I would pal around. Roger started dating Peg, and they were eventually married. They are now divorced, but were married for years. Through that friendship and Roger's friendship with Bill, we would all hang around together.

As I said, I think I officially met him when I went with Roger, Peg, Bill, and somebody else to watch the criminal trial.

DL: Right.

VSS: I met him like that, plus the law school was fairly small.

DL: Okay.

VSS: So you pretty well knew everybody.

DL: And you have two sons?

VSS: Yes.

DL: And they're both married?

VSS: Yes.

DL: And how many grandkids do you have?

VSS: I have four. My oldest son has a set of twins that were just four on June 14, and then they have a daughter who is two going on twenty-one June 17. My youngest son was married a couple of years ago to a lady who had a child from a previous marriage.

DL: Okay.

VSS: And (inaudible) is nine.

DL: Okay.

VSS: They're all in Texas.

DL: Oh, wow. Do you get down there often?

VSS: I don't get down to see Brad as much as I do Greg because Greg and Tiffany, his wife, are more needy. She's also a lawyer.

DL: Okay.

VSS: She chose to stay at home after the children were born and has been trying to ease back into her real love in life besides her children and Greg. She's a lawyer that dealt with family issues of abuse and children in need of services. It was a big change in life to go from working with all that responsibility to one day having two infants that

never slept. It was a hard life change. The kids were very demanding, and then along came Isabel. I doubt if they've had a night's sleep more than six hours since those kids were born.

DL: Oh, wow.

VSS: Just remember that.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I go out there more often to try to stay with the kids a little bit and give them an opportunity to go sleep in a motel. Last week it was her 40th birthday so Greg and some of their friends all went out to Vegas, and I went out and stayed out with the kids for a few days. The week after next Tiffany and Bill, my husband, will take the kids over to the beach. We try to go out there more often because they don't think they need the help, but I think they need the help. Brad is pretty self-sufficient, at least now, so Greg gets a good portion of our attention.

DL: Are both of your sons lawyers?

VSS: Yes.

DL: What sort of law do they practice?

VSS: Greg is with the firm Andrews & Kurth. It's a Houston-based firm, and he's in the Austin office doing public finance work.

Brad is with a firm in McAllen. I think they are more general practitioners. They seem to represent a lot of schools and municipalities, as well as private clients. I'd say he's more a general practitioner.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Greg is very specialized.

DL: Right. We talked briefly before about your work with the IRS.

VSS: Yes.

DL: But that didn't last very long?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Next you were with the Attorney General?

VSS: Yes.

DL: In that role what sort of cases were you trying?

VSS: Only one type. Well, the only law I was involved in was condemnation or inverse condemnation. Either I was representing the state when it was acquiring, by court action, grounds for highways or I was defending the state when someone that owned property claimed that in effect their property had been taken because of a highway improvement that had perhaps flooded their ground or done something in that order. I would do that trial work, and I worked with appeals. It all had to do with condemnation or

what was then called inverse condemnation.

DL: And how did you find that work? Did you enjoy it?

VSS: Yes. As I said, it gave me the chance to get into a courtroom, and it gave me a chance to travel throughout the state. I liked that. I met lawyers from all over the state since they would be opposing me. There was not always local counsel in whatever court I was in.

I met tremendous judges, many of whom I owe a great debt of gratitude as far as being able to call upon them for help down the road. I met a lot of interesting appraisers because we basically talked about values. I met a lot of real-estate people, professional appraisers, and people that I really enjoyed meeting.

Yes, I enjoyed it a lot. It was a good time, and they were really good teachers. Dick George, Phil (inaudible), Ann Miller, that's a great group of people.

DL: Can you recall any of the names of the judges that you met in that role?

VSS: Oh, yes.

DL: That influenced you and helped you?

VSS: Jim Richards from the Lake Superior Court and Lester Baker from the Dearborn Circuit Court down in

Lawrenceburg. There was Carl Smith and the Schrenker brothers.

The people that were very helpful to me particularly were Jim Richards, Cordell Pinkerton in the Lake Circuit Court, and Lester Baker. There were a lot of memorable ones like Carl Smith in Madison Circuit Court. The Schrenker brothers were two brothers who both, at different times, were judges. There was a judge over in Boone County whose name slips my mind right now. There was a judge down in Clark County. I'll bet he's in his 80s. He still wrote with a quill pen.

DL: Oh.

VSS: When I was first elected and before I was sworn in, I was invited to the Indiana Judges Association meeting held on the top floor of the Columbia Club. I remember getting off that elevator wondering what in the world I was going to find.

Jim Richards, who remembered me, and Lester Baker became presidents of the judges social, and they were influential in the organization. Both of those gentlemen came up, took me under their wings, introduced me around, and made me feel like part of the organization. I think because of their endorsement, a lot of the other guys accepted me.

I remember Frank Fisher from Vermillion County was extraordinarily helpful. Judge Dowell and Judge Niblack were very kind. This was way before the days of bench books, but they had their own little crib sheets, and they gave those to me to help when I needed jury instructions and so forth.

I can't overlook Harold Bitzegaio, the Superior Court Judge in Vigo County. He was a good friend of Jim Richards, and he was also a president of the organization. He appointed me to several committees that helped me along.

DL: What was his last name again?

VSS: Bitzegaio. He just recently died. In fact that's where I first met Neal, the bankruptcy clerk. He was Bizegaio's court administrator.

DL: Okay.

VSS: In Terre Haute years ago.

DL: We were starting to talk about your election to the Hamilton County Superior Court and the cases that you tried there. Do you have any favorite or memorable moments from your time as a trial judge?

VSS: Not that I can think of.

DL: Can you think of any intriguing cases?

VSS: I told you about the girl that lost her nose, the Dailey case, and the criminal cases. I'd say that

what I had was all good.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I'm not an up-and-down person.

DL: Even-keeled?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Then of course you moved up to the Court of Appeals?

VSS: Yes.

DL: In 1978; is that correct?

VSS: Yes.

DL: What influenced your decision to move up to the Court of Appeals?

VSS: Two things. One, I was disappointed I didn't get the Supreme Court, and I felt like I had to try again. That wasn't nearly as important as the fact that the kids were getting older and getting in more actives, and I wanted to be able to control my schedule.

DL: Right.

VSS: And being on the Court of Appeals you could. In theory, if they had computers like they do now, I probably never would have had to go into the office, because what you do is, you read and you write.

DL: Yes.

VSS: That was an important time for me to be able to be in control. I went that route partly because I am

an ambitious person and that was a step up, and probably because I wanted to control my life. Although I think I knew in my heart of hearts that I probably had been a better trial judge than I ever would be a Court of Appeals judge.

DL: Okay.

VSS: It just takes different skills. I always thought that my strength was a good gut reaction as to how things should come out, and I could make them come out that way, but I'm not sure that I was always convincing. As a trial judge you never had to say why they came out that way. As a Court of Appeals judge you had to analyze it and write it and so forth, and I don't know that I am particularly a scholar. I don't think that's my strength.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I did good work. I did not do great work, and I think I knew it. I probably did better in building coalitions than in my writing.

DL: Right.

VSS: And I helped keep everything on an even keel. I had some very good friends there, and still have them. I enjoyed it very, very much. As I said, I tried a couple of times to go up to the Supreme Court, not because I had this burning in my gut about me, but I

had a burning in my gut that a Court of Appeals judge should be elevated to the Supreme Court. I thought that the Court of Appeals was perceived as a dead-end.

In other words, if you could never move up, that would decrease the stature of the court and cause people perhaps not to consider that court, which really at that time was doing by far the majority of civil work because the Supreme Court almost did solely criminal work and very little civil. Really for civil cases, we were the court of last resort. I felt that they ought to have the best, and I didn't think they would get the best if there wasn't the opportunity to move up.

DL: Right.

VSS: So I think that's part of the reason I applied. I was unsuccessful. Several Court of Appeals judges applied, and none of us were elevated. In fact fairly recently, the first one to go up was Justice Rucker, who was the first African American male and also the first from the Court of Appeals.

DL: Why do you think so few from the Court of Appeals ever were elevated?

VSS: I would like to know the answer to that. I really would. I think I know part of it. Governor Orr

appointed Chef Justice Shepard. Of course they had been friends from Evansville, but it was a wonderful appointment. I think Shepard has really been a very good representative and spokesperson. He's done a lot of good, and I respect him very highly. I guess I don't know the answer. I really do not know the answer to that question.

DL: I don't know myself.

VSS: When my friend Evan Bayh became governor, his first appointment was Sullivan, and I don't know how many Democrats were on the Court of Appeals. Now, when I went on the Court of Appeals, there were nine judges. Seven were Republicans, two were Democrats, and that was July 1. Then on August 1, the First District came in, and it became twelve with ten Republicans and two Democrats. Now it's just the reverse, and there's only one Republican.

DL: Really?

VSS: Yes. I've never sat down to chart it out and figure all of that.

DL: Once you moved up to the Court of Appeals, did you miss being a trial judge?

VSS: Oh, yes, I missed being in on what was going on and knowing what was going on in a particular area. I missed the contact with the attorneys. I did miss

it. I enjoyed the new, and I worked for people like Pat Sullivan, who I had known before. I considered Pat one of my best friends, and in my opinion he's probably one of the best judges that they've had over there. I remember he was on a panel and he voted with me.

I knew when it was right because I could depend on him for reading my opinion, reading the cases I cited, and reading the briefs. He was a scholar/thinker. He cared very much. He was always accused of being too thorough. Now, I think that's a very weird thing to be accused of.

DL: Especially a judge.

VSS: Yes. There was a lot of pressure from volume, and that tension was always there with thoroughness versus volume.

George Hoffman I dearly loved. He's still over there as a Senior Judge. Wes Ratliff I had known as a trial court judge out in Henry county. In fact I had gone out there and tried some cases. Bill Garrard and just the whole group. I don't mean to be exclusionary. Sharpnack, who was the chief when I left, was one of the kindest gentlemen it's been my privilege to know. There was a very good group of people there, and that opened up new doors, and I

enjoyed that.

DL: Do you have any --

VSS: I didn't have any regrets when I left though.

DL: Okay. Interesting. We'll get to that in a second. Do you have any memorable cases from the Court of Appeals that stand out in your mind?

VSS: I had one criminal case that I considered extraordinarily interesting, and as I recall the conviction was child abandonment. Because it was a newborn baby, no one knew the term of the maternity, so it was a case involving statistics in a way. It was a small town, and they tried to find out things about women that had looked pregnant and now didn't.

DL: To put two and two together?

VSS: Yes, and assumed that was the mother and then questioned who was the father. Anyway, it was a very long convoluted case that was very difficult, but it was kind of a first case of it's kind using the opportunities for a certain person to have been the father when you didn't know the mother. It was very, very strange. That was an interesting case to me, but one that was notorious: I wrote the opinion in the Michael Tyson case.

If I would sit back, there were a lot of really interesting cases, but nothing comes to mind other

than that one. I struggled with that one because I was trying to understand it.

DL: Do you recall what case that was?

VSS: I do not recall the name. I could find it. I'll look it up.

DL: That's great. So you were nominated for the Supreme Court or applied for the Supreme Court?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Didn't pan out?

VSS: I applied twice.

DL: Twice?

VSS: Remember.

DL: When you were still in Hamilton County and then being on the Court of Appeals?

VSS: I believe I applied when Shepard was appointed. I do not believe that I applied when Dickson from Lafayette was appointed.

DL: What was that like when --

VSS: Well, another thing you should know about is Judge Barker's position. This was during the Reagan presidency. Whether it was accurate or not, Reagan was perceived to be particularly aggressive in his female appointments. When that position opened I was solicited to make an application for the position. The solicitation was fairly clear that I

would not get it. The party had done a lot for me, and I was doing what I could. It was thought that the fact that I applied would be more impetuous to women seeking appointment, so I applied with every expectation that Judge Barker would get it.

DL: Okay.

VSS: But that was fine.

DL: Okay.

VSS: And so I did do that.

DL: That's interesting. That's an interesting story because it portrays the politics of a federal appointment and things like that. When you decided to leave the Court of Appeals, what were your driving factors in terms of it was time to go?

VSS: There were several. One was the fact that the court had changed a lot in the years that I had been there. When I came on I was a young whippersnapper, and there were the old fogies.

DL: Right.

VSS: And I realized that now I was one of the old fogies, and the young whippersnappers were there. There was just a difference in attitude about a lot of things, and I felt it was time I move on. That was part of it.

Another part of it was quite frankly frustration

with the fact that I knew I would never go anyplace else there, and I wasn't sure I wanted to do that for the rest of my life. Third, it was financial. At that time I was making somewhere around 80, and this job was paying over 100, and my pensions were invested. I couldn't help myself anymore.

And so I thought about what I wanted to do for the rest of my years, and I didn't really know what this job would be for me. I really didn't, but I had a great deal of faith. I had known Judge McKinney forever, and I had known Judge Barker.

I did not know Judge Tinder well, but he was one of the first people to call me when it was apparent that I was going to get the appointment. He invited me over to his chambers and showed me the computer system and so forth to make me feel comfortable. I also did not know Judge Brooks or Judge Dillin, but I respected them.

Quite candidly, I did a lot of soul searching because as a trial court judge and as a Court of Appeals judge, although you work on a panel, you're not responsible to anyone. You're the king of the mountain, so to speak, and here I would be responsible. I'm a judge, but they are the judge. I wasn't sure how my ego would handle that, but once

I decided that it wasn't going to be a problem for me, I made the decision and came over here.

I realized that what I really liked to do I could fashion, and I could do it in this position, which is basically working with people and lawyers. That's what I like to do, and rather than do it in an adversarial form like I had been, I could do it in kind of an affiliation form. And so I found I had a niche. I found a niche. I had a talent.

DL: Tell me about the Magistrate Judge position here in the Southern District of Indiana.

VSS: Magistrate judges throughout the United States are used so differently. There are some districts where I think a magistrate judge would be absolutely the worst job a human being could have. They're not respected, and it would be a horrible life. There are others where they are used. Well, really we're side by side as far as trying cases, much more so than down here with the district court judges and they're on the draw if you will. Now, attorneys have to eventually agree to that, but they're initially given to the magistrate judges, as though they were an Article III judge.

That's wonderful if you want to be that kind of a judge and if you want to be a trial judge. But

I've been there, done that. I don't care about that, so it was a fortunate mix that put me here. It was a fortunate set of circumstances in the fact that Judge Godich before me had done it. That's how they used magistrate judges, more or less as case managers, and part of case management was trying to get the case settled. Again, it was fate that put me with this group, if you will.

DL: When you came over from the Court of Appeals, I know there was some talk in the legal community that you were maybe taking a step down.

VSS: No question about it.

DL: Can you talk about that for a little bit?

VSS: I'm sure that was out there, but I paid it no mind. Once I decided it wasn't a problem for me, then I really didn't care what they thought. All I had to say was I got a $40,000 raise or whatever it was.

DL: Right.

VSS: No one said anything to my face, but I know it was said.

DL: Right.

VSS: But I didn't care.

DL: Okay. You remind me a bit of myself on things like that.

VSS: Yes.

DL: You make up your mind about something and --

VSS: Yes, I try. You have to look at --

DL: The rest of it won't matter.

VSS: You can't worry about that.

DL: In this position are there any interesting or difficult cases?

VSS: Oh, yes, I could go on.

DL: If you could, just give me some case names of things that have challenged you personally or professionally.

VSS: Right there in that picture on the right.

DL: Okay.

VSS: That is a bank in Finland, the Merita Bank, and they got involved in a big long lawsuit involving financing of the Seville development down in the Clarksville/Jeffersonville area. These people from Finland had been sent over to put this thing together, and it was a complicated financial thing that went south.

Anyway, Judge Barker's courtroom deputy was visiting Finland and saw this picture, and so she took pictures of the bank. It was long, and I worked on that case probably for a year or so.

DL: Really?

VSS: Some great, outstanding lawyers. I met people from

Finland, New York, locally, and so forth.

Of course Ford/Firestone was one of the most challenging and interesting. It had been five or six years of my life, and it was terribly interesting. I got to meet people in the client world that I would never otherwise have the opportunity to meet, whether it's the CEO of the company, the developer of a patent, or people in the normal course of being a judge you don't meet.

Even a trial court judge never gets that opportunity. The case goes to trial and they see them on the witness stand, but never have the opportunity to have the interaction that I do, because I'm one-on-one with them. Of course in the Ford/Firestone case, there were absolutely outstanding lawyers on both the plaintiff side and the defendant side. A case gets better with better lawyers, so it was a real pleasure to work with those people. I also saw some of the worst lawyers I would ever hope to see in my life, but that was a very positive experience, and it gave me exposure.

Patent cases are fascinating, but they're fascinating more because of the subject matter. I am constantly amazed about patents, and there are some great lawyers. Of course Ford/Firestone is

still ongoing a little bit, and I don't want to talk about that. I would say generally there's a lot of great cases.

Employment cases are at the other end of the spectrum. I'm struck time and time again how much litigation comes about because people don't sit down and really talk. You know, if employers could just talk better to employees.

I've met a lot of nice people, and I've been able to do some good for them. At the moment I feel like I've done well for them, and they're very appreciative, much more so than you would normally expect. I feel good about it, and I think they appreciate what we're trying to do.

DL: In this position what is your favorite role? Is it acting as kind of a mediator?

VSS: Yes, no question. Right there. That's it.

DL: Right. Is that because you get to meet the people and you get to have your hands really --

VSS: I get to give them the opportunity to sit and become vested in their own problems and work things out themselves. I have the impression that as a rule if people work things out themselves, they are better satisfied than if someone crams something down their throat.

Secondly, sometimes we're able to work out things in ways that, even if they are successful, they get more out of this. Maybe it's something simple like getting a resignation and getting a termination removed, so that in the long run that will mean more to them than a few bucks.

In a mediation scenario sometimes I have the opportunity to let people know about the advantages of structures, particularly when there's reason to think that maybe their money accounting skills aren't so good.

DL: Right.

VSS: So there's even protection, and more than anything else you have to serve people. Going to trial is a crapshoot.

DL: Right.

VSS: I like that aspect of it very much.

DL: Can you speak about your career goals over the years, and what you've achieved, what you didn't get a chance to do, and how they may have evolved as you were progressing through your career?

VSS: Have I thought about that? No. I think the only thing I have thought about is never regret anything that hasn't happened, and I've been fairly successful at that. I'm probably just like anybody

else and there are a lot of things I wish I had done differently, only in the sense I wish I had done them better. There's not a career choice that I have made that I wouldn't make again, but there's always lots of things I could do differently.

DL: What about personal goals over the years and the way you've seen your life unfold in terms of reaching goals?

VSS: I never had goals. I never had goals like that. I think that's one area though where I wish that I had done things differently, and that is I have never been as vocal as I probably should have been in women's issues. I think I took a copout, and when I would think about it, I would say that I can do more by example and by not being seen or perceived as being a carpy or whatever. I thought I could do more good the other way. I think that was a copout, and I think that's the one area where I wish I would have had the goal of being more protective of women and a better mentor.

Otherwise I think my only goal really was to make sure I didn't screw up. Professionally I don't think I really have anything.

DL: It's interesting that you say you feel like you were doing a lot by example instead of in words.

VSS: Yes, I think that's too easy to say that. I was getting along.

DL: Right.

VSS: I was one of the boys.

DL: Right.

VSS: And by not being so outspoken I was accepted.

DL: Right.

VSS: Whereas I was afraid that if I had been, I would have been (inaudible).

DL: Okay. I've gotten some very interesting insights on you, having done some research and spoken to some other people. They name you off so rapidly as the first woman on a trial court and the first woman on the Court of Appeals and first Magistrate Judge in our district. What do you feel about being the first woman in so many of these positions? Do you think that's enough?

VSS: No.

DL: Or is it just circumstances because you are who you are, and you do what you do?

VSS: Yes. I think the only thing that really means is that I had an opportunity, I seized it, and I didn't screw up, basically. There's just been so many other women who were really the first. Virginia McCarty in the '50s and others were the real women

who blazed the trial as far as I'm concerned. I have so much admiration for them. Virginia not only did it, but she lived it and she spoke it.

DL: Of course you've received lots of awards and been on the receiving end of achievements and things like that. What do those mean to you, and are there any in particular that you take special pride in?

VSS: I appreciate the recognition and opportunity. Sometimes I think they are awards of opportunity, and I guess I'm not a person that gets really excited about awards.

DL: Okay. That's fine.

VSS: They made me uncomfortable.

DL: Some of your colleagues that I have spoken with have mentioned that your management and organizational skills are just second to none.

VSS: Well, then they don't know the real me.

DL: What's the real you?

VSS: I'm smart enough to have good help.

DL: Okay. In terms of cases, I think what they're implying is your people skills.

VSS: Yes.

DL: Your ability to mediate these cases.

VSS: I think that's right.

DL: Your ability to get them settled.

VSS: That, and I'm stubborn. I'm very stubborn. I just hate to give up because I have a lot of pride when I do. I want to be successful, so I'll just keep hounding them.

DL: Right.

VSS: The greatest thing is the fact that I have an hour's drive to work and home each day, which gives me an hour to talk on the cell phone and leave messages for lawyers to let them know that I'm thinking about them. It's not as good as it used to be, but I would see a lawyer on the street, I would remember his case, and go up and ask him about things. I am tenacious, and I really do believe in what I'm doing, therefore I keep trying.

DL: Where do you think you got your people skills? From your parents? From your upbringing?

VSS: Well, I think probably a lot of it is environment. Going back to my youth, there was never time to cultivate a friendship. You didn't have the luxury at that time, so you became immediate friends, and you didn't go through the dance. You took people on face value, and you became adaptable. I think I'm not quite as adaptable now that I'm aging as I used to be. At least my staff tells me I'm not.

I think that had a very positive influence in my

appreciation for people. My mother was a teacher, and she obviously had some social skills. My dad was a minister. I am what I am.

DL: Right. What sort of changes do you see in the legal profession and judicial roles as you have progressed through?

VSS: Well, I recently was asked that, and I made a statement that probably wasn't totally accurate. You've got to remember that in the early years, I was in a small county where there were maybe twenty-five lawyers. Everybody new everybody. No one could afford to really be anything other than considerate of one another, because in that small situation what goes around comes around.

DL: Right.

VSS: Lawyers complimented one another. They would reach agreements, and they would keep their agreements. They would be at least superficially friendly, and their word was their word. Now we're in a very different situation. It's a much larger bar than it was. There are a lot of economic pressures on lawyers, and sometimes that forces them to make a decision that even they would say was not in their best interest. They're graduating from law school with huge debt, and perhaps they are having to

practice a type of law that they really don't want to, but they need the money. They get caught in a rat race, and it's very competitive.

I've felt we've always done a very good job, even with all of that, in this district of having really a very civil bar. They try to accommodate each other and try to be civil in their tone. It's digressing a little bit, and it's not quite the same.

When you would talk to lawyers even thirty years ago, I think most of them liked being lawyers. Today as you talk to lawyers who have been in the business maybe ten years, and certainly by twenty years, there's a large number who are very unhappy with their day-to-day life. I think that's sad. I mean, I can't imagine having to get up and --

DL: Do something you don't want to you?

VSS: Yes.

DL: Right.

VSS: Were you at Judge Dillin's memorial service?

DL: Yes.

VSS: That day, when I heard the stories, I was proud to be a lawyer, and I don't know if those stores will be repeated very much in the future with other people. The law has changed. Just everything has

changed. Society has changed, so I don't know that it's fair to be critical of lawyers as much as it's just an evolution.

DL: Do you see any way to regain or improve the civility within the legal community?

VSS: Well, I think to some extent we can help in two ways. We being judges. One, we could treat lawyers civilly and demand that they treat each other civilly. It might help with the way some judges treat other judges. Read some of the opinions of the Supreme Court, and then read some of the opinions of circuits.

DL: Right.

VSS: Yes, there's a lot of --

DL: Sniping back and forth?

VSS: There sure is. One thing that I always tried to remember as an appellate judge is that a trial court judge doesn't have a lot of time to make deliberative decisions. I always thought that even though appellate judges may disagree, you ought to be respectful of the circumstances under which the trial judge was working and never be what I would consider at times downright rude, let alone disrespectful.

I think we need some help there, and then as I

say, we can help by being demanding in the work that we see and the conversations that we have. In both the state and federal system, there is a difference in the respect that is paid by the bar in practice. There's not preparation, and there's not respect.

DL: In front of the state judges?

VSS: Yes. I think part of that is the fault of the state judges by not demanding it, but they also don't have the same facilities, the same help so that they can perhaps generate the respect. There's just a different attitude. The same lawyer appearing in front of a state court judge and a federal judge, if he's going to make judgment call how he's going to be prepared, it is always going to favor the federal, and that's not fair. It's not fair to the litigants.

DL: That's a good point. What are you going to miss about being a judge?

VSS: Well, I'm going to miss the work. I'm going to miss the opportunity to meet the people. I'm going to miss the lawyers. I'm going to miss the judges. I'm going to miss the people I work with, and Lisa, my law clerk.

DL: This is a continuation of the interview with Judge V. Sue Shields by Doria Lynch. This interview was

conducted on July 21, 2006.

When we left we were talking about what you were going to miss about being a judge.

VSS: Yes. I'm going to miss the people and the events. I suspect I don't realize how spoiled I am by having a whole cadre of people who are helpful and attentive. Well, let me just say it. People are a lot more solicitous to me because I'm a judge than if I were not a judge.

DL: Right.

VSS: It will be interesting to see who my true friends are.

DL: I hear what you're saying.

VSS: I hope I'm smart enough to realize that there's a lot of that that just goes because of the position, and I haven't been swayed by that.

DL: That shows a lot of forethought. You're looking around going this could potentially be an issue or it might not factor into anything.

VSS: Yes. I just want to make sure it's not an issue for me.

DL: That's totally understandable. Of all the jobs you've ever had -- three different judicial positions, an attorney, and a short-order cook at a truck stop --

VSS: That was not memorable.

DL: Of all the things you've done in terms of jobs and careers, what has been your single favorite?

VSS: I would have to say that basically I've always tried to make sure that whatever I was doing was my favorite, so that I was happy and content. If I was forced into that question, I think what I am doing now, which is kind of nice. It's a good way to go out. It's a mixed blessing because I like it and maybe it's harder to leave it than if I didn't.

The flipside of that is -- and maybe it's an age thing -- I've worked harder certainly here than any of the other positions. In a way that makes it a little bit easier because I'm old to be working that hard. I have pretty good stamina, but I don't have sustained stamina. I can't do it day in and day out like I used to.

DL: Right.

VSS: So that's probably a mixed blessing. It makes it easier even as you leave the best.

DL: Yes. You've seen a lot in terms of gender barriers and the glass ceiling for women coming up through the ranks. Where do you see it now for young female attorneys as compared to when you were starting out?

VSS: You know, I can't answer that question. I think you

really would have to ask the women who are there. My sense is that it's not substantially improved.

DL: Okay.

VSS: When I was growing up, really there weren't enough of us to be perceived as a threat. In many ways I think if you were willing to be one of the guys you could do okay. As more women came up, I think it became a little more difficult, and then there was this big awareness of the 70s where at least people spoke the words whether they really practiced them or not.

I was reading an article in the National Law Journal about women in the bar compared to partners and so forth. It's still an issue. I think it may be more of an issue now when you consider the number of women in the position of partner or senior partner. That may be by choice. I don't want to come down because in many ways, I think women are a lot more picky in their values. They may very well decide, or have the luxury of deciding, that it's not the worst thing, and they'd rather have a life.

DL: Yes.

VSS: Whereas men don't seem to have that choice. I don't know.

DL: Okay.

VSS: Unfortunately, I don't think I've done a good job in sitting down and talking to young women fresh out of school or four or five years out to really see what problems they're facing.

This week I was working with male lawyers who I contacted at home because their wives were doing something out of the home, and they had to stay home and baby-sit. Now, not too many years ago that would never have happened. I see it with my own family. This is not a criticism of my husband, but I know my sons are a lot more active in the daily routine of a home than my husband ever was.

DL: Right.

VSS: A lot of it is he just doesn't think about it. But I think the young people saw it. I worked the whole time, and I think my kids are a little more aware that there's nothing particularly gender specific about the home.

DL: Right.

VSS: There's just so many pressures out in the workplace anymore.

DL: This might be a difficult question for you. As I said, I've spoken with a lot of your colleagues and the sense I had from them and from others in the building is that there are an awful lot of people

out there who have an awful lot of respect for you. How do you feel you earned that respect and maintained it over the years?

VSS: Well, I guess I don't know how to answer that question. I have hoped that I've always realized that people are people. I don't know how to express it exactly, but everyone has something to offer and you respect them for what they are, not for what they aren't.

DL: Right.

VSS: I like to think that I really just do like people for what they are, enjoy talking to them, appreciate them, and hope they appreciate me. I'm not a very sensitive person. I'm not as good as I should be on anticipating (inaudible) offering, but anybody who knows me knows that it's because I'm probably in outer space. There's nothing I wouldn't do if they asked me, and I'm sorry that they have to ask and that I'm not more sensitive to things. I think those right here would tell you I'm not very sensitive, but I respect them, and they respect me because of that trait.

DL: What motivates you? Where do you find your drive to do your job well?

VSS: I don't know. I've thought about that a lot because

it's a curse at times, too, and I think I have probably pushed my own family maybe too much in that way sometimes. I don't know whether that's a gene or whether that's something that my parents instilled in me. I don't know, but I am driven. There's no question about it, and it is awkward when everybody in your family isn't equally driven. It's just a curse at times.

DL: Do you have any favorite stories of your experiences as a judge, especially here at this court, but then in your other positions as well?

VSS: That's another things that I regret. I wish I had taken the time as day-to-day things went on. I thought about that with Judge Dillin. Certainly his memorial was the calling of the funeral home. I think that man or people around him kept every piece of notepaper that he ever had. He memorialized his day, and it was just wonderful. It really was wonderful.

I've never done anything like that. Yesterday is yesterday, and I have never sat back and thought about a special day or a special thing or a special case or special people. I'm not a storyteller like Judge Dillin. I don't have those stories.

DL: That's fine.

VSS: Maybe as time goes on, I'll have the chance to think about things.

DL: Of course.

VSS: But I really don't.

DL: We touched briefly on some of your hobbies. I hear you're big into golf.

VSS: I love golf. I particularly used to like golf. It was kind of a surprise to me this summer that I haven't been able to play because of shoulder surgery. I've adapted to not playing a lot better than I realized I would. What that means is I've been able to have a more leisurely pace in doing things on the weekend than I normally did, because you would spend five/six hours going to the golf course, and that takes a lot of time every Saturday and Sunday. I got to play last Saturday and Sunday, and I played nine holes.

DL: Oh, good.

VSS: With just an iron because I don't want to swing very aggressively. I'm looking forward to getting back. I love golf. I love to read murder mysteries. I love movies.

DL: Oh, really?

VSS: Oh, yes, I read.

DL: Who is your favorite author?

VSS: Oh, my goodness, who is my favorite author? I like Hague. Alexander Hague's son writes, and I love him. I like Cornwall sometimes and others not. Jenna (Inaudible), I just love her grandma. Stuart Woods, Stone Barrington, (inaudible). Just generally good murder mysteries and good spy stories. I used to read a lot of historical novels. I've kind of moved on from that.

I probably will do a lot of what I do now. I think I mentioned to you earlier since '78 I've had at least a two-hour drive every day.

DL: Right.

VSS: I've done a lot of books on tape.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I'll probably read more now by listening to books because I don't have much time to read. It will be interesting to see what it's like to sit down with a hard book in my hands and physically read it. I like to read.

I think I like to work in the yard. I don't like to work in the yard. I like the results of working in the yard. Now, the question is whether I will. I live in a condo so I've got a little, but not much. I love to travel. That's what I hope I really get to do.

DL: Is there anywhere in particular that you're going to head to?

VSS: I mentioned to you that I've never been to France. I would like to go to France. I would give anything to take a riverboat from Paris down to the wine country or north to Normandy.

I've never traveled England. I spent a long weekend in London and did those walking tours. I would love to go to Great Britain. I loved Ireland, but I've not been to northern Ireland or to Scotland. I would like to do that.

Places I haven't been, but I would very much like to go are New Zealand and Australia. I have not been to that area. I'd go anyplace. It doesn't matter.

DL: Yes.

VSS: I've never been on a cruise except the army, so I don't know whether I would like that or not.

DL: It's one of those things you have to try and see.

VSS: Yes.

DL: It's too hard to judge ahead of time.

VSS: A friend of mine went on cruises of the Nile and the Amazon, which I thought would be interesting.

DL: Not your typical Caribbean seven nights?

VSS: No. In fact I think the one on the Amazon was a

little rustic, but I wouldn't turn down anything. I've got a real challenge. I've been to 49 of the United States, but I've never been to Alaska.

DL: Okay.

VSS: I've got to get up to Alaska, too.

DL: Definitely. Do you have any other plans when you retire besides travel? What else are you looking forward to?

VSS: I don't know. I've gotten a real nice honor recently to serve on the selection committee for the next president of Indiana University.

DL: Wow.

VSS: That's something that takes a lot of time that I probably wouldn't have had the time to do. I hope there are some boards or volunteer work that will provide some opportunities. I'm just kind of open-minded and waiting to see what happens.

DL: How do you feel about that? Does that excite you or are you a little nervous?

VSS: I'm a little nervous about that and making sure that I don't sit home and vegetate. I don't think that's in my make up, but you can only play golf so many days a week. I want to have a reason to be, I guess. It's always hard. You may have the desire to do something, but you've got to match up the

opportunities with your talent, and that's always a challenge.

We'll see what happens. I do not have any plans. It's limited somewhat because my retirement pay is set at the time I retire, and the only enhancement is called the living increases that Congress has measured. If I do anything that's considered the practice of law, I lose that. It may not be significant, but I look at my father's age and it can be become fairly significant, so I'm not going to practice law.

The problem is that practice is a little bit broader than you would think. For example I personally don't consider mediation a practice, but it is, and so I can't do any mediation.

DL: Right.

VSS: Which is maybe okay because if I was going to do it fulltime I'd stay. That is a limiting practice and that's what I know, the law. So we'll see.

DL: Any final thoughts?

VSS: None.

DL: It's been a pleasure to work with you.

VSS: You as well.

DL: I really have enjoyed the chance to sit down and speak with you and get to know you a little bit.

VSS: When we're in the same building we pass like shadows.

DL: That's the nature of my job.

VSS: Yes.

DL: The other benefit of doing this is that I've had a chance to meet all of your colleagues now.

VSS: Aren't they a great group of people?

DL: An amazing group of people.

VSS: They really are. Are you going to do bankruptcy, too?

DL: Yes.

VSS: They're very --

DL: They're very exciting over there.

VSS: Yes.

DL: That's how it should be. I feel sometimes in this building people get divided into their --

VSS: Yes.

DL: There's magistrate judges, district judges, bankruptcy guys, the clerk's office.

VSS: Right. But I'll tell you, there's not nearly the caste system here as in others, which is nice.

DL: Everybody here started talking about the court family and how I am part of the court family now, and it feels really good.

VSS: I know it does. This is an exceptional courthouse,

as far as the people are concerned. Look at the District Court judges. I hope the bar appreciates the quality of these judges. They're all wonderful people. They're very bright. They're very sensitive, and they are the hardest working people. I don't think anyone really appreciates how hard they work.

DL: That's the difficulty of it. You get a group that works so well together that you don't know how good it is until some of them are gone.

VSS: Yes, yes. I know the magistrate judges and the bankruptcy judges work very hard. They work well and the people are blessed.

DL: That's unusual for a large system.

VSS: The citizens, they are served very well. That's why I get so frustrated. This has nothing to do with this. It's a political issue and probably not part of this, but I don't know if you read the Star yesterday.

DL: I did.

VSS: About the very (inaudible) pieces of legislation. It scares me to death the attitude of some legislators that reference separation of power. It's a real lack of understanding.

DL: That's what I was going to say. There seems to be a

complete lack of understanding, and a complete lack of knowledge about what that means and what that is.

VSS: There just is, and I was thinking about this this morning. I (inaudible) word with Kim Baker just because I was going to have the conversation. I don't know that these people really appreciate the fact that today they may be in the majority, but tomorrow they may be the minority.

DL: Yes.

VSS: It's a two-edged sword.

DL: Yes. Everybody has been exposed.

VSS: Yes, yes. And I think that's not a judicial comment, but it's a political comment. It's an educational comment perhaps. I don't know what it is, but I don't like what's happening in this country as far as the polarization.

DL: Right.

VSS: And what I perceive to be intolerance.

DL: There's a sharp division right now.

VSS: There sure is, and unfortunately it seems so much of it seems to be in the name of religion, which I've always thought the tenant was tolerance.

DL: For all religions.

VSS: Yes, that's right, and tolerance for no religion or a nontraditional religion. I always figured that

there are a lot of people in this world who have never had the opportunity to be exposed to religion as we know it. Maybe it's fire god or maybe it's whatever, but --

DL: It shouldn't make any difference.

VSS: It should make absolutely no difference at all.

DL: And it's not supposed to make any difference.

VSS: No.

DL: And it is now.

VSS: Yes.

DL: That's actually one of the things that scares me about government and politics right now.

VSS: Me too.

DL: It has no place in politics and in government, but it's a little scary that way.

VSS: It's very scary right now when you start trying to manipulate. The thing that scared me -- what was it -- it's a lot easier to restrict the jurisdiction than it is to amend the Constitution.

DL: Yes.

VSS: But anyway, I fear for my children and my grandchildren.

DL: Okay.

SVS: It's a pleasure. Take care.

DL: Thank you.