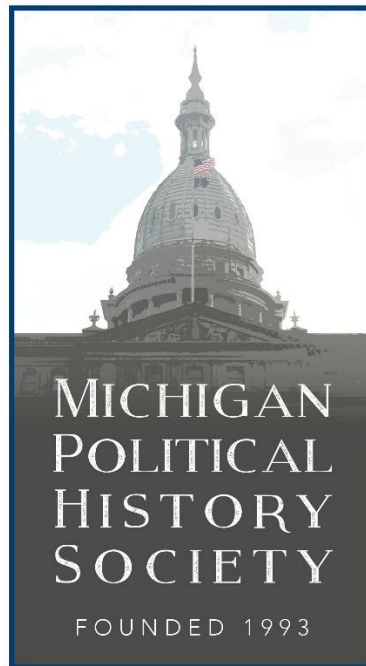


# Lawrence B. Lindemer

Interviewed by  
Bill Ballenger  
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Bill Ballenger: This interview is part of the James J. Blanchard Living Library of Michigan Political History.

Bill Ballenger: Lawrence B. Lindemer, it's a pleasure to have you here with the Michigan Political History Society.

Lawrence L.: Well, it's great to talk to you Bill.

Bill Ballenger: There was a famous Broadway musical once called The Boys from Syracuse, but you're the boy from Syracuse. You were born in Syracuse, New York, and I think you had a family summer home on Skaneateles Lake in Central New York, isn't that right?

Lawrence L.: Right.

Bill Ballenger: How and when did you come to Michigan and why?

Lawrence L.: I came to Michigan because I was married while I was in college in New York and wanted to continue, and my wife, Becky, whom you knew, had Michigan roots and so forth, and they had a family farm in Stockbridge. We moved to the family farm, and I could commute to the University of Michigan, from which I later finished. Becky is what brought me to Michigan.

Bill Ballenger: You graduated from Michigan, I believe, in 1943?

Lawrence L.: I was in the class of '43, Bill, but I was called up. I had enlisted in the Air Force, Army Air Corps, and was called up before I graduated. That was somewhat of story too. But anyway, I was supposed to be allowed to graduate and because of a number of circumstances I did not, so I had to complete my studies after I was in service.

Bill Ballenger: After the war?

Lawrence L.: No, no. While I was in the service I was stationed at Grand Forks, North Dakota, and all of my professors at Michigan had enough of a record so that they could give me a passing grade, which was all that I needed.

Bill Ballenger: Sounds like you must have been a pretty good student.

Lawrence L.: Well, I got through. With the exception of one, Spanish-American History. In Grand Forks, North Dakota, there was very little on Spanish-American history.

Bill Ballenger: I wonder why. I wonder why.

Lawrence L.: Anyway, I had to take an examination from that professor, and I'm certain that I blew it, but he, out of the kindness of his heart and thinking I might not come back anyway, gave me a passing grade and that's all I needed to graduate.

Bill Ballenger: Then, did you immediately go into law school after that?

Lawrence L.: No, after the war I did.

Bill Ballenger: After the war, okay.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Were you overseas in the war at all?

Lawrence L.: No. No, I was stateside.

Bill Ballenger: When you went to Michigan after the war, then you got out like what, 1948, '49?

Lawrence L.: '48, class of '48 law.

Bill Ballenger: It's 1950, and I believe you're only 29 years old, and you run for the State House of Representatives, and you defeat four other Republican candidates for the nomination, and you beat one of them, the runner-up, by only eight votes. Is that correct? A real cliffhanger.

Lawrence L.: Yeah, there were four candidates including the incumbent Jake Sheppers, and my recollection, Bill, is that I won by seven votes, but it was a squeaker.

Bill Ballenger: It was a squeaker. You served one term in the house. Now, during your time in the legislature, that two year period 1951, '52, that was a fascinating period. Harry Truman was in his last two years as President. You had two Republican U.S. senators from Michigan at that time. You had a Republican-controlled legislature, most of the state-wide offices were Republican, but you had a Democratic Governor, G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams. What was it like at that time?

Lawrence L.: Oh, it was a fascinating time and of course I was just starting out. In 1952, of course, I was defeated for re-election.

Bill Ballenger: That was another close one, like less than 300 votes or something.

Lawrence L.: It was close. That was a defeat, so I don't have that locked in my memory.

Bill Ballenger: Locked. Well, Stockbridge wasn't exactly a major population base.

Lawrence L.: No.

Bill Ballenger: That was probably one of your problems.

Lawrence L.: Well, it was and the guy that ran against me, John McCune, had been my manager two years earlier.

Bill Ballenger: Wow.

Lawrence L.: Lived in East Lansing, and was a very prominent, good guy.

Bill Ballenger: He had an East Lansing population base.

Lawrence L.: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: Well, I think it's remarkable. We'll get to this in a minute, that only five years after you serve a single term in the State House, and you're still only something like 31 years old when you left the House, you were elected state chairman, we'll get to that in a second, but talking about that time of your in the House, how often did legislators meet at that time.

Bill Ballenger: I mean, and did they recess for the year, adjourn for the year in the spring and not come back for the rest of the year? What were the major power brokers, the speaker, and the senate majority like? How did they interface with Governor Williams, who was of the opposite party at that time?

Lawrence L.: You know, I think the relationship was pretty good. The Speaker of the House was Victor Knox from Sault Ste. Marie. He was very good to me. We got along well. I liked him, and it was an interesting time.

Bill Ballenger: Did you meet year-round?

Lawrence L.: No. We did not, Bill. We generally closed the session in May or June. Then, if necessary, we were called back into a special session, which would not be long in duration.

Bill Ballenger: The pay wasn't very good was it?

Lawrence L.: I think the pay was \$2100 a year.

Bill Ballenger: Did you have to share a secretary with a whole bunch of other legislators?

Lawrence L.: Oh, yeah. Yes. Yes. I was a member of the judiciary committee and the lady that served as secretary to the judiciary committee, served as secretary to those of us who were members of that committee.

Bill Ballenger: It was a totally different time.

Lawrence L.: Oh, yes. Absolutely. You didn't have the contact with your constituents then that you do now. You didn't get out letters and so forth with great frequency. You were pretty much on your own.

Bill Ballenger: Wasn't there a speech delivered to the legislature by a famous general at the time you were there?

Lawrence L.: Oh, yes. Yes, while I was in the legislature, Douglas MacArthur.

Bill Ballenger: Wow.

Lawrence L.: Had been fired by Harry Truman and was doing the rounds throughout the United States. I suspect at that time he was thinking that perhaps he might run for office, which he did not do, but he did come and speak to the legislature and I have a clear recollection of that.

Bill Ballenger: Did he try out his famous line, "Old soldiers never die"

Lawrence L.: Oh, yes.

Bill Ballenger: "They just fade away."?

Lawrence L.: Oh, yes.

Bill Ballenger: He actually probably said it here in Lansing first before he got down to Washington.

Lawrence L.: I'm not sure whether it was first here or first somewhere else, but it was a line that he knew very well and had served him well.

Bill Ballenger: Now, when you were in the legislature and maybe this happened right after you got out of law school even before you were elected to that one term in the House, you joined a law firm. Was it the law firm with which you are identified for a long time?

Lawrence L.: No. No, I did not join the law firm. I established a solo practice. I worked some with a lawyer in Mason, Raymond McLain. I did not have any tie with the firm. But, I enjoyed it. I was an assistant prosecuting attorney for two years.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, okay.

Lawrence L.: While I was Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, at that time, we could maintain offices for private practice outside of regular business hours, and I used to go to the office of the prosecutor five days a week, and I think our hours were 9:00 to 5:00 or whenever you finished, and then I operated out of my Stockbridge office in the evenings and on Saturdays, and any other time. I had a very full use of my time in those years.

Bill Ballenger: You must have taken an interest in Republican Party affairs during the 1950's, while you were very busy practicing law, because only about five or six years after you left the legislature you were elected State Party Chairman, succeeding

John Feikens, who was another lawyer who served for four years, and in fact, is still alive today, actually overseeing the Detroit water system, and he's in his 90's. The two of you actually were together, I believe, chairmen for the most part of the 1950's decade. How did you get to be chairman in 1957?

Lawrence L.: I've always been interested in politics, and before while I was still in undergraduate school, before the war, the farm in Stockbridge was in Livingston County, right near the Ingham County border, and I was a delegate to the Republican County Convention in Livingston County, which is the first thing, officially, that I did in politics in Michigan, and I don't remember the year.

Bill Ballenger: Well, that's pretty good. You've just come to the state. You were scarcely a Michigander at that point.

Lawrence L.: That's true, but they couldn't get anybody to drive from Stockbridge to Howell for the county convention, and one of my friends, who lived on a neighboring farm, was going to be a delegate, and he said, "Why don't you go along with me and you can be a delegate," so that's what happened.

Bill Ballenger: You kept up your interest in politics, organizational politics, all the way consistently right into the 1950's, and then what happened? Eisenhower has just been elected to a second term in 1956, and I think there would have been a Winter State Convention or something in early '57, and you were elected chairman. How did that happen? Did you have any competition?

Lawrence L.: When I ran for chairman?

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Yeah.

Lawrence L.: Oh, absolutely.

Bill Ballenger: Well, tell us about it. What happened?

Lawrence L.: Well, Ad Wagner, J. Addington Wagner from Battle Creek was, I think, Chairman of the American Legion in Michigan at that time, and he was running as the candidate, basically backed by Arthur Summerfield, who was Postmaster General.

Bill Ballenger: Formidable opponent.

Lawrence L.: Very, very good, Bill.

Bill Ballenger: Was Frank McKay from Grand Rapids still active and powerful in the Republican Party then or not?

Lawrence L.: I never met Frank McKay, and I suspect that he probably was active but I did not know him.

Bill Ballenger: Not as openly as Summerfield certainly was. Summerfield was based in Flint, and had been a big power in Republican, state and national, politics. You were running against Wagner?

Lawrence L.: Wagner and Vernie Reynolds from Berrien County, and I think at the time of the convention, I think it had gotten down to just the three of us. I think I was fortunate in getting the support of a great many of the county chairmen and so forth, who really were objecting to The Postmaster General Summerfield's control of the party.

Bill Ballenger: You were the grassroots candidate.

Lawrence L.: Well, I was the opposition to the Summerfield.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah, the Summerfield.

Lawrence L.: And it worked.

Bill Ballenger: And so you won.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so you won, now let me just ask you this. In those days when you took over as State Chairman, could you still practice law or did you have to suspend your practice to become chairman, or what did you do?

Lawrence L.: In those days, the state chairman was paid, I believe it was \$21,000.

Bill Ballenger: Well, that's not bad for that time, really.

Lawrence L.: For that time.

Bill Ballenger: But it still might not have been as good as if you could have kept your law practice going.

Lawrence L.: I was a member of our firm then. I was a name member. It was Foster, Foster, Campbell, and Lindemer. I took a leave of absence from the firm, but fortunately the firm and the Republican Headquarters were both in Lansing, because we were facing very difficult economic times in the Republican Party at that time.

Lawrence L.: During my first term as chairman, I took a leave from the chairmanship and went back to the law office and worked for a few weeks on some matters, and went off the state central payroll because there wasn't going to be enough money.

Bill Ballenger: Right, sure. It's amazing.

Lawrence L.: It was not, during my first term, it was not a full-time job.

Bill Ballenger: Now, about that time did you look around and say, "Maybe I need some help around here?" How about this Elly Peterson, had you heard about her or what?

Lawrence L.: That was very interesting. In the race for chairmanship, I had great support from Eaton County. Dean Doty was the chairman, and among the members of the Eaton County delegation to the state convention, Gert Powers was a prominent member of that. When I was elected, my wife Becky and I went to the state headquarters, which was a building on Capitol Avenue, which no longer exists. It's now, there's something from the community college there. Anyway, and the condition of the building was terrible. It was dirty.

Bill Ballenger: It was one of those old Victorian houses, wasn't it?

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Lawrence L.: It needed an awful lot of work.

Bill Ballenger: And yet you had financial problems in the party?

Lawrence L.: We had financial problems. My wife, Becky, took down all the curtains, for instance, in the windows and took those and got them cleaned or washed or whatever. I mean, that was the type of thing that we had to do at that time.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, you're the new chairman, you're in your new headquarters, you look around, it's like the old Bette Davis line, "What a dump. Maybe I need some help in this place." Is that where Elly Peterson came into the picture?

Lawrence L.: Gert Powers from Eaton County came in to see me and looked around and said, "You know, you need somebody here to get this place in shape and to be of help, and a friend of mine has just come back from a trip, Elly Peterson, and why don't you talk to her and see if you can get her to come on board?"

Lawrence L.: I did talk to Elly. It was apparent to me immediately that she was somebody that I wanted very much to get if possible, and so I asked her if she would come on board. I think I asked her if she would be my secretary, but by the time I finished four years working with Elly Peterson, all I did was keep out of her way.

Bill Ballenger: That is utterly fantastic. Let me ask you this before we leave the 50's, I believe one of your, and Elly Peterson's signal achievements was the launching of what became the Biennial Mackinac Island Republican Conference. Could you tell us how all that got started?



Lawrence L.: Yeah. Elly and I talked about it. She came up with an idea of having a conference of Republican leaders but open to any Republican that wanted to come, and suggested The Grand Hotel on Mackinac, and so forth. It sounded to me like a great way for the people that do volunteer work in the Republican Party throughout the state to get together and compare notes and so forth and maybe get a little bit of inspiration.

Lawrence L.: So, we started it. I've been to several of them but not to all of them, of course.

Bill Ballenger: Well, it's amazing. It's lasted ever since. Every two years, odd number of year, there is a Mackinac Republican Conference, and you've had some of the top Republicans in the entire country, presidents and everybody else speak up there.

Lawrence L.: That's right. I haven't had them, but they've come to that conference because it's established now. Well, it's now been 51 years since we've first had it, so it's lasted quite a while.

Bill Ballenger: Was the idea that you wanted a venue for Republicans to gather without a convention where you're voting for people, you wanted them to just get the pressure off, let's not talk about candidates or counting votes, or caucuses, let's just review the situation and decide what our strategy is going into the next election?

Lawrence L.: Sure, and work on ideas that are floating around and so forth. It was a low-key approach to the philosophy that the party has and so forth.

Bill Ballenger: Was Governor Williams really the wild-eyed liberal that a lot of conservative Republicans in the late '50's depicted him as being? Maybe your view of whether he was or wasn't is different now than it was then, but when you stop to think about it, a lot of what he advocated was picked up on by two succeeding Republican Governors, George Romney and Bill Milliken. What do you think, was Soapy Williams really that far out in left field?

Lawrence L.: I felt then, and I felt always in working with him, and I worked more closely on a personal basis later on, but I felt then that his basic beliefs were very liberal. He was a charming guy. You couldn't get mad at him on a personality basis, but, he believed in some things that I found impossible to accept from a government point of view, so we had some marked differences.

Bill Ballenger: Let me ask you one question, flashback to seven years before the time we're talking about now, 1951 I believe, you were in the state house, US Senator Arthur Vandenberg, a Republican from Grand Rapids died in office, and Governor Williams appointed a Detroit news reporter, a Detroit Times reporter, Blair Moody, a big surprise, a shocker, to succeed him. How did you view that appointment, and how did Republicans view that appointment as compared to what else might have happened?

Lawrence L.: Very frankly, I didn't have any judgment on Blair Moody. I anticipated that as a Williams appointee, he probably shared a lot of Soapy's beliefs and approaches to government, but I had no preconception of what he would be like, and so I didn't react adversely to that. He had a good reputation among journalists.

Bill Ballenger: Of course, he didn't last long.

Lawrence L.: No.

Bill Ballenger: He was only in office a year and a half, and then he was beaten by Charlie Potter, a Republican congressman from, I believe, Alpena, or that area anyway. Ran against him for senate in '52 and won in the Eisenhower landslide, and served one term as senator. You must have known Charlie Potter right?

Lawrence L.: I did. I did know Charlie.

Bill Ballenger: What was he like?

Lawrence L.: Charlie Potter was a delightful guy, and I got to know him better later on. But he was handicapped as you know, he was a war veteran and had been wounded and so forth, and he had difficulty in getting around, but he was a very well-intentioned person. You know Bill, most of the people on both sides of the political spectrum have very good intentions, they just believe different things.

Bill Ballenger: You mean then and now?

Lawrence L.: Well, at least then. I must say to you, today as we're doing this, I'm not sure that the same standards apply.

Bill Ballenger: In other words, things have gotten a little bit more vitriolic and personal.

Lawrence L.: Yeah. It seems so to me.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. You're saying, basically what you said a few minutes ago about your relationship with G. Mennen Williams, that you felt that even though you had ideological and philosophical differences with him, you had a personally cordial and civil relationship, you respected each other, and you felt that that was really the way it was with most politicians, even of opposite parties at that time?

Lawrence L.: Yeah. Well we, the Republicans and Democrats in the house got along quite well. We weren't buddy, buddy, but nobody was out slashing.

Bill Ballenger: Issuing press releases every afternoon and so forth?

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Well let me ask you this, in 1958, your chairman Charlie Potter runs for reelection, he's beaten by Phil Hart.

Lawrence L.: Right.

Bill Ballenger: Did you know Phil Hart?

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: What was your impression of Phil Hart, and that race and everything else?

Lawrence L.: Phil Hart had a magnificent personality, and was a very pleasant, nice person. I liked him. We got along well. On a personal basis, I think I felt a greater warmth toward Phil Hart than I did toward Williams.

Bill Ballenger: Governor Williams?

Lawrence L.: Governor Williams.

Bill Ballenger: He was Lieutenant Governor I think, at that time.

Lawrence L.: He was Lieutenant Governor.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Nearing the end of the 50's, there was a group called Citizens for Michigan, either associated with or spearheaded by George Romney, designed to overhaul Michigan's constitution, call a constitutional convention. There was a vote that initially failed, another one, they finally had a constitutional convention right at the end of your tenure, 1961, '62. Of course, that was just a year or so after the famous election between Nixon and Kennedy in 1960, it was a real frenetic, exciting, interesting time in Michigan politics.

Lawrence L.: It was a fascinating time. The official Republican party as such, was not active in the constitutional convention activities. I'm certain that individual Republicans relayed their thoughts on various matters. I met with Neil Staebler at that time.

Bill Ballenger: He was the Democratic State Chairman.

Lawrence L.: He was the Democratic State Chairman.

Bill Ballenger: He had been all during the 50s right?

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: You got to know him pretty well?

Lawrence L.: I got to know Neil very well, and we worked together on some things, and to that extent, I guess you could say that we did get involved in the constitutional convention, but that was a bipartisan thing.

Bill Ballenger: Both of you thought in some way, shape or form, maybe I was a good idea to have a constitutional convention?

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: Okay. Finally, it's validated and it convenes, and of course, you leave office, and I think actually, Neil Staebler left about that time too, as State Democratic Chairman.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: But George Romney, where does he come into the picture?

Lawrence L.: George Romney, I had not know at all before he engineered, and I think he did engineer the success of the constitutional convention. But I got to know him while the convention was going on, and in fact, John Martin, who was National Committeeman, and I called on George Romney to see if we could not get him to run for United States Senator.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, Senator?

Lawrence L.: In 1960.

Bill Ballenger: '60, okay.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: That would have been against Pat McNamara.

Lawrence L.: McNamara.

Bill Ballenger: Who had won in 1954, so he was running for reelection.

Lawrence L.: Yeah. Romney declined. He didn't want to do it at that time, but it was a positive approach and a positive rejection because I think John Martin and I both realized that George Romney had an interest in elective office.

Bill Ballenger: Running for something.

Lawrence L.: Something, some day.

Bill Ballenger: Maybe even two years later right?

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Well, so you saw his work in the constitutional convention, and then he ran for election as Governor in 1962 and he defeated John Swainson, who was the one term Democratic Governor following G. Mennen Williams. You are back practicing law in the Foster, Lindemer law firm, working your way up the mast head, we go through the incredible election of 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson versus Barry Goldwater, we come to 1966, George Romney's running for his third two year term and you are the Republican nominee for Attorney General against the incumbent Frank Kelley, then a comparatively youthful Frank Kelley, not the eternal general we know today. What do you remember about those years?

Lawrence L.: Yeah, Frank Kelley had run for reelection. I think Frank was first appointed to fill a vacancy.

Bill Ballenger: He was, in the fall of '61.

Lawrence L.: Okay.

Bill Ballenger: Late of '61.

Lawrence L.: Okay. Then he ran and

Bill Ballenger: Was elected to a full term in '62, and then in '64. Those were two year terms in those days, so this was the first time the office, under the new constitution, was a four year term. You are tabbed as the Republican nominee to run against this guy.

Lawrence L.: Yeah. Well I think they were filling a vacancy that nobody else wanted to fill.

Bill Ballenger: Well, I wouldn't say it like that. I still remember a debate between you and Frank Kelley. I saw it, I was there.

Lawrence L.: Were you really?

Bill Ballenger: In the old Jack Tar hotel.

Lawrence L.: Yes, I remember that debate too, and my present wife Jean was at that debate.

Bill Ballenger: Right. I'm sure she was.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: A lot of people were there.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: I'll say one thing, you stood out in that debate. You were a take charge guy. You spoke in a very dramatic and forceful voice while the Attorney General was mumbling. Maybe he felt I've just got to do damage control here, I shouldn't have any problem with this guy, but you were really taking it to him.

Lawrence L.: I remember that occasion. I was importuned by my supporters to get more debates with Kelley after that.

Bill Ballenger: He didn't want any of it.

Lawrence L.: But Frank didn't want to do it, and I understand that. He was the incumbent, and that's generally good advice. The incumbents-

Bill Ballenger: Well he doesn't want to get in the ring with a mad dog any more than he can help it you know?

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Anyway.

Lawrence L.: Well I haven't been called a mad dog before.

Bill Ballenger: No, you were very logical, but you were, you were forceful. You were taking it to him. I still remember sitting next to Joyce Braithwaite, who at that time was the secretary to Elly Peterson, she later became a very important figure in Bill Milliken's administration, and ran his reelection campaign in '70. I remember her guffawing at your dramatic and forceful responses to Kelley, so I can see why he wouldn't have wanted to debate you again.

Lawrence L.: Well, anyway, we never had any more debates.

Bill Ballenger: Well, so then, after that, there was a vacancy on the University of Michigan Board of Regents, and Governor Romney in his final year in office, appointed you to fill the vacancy.

Lawrence L.: Yeah, I was appointed in 1968, so that would have been Governor Romney.

Bill Ballenger: Right. His last year.

Lawrence L.: Yeah. I ran in '68, and at that time, the election for regents pretty well went with the top of the ticket.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Lawrence L.: All of the educational posts would go either Republican or Democratic, depending upon how the top of the ticket did.

Bill Ballenger: It was a big year for the Democrats. Hubert Humphrey won Michigan easily over Richard Nixon, and so the Democrats won all those educational races.

Lawrence L.: Yeah, they did.

Bill Ballenger: But then, the next spring, there was another vacancy.

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: And?

Lawrence L.: And Bill Milliken said, "Would you like to go back on?" I said, "Yes I would." I greatly enjoyed that experience, and the Republicans and Democrats on the Board of Regents, during the period time that I served, never made a decision based upon political affiliation. We concentrated on, as our judgments indicated, what was best for the university under the circumstances, and we got along very well. It was a rather A-political atmosphere, and thoroughly enjoyable for me. I liked it.

Bill Ballenger: In the spring of 1969, you are reappointed, this time by Governor Bill Milliken, to the University of Michigan Board of Regents, and that fall, in comes a guy named Bo Schembechler, coach of the football team, turns Michigan's grid iron fortunes around. They climaxed a season by beating Ohio State and go to the Rose Bowl. Do you take credit for that?

Lawrence L.: I'd love to take credit for that, but actually, I can't take credit for that. I knew Fritz Chrysler, the athletic director in Michigan at that time, but I did not know anything about the process of the selection of Bo.

Bill Ballenger: Did you know Don Canham who was the athletic director?

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: What was your impression of him?

Lawrence L.: I liked Don Canham very, very much. Don Canham was a good friend. My wife and I traveled with Don Canham and his wife on some University of Michigan trips, and actually, Don Canham served as my chief financial guy for the race for election to the Supreme Court.

Bill Ballenger: Oh, okay.

Lawrence L.: We had a close relationship.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, now the man who appointed you the second time to the Board of Regents of the University of Michigan was Bill Milliken, who had been Lieutenant Governor under George Romney for six years, and became Governor in his own

right in 1969, and then was elected to his first four year term in 1970. What is your memory of your first impression of Bill Milliken when you got to know him? Maybe back in the early 60's or mid 60's, and Bill and Helen Milliken, what was your relationship?

Lawrence L.: I had known Bill Milliken for several years before that Bill, and he is a dear friend. He made great moves for me in my life.

Bill Ballenger: Was he the Grand Traverse County Republican Chairman maybe, when you were State Chairman? He was active in Republican politics out there.

Lawrence L.: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah.

Lawrence L.: I knew him at that time. I knew him when I was State Chairman.

Bill Ballenger: Another person who was a state chairman, but of the opposite party in the mid 60's was the very colorful Zolton Ferency.

Lawrence L.: Yes. Zorro.

Bill Ballenger: Zorro, that's right.

Lawrence L.: Sure.

Bill Ballenger: Revolting Zolton some people called him. What was your impression of Zolton Ferency?

Lawrence L.: Oh, Zolton and I had a good relationship. Zolton was somebody with whom a conversation had to be composed 90% of jokes. That was not true with a lot of the other people, but we kidded around a great deal and I liked him. We got along fine.

Bill Ballenger: 1969. '75, you're on the University of Michigan Board of Regents, you love it, but then, all of a sudden, there's a vacancy on the Supreme Court, and Governor Milliken plucks you off that Board of Regions and makes you a Supreme Court justice. That is because of the death of Thomas M. Kavanaugh, so called Carson City Tom Kavanaugh because there were two Thomas Kavanaugh's on the court. All of a sudden, you find yourself on the Supreme Court, I'm interested in what your impressions of the court were at that time. Your experience on it, and in particular, you'd never been a judge before.

Lawrence L.: That was one of the things that opponents to my selection pointed out, that I had not been a judge before, but I had been active in the court system. I tried cases, I had had appearances in the Supreme Court, and before the courts of appeals, and of course, had been in trial courts with great frequency, so I was



not nervous about my ability to participate. When it became known that I was Governor Milliken's selection to fill that vacancy, Justice Kavanaugh, the other Tom Kavanaugh. called and said, "When you're in Lansing, let's get together." Very cordial guy. Strong ties to the Democratic party and so forth, but again, a person with whom I got along well.

Bill Ballenger: Very well. Well, you're on this court and it's a very interesting court if I may say so. Not just Thomas Giles Kavanaugh, but you've got two former governors on the court. G. Mennen Williams we've talked about, was elected in 1970, the same year John Swainson actually led the ticket and finished ahead of Soapy Williams. In the voting, they both were elected, they're both on the court, you join the court, there are other people on the court as well, did you serve at all, technically with John Swainson? Because I know he left the court shortly after I think you arrived on it.

Lawrence L.: Yes. I did not serve. John Swainson was still a member of the court when I was appointed, but he did not attend court functions, he did not participate in court activities, and I had known him and Alice.

Bill Ballenger: You'd entertained them in your home I think.

Lawrence L.: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: In Stockbridge right?

Lawrence L.: That's true, and there was no personal animosity.

Bill Ballenger: Actually sat with him?

Lawrence L.: I never sat with him, never was in conference with him. He didn't attend any of the court conferences during that point.

Bill Ballenger: Because at that time, he was in some trouble and in limbo, and eventually was convicted of various things and resigned from the court right?

Lawrence L.: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: And resigned while you were on the court right?

Lawrence L.: Yes, he did resign and-

Bill Ballenger: At which point, Bill Milliken appointed Jim Ryan to take his place right?

Lawrence L.: That's correct.

Bill Ballenger: Okay, so what was the climate of the court at the time? Were there differences ideologically between certain of the justices and others? Could you crystallize? Is there any particular case or cases that you can think of that would sum it up?

Lawrence L.: Well, you asked me before about the liberalism of G. Mennen Williams, and there was one case that had been argued before the court before I went on, but the opinion had not been published, and in fact, the court had not ruled on it. Taken a vote on the opinion. It was brought up for discussion, and Soapy had written the opinion, and it was a case, a worker's comp case in which applying strict legal terms. Soapy's opinion awarded the worker's comp proceeds to a woman who was a bigamist and whose husband, in the bigamy, the second husband had died and she was awarded his workers' comp proceeds. I really found that...

Bill Ballenger: Over the top.

Larry Lindemer: That's a polite way of putting it, Bill. I thought it stunk.

Bill Ballenger: Then what? Wasn't there even more to the story?

Larry Lindemer: Well, yeah. Subsequently, she goes through a comparable process again and again.

Bill Ballenger: With a third husband?

Larry Lindemer: Again, recovers. Those cases are printed in the Michigan volumes of our case law.

Bill Ballenger: And that bothered you a little bit?

Larry Lindemer: Yeah, it bothered me.

Bill Ballenger: Okay. It's 1976, you're running for a full term. Very exciting year. You've got Michigan's Jerry Ford, Incumbent President running for re-election opposed by Democrat Jimmy Carter. You've got Don Riegle running as the Democratic nominee for the US Senate in a very controversial campaign against the Republican Marv Esch. What do you remember about that campaign and that year? Did you have any debates? Were there any issue differences?

Larry Lindemer: No. There aren't issue differences running for the court.

Bill Ballenger: For the court.

Larry Lindemer: Because you can't say, "Given this case, I would vote that way," because you've got to make your judgments on each case individually. There was no debate. I don't know. I worked hard in that campaign, but I could not take all the time. I had duties on the court and I thought it would be fatal to let my tasks suffer. If I

had opinions to get out and so forth, I wanted to get them out, so I didn't campaign full-time, but I did campaign.

Bill Ballenger: Here you are, the old party chairman, and you don't feel you can campaign the way you'd really like to because you got to tend to your judicial duties, right?

Larry Lindemer: Anyway, I didn't.

Bill Ballenger: You might be criticized if you weren't tending to them.

Larry Lindemer: Yeah. Blair ran a good campaign. He was an attractive person. It may sound like a broken record, but Blair Moody and I were never antagonistic to each other. We got along. After I was off the court, after he defeated me, he came down to Jackson where I was employed as general counsel to Consumers Power Company to have lunch with me. I mean, it was a very civil-

Bill Ballenger: Very civil. Well, another thing is, that must've been very disruptive for you because while you were on the University of Michigan Board of Regents you could still be a partner in the firm, Foster, Lindemer, etc. Then you had to give all that up to be appointed to the Supreme Court. Then you're only on the court four about a year and a half.

Larry Lindemer: That's right.

Bill Ballenger: All the sudden, you lose the election and it's very difficult to pull your whole law practice back together, right?

Larry Lindemer: Yeah, it was. The firm invited me to come back, but in that year plus that I was on the Supreme Court, my clients that stayed with the firm had been served by other lawyers in the firm and I thought that it would be terribly disruptive after that period of time to come back. I thought it probably best to look elsewhere for employment of some kind. At that time, I got a call from Al Lamond, who was the CEO of Consumers Power Company in Jackson, which was only 25 minutes away from Stockbridge.

Bill Ballenger: Right.

Larry Lindemer: He came out to Stockbridge to see me and anyway, I was offered the position of Vice President and General Counsel at Consumers Power Company and did that.

Bill Ballenger: For how long?

Larry Lindemer: I did that until I reached the mandatory retirement age of 65. Then I retired and I went back to the law firm on an of counsel basis and worked in that capacity for several years until my wife Becky died.

Bill Ballenger: From that point on, you really weren't immersed in politics to the extent that you had been the entire previous portion of your life. You were back into the practice of law. You might've been interested in politics as an observer. You weren't really engaged in politics by that time, right?

Larry Lindemer: I think that's a fair assessment of it, Bill.

Bill Ballenger: Well, now, when you look back and also, let me mention we mentioned the word and the name Jerry Ford a minute ago. You actually were State Chairman in the '50's when Jerry Ford was a congressman, so you must've known him for a long time.

Larry Lindemer: Yes.

Bill Ballenger: What was your impression of Gerald R. Ford?

Larry Lindemer: I had a delightful impression of him. He asked me to serve on the Gerald R. Ford Foundation board and I did that for a number of years and enjoyed it. Enjoyed working on the matters that foundation supported and enjoyed the relationships with President Ford and Betty Ford.

Bill Ballenger: I want to ask you one more question. Bow ties. Bow ties. Now, Soapy Williams was famous for his green and white polka dot bow ties, but you were famous for bow ties and you're wearing one right now.

Larry Lindemer: Yeah.

Bill Ballenger: Who came first, you or Soapy?

Larry Lindemer: That was treated by one of my law school buddies, Al Thorburn. I wore bow ties while I was in law school. I don't know when Soapy started wearing them, so I don't know who was first. After Soapy was elected governor Al Thorburn said, "Larry, you need something and I've composed an affidavit that I knew you before and that you have worn bow ties for years. I want you to have it and display it so that you put these stories to rest." He sent me that affidavit and I had it under glass in my office in Stockbridge for a number of years.

Bill Ballenger: That certified it actually. That made it official.

Larry Lindemer: Yes, it did.

Bill Ballenger: Well, let me ask you just in closing, if you had to look back at the grand sweep of politics in this country from post-World War II to the present time and where the Republican party has come from and where it's been and where it's going and the Democratic party, how do you look at the whole scene right now and at what you saw for the last half-century? The evolution. You've seen it all.

Larry Lindemer: Well, I've lived through a lot of it and that just comes from surviving. I've got to confess politics bothers me today. I think that the intensity of the opposition seems to be well-received by the public, but I can't believe that it's good for the country. I just wish that there was a higher level of civility. You can disagree on philosophy and on policy and on the specifics of various governmental matters without fighting a war.

Larry Lindemer: I'm troubled by these candidates that now say, "I will fight for you." I think government has got to have less fight and more reasoning.

Bill Ballenger: In other words, instead of politicians taking up the cudgel on behalf of one or more interest groups, they should be dispassionate representatives of the public interest and make balanced and reason decision on what needs to be done.

Larry Lindemer: You can't be totally dispassionate, Bill. I guess probably that's not something that a human being can do. If you're totally dispassionate probably you're out of the loop. I think the degree of antagonism, the elements of nastiness that creep in every now and then, and so forth.

Bill Ballenger: Regrettable.

Larry Lindemer: Are unfortunate.

Bill Ballenger: Yeah. Well, one last question on that. Do you think philosophically the differences between the Republicans and the Democrats now are unbalanced pretty much the same as they were post-World War II? Forget the animosity and the personal vitriol. Is it kind of still basically true the Republican party is the more conservative of the two and the Democratic party the more liberal? Are there any other nuances that you could point to that strike you as being kind of ironically different than they were when you were coming up in politics?

Larry Lindemer: I think that there is a greater degree of difference between factions within the Republican party. I think that some of the very conservative elements in the Republican party were not there.

Bill Ballenger: Back in the '50's and '40's?

Larry Lindemer: In the '40's and '50's and '60's.

Bill Ballenger: Are you saying the differences between, let's say, a progressive-moderate Republican like George Romney in the late 1950's, early '60's and the more conservative elements of the Republican party were not as pronounced or vitriolic as they seem to be today between, let's say, the religious right arch-conservatives in the Republican party and the more middle of the road Republicans?

Larry Lindemer:

I would say that. Yes. I'm not in position to make judgments about divisions within the Democratic party. I'm sure that they have them too, but I am troubled by some of the hyperactivity on the part of ultra-conservatives. I guess I would be more in the middle, in the moderate gender.

Bill Ballenger:

Right. Larry Lindemer, I want to thank you so much for your appearance here with the Michigan Political History Society. It has been a pure pleasure.