

## Matt Blunt Interview

--phone calls from folks that went to the Naval Academy because that's my alma mater and they're interested in running for office, and I talk to all of them but none of them ever run for office and it's always the same reason - it's just financially they can't run for office. And I was very fortunate when I first ran for office, I had a wife who - are we started?-[audio gap/side talk]

Question:

[0:37] Maybe I'll just talk about that a little bit. So I left the Navy and I ran for state representative in Missouri and I often interestingly enough talk to lots of Naval Academy and occasionally other Naval officers that are interested in running for public office. I always talk to them and sort of run through pros and cons, strategies, that sort of thing, but to a person, I have yet to have any of those people run for office. And it's almost always the same reason, it's just financially very difficult for that first-time candidate because typically being a candidate is almost a full-time job and you can easily make it into a full-time job which prohibits you from earning any other income. So when I ran for office the first time actually my wife and I didn't have any children, she was still working outside the home and that really made it possible for me to run for state legislature.

Question:

[1:48] Yeah, ok. You know I grew up around politics, but when I left Missouri to go to the Naval Academy and to serve in the Navy I didn't really have any political aspirations. While I was in the Navy, which I loved, I loved being in the United States Navy, I'm very proud of my service in the Navy, I started to think that someday I might run for public office and serve in public office. My wife was actually interested in me doing that so she was very supportive. I would not have predicted that I would do it as quickly as I did. But when I was leaving the Navy, coming back to Missouri, I learned of a member of the general assembly who was really looking for somebody to run for his position. It was a fairly competitive legislative seat so he didn't just want to abandon it for his party or his constituents so he was really looking for somebody to step in and run. I connected with him and he encouraged me to run and I did. I was very fortunate. I didn't really have any sort of primary. I don't think I had a primary at all. If I did, I'm fairly sure I didn't have a primary at all, if I did it wasn't obviously very competitive. Then had a general election against a very nice gentleman who was a former school superintendent in the area.

Question:

[3:18] It was a guy named Phil Wanamaker. He was really, today he's probably still maybe 50, 55, at the most, probably more like 50. So he certainly wasn't retiring, he just - the Missouri General Assembly's a part-time job. It's sort of a difficult part-time job in that it's about a five-month session so it's a lot longer session than most part-time legislatures have so it makes it difficult to

find something that sort of works to provide any sort of other income for your family. But he was sort of - to be honest, I think he was sort of done with it. He wanted to move on. He was a stockbroker. He'd been successful. I think he really wanted to concentrate on building up his practice and then obviously not have to go to the state capitol for three nights a week for five months of the year which can be challenging on family. He had young children at the time as well. So nice gentleman. Again, his name was Phil Wanamaker, and he and I began to speak and actually I was still in the Navy when I filed for office which is interesting - there's an entire process that allows you to do that in the Navy if you're leaving obviously the Naval Service. Then our state had state laws actually that also allowed you to file for office.

[4:38] So I filed for the state legislature. It was very clear that I was filing I think in February and was leaving the Navy May 31 of that year so it was very clear that obviously I would not be involved in any political activity whatsoever while I was still a member of the United States Navy. So I came back to Missouri in early June, walked off the ship I was the navigator of, the USS Peterson, a Spruance-class destroyer, May 31 of - actually I may have taken some leave towards the end. At some point in May I left the ship and drove to Missouri. My wife had actually already moved back to do some, to start work and drove back to Missouri and really immediately began to run for office. It was because I was getting out of the Navy, Missourians are very patriotic people so they're very supportive of that, they understood why I hadn't been a very active candidate while I was still in the Naval Service. I had an abbreviated campaign. So from early June through essentially November, I was a full-time candidate.

[5:47] I don't know the types of other folks you're talking to in terms of the office they've run for, you know a lot of famous candidates who first run for governor or senator or Congress or something of that nature. State representative of Missouri is a little different. We have a large legislature, about 163 members in the Missouri House of Representatives. So each member represents, gosh, maybe 35,000 people - at the time it was a little lower. I think now it's about 35,000 people so if you do the math in a district like mine, it means you probably have about 18,000-20,000 households and you know running for the legislature, you literally, at least the way I did it - I don't think candidates all do it, but I mean, I knocked on - my district was partially within a city limits and then the rest was rural. Any house within a city limit I knocked on their door at least twice in many cases three times to visit with them. So you have a lot of direct interaction with individual citizens.

[6:54] Interestingly, I think that's a little - a lot of candidates - I like door to door campaigning. I thought it was interesting and I thought it was sort of fun. And in some ways challenging. A lot of candidates have never really done, you'd be surprised how many candidates have not really done door to door. If they've done it, they've kind of gone out for the afternoon or they've put out a press release that Candidate X is going to be knocking on doors in neighborhood Y and he's really working hard. But they don't, you really don't have a lot of candidates that focus in a systematic way, I'm going to knock on every door of every house where somebody could potentially vote in this election. I think there's reason for it - one, it's a little bit challenging on the candidate's psyche because even if you're in a situation where you're going to win by 60% of

the vote, 2 out of 5 doors you knock on are still somebody that's not going to vote for you. So you're just constantly running into people that are not for you, some of whom are very pleasant and not for you and then some are obviously extremely hostile and erratic about it. So it's sort of a challenging thing I think for a candidate to really get out there and do door to door. I mean you're just going to be again even in a district and there are not a lot of districts where you're going to win 60% of the vote, most districts are 55-45 would be a very solid victory, 10 points. So you know you're going to have at least 2 out of 5 households where they don't like you. Again, as I said, in some places, they'll be very, very hostile about it.

[8:23] But I enjoyed it because you obviously meet some people that are really supporters. I found sometimes I would go out and drive around and actually go to in the farmsteads type residence and talk to people. Those were more difficult because - they don't just answer the door, they have you come in the living room and they want you to eat a piece of pie or something of that nature and you'd be there for an hour. Almost every night of door to door I'd have one person, even in the city limits, that would be sort of that 15-30 minute house where they really want to talk to you. Most people will say, Hey, nice to meet you and thanks for coming by. Be watching the campaign.

[[9:03] The other thing that's interesting about it is you really do sort of see how people live when you go door to door. You really do, you figure out how people in this country live because my legislative district the household income is probably \$23,000 so some people are really struggling in that district and you really see sort of how they're living. It's interesting too a lot of people won't come to the door. You learn a lot. People, it will be obvious that they know you're there - they're walking around the house, you can see them. They obviously know you're at the front door. They're just not coming to the front door. Got bit by a dog of course. Which is, I think a lot of candidates have - if you do any sort of door to door you're eventually going to get bit by a dog. It was a great experience. I really learned a lot.

Question:

[10:03] I don't think my dad had ever really done any sort of door to door campaigning and actually his campaign manager has told me he never really liked it very much so he'd never really done it. He'd also run for a larger offices. He'd been a county official. In a county really door to door wouldn't make a lot of sense given the population. It's not all that complicated. I mean, I knew that you needed to raise money, and in Missouri you have to raise it in \$300 increments from individuals, was the maximum contribution. So if you wanted to try and do radio and some mail and TV, you need to raise money, which I kind of tried to do all throughout the day and then every evening I'd go out and walk. So I kind of developed my own little system. I walked every evening except we didn't walk on Sundays. We'd walk all day Saturday. Didn't walk at all Sundays. I may not have walked every Wednesday evening just because it was a highly-churched area so there'd be a lot of Wednesday night church attenders in addition to Sunday church attenders obviously. So may not have walked every Wednesday evening, now that I think about it.

[11:14] But I sort of knew that there were certain people that you'd want to get around and meet and visit with. Probably as a young person, I probably didn't have sort of the patience that you ideally would have. So I was pretty focused on, okay, how many doors am I going to knock on, how many people am I going to actually interact with? And I probably didn't focus enough on the quality of that interaction. Probably been better off to really be patient. I mean I was there, I'd answer any question they'd want for as long as they wanted. But I probably in my demeanor could have seemed more patient as I was there to talk with them. Just as you get around, I was - young people are in a hurry obviously so not as patient as I probably would be today if I did it. I'd probably be more a little more relaxed than I might have appeared there. But I think your question was how did I know what to do. I mean obviously I had lots of smart people who gave me advice as to what they would do. I took in really - I ran for office three times. Interestingly, I was probably more nervous about that election because you can't really poll - you can, but you've got so many, a smaller, two or three big families get mad they can sort of really affect an election. You don't really know what's going to happen so I was really pouring myself into that race in a way maybe I didn't the others that I ran in. It was my first race so it was a learning experience.

[12:42] But you learn a lot, you learn a lot as a candidate. I know people that have been candidates for governor, that's their first office or office they've sought. I'm sure they learn a lot. But I think you really do learn something about running in that sort of smaller, that smaller campaign, because people really do sort of decide whether or not they like you. They don't decide whether or not they like the guy they see in commercials that plays you. They decide whether they like you because they're directly - there's enough direct interaction that you can lose the race just if you're not, don't come across at least as a good person. It also builds a real sense - I understood that district really well because I'd been literally to everybody's house and it's a pretty - there's very few things you're going to do in life where you'd say as a public official, I've been to every home that I represent, both the struggling areas and the fast-growing areas. So it was a great experience. I'm glad I did it.

Question:

[14:00] You know, yeah, I would have assumed that I would have run and hopefully be successful and serve 6-8 years in Missouri's' General Assembly and then perhaps find something else to do. And find something while I was doing that that sort of allowed you to have a reasonable lifestyle to supplement that income. So I had lots of little ideas of what that might be. But when I got in the legislature and I think it probably goes back to that being - a little bit of it was my age and a little bit's just my personality - I had great friendships so personally it was rewarding but professionally it was the worst experience of my life because I was a freshman member of the Missouri General Assembly in the minority people - you're not going to accomplish very much if you're the freshman member in the minority party in the Missouri General Assembly. So I would have thought I would enjoy it more than I did. I didn't. I tried to really focus on constituent service and ensure that I was making government agencies be responsive to my constituents. But in terms of really affecting public policy it's probably the least productive thing I've ever

done in my life. But a great learning experience, don't get me wrong. And I cast my vote. A lot of what the representative does is cast the people's vote in that chamber. I think I did so in a way that reflected the values and views of those people so I didn't betray their confidence or their trust in any way. But it wasn't really a productive thing for me to do for two years.

Question:

[15:46] No, I would have never predicted. I really didn't - I would have never predicted what ended up happening to me politically. Would have exceeded all expectations, the idea that when I was starting to knock on those doors that in literally six years I'd be the governor of the state would have really - I would not have thought that was possible. It was just sort of a lot of timing. I ran - as I mentioned I really didn't enjoy being in the legislature. There was sort of a - my father had been secretary of state and there was actually a contested election and I was on the election's committee. It actually gained quite a bit of attention - I did a pretty good job representing our point of view on this contested election so I decided to run for secretary of state and actually against the speaker of the house which made me even less effective as a legislator. I was then the only person in my party who was elected to state office. We elect 6 state officials and I was the only Republican elected so that sort of made it obvious, at least to some, that if I wanted to run for governor I'd be in a position to do so.

Question:

[17:12] Yeah, again I try to - I think just more patience. Maybe I didn't need to go to every - there were a lot of places I went to every house three times. Probably would have been better off to go two times and just be a little more relaxed on those doorsteps. Because again I was always willing to stay as long as they wanted to ask me stuff but I probably seemed like the guy that's ready to go the next house as soon as they're doing asking. So I think I'd be a little more relaxed than I probably was. You know the races never really change in terms of the work. I don't know that you - I probably worked as hard as a candidate for state representative as I did the other offices. Now the stress level is quite a bit different because the magnitude of the office in question is different. You've got a lot more people throwing arrows at you all the time when you're running for governor than when you're running for state representative. And when you're running for governor quite - you know a lot of other races depend on you. When you're running for state representative, nobody's going to win or lose, no other candidate's going to win or lose based on how you do. When you're running for governor, a lot of candidates are going to win or lose based on how you do. So there's a whole different - and the magnitude as I mentioned. So there's a whole different sort of level of stress I think associated with running for higher office. But it's really about the same, same amount of actual work. If you're a state representative you do almost everything yourself. I mean you put up yard signs yourself. You do - you're not going to have a lot of volunteers that get real excited about some state legislative contest.

Question:

[18:50] You know, I thought we'd probably win because it seemed like we'd worked a lot harder, we'd had more, we'd raised more money so we had more television ads and more mail, more - I had sort of a theory that in a lot of campaigns I think you say, Okay, we're going to beat mail with rate TV or we're going to beat radio with mail. So we raised enough money we were able to sort of dominate all three of those things which would be what matters. It was very early. We had like a web site. It was very early and there was no real digital component to your campaign as there is today. So those three at the time were the three things you'd want to win, the three media areas you'd want to win, we were able to win all those. So it made sense to me, that I worked hard, seemed like a reasonable candidate with reasonable qualifications and it's a fairly low-income area as I mentioned but it's very culturally conservative so I thought I was a good fit for the legislative district. So I thought I would win but again as I said it's not like you have a lot of scientific analysis. When I ran for secretary of state, pretty much knew the entire time through polling, the little polling that we did that it looked as though I would win that election. Then when I ran for governor the same thing, with more tracking. It was very close, very competitive, but I thought going in - every race I've been in, I thought I would win.

Question:

[20:23] We did actually, yes, for a legislative race which it's an interesting market, Springfield, Missouri, is where this is. It's probably the biggest market in Missouri that a legislative candidate can really still do TV and you're not going to be on the, not going to run a lot of TV. But you can probably run - I don't know - you can probably run at least 1,000 gross rating points of television. It's an expensive place to run for state legislature because not only can you afford TV to some extent voters expect to see you on TV. One thing I was always surprised by, I was surprised by how many houses I'd go to and I was there in person ready to answer any question they wanted to ask about any issue, they might want to ask about and so many people would say, We'll look forward to hearing what you have to tell us on TV, on your TV commercials. It was like somehow those TV commercials to some people were more real than the flesh and blood candidate that was there ready to talk to them for an hour if they wanted to about whatever they wanted to get into. But those TV - TV is very powerful. Actually my father's Senate sort of the first time I experienced this not as the candidate but as sort of somebody who's observing - when you put something on TV, people generally believe it and it shows up almost instantaneously in verbiage about the campaign. TV's very powerful still. You know everybody talks about the death of TV in campaigns and that sort of thing. But it's still the most powerful medium out there.

Question:

[22:03] Yeah, I had a guy that had done a lot of media for those types of races. Had good advice and in the legislative race it was important to emphasize I'd try for the fair share for the area. That's what we talked about a lot, I think was fair share. And you know talked about my experience and my background and my biography.

Question:

[22:33] Yeah, you know, today I think people'd be more casual. I never wore shorts for example to go door to door. Today I think candidates would. I always sort of wore slacks and a blue shirt. That's what I wore I think virtually every single day. Actually I think I had sort of a blue polo shirt - now that I think about it that said "Matt Blunt for State Representative" on it. So it was sort of a business casual look. I think today candidates, today you could easily go door to door in shorts. Maybe not a t-shirt for the candidate but maybe a t-shirt, there's a lot - candidates went from suit and tie to business casual to quite frankly just casual. I see a lot of candidates now in jeans and that sort of thing on the campaign trail. I didn't - yeah, my appearance has always been pretty bland. [laughs] I've never been the guy had to worry about - can't wear my some sort of bracelet or something. I don't have a lot of jewelry so - there'd be stuff that a media consultant might tell candidates to avoid because it was distracting but it wasn't really an issue for me. I was straight out of the Navy so the Navy sort of - haircut, sort of pretty much what I have right now. As I said, I sort of wore just a new uniform, slacks and a blue shirt.

Question:

[24:04] Yes, I was. I was the navigator of a frigate. Actually I was the engineering officer on a frigate. And then I was a navigator of a destroyer. So I came right off that destroyer.

Question:

[24:13] My first ship was at Pascagoula[?], Mississippi, and we were underway a lot. And my second ship was out of Norfolk, Virginia, and we were underway quite a bit, not as much as the first but we were underway quite a bit. And then actually the last four months in the Navy we were in the yards with the ship, getting a lot of repairs done.

Question:

[24:43] Yeah, it was a big change, a big change. I can't say that was difficult for me. I sort of miss the Navy. I mean, I love the Navy. I love the United States Navy. I'm proud to have served in the U.S. Navy. It was a great experience. I think it was an important thing. That's probably the accomplishment I'm actually the most proud of. But I sort of miss it because I miss traveling and that sort of thing because I was back home basically, southwest Missouri. Sort of miss it. But it never really felt like a real shock because I kind of kept going about my same speed once I got back.

Question:

[25:28] Yeah, I'm very self-disciplined, very focused, very organized, and those are things I think were true as a candidate and are true today. You know, you're probably not - again the Navy's probably a little more rigid than the average person so that's probably something that you have to work on that you can't just be - I had a tendency to sort of get focused on the end objective and maybe not as - I don't know that I'm a natural candidate for public office. I'm probably not the natural back-slapper type of person. I think I'm a good public official when I'm in office but

I'm maybe not the natural candidate that's just sort of naturally boisterous and affable. So I have to that's something I have to focus on, work on.

Question:

[26:38] I had been. Now compared to the Navy it was easy. That's one thing - I was married my last year in the Naval Service and I was gone like 9 months of our first year of marriage so that was in a lot of ways that was bad but at the same time it was sort of good because it put everything else - no campaign was as difficult as being in the Navy and separated for a long period of time. At least - and that was before email and cell phones. When you went on the ship, you literally might not talk to your wife for, talk to her at all, for a month, two months. So nothing - I've never replicated that experience, that sort of helped to keep things in perspective for us.

[27:22] Now having kids, I never ran for office with children. We were expecting my son when I ran for governor and he was born about 3 months after I was inaugurated. That's probably part of the reason I'm not in office today. I just wouldn't want to - I'd hate to be away - I really hate to be away from my wife Melanie - I just hate to be away from her at all. And I don't like to be away from my boys, so that's probably part of why I'm not - that's not the entire reason - but that's probably part of why I'm not a candidate for office today.

Question:

[28:05] Yeah, I think I would have. Maybe. I mean, financially it's different when you have children, too. I don't have any natural family wealth or anything of that nature so you've got to support your family. I might not have been in a position to essentially take six months off and run for office, which is what I did. So I don't know. I don't know the answer to that. I do think, I noticed when I was in the legislature what you found a lot of were, at least it seemed, young people in their 20s and early 30s and retired people. You didn't have a lot of people that were 40 years old with a wife and 2 children at home. You get a lot of people who are just starting out in life or a lot of people that were retired. In some ways it probably works. But you'd benefit if you had more people that were sort of in the prime of life, that were in the legislature.

Question:

[29:10] Yeah, I don't think they were very surprised. When I was a kid, of probably my brother and sister, I'm probably the least sort of naturally outgoing of the 3 of us. So that might have, if my dad and mom had to say which one of your kids are going to run for office, I don't think they would have picked me. I think they probably would have picked one of the other two, my sister or my brother. But as I got older, I don't think they were surprised at all. I don't think anybody was surprised. My wife I think honestly I think she did think I would run for office someday. I don't think she thought I would run for office when I did. She's a very young first lady. She was 31 when she was first lady of the state which was pretty uncommon to say the least. I think she was actually the youngest first lady the entire time she was first lady in the country. So I don't



think she would have thought we'd do it as quickly as we did. But it worked out. She was very supportive.

Question:

[30:19] Yeah, you know, I told them I was interested so there actually had been some legal exploration necessary. So it wasn't probably like a lot of candidates where they might call their mom or dad and say, I'm going to drive up and file. Really didn't have that because there'd been enough sort of interest and then I'd actually have to find out if it was legal for me to file while I was still in the Navy and I had to get permission from the undersecretary of the Navy. So there was enough leading up to it of just sort of groundwork that any sort of surprise was definitely gone by the time it happened.

Question:

[31:04] It sort of was, yeah.

Question:

[31:08] Yeah, but not until about a year, maybe a few - I don't know when I started that process, but of trying to figure out if I could run for office. But I didn't spend most of my time in the Navy thinking, When I leave the Navy I'm going to run for office. It was probably the last year or so of my naval career that I thought that.

Question:

[31:44] Yeah, and you know I think when you're - I think people who run for office tend to probably have more self-confidence than those that don't. So I never really remember feeling any sort of anxiety. I thought I need to get up to speed on sort of Missouri state government and the budget so I read books. To be honest I probably learned more than I needed. I probably didn't need to know to be a successful candidate. Because I'm sure I knew more than most candidates, probably more than most of the representatives. So there wasn't anything I really had any trepidation about. You know I was excited. Interestingly I thought in that first race I thought if I can do this it'll be a great thing to have done and I actually thought that any sort of political interest I have, I thought that might satisfy it. But obviously I ended up running for other things.

Question:

[32:40] Yeah, I thought this'll be a new thing to do, to be in the legislature it'll be a neat thing to do, be a neat accomplishment. I think I'll do a good job. I like to serve. At the time the government was very liberal. I'm a conservative so I thought we could make a change in state government so I thought that would be interesting. But I think I might have thought, well, the legislature, maybe I'll do that for 4 years, 6 years, 8 years and I'll be done and then that'll sort of be my political career. I never really thought like a lot of people do, Okay, I'm going to go into

politics for 20 or 30 years. When I first ran for office, I probably thought I was going to be in politics for 10 years or so. And that's what it turned out, it was 10 years. It just was dramatically different than anything I could have envisioned.

Question:

[33:44] Yeah, a little. I mean I've seen enough of it just growing up - I didn't really feel like I needed to ask a lot of questions. I'd get - I can't remember sitting down saying, What's it like to be a candidate? I never asked my dad that. I sort of had a sense of what that would be like. Again, a lot of it is just, particularly that legislative race, it's just not real glamorous. It's all just work so you just kind of get after it.

Question:

[34:23] You know, I don't really have any sort of active political heroes like a lot of young people of my generation that are conservative and admire President Reagan. President Reagan in my opinion is pretty clearly the best president of my lifetime still today, so President Reagan obviously had an impact. Sort of big picture, philosophical hero would be Jefferson, somebody I really learned a lot about and enjoy reading about and think he's a fascinating person, fascinating man, obviously given the diversity of his interests and everything he achieved but also it sort of encapsulates a small government, maximum personal liberty philosophy. So I think I generally look at things through that Jeffersonian lens. And I think most - I think this is an antiquated, I don't think historically most people think this, but I most government questions come down to a Jeffersonian versus Hamiltonian debate and I think that's true today. I think it's true in Obama care, it's true in Federal spending, it's true in the Federal government. I think most questions come down to that same prism and I'm definitely on the Jeffersonian side.

Question:

[36:03] It's a good question. This interview has actually caused me to think about what I was like as a candidate. It's interesting. I bet you get that from a lot of people. They find it interesting to sort of think about. I wouldn't say I was more idealistic. I would say I probably had a sort of naiveté that was appealing and looking back I seem sort of naïve about what the impact I could have. I mean, in some ways it's a naiveté you wouldn't mind recapturing because it's sort of interesting. But I wouldn't look back and say I was more idealistic then or less idealistic now or less idealistic when I was governor. Certainly when I was governor, you really see a lot, you get a perspective on everybody's motivation that you don't have in a legislative race or something of that nature. So I certainly became more pragmatic and less naïve but in terms of my principles and belief that individual people can make a difference, that didn't change at all.

Question:

[37:33] I'm a lot wiser. Like most people, I'm a lot wiser person today. I think the main thing is - I think part of it is the governor's job. Because when you're governor, you really do sort of see

people's motivations and there are some people that come to see the governor that are pretty altruistic in their motivations but there's a lot of people that come to see the governor that have sort of a personal motivation that at least I might not have seen when I was that legislative candidate. And you just become more pragmatic about the world than I was then. I think I'm idealistic as I was then. I don't know maybe that I think everybody is as idealistic as I thought they were then. Does that - I think that's what I'm trying to say. I do think there is something appealing about that person that ran for office the first time, though. There's something appealing about the naiveté that didn't, that just sort of thought everybody had idealistic motivations. And that obviously changed as I grew older and learned more and I don't - I think - that's enough about that, I think. No, just trying to think through it. Sort of an introspective process here. I think - it just - that first-term candidate sort of saw things from his perspective and I don't mean that in a bad way, that that guy, that that me wasn't able to stand in somebody else's shoes but everything was a lot - and I still, I believe in moral absolutes, I believe things are black and white in a lot of ways - but I sort of assumed, I don't know that everybody looks at things in that sort of prism. I think I've got a better idea today about how other people look at issues. It could be just as governor you're sort of bombarded with people's self-interests and that sort of does get you jaded over time. I don't want to mislead you and say, Oh, being governor's terrible. Because you'd see some people that - I saw remarkable things. I saw you got a natural disaster you see people pull together and do things that obviously have no personal benefit. And in some cases they do it for their neighbors and communities pull together and I've seen worked on sandbag lines where you townspeople and ministers and police and literally prisoners all working on the same sandbag line and keep their town from flooding. It's really noble. You see some incredibly noble things. But at the same time you're sort of bombarded with people's self-interest. It gets a little old after a while, and you know I don't think I had that perspective when I was that first-time candidate. I assumed that everybody [41:22] was sort of well-motivated, even if they had a different position on an issue than I did. Obviously that's not correct. Not everybody's well motivate. There's a lot of Americans that are. Most Americans are. Most people I got to interact with as governor are and as a legislator. But obviously some are not. And you become more aware of that.

Question:

[41:47] You're going to have to cut this. I've got, it's just me staring out the window at this thing.

Question:

[42:00] I think I probably met, I bet I met half the people who voted in my first race.

Question:

[42:20] Yeah, you know, I've never been very sensitive about that kind of thing. So I don't mind, I'm never - rejection doesn't bother me. It doesn't. It never bothered me. But that's probably a little, I'm probably abnormally unconcerned with other people's perceptions. It is probably a little unique. I've noticed like - I think most candidates actually are pretty prickly. I'm surprised

sort of how thin-skinned they can be about stuff. I maybe don't get upset enough about it. So I don't really respond to it really effectively because I don't care what most people think about me. So it didn't bother me at all.

Question:

[43:18] I mean, I wanted to win obviously so I wanted to do well. You know, another thing I guess I would say is a first time candidate and you learn this particularly as you get into a race like a governor's race, I assumed if I said, I'm Matt Blunt, I believe in X, Y, Z. You live here, you probably believe in X, Y, Z, too. The other guy doesn't believe in X, Y, Z. Obviously you're going to vote for me. That's a little bit sort of my rigid, Navy, military personality. You know, it's logical. But when you get in the governor's race, people really want a governor they think understands their problems, that generally cares and I do - I like to think that I do generally care. But I think I approached it with this, every time I meet a voter, I need to just demonstrate to them that I hold more positions that they do than the other guy does. And it's a lot of people don't really think that way. They don't think, Okay, I believe in - they sort of think in broader thematic, I think, than perhaps I do. Probably more interested in personality traits. You know that naïve kind of - everybody's sort of honest so I don't need to prove I'm more honest than the next guy. I'm an honest person. Hope people believe that. But I do need to show that he believes A and I believe B and that's, I'm more in line with the district.

[45:00] And I probably was young enough in all 3 of my races that I sort of kept that, had that position all 3 times I ran for office, that it was about demonstrating to individual voters that I was more in line with their positions than the other candidate. Though all 3 of those races I probably became less rigid and strict about that because I think I gained a better understanding of what a lot of people were looking for, particularly in the governor's race which in a lot of ways is about positions, it's about management ability. But perhaps more than anything it's about what sort of leader people think they're electing to office.

Question:

[45:45] I'd just try to change the subject. I mean, if it was - if they said I believe in - I was pro-life so I say I'm say pro-life and my opponent's - I wouldn't have been that direct about it but you know that's an example. I try then to talk about something else. I wouldn't - I've never and I'm like a lot of people in office. I never believed you really change a lot of minds through argument. Actually Jefferson said he'd never seen anybody's mind change through an argument. So I don't I wouldn't spend a lot of time arguing with people on their doorsteps and I'd say Well, this is my perspective or something of that nature. But I never really got into it. Quite frankly I was so logical about it, if somebody was sort of your classic modern liberal I would say, Well, you're probably going to vote for my opponent. He seems like a pretty nice guy and obviously he's very much more in line - because he was a nice man. The gentleman I ran against was a very nice person. Say, he seems like a nice guy. He's got a nice family and he's probably more in line with your positions than I am. I was that sort of logical about it. So - and I probably became less sort

of rigid about this is all about who you agree with most when you have an election.

Question:

[47:03] Yeah, I just worked the polling places. It's kind of an interesting day because I think you do sort of want to be there - by working a polling place, I mean, I think I had a volunteer that would hand out literature and I was there to shake people's hand or just say hi. It's interesting that you don't want to be too aggressive on election day because a lot of people have made up their mind, they're sort of like, the election's over, leave me alone. It's changed a little bit. I noticed people run more advertising on election day than they used to throughout the day. But I think you can be there and just sort of - it's a day to definitely sort of dial it down if you're trying to campaign. It's not a day to really be aggressive, try to make the case, but it is a day to be there and sort of talk with them. So I went to 2 busy polling places, one in the morning, one in the evening. They tended to be polling places that I needed to win big and I thought I'd do well in so obviously I was trying to drive up the margin in those polling spots. Again, in a legislative race you never know. It could be, it's often the case that the legislative race will change just based on one or two precincts that come in. So that's what I did election day. I was pretty nervous. I'm sure I was nervous but I didn't probably seem all that nervous. Went to dinner with my family and we watched election results. Soon as they started to count the ballots it was pretty clear that I'd been successful.

Question:

[48:47] Well, I usually tell them to start with a smaller office because I'm interested in people that call me. They usually all want to start by running for Congress or something. They all want to run for Congress! They all call me, they all want to run for United States Congress. I say, This is going to be hard to find a place where you can just waltz in and run. I say it more kindly than that. It's going to be hard to find a place where you can just show up and run for Congress. Most cases you're going to need to demonstrate at least some involvement in public life before that. I say you need to look at these other opportunities. There are interesting, you'll learn a lot, the campaigns in and of themselves are learning experiences. So what I did, I'll say what I did, was ran for state representative which may not be the most glamorous thing but it's a good thing to do and it allows you to demonstrate how your interest in important political issues and perhaps will provide opportunities if you really do want to run for higher office to run for higher office down the road. So I encourage them to run for those lower level jobs. I do think one thing we've got away from in the country I mean if you look back at the founders, like James Madison was in the U.S. Congress and he ran for the Virginia House of Delegates. Nobody would do that today. They'd think that was almost beneath them to run for a lower job than the one they have. But the founders didn't think of it that way. They thought it was part of being a citizen was to be involved in public life wherever they thought they could make a difference. So I encourage people, I think people are not naturally inclined to run for city council, state representative. I encourage them to do so. And then I say before you get into this, you really need to think about what this means financially for the next couple years because it's going to be

depending on your age it's going to be potentially your biggest challenge. And a lot of it is work. It is not glamorous. I think a lot of people sort of have this TV view of what it is to be a candidate where you step out of your car and there's a bunch of flashing cameras and you make some grand statement or gesture about what you're going to do in public office and everybody's just amazed and says, Wow. It's really not like that. It's hard work. It's putting up your own yard signs. It's walking door to door. It's talking to people. It's answering every question they have. It's listening to crazy ideas and at the same time listening to good ideas that you never do really quite get out of your head when you get into office and then work to enact. So I just try and emphasize to them that it's not going to be the glamorous political campaign they probably - that a lot of them are expecting. A lot of their views of reality are shaped by television and people don't watch just some guy putting up his own yard signs or going door to door, they watch - I don't know what movies they watch. I can't think a name of one of these movies, but you know the type and what I'm trying to say. So yeah, that's what I try and remind them of [52:02] I try to get them to really think about how they'd do this and support their family. I definitely encourage them to. I've yet to really - at least with that Navy connection I've yet to talk to anybody that runs. Now in Missouri I've talked to lots of people that have gone on to run for office, many of them been successful, some of them not been successful but think they've all benefitted from the experience.

Question:

[52:30] Yeah, it was a little bit of a district - I mean it was competitive but it was probably - it was '98 was sort of a down the road, middle year. It wasn't really a good Republican or Democrat year.

Question:

[52:48] This guy named Al Herb. Mr. Herb was the school superintendent. It's a legislative district. You know you don't want to have a lot of candidate forums. I think there were a couple of events we spoke at. We didn't have some big debate or anything. But we - he was very pleasant.

Question:

[53:11] Well, I probably benefitted from my family's political experience and just sort of notoriety. But I mean I do think I was more in line with not to go back to that rigid, I believe this and he believes that, but I was more truly in line ideologically with where the district was than he was. He worked and I probably was able to devote more time to the campaign than he did and probably spent more hours on it than he did. It was an area of the country that was starting to become even more Republican which was my persuasion that it was. So that's probably why it was successful. I think I worked really hard and I think the positions I had on issues were more in line with the constituents of the district than were his own.

Question:

[54:18] No, I don't think so. Well, maybe. I don't know. That's an interesting question. I've sort of thought about what it would have been like to lose the other two races. I've never thought about what it would have been like to lose that race. I won by about 16 points so it was a pretty good margin. Maybe that's why I never -

Question:

[54:40] He did. Yeah. You know the guys that have been in politics running for office 20, 30, 40 years p- I don't quite have that in me. I don't quite see what it is that makes them want to do that. Because to me I would be really frustrated with that life because I was able to really focus a lot of energy on what I did when I did it and get a lot of things done particularly while I was governor. That's just more my personality. I can't imagine being in the Congress for 10 years or the Senate for 20 or anything of that nature. I don't have that in my persona. So if I'd lost that first race - that's a good question. I don't know. I guess I - maybe if that first race, it'd sort of be something to prove almost, that I might run again just to - but I don't know. It's hard to say. I might have found some great business opportunity immediately that I would have not wanted to ever turn away from. Good question.

Question:

[56:06] Yeah, I mean, I think sometimes you can but sometimes you could have a great candidate who has a bunch of liberal positions trying to win in Kansas and that's just not going to happen. Could have a real conservative candidate that anywhere else in the country would just be a phenomenal candidate, that's not going to represent Manhattan in the Congress or something. So it's part of it is - I do think positions are important and matter so I think a lot of it is if you look at the ideology of an area and you're going to, you can sort of figure out the types of candidates that are going to win. It's not necessarily rocket science. You've got a lot of - there's a lot of people that do a good job writing about demographics like Michael Barone and others that do a good job tracking political trends. If you see a fast-growing area, they probably have a Republican that represents them. I think George Bush won like 96 of the 100 fastest growing counties in the country in 2004. And that's the same. So I think a lot of it boils down to demographics and the political persuasion. You do see some candidates, they really do stand out as phenomenal candidates. Dino Rossi would be an example. Here's a candidate in the State of Washington - in a state that was even slightly more Republican, he would have probably been elected governor or to the U.S. Senate. Jobs he's ran for now three times and wasn't successful. So that takes you one of the better examples of a charismatic, intelligent candidate that hasn't been successful because of his adherence to his positions and how that maybe is not a perfect fit for the area he was seeking to work for and represent.

Question:

[58:32] First time I ran?

Question:

[58:44] You know, raising money's not fun. You get more attuned to it. I remember the first time I had a meeting with somebody and asked them for \$300 for the campaign and they said yes. It was probably a 45-minute meeting to do that. That was - I remember that [inaudible] a lot about that situation because it's not a - it's a big hurdle for a lot of candidates is to raise money. It's not something, I'm not naturally inclined to ask people to give money to a cause particularly when the cause is you and your candidacy. So that was a moment I probably have never forgot what that felt like.

Question:

[59:30] Just I mean I was in his office and we talked and we talked about workforce preparation. He's an interesting guy. He actually showed me a test that he gave all of his employees. Sadly it was probably what you might think of as a sixth grade test that a lot of high school graduates were not able to pass with some very basic tough. There were probably questions on there that would be on like one of my kindergarten son's tests. They were just basic things. We talked about that. We talked a lot about workforce preparation and I talked about what I thought of the issue and how we need to focus resources on classrooms and I mean literally it was probably - it was good discussion. I learned a lot as you typically do in a meeting like that because he was a successful businessman who had a lot of employees, created a lot of jobs. I just remember finally I got up the nerve to tell him what I was trying to do, to ask for this contribution and to my surprise he said he would make it and actually gave me the check right there. It was a stunning moment that someone would actually do that to me. It was sort of a stunning thing to happen. By the end of it, you're asking people for contributions on the phone very quickly. But I remember that particular contribution and I don't think - I think everybody thinks it's a seedy experience. It's really not. You're typically finding somebody that shares your views, your values, explaining what you're trying to do, talking about your campaign, your plan to be successful and asking them for assistance. It sort of requires you to go and learn more about their ideas, their concerns, what they'd like to see happen. You develop a certain sense of diplomacy because not everything that person wants to do is possible. So it's a good experience. It's a moment I remember in that first campaign.

[61:39] I remember the first time I met my opponent. Actually I was in the town of Willard, Missouri, and was knocking on doors and he'd been nearby and I started to look around for him. I saw drive by in this truck, this huge sign on it, and waved him down and talked to him for a while. I remember that. They do sort of do some negative attacks on me but I never really - we never said anything negative about him that I can remember. So I remember meeting him. Those really were the only two I remember. Other than, this big black dog that turned and bit my pants off! So I remember that pretty well! Let's see. I've got some door to door stories that probably aren't suitable for tape! [laughs]

Question:

[62:36] Just some, you see how people live - let's put it that way!



Question:

[62:42] I saw people watching things on television where I didn't want to shake their hand. Let's just put it that way. [laughs]

Question:

[62:55] Yeah, I had maps of all the precincts so I would shade in, I mean today you'd use an iPad or something. I think I had a cell phone but I didn't have a smart phone. So I had maps and I'd literally just shade in the streets as I walked them so I'd get a precinct map and I'd shade it in yellow as I walked them. So I had all these maps. I did have a little office that I used for the campaign and I had these maps all over the wall and I just kind of knew which ones I needed to walk. And once I finished all of them, I'd walk them - I'd made more copies obviously - so I'd walk them again. I think the second time they got blue and the third time was in red. So I mean that's how I did it. I was very organized and I was doing it every afternoon from 5 to 7, I was walking. And then every day, I'll say all day Saturday.

Question:

[63:53] Just go home and hang out.

Question:

[[63:57] Towards the end we started to do a phone program where we would call and identify voters. So we'd call them and actually somebody developed this. This is called friendly phones actually. So we'd call them and I had some volunteers help me. We'd buy them pizza. So we'd do this Wednesday night and then I think like 7 to 9 we'd call. The times may be wrong. But we'd call and basically we'd say, Are you for Matt Blunt or Al Herb? And if they said they were for me, then we'd send them a letter saying, Thank you. Make sure they knew how to register to vote. Well, they had to be registered voters I guess to be in the system. But we'd send them this one letter. If they said they weren't for me, if they were undecided, we'd send them a letter about why they should be for me, that sort of thing. If they were for the other gentleman, we just recorded that and let it go.

Question:

[64:55] You know, just a little - mostly I'd talk to her about how she was doing.

Question:

[65:04] You know, I think she was - I'm very grateful my wife has stuck with my through politics. I don't think she thought - it really didn't make a lot of sense to her to run for state representative.

Question:

[65:16] Just we're trying, we're a young, married couple and taking a huge - the Navy's not particularly lucrative. We're taking a big pay cut to run for this office and it didn't make a lot of sense to her to do that. But she was very supportive and stuck with me.

Question:

[65:37] You know when I ran for secretary of state, I had a lot of people like, Hey, you don't want to do this. Who knows what kind of year it's going to be? You're too young. If it doesn't work, you'll only serve one term in the house and that's not much of a legacy. That sort of thing. So a lot of people tried and talk me out of that. I mean, some were ruthless, some were like, You're going to embarrass yourself. It'll be terrible. Actually later on he was very nice, came up to me and said he apologized. But I had a lot of people try and talk me out of the secretary of state's race.

[66:09] And then when I ran for governor, quite a few maybe not as many as the secretary of state's race, but I had some people like, Hey, you're 33 years old. We're not going to elect a 33-year-old governor. Let somebody else do this.

Question:

[66:26] I do. I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Question:

[66:33] Oh, good. Because I have no idea where I'm going.

Question:

[Side talk]

Question:

[67:07] You know, most of my life experiences I'm glad I have done but I'm also glad they are done. So I wouldn't do anything differently about my life. I wouldn't relish the opportunity to run for office again as a first-time candidate, I wouldn't. But I'm glad I did. I wouldn't discourage - maybe a different way to answer would be, based on what I know, I would not discourage anybody from running for office.

Question:

[67:40] Just, I guess, maybe I feel like I'm done. I mentioned to you that I can't, I don't quite understand the psyche of people that truly run for one office after another for 30 or 40 years. I don't quite get that. I just sort of feel like I'm done with politics.

Question:

[68:09] You know, I accomplish so much when I was governor that I would definitely want to do

it again. But I learned things as a candidate that I can't imagine learning any other way. So I would definitely want to learn those things again.

Question:

[68:33] You learn about - you really do see how people live, how they exist. Just to some extent you learn what they're worried about. You really see more about how they live and just comport themselves with visitors than you do really their issues. But you do kind of learn what they're thinking about. Typically people don't have a sort of real concrete concerns. There's a lot of wild ideas out there. You know they want to build this crazy highway systems or something that obviously wouldn't make sense to a lot of people. But you see how they live and I think people in politics they assume that everybody thinks about politics far more than they do. Actually I sort - I don't really think about politics all that much anymore. I don't really think about - the government doesn't seem quite as sort of a Jeffersonian-libertarian - doesn't seem quite as - I do still think there's a lot of danger in the government that's too large and too powerful. But I don't worry as much about what the government's going to do in public policy as I did when I was in office. I think people - I think when you're going door to door and you're talking to people, it helps to remind you that they are not thinking about politics and government all the time but they are very busy working, trying to take care of themselves or families. You learn a lot about demographics. I never knocked on the door of a family with children at home where they weren't for me. It sort of fit the demographic profile of who'd be for me. Which would be working families with children. But a lot of that's sort of affirmed as you walk around. It's a great experience and I wouldn't trade it.

Question:

[70:00] I'm sorry I rambled so much.

- End of file-