

Interview with Judge Jesse Reyes

Q: Today is November 5, 2005, and the time is approximately 11:45 in the morning. We're at the Cook County Court Building at the Daley Center, and we're speaking with Honorable Judge, Jesse Reyes, about his experience leading up to and his career as a judge in the Cook County Courts. Thank you Judge beforehand, for agreeing to talk with us this morning.

A: It's my pleasure.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit about your background. Where were you born, and perhaps a little bit about your childhood.

A: I was born and raised and I should note educated, in Chicago. I was born -- I'm trying to remember the hospital. It was Mercy Hospital. My father was from Mexico, Mexico City, and my mother was from Dallas, Texas. From my recent memory, we used to live on the near north side, on Armitage. From there we moved to the south side and grew up in Pilsen, on 18th and Allport, basically almost right across the street from St. Procopius Grade School and that's where I went to grade school, at St. Procopius. I was at St. Procopius until about the age of 14, 13, when we moved from there. Then we moved to

Bridgeport, four blocks away from Comiskey Park, over on 36th and Parnell. And for posterity reasons, that's one of the reasons why I'm a Chicago White Sox fan, yay White Sox.

I always wanted to be a lawyer, as far as I can remember. My dream was to be a lawyer. Pilsen at the time when we moved there, was a changing neighborhood. It was predominantly Polish, there were some Germans, but very few Mexicans. In fact, in our block, we were the first Mexican family on our block. It was a very interesting neighborhood, I enjoyed it. They still had a lot of the old European shops. I used to go and get some poppy seed bread and some of the pastry, European pastry that I used to love to get early in the morning from the bakery. There was one fountain shop down the street from where we lived, and they used to make the old fashioned sodas, with the ice cream and the cherries. Those were kind of like my fond memories of the neighborhood at that time. Then, eventually started having more and more Mexican families moving in, and I think part of it might have been because at the time, also there was a little change going on a little bit further north, in terms of the U of I area. More families started moving in and as a result, one of the things that started happening in the neighborhood is it started getting a lot more gangs.

The gangs started coming into fruition and basically for them, power was numbers. So the more people they had in their gangs, the better off the gangs were, because then they could claim superiority. I chose not to get involved in the gangs and as a result, I was always getting into fights. It was almost like a daily thing. If it wasn't during lunchtime, it was after school, because I just refused to join gangs. And what made matters worse was a lot of the gang members were in my classroom, you know I was going to school with them. So it was like I really couldn't get away from it. We had nuns at the school at the time and they're very strict disciplinarians and unfortunately, because a lot of times I'd come in looking like I had been involved in a scuffle, they always perceived me as being the troublemaker, not knowing that actually you know, it was the other way around. As funny as it may sound, there was always this code; you didn't tell on your friends, you didn't tell on your classmates, even though they were the ones that were trying to put the lumps on you. So I never said why I was getting into these fights, so that's why I think they always kind of perceived it as me being the troublemaker. That made life a little more difficult, particularly in terms of me wanting to

accomplish my goals, because I wasn't sure if I was ever going to even make it out of the neighborhood in one piece.

One of the other things about the neighborhood that was interesting was we had no library, we had no public library. Every once in a while or actually once a week on Wednesday, there would be a mobile library that would come to the neighborhood, a few blocks away from where we lived at. You had to get there at a particular time, when the mobile library was there, to get your books. So you know, I mean I was a little guy, I'd go there and I would tell the lady in the mobile library, the librarian, I'd say I want to become a lawyer, so I want to get law books. She was a very patient lady. She always found something that was law related, so I would check them out and read the books. But you know, it would be somewhat difficult sometimes, because sometimes I wouldn't be able to make it there on time, so there would be weeks where maybe I wouldn't be able to get the books I wanted to get. I just always kind of kept that dream there and felt that eventually, I was going to get where I wanted to be.

Then after I graduated from eighth grade, we moved out of Pilsen and we moved to Bridgeport. One of the things I enjoyed about it was that it was a neighborhood, it was a family neighborhood in the sense that there was a library

not too far from where we lived, there was a theater. On the weekends, you could go to the movies. And I was the oldest in the family. There's quite a difference between me and my sisters, they're like eight years apart. So although we were close, we weren't really close. There was me and two girls and then a boy. They had their interests and I had my interests. So as I was growing up in Bridgeport, I would have these side jobs, save my money, go to -- on the weekends, for me the treat was going to the movies. Back then what was nice is that you'd get two features for the price of one. I really enjoyed living in Bridgeport, because I mean it was like everything a kid could want. You had the ballpark four blocks away and then you had the library, which I loved and I spent a lot of time in, and then you had your theater, so it was great. I sort of got revitalized in terms of realizing the possibility of my dream and when I got to high school, I went to Kelly High School.

Kelly High School was an interesting school in terms of the ethnic background. You had Poles, you had Lithuanians, you had Mexicans and some Puerto Ricans, and not a lot but some African Americans. So it like an international school and we all got along really well. I

mean there were some guys that were in the gangs, but they kind of kept that separate and apart from school.

Q: From all backgrounds?

A: I don't know if it was all background. Some of the Polish boys were in gangs and some of the Mexican and Puerto Ricans were in gangs, but I don't know if each ethnic group really had their own gang. I just basically kept to myself in some regard, because I didn't want to get involved in any of that. I also didn't live close to the school. I had to commute because the school was located on 42nd and California, and I lived at 36th and Parnell, so it was a commute. So usually after school, I'd stay around for a little while, but then I'd have to head home. And I was usually always working. If I didn't have a paper route, I was working at the Dominick's. I'd always find a way to make a little extra for myself. But in high school, I got involved on the football team. I started out in the frosh soph, which is the freshmen/sophomores, and then from there I went to varsity, I was on the varsity team. It was again, a nice environment to grow up in.

Q: What position did you play in football?

A: I started out -- well at that time you played both ends of the ball, so I has a halfback and then sometimes defensively I was a guard or a linebacker. It was fun

because as a kid, you always want to be playing. So the opportunity to be on both sides of the ball during the game was great, because then you're on one side and then okay, now it's time to go out again and you're going to play on the other side. So it was a lot of fun. Our team actually, the year I was on varsity, we did pretty well. We moved up in the division and we went to the city playoffs. Unfortunately, we didn't go all the way but you know, it was the furthest that any one of the teams the school had had in some years had gone. And you know, naturally I wasn't the biggest or the fastest. The only thing I could really give was just being persistent and never giving up. But as my coach always said, the one good thing about it is having played organized ball. When you played in the neighborhood with your friends, out in the street or in a playground, the skills you picked up would always make you like the best athlete. And I think they had -- you know, there was a lot of reason to that, it was true, that you actually were a little bit better than most of the guys you end up playing in a playground, which is one of the things that you would do a lot. You'd go out and when the snow would fall, that was the first thing you would do is grab your football, go out in the street and

start playing football. And then in the spring, basketball or softball.

One of my goals in high school however, was to graduate in three years. Unfortunately, I wasn't successful in that goal, although I had completed all my credits. In my freshman year, I took all the courses you could take during the regular year and I went to summer school, and the same thing in my sophomore year and in my junior year. But when I went to go and get certified to graduate, the assistant principal wouldn't allow me to do it. He says no, he says you're going to have to go all four years. I put up a bit of a battle there but ultimately, in retrospect, I understand why he was doing it, because although -- where Kelly is located, it's Brighton Park, and where I lived it was Bridgeport and it was blue collar. You know, there were still some elements of the other type of life out there and I think what they were afraid of is that if I graduated in three years, then that one year when I would be out, or not going to college, I might get involved in some other things.

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, so it might derail me. So in retrospect I understand maybe what their intent was and what their purpose was for not allowing me to graduate earlier. I

wasn't too thrilled with the idea but I thought all right, fine.

Q: You said that you always knew that you wanted to be a lawyer, but somewhere -- an event perhaps. You know some feel a sense of injustice or some simply see a role model. What cultivates -- and this may not necessarily be your experience but what cultivates the sense of -- this interest in law in you?

A: To be honest with you, I've always kind of reflected on that and I'm not sure exactly what event or what person might have motivated me to wanting to become a lawyer, because you know, even before I started going to school, to grade school, and it was something that I always wanted to do. It was something that I just felt that this is what I want to accomplish in life. It was a dream that I always kept close to me. Unfortunately, along the way, there were obstacles that would always get in my way and either kind of slow me down or prevent me from actually trying to get where I wanted to go. So I'm not exactly sure what it was, but I'm sure there might have been something when I was very, very young, that happened in my life when I said okay, this is what I want to do and this is who I want to be in life. As I said earlier, growing up in Pilsen, it was just because of the lack of resources and also what was

going on in the neighborhood at the time, it wasn't really an area that was conducive to wanting to obtain an education, at least an education in an institution of higher learning. We did not have people who encouraged us. In fact, because of my constant little scuffles, going to grade school. The mother superior, or when I was in eighth grade, had stated to me that -- oh, I finally decided one day I was going to share with her what my dream was. We were walking from church. That was the one thing, we always had to go to church every morning. We went to church in the morning, then the school.

One day we were walking from church and she said -- I told her what I wanted to do in life and she kind of like snickered and said by the time you get into high school, you're either going to drop out or you're going to be dead. So then okay, what do you know? Because I mean that's kind of like the way the neighborhood was and due the fact that I was doing what I was doing in terms of trying to stay out of that, she thought early on, this guy is a troublemaker and he's not going to do it. But she didn't really know what was going on. And you know, the fact that we didn't have a library, I found frustrating at times because you know, sometimes I'd get the books I wanted, and then usually I was done with them by the time the week would

end, and you had to wait one week to the next to get books. That was a little frustrating, but I just said, this is something I wanted to do and I would always try to find a way to do it.

The one person who I always did share my little dream with was my grandmother. She lived in Dallas and we would go see her once a year. I'd always talk to her and tell her you know, this is what I want to do, and she was always very encouraging. She always encouraged me to continue on doing what it is that I wanted in life. And I remember when I went to high school, the first thing I did, I went to go see the counselor and I told the counselor. I said okay this is -- I said I want to go to college because this is what I want to do after I get out of college. I want to go to law school and become a lawyer. She says no, you don't want to go to college. I says I don't? She goes no. Then she goes into her desk and pulls out some pamphlets for some tech school and she goes, you want to go here, to DeVry, you want to go here and you want to get a good trade, get a nice trade so you can support your family, bla bla bla. I said no, I don't want to do that. I said, I'm not good with my hands. So she insisted and I said okay, thank you very much, and I left her office and I never went

back, because I realized that I wasn't going to get any help there.

Q: How did that constant, being told you're not going to do anything with your life basically, how did that -- did that push you to actually go on to college and go on to law school? How did you handle that? I know personally it --

F: At some point, you may want to, as a young boy, perhaps feel that -- I mean there are concurrent issues of racism or prejudice perhaps, underlying. One necessarily does not see them at that point but in retrospect perhaps.

A: At the time, to your question, actually it was sort of like it added fuel to the fire, because then I just was, well I'm going to show you. I remember when my mother superior told me that and I was like yeah, what do you know, you know what I mean? I know what I'm going to do. The same thing with the counselor. I just used it always as a motivator. This is what I'm going to do, whether you like it or not. I didn't know how I was going to accomplish it, I didn't know exactly when it was going to happen or how it was going to happen, but I knew this is what's going to happen. And so I didn't let it to sway me or in any way demoralize me or influence me in a negative. I used it in a positive way for myself and just said okay, well I'm going to show them. I guess that's what you would say, is

it was one of these things where I just said, I'm going to show them that I'm going to be able to do it.

Did I perceive it as racism? To be honest with you no, I didn't perceive it that way. I mean I know this is going to sound strange, but as a Mexican American, growing up on the south side of Chicago and things would occur, I never viewed it as racism. I never saw myself like well, because I'm Mexican, I'm not good enough or that someone, because of the color of their skin, is better than I. I always kind of viewed it, everybody puts their pants on the same way. In high school, I said you know we're all -- we were all the same. It's all different groups, different ethnic groups, and we were all blue collar kids. A lot of us had to work if we wanted extra things, and that was the reason why I worked, because I wanted certain things. The fact that there was more siblings at home, I knew that I wasn't going to be able to get those things. So I didn't necessarily view it as racism. Maybe it was and maybe I was just too naïve, or just too stuck in my world to see it that way. When something like that would occur, I just thought okay, well I'll find a way to get around this.

With regards to the counselor, I don't know if necessarily it was racism on her part. I just think it's a blue collar neighborhood, it's all blue collar kids, they

should be getting good jobs and for them, the perception is a good job is a trade school, you know you become a mechanic, which a lot of my friends in high school did. They went on to become draftsmen, they went on to become auto mechanics, body shop guys, working in auto repair. There wasn't that many that I became aware of later on, that actually went on to college. There was some of us. A good friend of mine on the football team, he went on to college, and another one went on to college to become an accountant, but very few actually ended up doing those type of things in terms of going to college and getting a profession. So you know, it might have been, and maybe someone listening to this later on or reading this later on may say, that was racism. You know, what's the matter with you, why didn't you see it as that? Well maybe it was and I just refused to accept it, because I didn't see myself any less than anybody else. I just kind of viewed it in terms of my circumstances. It's like you know, okay so I'm a blue collar kid, I don't have a lot of money, but I'll find a way to get into college, which brings me to college.

Q: Materializing this interest.

A: Right. The other little obstacle that occurred, which wasn't really little. I guess I should back up a little bit. When I was -- I think I was maybe about five or six

years old, my parents, they separated and then later on divorced. My father went back to Mexico City and my mom remarried, so my sisters and my brother are actually, I guess you would say -- although I don't consider them that way, you know they're my half brothers and sisters. My stepfather, he never went to high school. He went to grade school. He had a blue collar job. He worked at (inaudible) Company and he was a good man. He wasn't the type of person that was very affectionate or open or warm, fun. You just kind of knew by the way he was, that he did care about you. And even me and I wasn't his own son, I mean I always knew that there was -- that he did care about me, but he just wasn't the type of person that would put his arm around you and show you affection that way. So anyways, what happened was when I applied to college, I got accepted.

Q: Which college?

A: University of Illinois at Chicago. What was funny is that when I was little, when I was in grade school, they were building the university, and I just happened to mention to my mother, you know that's where I'm going to go one day. She goes oh that's good, that's good.

Q: In Spanish or English?

A: In English. So that was the place I applied to. I didn't apply to any other place really, but I applied there.

Q: What year was that?

A: '71. Actually it was '70, because I applied in my junior year and I got accepted. So was accepted and I was ecstatic. I get home and I tell my mother and I show her the letter you know, and she's not thrilled, she's not excited, you know like this is great. So she goes okay, well you have to show it to your father. She starts telling me, you know she says well if we have to eat just beans and rice, we'll just eat beans and rice. I'm like what with this? So when he came home I showed him the letter and he says what is this? I says well, I got accepted to go to college and he says, "You're not going." I said well why aren't I -- what do you mean I'm not going? He says well, he says when you graduate, you're going to go to work and you're going to help me support the family. And I just like looked at him like what and you know, where's this coming from?

In retrospect what it was is that they knew I had this, but I don't think they really thought that it was ever going to happen. So I was torn. I was torn from the sense of obligation to your parents and to your family, and then also what I wanted in life. I remember I left. I

mean I didn't move out, but I left the house and -- it was interesting, when you asked me earlier about that. When I stepped out of the house, I remember it was a nice summer day, and I went out and I was going to go with my friends, and as soon as I stepped out of the house I remember I said, "I'm going to go." I says, "I don't know when I'm going to go but I'm going."

After I graduated from high school, I didn't go directly to college. However, I applied to a junior college.

Q: Which one?

A: Well at the time it was Southwest, but then it became known as Daley Community College. I went there at nights and I was working, and I wanted to continue going to school because I wanted to build up my credits and keep my credits going because I figured eventually, I'll be able to apply those credits and keep going on and getting an education, then go to a four year university. My thought also was, because I had talked to some people and they said, if you get enough credits, if you go two years, then when you go to university, you'll only have to do two years and then you get a four-year degree.

Whoever reads this, they should realize from my experience that when you go talk to counselors, don't

always believe everything they tell you, because when I went to the counselor at the junior college I says okay, this is what I did. I said, I got accepted at U of I, I don't know how long it's going to be good for, but I want to end up going there and so what do I have to do to get in there? So they were telling me what courses to take, so I took those courses, and then I had enough -- and I went there for a couple of years, although I didn't graduate from there. And then when I applied to U of I, it took them a while before they even told me. And I'm looking at this like okay, I only have like two years in this right? So eventually, they got back to me and they said all right, only one year of your two years is applicable. So I had to go to school three years. That's okay.

Anyway, I held off for a while going to a four-year college, and worked during the day and I went to school at night, and then eventually I went to --

Q: What job did you have during the day?

A: Well, I had a variety of different jobs. My first job out of high school was with a paper company. That was for a young person, it was an interesting job, because I started out -- they did the papers for like newspapers and publications and ads. So there was a lot of machinery in terms of cutting out the long sheets of paper and

everything. I started out working behind one of the things called the -- I forget what they called it but it cut the real long sheets of paper. And then shortly after that, they put me on as the floor person, and I was the one in charge of making sure that everybody was kept supplied; so if they had reams of papers that you had to do for like the flat cutters, or the person who would band everything. I had to drive the forklifts or what we used to call the floor walker and you know, these were fast moving vehicles. So as a young person, I enjoyed this, because you had to get on the forklift and I'd be so quick. It was because I made a game out of it, try to kind of -- you know, there was little challenges I had, I want to make sure everybody loaded up. Then I'd go on and help out at the other floors and stuff like this. Eventually, they liked me so much, they put me on another project, which was -- they had come up with this new invention. When you have round rolls of paper there's a core, and that's where you put the shaft in. Well sometimes when the rolls of paper are transported, they're damaged and the core collapses.

So they came up with this invention to try to open up the cores so they could be utilized, because otherwise, you lose that whole big roll of paper. You know we're talking a huge roll, some of them were like around five feet tall.

That's how large these rolls of paper are. So I got to work with this one gentleman who knew how to operate this, and so we went traveling around, going to various paper companies and opening up these rolls. The thing was is that I realized that this wasn't what I wanted to do in terms of working in this type of environment. So I stayed there for a while and then I moved on to another place. It was called Drackett.

Drackett, they made all the household items, like Drano, the O-Cedar broom. I don't know if you've ever seen those brooms that are like made out of plastic and they're cut at an angle. But they made a lot of the household items then. I started working as a packer on the line. So what would happen was they'd made these brooms. The brooms would come complete, but then they had to send them out and ship them out. So they would put six in a box, and they had these internal little frames that were cardboard, and it would be like a conveyer line. What happened was you'd have mostly all women on the line, because some of them had to put them in these plastic bags and then they had to seal them, and then they had to put them in a container, and it would work its way down, assembling the broom. Because basically, when they got the broom, all it was, was just a stick and then there was the broom part itself where the

bristles were at, and then the plastic housing. So they had to literally put the stick into the bristles and then put the plastic housing on it, and they had this conveyor belt. Well the thing about it, what really interested me was that if you made so much for the company during the evening, the rest of it was incentive, which means you got that extra.

Q: For yourself.

A: For yourself or for everybody on the line. So the goal was the more you make, the better off you are. We were on the midnight shift, so I would get in right after school. I'd get in and I'd start making all the boxes and getting everything lined up. We made a ton of money, I mean we were happy you know, because by -- let's see, we started out, I think it was -- we started out at 11:00, and I think by -- and we worked until 6:00, and I think by like 2:30, 3:00, we had already made the company their money, so the rest of it was just for us. And then you know, sometimes we wouldn't even take lunch, we'd just work right through. So I was making some good money, but unfortunately, they took me off of that and they put me on what was known as the Extruder machine, which actually makes the plastic for the bristles. They saw that as a promotion. I didn't necessarily see it as a promotion, because I was like you

know, I want to do that. But I was making more money operating the machine and there was more job security in that.

Q: They allowed that flexibility for you, or how did you manage your schedule?

A: It still stayed the same. I mean it was still the same. I was still on the midnight shift, so that was okay.

Q: College was during the day?

A: Yeah, it was like you know from -- I would go in the early evening to the classes. I also turned that into a nice enjoyable experience, because the operator in the morning, he had his own forklift driver, because you had to mix this -- you had to mix all the plastics, and then you had to mix them in the dye, in a mixing room. You had to make sure that everything was just proportionately correct; otherwise, the bristle wouldn't come out correct. So there was a lot of heavy lifting, I mean these huge, 50-pound bags of plastic you would have to dump into this huge mixer and then you would have to dump in the dye. So the gentleman in the morning, he had his own mixer, he had his own forklift driver, he had an assistant. And at night, when they decided they were going to create another line, I didn't have any of that. But you know, the thing that I liked about it was that I got to do it myself. So I used

to drive my own forklift, I used to do my own mixes. So every once in a while when I thought it was safe, I'd try to create a new type of bristle. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. It was kind of like -- it was fun.

Q: Yeah.

A: But then the company I guess overproduced, so then they had to start cutting down. This was an experience where it gave me more incentive to want to stay in school and get an education. The guy on the first shift had been with the company 25 years. I had only been with the company maybe a year? Yeah I think maybe about a year, it might have been about a year. Well, they let him go and -- oh, and then there was a guy in the middle shift and they offered him the spot on the first shift. He didn't want to leave because it worked out just right for him to be in the middle shift, because of his family commitments and so on and so forth. So then they told me they were going to put me on that first shift. I didn't want to be on the first shift because I was going to school and it was going to interfere with my school. But it was like I really didn't have much of a choice. It was either that or they were going to have to let me go, and so I said all right.

So I suspended my studies and went on the first shift, but the guy who was working on the first shift, he needed

to work. He had been with the company 25 years, he was already up in age. They kept him on but basically as a maintenance man; pushing the broom, cleaning around the machines and so on and so forth. And I saw this on a daily basis. I mean this guy had given 25 years to the company and this is how he ended up. Part of it had to do because he was older and you know, they wanted me because I could do all of this. I could do the mixes, pick up the bags, and I didn't need any help with the bags or anything like that, I could drive my own forklift. So they figured if they put me on there, they've cut out all this, and then they cut out the big expense of the operator with 25 years and they've got me.

So I decided after a while, I says you know what, this isn't fair. And I went to them and I said listen, I'm going to leave, I'm quitting, but I want to make sure that he gets his job back, otherwise you know, I'm not going to leave but I'm not going to do the machines. So they said all right and they gave him his job back, they gave him one assistant, and then I quit. And that's when I decided all right, I'm going to go back to school full-time. I'm just going to do it and just you know, just go full-time to school and get it over with, get it done.

Q: And what kind of -- were there any -- many students now get scholarships, even as undergraduates, and that's how they pay. A lot of them are loans as well. Did you receive any...

A: No. In fact, what had happened was at U of I, there was a program for minority students and (inaudible) forgot. I think it's still in existence now. I forgot what it was -- what the name of it was, what the program was. I applied, because I wanted to get in. So I applied and they wouldn't accept me, and it wasn't because -- and I guess maybe now in retrospect, I look at this as like this was reverse discrimination, because it was intended for African American and Latino students, but because of my grade point average being so high, they said that I wasn't acceptable. So like what's that got to do with it? You know, this is -- I'm a minority, you say you're looking for minorities and you know, I'm a minority. So I couldn't get in.

Q: Wow.

A: That didn't put them in good standing with me, because when I actually did get in, and then they wanted me to help out and participate, because when I got into college, I got very involved, and I says forget it guys. But anyway, so no I didn't -- I wasn't eligible for that, and they didn't have scholarship funds. And then also what kind of made it

difficult for me was that I had been working and I'd been saving my money. So financially, although I really wasn't that well off, I was a lot better off than a lot of other students, so I wasn't eligible for scholarships. At the time, a lot of the community organizations that are in existence now, were in existence but they didn't have scholarships. There was a lot of them that I didn't even know existed, and that's one of the reasons why when I started practicing law, when I started getting involved, it was my mission to kind of get this out as much as possible, so people knew about all these scholarships. I wasn't aware of them and some of them were not in existence at the time, but those that were, I didn't even know that they were out there. So to answer your question, I didn't. In some regards I wasn't eligible for scholarships for minorities and others, or I wasn't aware of them or it wasn't there.

Q: When did you begin shopping for law schools, at what point during your college career?

A: Oh -- yes?

Q: I'm sorry, backtracking a bit on this. What kind of groups were you involved with in your undergraduate?

A: Oh, in undergraduate, okay. Well in my undergraduate, I --

M: Thank you very much.

A: You're welcome.

Q: That was Judge Henry.

A: No I know.

Q: Yes.

A: I applied myself first of all, to school. Oh and I should back up. I worked, I stayed at home, but then there's a time when I ended up getting married. I met my wife when I was in high school, but we never dated. It was just one of those things, we met in high school and we were friends, we talked, but we never dated. I didn't meet her until -- I didn't meet her again until after -- a while after I was already going to school at night. Then we met and we started dating and then eventually we got married.

Q: What year was that?

A: When we got married?

Q: When you got married, yeah.

A: You would ask me that. I'll get back to you on that. So anyway -- make sure you delete that. All right, so then what happened was at that point in time, it wasn't just a decision for me, but you know, I had to incorporate her in my decisions.

Q: Yeah.

A: She was very supportive, she was always behind me.

Particularly when I had left Drackett and I said okay

that's it, I'm going full-time, I'm just going to do this. I mean we had money saved up, so it wasn't like it was going from ground zero, but at the same time also, I paid my way through college. I didn't take out any loans at college at all, because I knew that when I got to law school, having already done the research and seeing how much law school was, I knew that when I got to law school, I was going to have to take out loans. So I knew that if you're going to take out loans, you don't want to take loans in undergrad, you're going to take them out in law school.

And when I got to undergrad, I was working. I was working at this place called House of Vision; they made glasses. That was a neat little job, because there was a lot of guys, we were all around the same age and we basically filled the inventory. So when a doctor said okay, I need this glass or this frame or whatever lens, we were the ones that got the frames or the lenses for the doctors. Then I was very fortunate when I was an undergrad, to apply for a job at Lord, Bissell & Brook. It was interesting because what was in the paper was a job for mailroom okay, and I thought well this is a good opportunity for me to get into a law firm. I didn't know Lord, Bissell & Brook, I didn't know what Lord, Bissell &

Brook was, I mean I knew it was a law firm but I didn't know what kind of a law firm it was or anything else. And actually, I had seen an ad for another law firm, and I won't mention the name of the law firm.

So I went to the interview and they liked me, and I was going to sort of be like a jack of all trades. I was going to a little clerk, but I was also going to do a variety of different things for the firm. Then we started talking about hours and I'm in school. So they said well, we don't allow you to take time off for finals or for anything like that and I said you don't? She said no, I said okay, so I guess this is not going to work because you know, I mean I'm working for them but I'm not going to give up what I have for that. So I didn't end up working at that firm. But when I went to Lord, Bissell, I applied for the mailroom. I'm interviewing with their personnel manager and she looks at me and she tells me she says, "You don't want to work in the mailroom." And I was like devastated, because I had got to see the firm already, I had gotten up there. I don't know if you know Lord, Bissell, but it's one of the largest firms in -- it's one of the large firms in the city. At the time, I think it was like fifth largest in the city and you know, the elevators open up and it's the marble walls with the big

letterings, and spiral staircases with the glass doors. I was like, I'm thinking to myself, this is a law firm, this right here.

Q: Yes.

A: So when I interviewed, she told me I didn't want the mailroom job and I was just like oh man, this would have been a great place to work. But she doesn't say anything to me and then she says, "Follow me." So I follow her and I don't know what's going on. So I follow her and we go up, and she takes me to their library and she introduces her librarian, and she told the librarian, she said, "I think I have someone here for you." She says okay, she says when you're done talking Ms. Gaddis, her name was Jane Gaddis. She said finish talking to Ms. Gaddis and then come back down and see me. I said okay. So she has me replace some pages in a book and so I did it, and she goes okay. So she said, go downstairs. I went downstairs and sure enough, they hired me, which for a kid in college, that was a great job.

Q: From the mailroom.

A: Yeah, from the mailroom. It was convenient for me for school, because from U of I, I'd jump on the L and in ten minutes I'd be in the office. So it was great and it worked out just fine. So I was going to school, working,

everything was going great. Towards my third year, that's when I started getting involved in extracurricular at the school. I joined the Student Senate, which was an organization that actually, all the students had to vote for you for. After I was elected to the Student Senate, then I got elected to be vice president. But then I could have moved on but I was like, do I want to stay another year and be president of the senate or do I want to graduate and get into law school?

Q: Yeah.

A: I said all right, vice president is it. I then became involved in the -- I forget what they call it now. It was a group made up of executives and administrators at U of I, and then also students. I forgot the name of the organization, but it was interesting because back then, I got to see the whole layout and the plan of what they wanted to do with the expansion, because at that time, it was just a campus that was from Halsted to Loomis, and from Harrison to Van Buren, and then eventually they expanded it. And then the other activity I got involved with was the Circle Historical Society, and they elected me as their treasurer. That was pretty interesting.

Q: Because you were a history major.

A: Right. Circle was a great school in the sense that it fulfilled my expectations in terms of getting an education, being able to work and moving on, and getting involved in things that I thought were of interest. I always appreciated the opportunity they gave me, of being able to get an education.

Q: So you're moving toward your final years as an undergraduate and you're applying. What were some of the greatest obstacles that you encountered through this application process? Tell us what the outcome was and what law school you decided.

A: Oh, you mean for law schools?

Q: Yes.

A: The application process for law school. Well, this is the first -- that was the first time where I really kind of wished that there had been somebody else that I could go to, because I mean this whole thing about LSAT and how to apply to law schools was totally like new to me and I had no idea what I was getting involved to, or how to approach it. I mean you'd read the books and you'd get somewhat of an understanding but overall, it was still like, how exactly does this work? So I had really no clue and I tried -- you've got to look at it from the perspective as you know, I'm basically, since there's no one else that I

can talk to or rely on or discuss these things, it was kind of like I was alone. It kind of felt like I was groping through the dark.

I took one of those courses where you know, they kind of help you or they give you guides in terms of how to take the LSAT. The gentleman who was doing the class or lecturing the class, he was full of himself, sort of like I could take anything, all that you know.

Q: And this is approximately in what year?

A: This is like '78, '79. So I realized that this course isn't going to really help me, because I mean it's sort of like they give you the stuff but... So I got some old tests. Then I found out that maybe one way of doing it was getting some old tests and that they're actually available in the library. I would just get these tests and then practice taking the test. Then I went and applied and I took the test and fortunately, it was enough to get me in. So I sent applications out and I got -- let's just say I got accepted by two but one of them, I realized I wasn't going to be able to go to school and work at the same time.

Q: Because you were married at this point?

A: Not only because I was married, but don't forget, I had to keep paying my way through school, so I had to work. My wife worked but you know, I had to work also, not so much

just for the household but just to pay for the education, the tuition and the books and everything else. So I decided to go to John Marshall and John Marshall was great for me because it was a school where they were willing to work with me in terms of the schedule. The one person that was very -- actually, there was two women at the school that were very helpful to me; Jane Oswald and Marilyn Criss, and if it wasn't for them, I don't know if I would have made it through law school or not. It was one of things where I -- you know, because I have to work. I was taking classes in the morning and in the afternoon, late in the afternoon. Then one year I'm taking a class at night and then one in the afternoon. So I was like, I was all over the place, but they were very good about helping me out and getting me the class at the hour that I needed it.

So I managed to finish school, working, in three years. I owed them a big debt of gratitude for that, because a lot of other schools would not have been so accommodating, you know they have a structure and this is the structure you have to follow. When I started at John Marshall, my thought was to be a wills, estates and trust lawyer. And then I took my first Trial Ad course and then I realized that I knew what I wanted to do, is I wanted to be a trial lawyer. It was sort of like the bug bit me. As

we say, trial lawyers are actually frustrated actors. So then I took every course that Marshall had to offer in terms of Trial Ad. I enjoyed it, you know it was a lot of fun being in front of the jury and trying to convince them that you're right and they're wrong.

One of the interesting things was, one of my Trial Ad professors, who I became close to, you know I would always ask him, how would you do this and how would you do that? He was very helpful and I always kind of thought it was interesting, finally when I'm getting close to graduating I'm saying okay you know, I want to get into litigation. So what do you think -- what firm should I look to, to try to get into? And he mentioned to me that he didn't think I should do litigation and I said, "Well why not?" He says well, he says first of all, you're not blue eyed, blonde haired and you're short. I says so, what's that got to do with it?

Q: There's plenty of lawyers in Mexico under that description.

A: Well yeah, right. So I always kind of used that as a little motivator afterwards, because then when I went to the City of Chicago and worked at the City of Chicago, knock on wood, I was pretty successful and I always sent them my verdicts when I got a not guilty, and it's like here you go, here you go. After a while he was like okay,

I don't want any more of these, I got the point. And the reason I say all of this is not for people who see this later on or read it will feel sorry for me and say wow, you really had a tough life, but to view it from the standpoint that you really, if you want to accomplish something in life you can do it. I mean, you have to believe in the possibility of the improbable occurring and if you don't believe in it, then it's not going to happen. But whatever the obstacle is and whatever the setback, just realize that it's possible. If you want to make it possible, it will become possible and the improbable can become probable.

All of that said, when it happened to me, I just used it to be a motivator, to push me on, basically to show then, to say okay you know what, I'm going to show you you're wrong and that I'm right, that I can do this. There could have been any number of setbacks, particularly with my parents. My parents were -- like were not supportive. They could have kept me from accomplishing what I wanted to do, but I would not have ever -- whatever it is that I would have gone on to do afterwards, there would have been a part of me always thinking what if. So why think about the what if, just go for what it is you want and if you get the brass ring, you get the brass ring, if you don't, well you tried.

Q: Absolutely. Were there any other -- what were the memories that you had during law school in terms of the people you befriended, a network perhaps, of support, during that period, which is three very -- what I'm assuming, very intense years.

A: They were intense years in one regard, and in another regard, it really wasn't that bad. It made me now you know. Maybe if you would have asked me back then, I would have been like it's horrible, but looking back, there's the pressure of doing well, of getting the grades and getting through school, but there was a lot of camaraderie in the school. A lot of the people that I became friendly with then, I still have as friends now. We maintained that friendship and they're some of my best friends. It wasn't any particular group or segment, it was just sort of people that I became friendly with at school. And I mean we didn't always just constantly stay in touch. I might have lost touch with somebody and then later on down my career, we became reacquainted again.

The professors, believe it or not, were very instrumental in my being who I am today. I mean a lot of them not only were professors of the law, but they were also professors of life. They were willing to give you advice and guidance in terms of okay, when you get out,

this is what it's going to be like. At the time when I was at Marshall, many of the professors had had prior lives. They had worked as lawyers, they had worked in the trenches of the law and knew what it was like, and they were willing to, if you asked them, they would take the time and tell you, this is what you've got to look forward to, if you do this or if you do that, or maybe you should do this or maybe you should do that.

I was fortunate in law school, to work for the professors as a research assistant. It was convenient, because when you were done with school, then you just go to the library and you do research for them. One of them, Professor Michael Seng, he told me, he says your resume looks good but for what you want to do, he says you need to have some practical experience, you need to have some knowledge of the courthouse and know where the courthouse is. So he had suggested that I get a law firm position, you know at a law firm, which actually was good advice. In the sense, it wasn't what sometimes people perceive, that law professors are these cold, unapproachable people. I was fortunate to have had some professors that were actually very approachable, very helpful not only in class but outside the class in terms of what to do with your life and how to approach future employment.

Q: And you graduated from John Marshall in what year?

A: I graduated from John Marshall in '82.

Q: With this note, we're going to take a little break.

A: Okay.

[END OF DISC 1]

Q: We're recording now.

A: One of the things that occurred when I was in law school, there was two, no three other Hispanic students at the law school and particularly two of us, we got to be pretty friendly. We would sit around and we would talk. We started talking about our cultural likes and remembrances and then also some of the differences, particularly when of us was Puerto Rican and you know, Mexicans would talk about Mexico and our remembrances in Mexico, a Puerto Rican would talk about Puerto Rico. We had the idea that we should create our own group, but there was only three of us. So we thought well, we could take turns being president; one day I could be president and you could be president. So we would joke around about that. Then the following year, there was some more Spanish students that were accepted and we thought, we should form an association now, now that we

have -- I think there was like six now, so all right, we've got a big group here.

So I did the research and I found out how we could do it. Ms. Criss was very helpful in that area. She told me you know, she says we have to tell the dean, you have to go down and meet the dean and tell him why you want to do this and everything else. So I and the other student, he was already going to be graduating. So I went down and I talked to the dean, and it was Dean Herzog at the time. I told him we want to start this association, this organization called the Hispanic Law Student Association. And he said what is the purpose of this organization? Well you know, so we could sit around and talk about our cultural differences and also similarities, and have an area where we can just basically get together and share view. And then also, to try to provide assistance for incoming students. He was receptive to the idea and he gave us his acceptance that we could form the organization in a formal manner, and we did. It has grown since then. Now they have a considerable amount of students in the association, and I still go back to support them. It was also an indication of the school's commitment to diversity and providing opportunity, because you know here we come in and we want to create this organization and they didn't

really know what it is that we were up to. But at the same time, we did start putting on programs to raise money for the organization, to develop benefits for student members.

One of our first fundraisers was -- we bought pan dulce, you know Mexican sweet bread, and one of the students who became a member, he was Cuban, so he brought his espresso making machine. So then we had Mexican hot chocolate and we had Cuban espresso and then the sweet bread. We bought a few dozen and we went through it in a matter of minutes, and we had to go out and get some more. I think we were just selling it for like 25 cents apiece or something like that. It was pretty reasonable but yet it was still a profit for us. And then one of the professors said, why are you selling this just for a quarter? He says sell it for me, charge a dollar. So we're like oh okay, maybe we will. Sure enough, they still kept coming and buying it. So that used to always be our fundraiser.

And then we started putting on these mock trials. One of them that we did was using interpreters, and we had this trial, it was a criminal trial, and we had this witness in the trial who needed a sign language interpreter. So it wasn't one of these common trials where you had just a Spanish speaking person that needed an interpreter, but we had one where the person needed sign language. And then

one of the other -- one of the defendants was Spanish speaking, and we had the victim that was represented by the prosecutor to be Romanian. So we had all these different interpreters. I had lawyers who participated in this and real interpreters. It was very educational in the sense that this is what happens and that's not unusual. And I know this is for the next part of this tape, but I ended up having a -- when I was a judge in domestic violence court, I ended up having a trial where we needed three different interpreters, because all the parties spoke different languages. I was like hey, I did this in law school. So it was kind of interesting. You know, it was an opportunity for us to create something in the school, that the school allowed us, and it still flourishes.

Q: So that was seminal in --

A: Right, yeah, yeah. Now they have -- they've gone beyond the bake sales and now they have these fiestas. Every semester they have a fiesta and they have one of the rooms set up like one of these Cuban nightclubs, with the tables and the candlelight, and they have a DJ and they have a variety of different type of Latin foods. Then they have the Latin music playing. It's kind of neat to see it from the day when you know, we just had the bake sales, now to the fiestas. It's kind of nice.

Q: Can I quickly just share with you. I guess you know, in the Latino popular imagination, there was this idea of the son or daughter that "makes it" through college. It's (inaudible) depicted through Gregory Nava's film, *Mi Familia*, and there's this idea of the divided self you know? On the one hand, you are dealing with your ethnic, cultural background, which is a reality, and on the other, your profession you know, which deals primarily within a very -- you know, the wider Anglo community. How does this experience for you, of a divided self -- at least because it seems pertinent -- fit into your experience?

A: I always -- yeah it's interesting because for years I felt all right, I have to obtain my goal to be fulfilled in life, I guess you would say. To become a lawyer and then ultimately become a judge was my purpose in life. I mean, I have a lot of other purposes in life now, but that was my singular goal and I just had like tunnel vision. I mean I was aware of things occurring, I was aware of my culture and my ethnicity, but at the same time I was just like this is what I have to do and this is where I'm going, and I'm not going to stop until I get there. And then once I was able to be where I'm at, then I started kind of like branching out and doing things, sort of reaching back and helping out others. I became very involved in other

organizations, Hispanic organizations, like the American GI Forum, I became involved with the Hispanic veterans. I went back to the neighborhoods to speak in the high schools and in a sense, it was sort of like -- particularly in Pilsen. I would go back to St. Procopius and I'd go back to Benito Juarez. And the sense was that you can get them to realize hey listen, I made it, you can do it.

It was funny when people would tell me, like you know, you're like the prodigal son, you've come back and we're very proud of you because you haven't forgotten. And there's a part of me that says like well, I did for a while, because I was like hey, I don't want to have nothing to do with anybody, this is what I'm going for. And now it's sort of like okay, now you know, if I can give back, I'll give back. So in that regard, I feel a little more generous in the sense of you know, if there's something I can do to help out. We do quite a few things, like with the Judge's Association, we have book drives and we give back to the kids on the west side and the poorer areas. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

Q: Yeah, (inaudible).

A: But yeah, there's a part of me that feels that you need to try to give back to the community, give back to those areas where I feel that maybe I could be of assistance and help.

Q: Not, never -- excuse me. Mainly with the Anglo aspect for example, in your profession, you don't want that being confused with your ability, and in that sense, I think as a lawyer, as an intellectual in the legal profession, to sort of be a great example because it's honestly a breakthrough, especially from the idea that at John Marshall you were able to foment this new association of Hispanic students. And on the other hand, you could count the number of students, but never letting go perhaps, of those roots.

A: Right. I think I just felt that to try to do it a bit earlier, might not have benefited anybody. It might not have benefited me, it might not have benefited the community and the people that I wanted to try to help, because I myself at the time was struggling to get where I wanted to be at, and to sort of have deviated, in one way or another, I might not be of service to anybody. Then once I think I felt comfortable.

The other aspect of it too is -- and it's kind of sad to say, but as I was marching on to my goal, particularly in undergrad, I didn't encounter a lot of Latinos along the route. There were some that were in undergrad, and they belonged to a particular club or association; I forget what it was called. And at that time, I just viewed it as they were just kind of like segregating themselves from

everybody else, instead of becoming incorporated and was sort of like okay, this is what we're going to do over here, and we're just doing our thing. And then you know, some of the -- because as a history major when I was an undergrad, and I would take some of the Latin American studies, there was a lot of emphasis on like it's them against us, even by the professors in the university and it's like, well that's not going to accomplish anything. I mean if you have this attitude about them against us, then it's going to be them against us. I just felt that that was negative in the sense that it wasn't furthering what I wanted to do. I mean you wanted to become part of the overall picture.

It wasn't until maybe like when I got into law school, that I encountered other Latinos who were of similar mind in terms of we all have goals, we all want to achieve certain things in life. We still had our cultural remembrances and our ethnic remembrances and similarities, and wants, but we also knew that in order to obtain what we wanted in life, we had to do certain things.

Q: That was great, thank you.

F: Thank you very much.

A: Thank you.

[END OF DISC 2]

F: We're recording now.

Q: Today is November 19, 2005, the time is approximately 11:50 in the morning. We're at the Cook County Court Building at the Daley Center. We're conducting part two of our interview with the Honorable Judge Jesse Reyes. Thank you Judge, for agreeing to be in the second part of the interview.

A: My pleasure. I am enjoying this.

Q: You graduated from law school and what was the area of law that you began practicing?

A: The area I went into after graduating from law school was litigation. I realized in law school that I'd like to become a litigator. So I started out with a firm that I was clerking with, Kenneth Gore Limited, mostly was a personal injury, worker's comp firm, it was a small firm. There wasn't that many people in the office. It was Ken, he was the head person in the office, and then myself and a couple of other attorneys, and we were all relatively out of school, I mean we were maybe like two, three years out of school. The other associate that had a few more years of experience on us, after I passed the bar, then he went on to work somewhere else. It was a plaintiffs' firm and

was a very interesting experience. I was able to bring in business which was profitable for everybody, but on the other hand, we were not trying cases and I wanted to try cases. Ken's philosophy was if you could settle the case, it's worth more for the client and everybody involved to settle the case. Being a young lawyer right out of law school, anxious to try cases, you know you want to try everything. In retrospect, I understand his philosophy and see it from his viewpoint, but at that that point in my life, I wanted to try cases.

So after about a year in Ken's office, Kenneth Gore's office, I moved on and went to the City of Chicago, and I worked in the City of Chicago Torts Division. I enjoyed my years there. It was a very rewarding experience. I got to try many cases to a jury, both in State and Federal Court. They were all civil litigation cases.

Q: Involving what kinds of issues?

A: Well, it was a variety of different type of issues, but mostly personal injury. The city at that time, had also some medical centers, so some of them involved some issues with regards to medical malpractice, but not that many of them. Paramedics' negligence, which was, when I was there, was starting to become a major issue that a lot of the plaintiffs' firms were trying to litigate against the city.

So I would say you know, we would represent the police officers, the paramedics, various departments. Nothing with regards to civil rights. It was all mostly personal injury, mostly also wrongful death type of cases. I got to do what I wanted, which was to try cases, and try cases in front of a jury. Fortunately, I was very fortunate in having an opportunity to see some very good judges and some very good lawyers try cases and hear cases, the judges hearing cases. So it was a great experience for me and I loved doing it.

I also think I got my appreciation of what a judge should be on the bench and how a courtroom should be. You can kind of say that I came in, in the profession, in terms of litigation, at a time when it was still old school and everything was very proper and very professional, and you always had the proper decorum in the courtroom. That's the way I, now as a judge, like to run my courtroom, with that same type of proper decorum and professionalism. And so from the standpoint of just being able to be in a courtroom sometimes, when I was a young lawyer at the city, it was a great experience, because I got to see some very good judges on the bench.

Q: Could you elaborate on that; what makes a good judge?

F: And part of the idea of the proper decorum.

A: I think for me, what made a good judge is someone that was a good listener, that was very attentive and listened to both sides and then, after having had an opportunity to listen to both sides, they would make a ruling on whatever the issue was. With regards to proper decorum, I think respect is the key word; having respect for the judge, for the courtroom, for each other as advocates. My view is that I as a judge, represent an institution. The courtroom represents an institution and our way of life, and the people that are in those courtrooms also represent the system as advocates. It's a long tradition and it's important for the public to understand that everything is done in a proper and orderly manner. Quite frankly, a lot of times the reason why people cannot resolve their issues and end up in the courtroom, is because there's emotions, there's feelings one way or another, so therefore in a courtroom, everything should be objective and unbiased, and everybody proceed in an orderly, proper fashion, particularly in front of the public. I think it's important for the judge and for the lawyers to conduct themselves in a manner where the public can feel, at least at the end of the day, that justice was done and that it was done in a very professional manner.

Q: Can you perhaps elaborate on one of your most significant -
- or something that really comes out at you as a very
memorable experience in the courtroom when you were a trial
lawyer.

A: When I was a trial lawyer? Something that happened in a
courtroom that was memorable. Oh wow, that's a hard one.
I don't know if I could really single it out and say there
was one specific event, but I think the opportunity to
stand in front of 12 people and to present your client's
position, for me that was always a memorable moment. When
I got to go up in front of 12 men and women and give a
final closing argument in a case, I took a lot of pride in
that, because that's the ultimate in terms of what our
system of justice is. The people are going to decide this
case one way or another and I am the one that is, at that
point in time on behalf of my client, presenting what I
feel are the facts that they need to really take into
consideration, and the evidence that has been submitted for
them to take into consideration and you know, basically
hand it over on a tray and say this is for you, for you to
decide, and after it's all over then you make your
decision.

I used to always end my closing remarks with a phrase
that may sound a little hokey, but I really believed in it

a lot, and I always made sure that it was part of my closing, because I really felt that that was what epitomized the entire process. And that was that, "In a court of law, there are no winners or losers. There are only those who receive justice." And then I would finish by saying, "And justice in this case dictates that you return a verdict in favor of my client." And I really did feel that that was the truth, that in a court of law, when people come in to advocate their issues, there are no real winners or losers, there's just the one that receives justice. That's what the process is supposed to do, it's supposed to deliver justice.

Q: Have things, in the lapse between when you were trying at the beginning, and then once you become a judge, how have things changed for litigators in these times?

A: How have they changed? Well, I don't know if they've changed from the perspective of that the process is different. I think unfortunately, some of what is going on in popular media gives people the wrong impression of what happens in courtrooms.

Q: Such as, like The People's Court and using the court as entertainment perhaps.

A: Right. Well, I don't want to name any specific programs, but I think that the current trend in the media is that

people being depicted as being scolded and yelled at, as people shouting at each other, and that's not what happens in reality. It's not a contest. In the modern media, it's about winning and losing, regardless of whether it is justice being delivered or not. It's about who's going to win and who's going to lose, and if you ever watch those programs, they'll say, we want to speak to today's winner. There are no winners.

Q: And this idea also, of that the two minute trial, almost like the five minute, fast, quick justice, and then next. You know?

A: There are rare circumstances where you have those little sound bytes in reality. That's all it is, they just show these little sound bytes. So I think that that unfortunately has given the public the wrong image of the system of justice, and a very slanted image I should say, because again, it's about dramatics, it's about the sound bytes, it's about who's going to win here and who's going to lose.

I was at a conference not too long ago and someone -- one of the speakers mentioned that if you have cable, you could literally, for about six hours, click one channel after another in succession and watch six hours of courtroom TV, and a lot of it is dramatized. And I'm not

talking about the courtroom TVs where there's actually courtroom, I mean there's actually a camera in a courtroom that has real trials taking place. We don't have that here in Illinois yet. So that's not what I'm referring to, but these other shows where this dramatic sound byte type of scenario takes place and they said that's -- you know, you can watch six hours a day. I mean, I can't imagine watching. I mean, I don't watch that much television as it is, but rarely do I ever watch those type of programs.

I remember when I was younger, what was it? L.A. Law, I think it was, came out, and I watched a few moments of it. Now again you know, it's a drama, and it was a trial and this lawyer is going on. It's cross examination, he's hammering this witness and he's getting away with things that you would never really be able to get away with in real life. I found myself almost like I wanted to scream at the television and go like, that's not what happened, that's not what it is. You know, I never watched the program after that because I mean, it's just not -- you know, not based on any type of reality. And unfortunately you know, I mean I'm from -- I have the perspective of having been there and done it, to know that that's not what it's like, but someone who has never been in that type of situation or is going to be going there for the very first

time and they've seen these type of programs, that's what they're going to be left with in terms of impressions. That's what they think the courtroom is going to be like and it's probably a shock when all of a sudden they realize it's not like that. I don't know if I answered your question.

Q: Absolutely.

F: Yes.

Q: If we can dovetail then, into certain realities of the courtroom and into the cases that you began presiding when you were a judge, can you please tell us what year -- approximately what period did you start presiding as a judge?

A: I went on the bench in '97, December of '97, so I've been on the bench about eight years now, going on eight years. I had the good fortune, when I first came on the bench, I mentioned it to my superiors that I wanted to volunteer to travel around, which means I didn't just want to be assigned to one particular area. If they needed someone in a branch court, I'd be more than happy to do that, and they took me up on it. I had a very good experience the first two years of sitting in almost every branch court, actually in every branch court in the county. Also, I've had the opportunity to go to 26th Street and sit in a Bond Court.

At that time, when I first came on, we used to have what was known as the Night, Holiday Bond Court and I got to sit on that. I was in Traffic, I was also assigned to Domestic Violence court, as well as in Markham, which is the 6th Municipal District. I was there for about a couple of years, before I came back to the Daley Center. Now currently, I'm in the Chancery Division doing mortgage foreclosures, the mechanics of things.

Q: You talked about your superiors. It seems like there is -- can you just briefly talk about that process of becoming a judge.

A: Sure. Becoming a judge or becoming --

Q: Yeah.

A: Well I'm an Associate Judge and the process for an Associate Judge is that at certain points in time, the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court will open up what's called the list, and that means that people who are interested in becoming judges who want to run for an Associate Judge position will apply. I believe the year that I ran, which was in '97, it was the early part of '97, there was, I think 366 people that put their names in, for 18 spots. What the process then happens after the individuals who want to become judges put their names in, then you go before the bar association or bar associations, to be

evaluated. And if you receive a favorable evaluation, then -- well, let's put it this way. After the bar associations evaluate you, then you get an opportunity to interview with the Chief Judge's Executive Committee. At the time when I was running, the Chief Judge's Executive Committee was mostly made up of the presiding judges in the Circuit Court. They interview you and they ask you a series of questions, and then ultimately, after they've interviewed everybody who wants to run for Associate Judge, they come out with what's known as the short list, and that's always twice the number of the spots they have. So in our class it was 36. There was 36 of us who ran. It's the most, let's say exhilarating, intensive two weeks in your life, because you have to meet all the Full Circuit Judges, so that means you have to go to all the courthouses and all the courtrooms in the county, to meet them. And not only the Full Circuit Judges, there's some Associate Judges who are also very influential, that could maybe help you, and you want to make sure that you see them as well. But you want to make sure that you get your resume out to everybody and you meet them. Even those who know you, you have to make sure that you meet them.

Then the ballot goes out and then they vote for you and if you're fortunate to make it, then you get sworn in a

short amount of time after that, and then you go to what's known as judge school, for a couple of weeks. That's a school that actually has two components. There's the Cook County component and then there's the state component, and basically what it is, is it's a program where judges and attorneys will lecture on various topics of the law. It's pretty intensive as well. You're writing copious notes down, hoping that you remember everything, because at the time, you don't know where you're going to go. The day when we finally got our assignments was a Friday, and we're all sitting in the -- it was at a hotel in downtown and we were in the banquet room, because this is not only just the Cook County judges but it was also judges from around the state that had just become judges, who were all in the school together. Then one by one, we're getting phone calls to find out where our assignment is. Of course everybody wants to know where everyone goes.

Q: Right.

A: And you know, the rule of thumb in Cook County is that you get 1st Municipal, which means you can go to Traffic or you can go anywhere right? But all of us first started out in 1st Municipal, in Traffic, and it's a great place to start. It's a great place to start because at the time when I was there, we were at the old building over at 321, and they

had this one room, we referred to as the bullpen, and it's where everybody put their robes, it's where everybody ate their lunch, that's where everybody kept whatever files they had. It's where, if you had to make a phone call, there was two phones, you know that's where everybody went to go make their phone calls. And what was nice is around lunchtime or in the morning or maybe after the day, we would all sit around and you know, we would basically ask each other questions about how would you handle this, how would you handle that. So it was a great place to start and to be in.

Q: And now dovetailing for example, into a specific -- well I guess presiding, the subject of domestic violence.

A: Mm-hmm.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit, I guess in general terms, the experience of -- because domestic violence is something that affects all cultural backgrounds, a diverse space of people. What is your experience presiding over such complex cases of domestic violence?

A: Well, you're absolutely right. I mean people generally had this perception that it's just a poor person's courthouse and it's not. The period of time that I was there, for approximately about two years on and off, you had some of the poorest individuals who were in front of you, to some

of the wealthiest. I had people that were you know, street cleaners, and I had some very prominent businessmen, wealthy businessmen in front of me. So you know the spectrum, in terms of economic boundaries, it recognizes no boundaries; no cultural boundaries, no educational boundaries. I mean it affects every walk of life, which is one of the sad parts about it because you know, it doesn't matter if you're educated with title on top of title on top of title and degrees, or you just had basic grade school education, you can be affected by domestic violence. And it goes both ways. It's not just the women, but men are also affected by domestic violence.

Q: And children.

A: And children, yes.

Q: And families.

A: And children, correct, you're absolutely correct, and children. It was an experience for me, because the very -- I remember one of the very first cases that I had was involving a situation where a judge had already, at one point in time, found the gentleman guilty and had sentenced him to the maximum that the statute allowed in that particular type of domestic violence case. Then something happened, when he was getting out, he happened to talk to her and they got together. Now they hadn't been together

for years, okay? And they got back together again and then in the interim, when they were back together, the domestic violence re-ignited and he ended up putting her back in the hospital. To me it was like, how can something like this happen? I mean this particular woman had not been with this man because of the judge's order, for years, and then yet, she went back. Well they actually said they both went back together. The way I kind of saw it was they both went back together.

And so I started looking into as much literature and law with regards to domestic violence as possible, because it was something that I found fascinating in the sense of how could something like this occur. I guess looking at it from a standpoint of never having seen it myself ever in my life, to now seeing these hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of cases, it was just something that I wanted to get an understanding, because at least if I had an understanding, then I could understand what was the dynamics involved. Not so much to be geared towards one side or the other, that wasn't my purpose. My purpose was to understand, what was the driving force, because it's both of them, it's not just one. So as a result of that, I became well versed in the area of domestic violence and I then started becoming -- invited to go speak locally and

also around the country, at various conferences regarding domestic violence. It was a fascinating area. It was an area where it's not -- even though it seems like maybe there's black and white, there's a lot of gray. It's an area that unfortunately, I think will be with us for a very long time. I think everyone involved, the judges, lawyers, social workers, are doing a great job in terms of getting an awareness out there, just an awareness of what's going on and how to protect yourself in terms of your rights and so on and so forth.

One of the things that happened when I was there, I had the good fortune of having heard the first victimless domestic violence case. And by victimless, what I mean is that the State's Attorney's proceeded with their case without the victim testifying in the courtroom. It was an interesting case. It went up on appeal and I was affirmed, but it was a case where the state, outside of the victim's testimony, had enough corroborating evidence, that they felt that they could proceed with it, and I found that they did. I ultimately found the defendant guilty and then of course they appealed it. It was one of those where you know as a judge, when you know you're going to get appealed, you're always kind of wondering, well what's going to happen, what's going to happen. They came back

and affirmed us, so I was glad just from that standpoint, because it was something that when I was looking at it in terms of the case law in the county and in the state, there was very little that I could really kind of go by, in terms of victimless domestic violence cases. So I just made sure that I made a very good record, because I knew the public was going to be taking a look at this.

Q: And approximately what is the period that you presiding over domestic violence, and then what happens after? I mean you go from presiding over very complex cases and becoming actually a very prominent voice in the U.S. and in Chicago, and what do you go on to do after domestic violence?

A: Well I don't know if I was a prominent voice. I was just someone that they always kind of invited to speak. But from there, I went out to Markham, the 6th Municipal District, and I was out there for a couple of years also, in the 6th Municipal District. My assignment, although I was given one room, I was also, because of my background with domestic violence, was asked to, if needed, to hear domestic violence cases. But my call was mostly misdemeanor, court call. I had a variety of the villages and towns in the south end of the county. That was interesting because on the south end of the county, you

have some of the poorest townships in the county and you have some of the wealthiest. So you get a wide variety of cases and a wide variety of representation in terms of you might have a public defender on one case and then you might have a very prominent criminal lawyer representing someone on another case. So it was interesting from the standpoint as a trial judge, because it wasn't always the same thing day in and day out, it was always something different.

The way the misdemeanor courtroom was set up, it could be a variety of different things. It could be a simple assault case where someone is alleging an assault in a theater, because the Tweeter Center is over there. So in the summertime, sometimes there's always fights after a concert. Or it could be one where -- I had a situation where a woman was being charged with stealing from a cable company; she was using their cable services and not paying for it. So it was a nice mixture because you never knew from one day to the next, what you were going to get, and they were all pretty interesting.

Q: What were the prevalent problems that affected communities? I'm thinking immigrant communities and the poor communities.

A: I think violence was a prevalent problem that you would see with poorer communities, and I think in the immigrant

communities, I think it's a lack of knowledge, lack of cultural understanding, lack of awareness of the laws. For example, in our society we frown upon physical use of force to discipline children, and in some other cultures, that's quite appropriate. And when someone's brought in front of you because they had been charged with physical abuse to a minor, they don't have an understanding of what they did wrong.

Q: Right.

A: Because in their culture this is quite appropriate.

Q: "It's necessary at times."

A: Yeah. In their culture, they feel that if you're going to discipline a child, that's quite appropriate. So sometimes they don't have an understanding of why they're in front of a judge, being charged with a crime.

Q: Right.

A: You know, in the process, somehow or other, you have to try to make them aware of it. And again, as a judge, you can't advise them, but you try to make them aware of why they're being charged the way they're being charged. Because sometimes what I found interesting was throughout the process, in terms of getting arrested and getting processed, meeting with the lawyers, both prosecution and defense, that aspect of it really was never ever fully

explained. Now they're in front of you and they're still kind of looking like what did I do? So then you try to explain it.

Q: What was the most difficult case, for that matter, or cases, that you can remember, during that period of time?

A: Difficult? Difficult in the sense of facts or difficult in terms of...?

Q: Perhaps in terms of, it could be length, it could be complexity, it can be where you're recognizing so many external forces at play and yet there's this need also, to create a very objective environment, to impart justice, as you have said.

A: I don't know if it was difficult.

Q: I guess my word is more complex.

A: The one that I'm sort of thinking of, it was a case that involved neighbors. It was a neighbor dispute and it was a cross cultural type of situation. There were siblings involved, along with adults, and it was a situation where throughout the trial -- it was a lengthy trial. Throughout the trial, these people didn't get it. They didn't get that at the end of the day, whatever happened at the end of the trial, whatever my ruling was, that they were going to end up having to go back to their respective homes, and they were going still have to deal with each other as

neighbors. So for me it was sort of like, don't you understand, you're neighbors, so you should try and maybe get along like neighbors. Because it was clear that neither one was going to move, which would have made life for everybody a lot easier, right?

Q: Right.

A: But in this one it wasn't so much that it was difficult. It was just sort of maybe difficult for me to sit there and listen in the sense that you know, do they realize that they're going to have to go back home one day and they're going to have to look at each other when they throw out the trash or when they're cutting the grass. I don't know if that answers your question or not.

Q: Yeah. It's really interesting, because I guess it goes back to this idea of really not knowing sort of what... I mean, I guess there's this dichotomy and there's just really a separation between civil society and then what comes to the courtroom. And probably it does back into our ideas of what the courtroom is and you know, how it plays out to popular imagination. I guess into that, we wanted to ask you if you think that -- how specifically you think our ideas of judges have changed over time.

A: Well again, I think it goes back to perceptions. I can't say specifically, but my view is I think that our

perception, our general perceptions of judges is not what it used to be. And I think our general perception of not only judges but the legal profession and of lawyers right now, is it's not what it used to be. Now you know, the fact is that I think what happens is that we go through these trends and there's a period of time where judges and lawyers are held in high esteem and then there's a period of time when they go back down. Right now I think we're in that period of time where we're on a downswing. I think it's going to bounce back up and we're going to go back up. I take it back to what people see on a regular basis in the media, and the media, I mean just in general, radio, television, the movies, I'm lumping it all together, a lot of them derive their impressions of things from that, because that's what they see. And then unfortunately sometimes, I think that's what they end up believing, that that's what happens. And then if it's not what a belief is, at least in terms of societal views, it's what a view is.

For example, in the fifties, and I don't remember exactly when, there was a movie called the *Anatomy of a Murder*. And the one thing a lot of people don't really know is -- you know there's a courtroom scene and the judge

who plays the judge in that actually is a real judge. But it's a trial, it's a murder trial.

Q: I've seen that movie.

A: Have you seen it?

Q: Yeah.

A: You know, the advocates are strongly fighting for their clients, both the prosecutor and defense, but yet the way they do it, it's in a very professional manner. And the judge is depicted as a very wise professional who's doing his job. But then, years later, you get these other movies that come out and they depict the whole system completely different. I don't remember the name of the movie, but it's with Al Pacino. I think *And Justice for All*. It's Al Pacino and Jack Warden, and there's this one scene where there's total chaos in the courtroom. Everybody's like yelling and screaming and everything else.

Q: It's not *Serpico*?

A: No it's not *Serpico*. The judge comes out and he stands up and everybody's like -- you know there's no order right? So all of a sudden he just pulls up his robe on one side, he pulls out a gun and he shoots it in the courtroom to get order. I mean it's you know, the sad part about it is that it's a drama, you know it's not a comedy. I mean that part was sort of comedic, but the movie itself is supposed to be

a drama. To think that we went from this one here -- and I think its *And Justice for All*, I'm not sure. You go from one viewpoint to another, that's a viewpoint that people see, in the movies. This is a viewpoint the general public will see, and I think that's you know, that's damaging.

Now, there's others that argue that it's a result of Watergate, that after Watergate, we started questioning authority, we started maybe not having the same type of deferential respect for authority, and it trickled all the way down. I mean the court system was involved in that process, the legal system was involved in that process, and there was a lot of question about lawyers and judges with that process. And I think maybe that's what we're still seeing, is that viewpoint of lack of respect for authority and deference to authority. But I think this is a general view, I think that's what's going on in society today with regards to judges and lawyers.

Q: And in a deep sense, we come to really not understand it at the end of the day, because we see judges, particularly in the way they're situated even within the courtroom, in the center. So we see judges in the sense, as you know, having this very objective place. And then when we hear things like what happened to Judge Joan Lefkow, suddenly we come to see them as human beings. What is your opinion of that

and the shifts that are going on, particularly with this case, with Judge Joan Lefkow.

A: Well, I think again, I think that what it boils down to is a lack of respect again. Judge Lefkow, as a person, represents the institution of the judiciary, and she presided over cases and she made her decisions based on whatever facts and evidence that she had, and that is what her rulings were. Now there's an appropriate means by which, if you're not satisfied with a judge's ruling, to proceed with. You know this would occur to Judge Lefkow and then a judge down in Atlanta, is again, where people decided that individually, they want to try to change the decision or change the process or not abide by the process, and that's a throwback to another time, when there was no law and order. I think this is where we've come full circle, in the sense that okay, you don't respect law, you don't respect order, you don't respect authority, this is what's going to happen. Unfortunately that is what happened and I think hopefully, that will send a message to people that okay, so she's only one individual but next it could be you, it could be your neighbor down the street. I mean if people don't want to abide by the rules, they don't want to abide by authority, okay fine, I'll just get a gun and shoot you, then I'm done with the problem. But it's

not going to end and you know, that's why we need to have courtrooms, we need to have the law and the order to maintain that within society, so people could feel protected, so they could feel that this is -- whether I like it or not, this is where we resolve our differences, and if those differences are not resolved in my favor, so be it, but this is where we go.

Q: Mm-hmm.

A: It's not up to us to determine how it should be, but the process that we've all, as a society decided, this is the process and whether we like it or not, at the end of the day, that's what the decision is, I have to accept that decision. I think the unfortunate, what happened with Judge Lefkow, I think is an example of this trend of people saying well, I don't like the way it is and I'm going to try and change it.

Q: Moving into another area.

A: Good.

Q: What are the things that judges can talk about and what are the things that judges cannot talk about, while they are judges?

A: Well, the one thing that we cannot talk about and the one thing I think sometimes maybe people do not understand, is pending cases. We cannot address anything regarding a

pending case. So you see sometimes, press conferences after a trial or a hearing or a ruling, the lawyers will be out there speaking. You never see a judge, because even though the judge may have entered a ruling, that case may go up on appeal, so you can never speak about a pending case. That's just something, that it's against our ethical rules to do. We cannot do that, so we can't speak to the media. We can never give our viewpoint in terms of how we felt about a particular ruling or a situation in a courtroom. And that's the unfortunate side of it because sometimes, when something happens in a courtroom in terms of a judge's ruling or certain circumstances, everybody gets the lawyer's point of view, but no one really, unfortunately, ever understand the judge's point of view, and you never really will, because the judge is not going to speak about the case, you just can't do that.

Q: That's one of the points of this project, this oral history project, especially for retired judges, to look back on their cases and say when I tried this case, I felt this way and this is what I thought of it, and finally have their point of view said. So this is why we're doing this, so in another 20 years, when you -- if you want to retire, you can come back and new people will come and interview you again so you can get this all out.

A: Okay, good. But you know, what can we talk about? There's other things that we can talk about. We can talk about the law, we can talk about the process. We cannot give people advice. We cannot give people advice on pending cases, but we can address certain aspects of the law. Like for example, one of the things that we cannot do is right now we're going through the process of a new Supreme Court Justice being appointed, so we can't speak on Supreme Court decisions and Supreme Court opinions or the process. I mean that's something that we cannot do, because we cannot get involved in partisan politics, which is another thing that we can't speak on. You may have your preferences about some political party over another or one political leader over another, but we can't speak on it.

Also, in terms of soliciting funds, that's another thing that we cannot do. And the downside of that is that a lot of times you might want to get involved in an organization because it's a worthwhile organization but you know, the fact that you're a judge, it will be viewed as you're trying to use your office to have people give to this cause. So that's why we don't (inaudible) as judges. But you know, one of the things that you can do is you can be proactive in certain areas. For example, when I first came on -- and you know, I've been fortunate to work for

two really good Chief Judges; Judge Don O'Connell and Judge Tim Evans, because I, in many regards, wanted to be proactive about some of the things that I think that we can address as judges and that come to my attention.

One of them for example is, when I was in Traffic court, I realized that a lot of people that are only Spanish speaking, were not aware of their rights and were not aware of their consequences. I speak Spanish, but I never speak Spanish in the courtroom, I always use an interpreter. Sometimes, when the people come up and they're talking to the interpreter and the interpreter translates, they would be like, and well I don't understand what I did. I mean you know I just -- I just had a few beers, what's wrong with that? Now, from where they came from, that might not be a violation of the law, but it's a violation here. So I became active in helping produce a Spanish speaking DUI video that was an educational video. We called "Que Precio Tiene La Vida." It was about a young man who was married and had some children, went to his brother's birthday party at his mom's house, he had a little too much to drink. And then we did the little thing too where he was just drinking beer. His brother was drinking hard stuff but he said no, no, he didn't want to get into that because he wanted to not get drunk. But he

did have a little too much beer, he left. Sure enough he's swerving over and he gets stopped.

Now, what we did also in the video is we showed that no one had any seatbelts on, which is another violation that happens a lot, and no one -- he didn't have insurance, which is another violation. And his name was Miguel Rodriguez and what we did was, we showed what happened to Miguel through the entire process. I've got a little cameo role in there, I played the judge. We showed not only what happens to him, but what happens to everyone else around him. For example, he wanted to get a judicial driving permit, so that means he had to tell his employer, which he wasn't too thrilled about. He was the only one who was able to drive in the family, he had a driver's license. His wife didn't drive, so now it impacted his family, because how are they going to get the kids to school, how are they going to go shopping, because now he's got this problem with the DUI. We also show how it impacted his extended family, his mom and his brother and so on and so forth. And then ultimately, we ended up with statistics in terms of financially, how much it ended up costing him, having to get the lawyer, going to court, paying all the fines and fees. And then we finished it with statistics in terms of how many people have been killed as a result of

drunk driving and how many have been injured seriously as a result of drunk driving. So that was something that I'm proud of, that I was involved in, that was through the Circuit Court, and the purpose of it was to educate the community. We were able to get it out to a lot of community centers, a lot of community groups, and they exhibited it. Even now, I mean that was almost eight years ago. I still get people who say oh, I saw you. I say well that's good, I hope you learned from it.

Q: Yeah.

A: So you know, those are you know, that's like one of the things that as a judge, maybe you're not able to speak, but you're able to address something in a way, that you see. Fortunately, we're constrained because again, we can't raise funds, we can't participate in certain type of -- so it's kind of difficult sometimes, when you do see a problem, that you as a judge cannot do it because of our restraints in terms of the ethics, but sometimes you can find a way to get around it. Same thing with the domestic violence. I went around speaking because I thought, well maybe this would be a way to let people know what they can do if they're faced with this type of situation, and they'll also have an understanding of why people are the way they are in this situation.

I was in Philadelphia and one of the speakers was a former prosecutor who had tried a case where the woman was being accused of cheating on her husband, and she was not. He finally confronted her and they had children. I mean he beat her so bad, she ended up -- she almost died. When she was in the hospital, she almost died. He went to talk to her in the hospital, to testify, and she said no. Through the whole preparation of the case, she said no, she's not (inaudible). He finally put the case on and they were successful and he was found guilty. After the trial she went up to him and she says thank you. He was like taken aback because I mean she was -- he had her on the stand, she was not a good witness for him. And then she came up to him and she said thank you, you know thank you and says you know, I just couldn't be the bad guy because of our kids, which means that even though she almost got killed, because of the children, she still had to maintain that relationship with his family as well.

So you know, sometimes people don't understand the other part of the dynamics that it's about, so that's why I took on these opportunities to speak because again, like I said, it's not just black and white, there's a lot of gray out there. And I'm with the Illinois Judges Association in the Circuit Court. We raise books. We give them out to

schools, needy schools, and this year, we just actually raised over 3,000 books that we donated to a school on the west side, because the school is located in an area where they don't have a library and these children come from some families that can't even afford to buy a book.

Q: It's interesting, because you grew up telling us the way that you saw in your life, with the mobile library that used to come every couple weeks. We would like to think that it's 2005 and that people have -- children have access to the library at some point, and they still don't.

A: Right. There's you know, I mean there's a lot more libraries in the city now than there was when I was growing up, but yeah there are still areas where that's not available to them. There still are situations where maybe there are libraries, but some of these children can't afford to buy books. So through this process, we're at least able to give them books, and we've been doing this now for about four years, giving out books to different schools.

Q: That's very admirable.

A: Yeah, thanks. So there are things that judges can do. Also, through the Judges Association and the Circuit Court, we get involved in the Principal for a Day. Some of the judges go out to schools throughout the city and they talk

to the students, because I think it's important that at least they see you. You know, whether you're a woman or a minority, they see you and they see you as a role model and they realize, if they did it, I could do it.

Q: Absolutely. Just to get to the last part of our interview. What would you sort of like to say at this point in your life as a judge, the main ovations, the main continuities of the court system in your experience. How do you foresee the court system in 50 years, I mean when things become more complex. That's one and then two, if you have any questions that you would like to give us about any further details about this project.

A: I'm sorry, so where do I see the court system going in the future?

Q: In the future, yes.

A: Well, the court system also has to keep up with society, and you know we're becoming very technological in our society. I mean, we're being reliant on so many pieces of electronic equipment in our everyday lives. I think that's one place where I think we within the system have to try to keep pace in terms of information, being able to access information. I remember when I was able -- when I was practicing and if something came up where the judge needed some information but it was in the court file, okay?

Because a lot of times people don't realize, a judge doesn't just get off the bench and the court files are there, you know they're kept by the clerk. So sometimes when you need some information that's in the court file, you have to try to access it. Now, the clerks have the computers where they can -- I can go to my clerk and just kind of bend over a little bit and say you know, was there an appearance filed in this case, and he could just plug in the case and get that information. And in the past, you would have to get the court file, go in the clerk's office and manually send somebody down to get it and pull it up and bring it up. I don't know where technology is taking us, but that's something that I think we have to be prepared to keep in pace with.

I think also, judges have to become more adept at the use of technology, and some of them are and some of them are not. It's a generational thing. The other day, my law clerk, we had a power downage with the computer, so the computers weren't working. I needed a case and my law clerk said, how am I going to get the case, the computers are down? I said well, I says you know, you can go and get the book and shepardize it the old fashioned way and find the case. Oh yeah, that's a good idea. And you know, when I was in law school, we learned to do research both on the

internet and then also the old fashioned way, in terms of getting the book and shepardizing it or go get it. So we don't want to lose that, but I think at the same time, we want to make sure we keep in pace with that.

Beyond the technology, I mean I think that we just have to maintain that sense of again, that we all represent an institution and an institution that's important and necessary in everyone's everyday life. You know not everybody is going to try to take justice in their hand, hopefully not, but there's still the need for the system. There's still a need to get your disputes resolved, and we just have to make sure that we maintain the integrity of the system. I think that's important. The world will always be changing, there's always going to be innovations that are going to create different changes in our lives, but we have to stay on the steady course that has gotten us to where we're at. In terms of what kind of litigation matters come in front of a judge, those are going to be a lot different 20 years from now than what we're dealing with now.

When I graduated from law school, a friend of mine gave me a book, it was a statute from the thirties, and I think it was 1939. And to think that all of the laws in the State of Illinois were contained in one book. And now,

when you look at the statue books that we have, it's rows and rows of books. So I mean that's where we've gone from the thirties until now, but just to think that at one point in time in our society, it was all contained in one book, and I'm sure 20 years from now it's probably even going to be a lot larger. I don't know if I answered your question.

Q: Absolutely.

A: Yeah, okay. I kind of went off.

Q: Do you have any questions for us in terms of what this project is, our experience interviewing you?

A: Yeah, I'd be interested in your experience in terms of interviewing me. How much coffee did you have to drink before the interview, so I wouldn't put you to sleep?

Q: No. I'm not a big coffee drinker.

F: Neither am I.

Q: This for us far surpasses what we expected from a judge again, perhaps coming in from the outside.

F: You're not as scary as we thought.

A: Oh okay good, all right thanks.

F: Yeah, you're a real person.

A: Oh, thanks.

Q: It seems, at least my experience as a Mexican American, and from a particular context, you always have this perception that -- sort of like that you are not demonized, but you

don't see -- you see like the law in very sketchy terms
because --

A: This is like the why?

Q: Because there's a lack of knowledge on this process. For example, the DUIs and growing up in a community that's done all this, and you're always seeing that. You always think in terms of harassment and not in terms of using the state as a tool, which it's interesting because recently, I went to see (inaudible). She was saying you know what, despite of all of the things that have happened in the past, it seems to me that the state and the processes of the law is our best tool, to first understand it and make it ours. Because really, I think that's one of the big problems in our society, is that we don't make that institution ours.

A: Right.

Q: We try to always separate ourselves and polarize ourselves.

A: Right.

Q: And I don't know what are the processes that make us do that. And I think this is a great experience for me really, you know, and also obviously a role model, but it doesn't necessarily have to be because of your particular background.

A: Yeah, I totally agree with that. I think every migrant group that comes in, and you could see it in terms of when

you had the Irish, the Jewish. The first wave have to deal with the differences, and there's always differences; there's cultural differences, there's legal differences, there's societal differences, and the first wave coming in, they have to deal with all these differences.

Q: I think it's saying we have had enough.

A: Okay. But then they adapt and then they assimilate, and for some reason or other, I don't know why, but Latinos as a whole -- and I mean as a whole, because you could see individual groups, but as a whole, do not do that. I mean they come in and they see the differences and they're like -- (beeping) and that's it. They don't want to try to adapt, they don't want to try to adapt or try to assimilate. They just want to maintain the difference and I don't know, there's people -- and I'm sure in your family, just like in my family, they've been here 20 years and they refuse to want to speak the language or become citizens. I'm like what's with that?

[END OF DISC 3]

Q: And we're recording now. To our audience, please excuse us, but we ran out of time. But we would like to extend our deepest appreciation to Judge Jesse Reyes, for his

interview. Judge, thank you so much for participating in the oral history project.

A: It was my pleasure to be part of the project. I look forward to hearing it and reading the transcript. I recommend you to colleagues, about this fine work that you have done with regards to the oral history.

Q: Thank you so much Jesse Reyes, have a great day, bye-bye.

[END OF INTERVIEW]