

UP002659 Oral History Project

Detroit, MI

Roy McCalister Jr

Interviewed by

Cristy Burchartz

December 15, 2017

Detroit, Michigan

As part of the Oral History Class in the School of Library and Information Science

Kim Schroeder, Instructor

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Brief Biography

A life-long Detroit resident, Roy McCalister Jr. was born April 24, 1954. A graduate of Detroit Mackenzie High School, he furthered his education at Eastern Michigan University, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Criminology/Criminal Justice. Mr. McCalister would further his education when he received his Masters of Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma. He is also a graduating Fellow from Michigan State University, Michigan Political Leadership Program and has received advanced degrees and diplomas from Northwestern University Traffic Institute in Management and Leadership and from the United States Army Warrant Officer Advance Leadership Course.

Mr. McCalister is a retired Detroit Police Detective Lieutenant and former Commanding Officer of the Detroit Police Homicide Section. He retired from the United States Army at the rank of Chief Warrant Officer IV/Special Agent to the Army's Criminal Investigative Division.

Over the course of his military career, Mr. McCalister has been stationed in countries such as Korea, Germany, and Iraq. He spent one year in Iraq with the U.S. Army and two as a civilian contractor during which time he worked to improve the quality of live for thousands of Iraqi citizens.

Mr. McCalister has worked as an Investigator with the Legal Aide, Federal Defenders Office of the Eastern District of Michigan. He won the City Councilman's Seat for District Two on November 7, 2017. When not fulfilling his role as a City Councilman or Investigator for the Federal Defenders office he takes an active role in his church and community.

Interviewer

Cristy Burchartz

Abstract

Roy McCalister Jr. is a life-long resident of the City of Detroit, a U.S. Army Veteran, and a newly elected councilmember from District Two. Discussed, in brief, are his goals and objectives for the City of Detroit, as well as issues he identifies that are road blocks to Detroit's future. He shares how he hopes to accomplish the goals and objectives he's outlined and he gives encouragement that he hopes others will benefit from. There are brief glimpses into Mr. McCalister's personal life and how he became the man he is today.

Restrictions

No Restrictions

Original Format

WAV audio format

Transcription

CB: Today is December 15, 2017 and I'm interviewing Roy McCalister for our oral history project. Good morning and thank you so much for agreeing to do this. I appreciate it.

RM: Thank you so much for the opportunity.

CB: I'm going to start out (basically) with, tell me a little bit about your childhood.

RM: Okay. I grew up in the city of Detroit. Lived half my life on Detroit eastside and the other half Detroit westside. Only child. Mother, father both were workers in with the General Motors Tech Center and we had a pretty good life, had some good values. Grandparents very strong workable family. We moved to the westside of Detroit, where I graduated from Detroit Mackenzie High School. Went on from there to Eastern Michigan University. Received a bachelors degree from Eastern Michigan. Then went into the police department and I was laid off for five years and that's when I went into the military. During that time, I received my bachelors, I'm sorry, my master's degree from the University of Oklahoma. Then I came back to the Detroit Police Department and retired in 2006. Back to Iraq. Then came back. I was an adjunct professor with ITT Tech and University of Phoenix. Then I've been with the Federal Defenders office since 2010 and I'm getting ready to leave there and take a position with city council.

CB: You just answered most of my questions

RM: [Laughs]

CB: You said your parents worked at the GM Tech Center. Was it the one in Milford?

RM: No, Warren, Michigan.

CB: Warren? Oh! TACOM.

RM: TACOM

CB: (mumbles) I forgot it was called that. Your decision to become a police officer, what drove that?

RM: It really was, it was during the era when Coleman Young came on board and I happen to come down from Eastern, I was, just during a break. At the time they were recruiting in front of Hudson's building. A gentleman asked me if "Hey, would you like to fill out an application for the police the department?" I was just like, it just (mumble) and didn't think anymore of it. As the process went on they called me up, had me down for an interview, and in the process and as it went on I became more and more I became more and more interested in it. It was really

interesting and my objective was try to make some changes and do positive movement on the police department.

CB: You said you went to Eastern Michigan University for your bachelor's degree. Do you mind sharing what that was?

RM: Yes, it was Criminology/Criminal Justice.

CB: So, then becoming a police officer would have been parallel from that. And then you entered the military. Did you retire from the military?

RM: Yes, I did five and a half years because of the lay off from the police department. Then when I was called back, when they were going through the process of calling back to the police department I remained with the reserves. I did eighteen years with the Reserves. I have, I retired with twenty-three and a half years.

CB: That's a pretty impressive career.

RM: Thank you

CB: Would you mind sharing what your job was in the military?

RM: I started off with admin and then from there I became a CW4 in Criminal Investigative Division (CID).

CB: Then becoming an investigator would have been the next parallel step from you becoming a police officer?

RM: No, not really. Really, because I was an investigator from 1985 and throughout my career because I was assigned to Internal Affairs/Internals Controls Bureau. Therefore, it was parallel that I did investigations with Criminal Investigative Division with the United States Army. So really my career had just continued on with civilian, with the police department, and military with the Criminal Investigative Division.

CB: It sounds like it made one nice neat package.

RM: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

CB: What did you think of your whole military experience.

RM: It was a pretty good experience. Especially going over seas and looking and being engaged with people. During my first three and a half years of active duty I was located in the far East. Therefore, I was in Korea, Japan, Okinawa and then the last portion I was in the Middle East, Iraq and then it allowed you the opportunity how other folks lived and have an engagement with other people.

CB: Now, when I did a little bit of research on you, and they kept it very, very brief, I noticed that you are a member of several organization, very active in those organizations. How did you decide what organizations over others that are out there because there's a whole plethora of organizations that you could have become involved with? How did you decide which best suited you?

RM: Well mainly I look at organizations where I can help others and that's mainly what the driving force is. Prior to me moving to where I currently live I was active with my community association. When I moved, in fact it was funny because I didn't know where I lived my wife moved while I was in Iraq and once I got in I got involved in my community association and became president of it. I've always been active, police benefits, you know (mumbles). The different organizations really as far as I can help others and be a factor in the quality of life of others and I guess that's why I ran for city council.

CB: What was the driving force in you becoming in involved in politics?

RM: Really it started back in 1988. What happened was the Urban League had its convention then. I happened to be head of security, for the then president, Johnny Jacob and traveling with him I had opportunity to meet the then council people like Maryann Mahaffey, Erma Henderson, and Mel Ravitz, the folks that really cared and fought for the citizens of Detroit and Detroit. I stated after my career with the police department this is how I wanted to end my service, as a city councilperson. To continue to do the things they were doing. That's what started it.

CB: During your campaign, what did you walk away with? What did you learn from it?

RM: You have to understand, again, it started back in 1988, that desire and I've actually been running for this position since 2005. Each time you learn a little bit more and you get out and you have a little bit more name recognition and you kinda learn what issues to build your platform around and how to maintain your campaign and therefore it came together in this campaign here. With me being successful. Plus, the opponents I was running against. The incumbent the people were dissatisfied with the representation they were not receiving. Really when I stopped after the 2013 campaign I never really stopped being involved with the people, going to their meetings. That kind of gave me an edge as far as people knew me, people understood issues was, I understood what their issues were. It kinda like combined into a, I guess, a collaborative between myself and the communities and associations.

CB: That's awesome. As a new city council member do you hope to accomplish? What initiatives do you want to see go through?

RM: One of the things, I mean there are several issues that I want to see through. Mainly is enhancing the quality of life in of the people within my district and the city of Detroit. What I'd like to see is more apprenticeships and trades taught to different individuals that, for them to get into the work force. I want to see some development in our area. District Two, which is the

district I represent, it's the highest voting district, as well as the highest tax paying district in the City of Detroit. I believe the folks should have that type recognition and should be inclusive in the issues and matters that are going on. The other thing I want to make sure that the people are represented, their voices are heard, and their issues are addressed. Those are some of the main things. Collaboratively, all of those issues combined, you know, they help enhance the representation.

CB: Well, that answered the next one.

RM: [Laughs]

CB: You're just covering them all. The city as a whole, where do you see the city going in the future?

RM: The city, I believe, is going back to the to the era of the late 1960's, early 1970's when the City of Detroit was the, how would I say it, they were the image for everybody throughout the country. Everybody looked at what happened to Detroit. Even when we went through the emergency manager, everyone looked at how is this going to affect Detroit because this is going to affect the rest of the country. But I know when I was in the military, when I went to the military initially went, the people said "Oh! you're from Detroit." Because we were the automotive leader, the fashion leaders, the music leaders, and so that's the thing I want to bring back. The recognition that we had during that era and its coming back to that. There's a lot of development forward but what I'd like is some of that development be transported to the communities and that what my objective will be, to make sure that their inclusive.

CB: This is something that I see when I drive around Detroit. I see all of these abandoned buildings. I see the failed jail. What do you see happening with those buildings and, you know, that their abandoned and some have been set on fire, that is a huge black eye for the city. What do you see happening in the future with those?

RM: Well, with District Two we have a combination because we have a very high-end community and we have a very low-end community and we have the mid community. As far as abandoned buildings that can be resorted I would like to restore them because of the material that build when they were build was much better the materials of the homes that are being built now. Those that are destroyed, those that are burned out, we want to demolition, makes some areas and rebuild hopefully have a quality of building maintenance that will be manageable and attractive for people to come in. With that I want to restore, not only residential buildings but the business building because that is the tax base of the City of Detroit and with a higher tax base we can have more services as far as police, fire, trash pick-up, things of that nature. We want to enhance that tax base both on the business and on the community. That's what I'll be working towards.

CB: I like that idea because Detroit is a fabulous city.

RM: Oh yes, it is. Its growing and a lot of folks is looking at the futuristic process of it.

CB: You know we've seen some negative press on politicians in Detroit. As you said the world is looking at or the nation is looking at us. What about your feelings on how, in the past, all of these politicians their negative images, I know we have some good ones here. What do you like what's happened in the past with city council and the politics going on in Detroit? What negatives would you like to see go from negative to a positive?

RM: Again, when we're talking about going back to 1988 when you had Erma Henderson, Maryann Mahaffey, the folks that really fought and cared for, that the type of city council or elected officials that we want to bring back. That's not only at the local level, that's also at the federal level and, you know, I'd like to build those relationships. Of course, we're going to have individuals that have gotten away from that stream that are currently elected now that are looking at a paycheck or "I want to maintain this position so I'm going to work to maintain the position whatever it takes" or "I'm going to use to elevate myself to the next level." Its gotten away from serving your constituents because that's what they elected you for. So, therefore I want to bring back that close ties as far as city council goes. I want to build those relationships with others, like commissioners, state reps and state senators and federal congress and federal senators. These are the relationships we want to build that so people will have a feel of confidence in voting for their elected officials. I think that's one of the reasons why we have such a low turnout. People say "well one it's not gonna do, not gonna make any difference and two, why vote for these people they're not going to look out for us either way. So, I'm not gonna vote. Why vote?" Well we want to change that mind set. That's what I want to do and what I want to start to do.

CB: [Lost thought] Changing the mindset of the people is extremely hard. How do you plan to get these others onboard? You can't twist arms and say your going to do this. You can make suggestions and say this would be for the good of your community. How are you going to get that through to them to make them understand that these are their people, they need to do this, that this is something that is for the good of the city?

RM: Well, the thing of it is your absolutely correct. Each individual has their own mindset of what they want to do but what I like to do is lead by example because if you start doing things where you're taking care of your constituents and the constituents are really calling your name and constituents are calling you as opposed to their own representative, then they're going to take notice of that because every four years or every two years, whenever election time comes up the people are going to say "You know what, you know we got a representative in here and this is what we need." It's going done by leadership and its going to be done by example. When people understand that there is someone out there fighting for them and when our elected official understand that it's the people who have the power to either keep them in office or remove them from office, that's when its going to start because when you look at it. Although the proposal, the new tax bill, we looked at initially what President Trump did, he was trying to like strong arm some of the republican, higher ranking republicans, but they were concerned about what their

people, what their constituents were going to say. Were talking midterm elections coming up and they were like health care was the main one, they were like do we want to take this health care away from the people. Their looking at this and what happens to me at midterm elections if we do this. Well, the same mindset has to be where you consider the people as opposed considering what's best for you or what's best for whatever, it's the people. I mean, its always been, when I taught at ITT Tech and University of Phoenix I used to always tell my students that it's the people that is the power, not the government but it's the people and those are the ones. When you start changing that mindset and people start believing or feeling confident that they really do have a say so then that's gonna start changing things but it has to be by example

CB: Basically, your going to bolster the confidence of the people and give them that voice.

RM: Yes, yes.

CB: Going back to your military background and your early police days. I know you said in 1998 you were head of security for Johnny Jacobs.

RM: 1988

CB: Yes, 1988. How do fell that this prepared you for today. What skills did it give you?

RM: It gave me the skills of people skills, I guess you might say, because what it did was stated that and this has always been something, if you take care of the people, people are going to take care of you. That was police department, that the military, I mean that is your community associations, as long as the people feel your taking care of them they're gonna take care of you because they want you to be there to continue taking care of them, allowing to have those benefits, allowing them to advantages that normally they would not have had. I guess that's the whole thing, taking care of the people so that they'll take care of you.

CB: You would say that it defiantly helped you develop those leadership skills?

RM: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Again, when you talk about the city council back in 1988, that's what they did and addressed them. Even when you talk about Coleman Young there were some people that didn't like them but a lot of people said he took care of the city. That's the whole thing. I learned that from, again, not only police department, military, but also in the community sector.

CB: I didn't think about this earlier, you did tell me a little bit about your childhood. Was there any one thing that wanted to make you want to do the criminal justice route, the military route?

RM: When I initially went to college I went there to be an attorney, as you go on you look at things and say "do I really want to do that?" and when I came down and I was recruited in front of Hudson's building that changed my message. You know you can do somethings and make some differences with the police department. Even today a lot of people say are you coming back to the police department. Before I got elected "are you coming back to the police department,

you should be chief.” It’s always a measure of everywhere I’ve went folks have wanted me to come back and work with them or give them the leadership. I even have guys are in Afghanistan, who served with me in Iraq, “can you come back and give us some direction and be there to support us?” I believe its just a means of going through and making sure that people appreciate what you do for them and that’s the overall measure. Again, it goes back to, again, taking care of the people.

CB: It really does. Can you tell me some of the community projects you’ve been working on lately?

RM: Oh yeah, there are a number of them. The State Fair Grounds, the project has been in limbo since 2009, ever since the State Fair. I’ve been trying to push and work with the State Fair Coalition Development to make sure that there is some movement on that. We have rec centers; Johnson Rec Center is another one where the community and the University of Detroit Jesuit (U of D) is at odds with other because the community that it is a historical rec center and they feel that University of Detroit Jesuit takes it or buys it they will no longer have access to it. It has to be rebuilt. Next to it you also have Higginbotham School and one of the things I want to do with Higginbotham School is bring it, as far as trade or apprenticeship or make it where it goes into a medical field, as far as mental health, health care, and things of that nature. Make both of those viable where they will help do something. Of course, we have the medical marijuana dispensaries. Which I’m not against any person who needs medical marijuana but the fact is I don’t want Detroit to be the mecca of all these dispensaries and everyone else, everybody comes to Detroit to get their medial marijuana but then they go back to their own communities. We want to make its so that its viable and meets the standards. Those are some of the projects I’m currently working on and trying to bring some additional industries to the City of Detroit, give people jobs.

CB: You said Higginbotham. Your looking at trade, apprenticeships, or medical school [interrupted by RM), mental health.

RM: Mental health, something along the lines of the medical field.

CB: Or medical field, yeah. Are you working community partners, like any of the universities?

RM: Yes, see that’s the other thing I always say, everybody, Midtown and Downtown has a lot going for it but to me District Two has the same thing because we have the same thing that Downtown/Midtown has. We have institutions of higher learning, we have hospitals, we have communities, we have businesses and what I want to do is I want to organize all those entities, bring them together and see how our resources can be utilize to help build District Two, build the community up.

CB: If the community retains the rec center, you said it was Johnson, and the University of Detroit Jesuit does not purchase it, how are you going forward with getting this declared a historical building?

RM: Well, one is to talk to the historical personnel at the city, City of Detroit, that the first thing, the other thing is we want to see if we can have a fundraising initiative because it's going to take three million dollars to get it back in operation and another two million. Well, if we have athletic, baseball, football, hockey, basketball, I would like to tap into some of the professional teams that deal with that and help build. We have, also, other investors that would I think would build into that. Therefore, get a number of the community people to do a business plan to make sure it is running functionally, in an operation that gonna satisfy and suit the community.

CB: That sounds like a wonderful idea. Revitalizing the building, renovating it and having the sports field would bring the kids, give them a safe place to play, which making someone's child safe makes that parent happy and that whole contact between you and the community. Which is awesome. That would be something [interrupted by RM]

RM: The other thing it does is when you involved your more likely to accept it more because you say "look I had something to do with this and therefore I'm going to make sure my part and the additional parts are maintained and move forward on."

CB: Your making them a stakeholder in their own community.

RM: Yes! Exactly, exactly.

CB: You said the State Fair Grounds, you're working with them. I haven't heard a lot about what's going on at the Fair Grounds, as I told you before we started the interview I'm not a resident of Detroit. I've driven by the State Fair Grounds, I've never been there personally. Can you tell me a little bit more about what's going on with that?

RM: Sure, what is happened is you have one organization called Magic Plus, LCC. That involves Magic Johnson, the basketball player, Marvin Beatty, who is a developer and investor, and you have Joe Ferguson and they have had a lease form the state because the state still owns the property. The state has leased it to them for development since 2009 and you also have another association with the State Fair Coalition Development that has Metro Plus and they have had presented ideas as far as technology, transportation, different types of things that are futuristic, residential and the combined they both have good ideas for that property. One of the requirements with the state is that they work with the City of Detroit and talking to both groups it seems like that there are some things that are not coming together with the City of Detroit in order to make that move forward. Being on city council I what I want to do is see where I can cut the red tape and let's start bringing things together and let's start these initiatives forward because even with Metro Plus, Meta Expo they both said these are some good ideas that can bought and help enhance this property. Were looking at technology, were looking at transportation, were

looking at manufacturing, were looking at housing, senior citizens, there's a number of initiatives that can be dealt with not only with that particular property but the surrounding property in that area. Because when you look at the State Fair it actually borders three counties Wayne County, Macomb County, and Oakland County. Not only is the development bring forth the people from those counties we want to bring some initiatives that's going to bring worldwide. When folks come from other states and/or other countries that's where they want to go, that's where they want to be. We're talking about Uptown, again, then we have Downtown and Midtown. What we want to do is we want make it viable and we also want to make it, one of the things I want do is that have Livernois the Old Avenue of Fashion, we want it make assured on State Fair Grounds is also comparable the Avenue of Fashion, we done one over-riding the other that's gonna cause problems, we want them to work together.

CB: Everything needs to be seamless. Midtown flows right into Downtown. I've seen quite a bit from other people, you know, the rest of Detroit needs to be revitalized and I have to agree with that. It honestly looks like the areas your looking at, some of them are outside your district I'm assuming and it looks like you're moving the right way, its just getting everything to mesh together and everybody to communicate. Metro Plus and Magic [interrupted by RM]

RM: Metro Plus and Magic. Metro Plus and Magic. Metro Expo and Magic Plus. You will get those mixed up because they are similar.

CB: Thank you. Yes, yes. They would both be on the State Fair Grounds at the same time?

RM: Well no, what it is Metro Plus is really the developer that has that property. Meta Expo is the community. Again, its about bringing the entities together to work together, so everybody has a stake and say "Okay, I have a part in this, I have a stake in this." Together we can make sure this initiative is successful.

CB: I really have to agree with that because when I used to drive by the State Fair Grounds everyone and a while and its disheartening to see where things have gone. I even remember coming down to Detroit as a kid and being in Heart Plaza and Belle Isle and we stopped coming because of the conditions and now I'm bringing my kids down so they can see what the city's like. I'm always hearing "(indrawn breath) You go to Detroit! Oh my God, aren't you scared?"
No

RM: But you know it's also changing too. There's a couple things, starting with State Fair, every Labor Day you have the State Fair Festival, more or less. It allowed the people of Detroit or the kids in the City of Detroit to see farm animals to see cultures and allowed the farmers to come in and deal with city issues. Again, your bringing in two different entities together and combine their ideals and say "Okay, we can do this together." When the State Fair left that was taken away from the City of Detroit and the children. Then when you look at how we can measure and make sure we move forward, again, we're looking at, when you talk about region the State Fair Grounds covers three counties. Therefore, when you're bringing in ideas from these other

counties then you can expand and its not just one particular city or county, you have a combine and then that's how, not only how help the region but we help the state grow and that's what we want to do. You know, what I look at Kristen is my objective is to say, just like transportation one of the things I want to do is say we need to have transportation not only from one city to another city, one county to another county, but I'd like to also see it go from state to state, and eventually country to country. That's vision that we need to be looking at because when we talk about complete, its global now, its not just regional, its not just local, its global and that's where we want to be. That's when I talk about bringing Detroit and escalating it back up to that height, so that globally we are recognized and we are competitive.

CB: That very true. You said on transportation saying that you wanted not just regionally but interstate and then worldwide.

RM: Worldwide

CB: You know we have the Q-Line but it stops in a certain place and we have the People Mover but that only goes in one huge circle.

RM: Exactly.

CB: Do you see, well even the bus, let me back up for a minute. Even the bus system could use improvement put that requires funding as well. How do you see funding making mass transportation more accessible and throughout the state and even interstate? Because starting within our own state, that's first.

RM: What happened was last year we had regional transportation authority and that proposal failed and one of the proposals was we had five counties involved in that. We had Washtenaw, Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb, four counties, I'm sorry. Washtenaw and Wayne County was for it moving forward but you had Macomb County that was against it and you had Oakland County that was against it. For various reasons they were against it. One of the reason, I'll say with Macomb County was the fact that they already paying a millage with Semta and therefore they were not receiving the services so they were like "why do we want to pay a millage when were not receiving now." So that's understandable. But when it failed it also at looked at Detroit and Michigan the metropolitan mecca of the world now you've taken that back because when you travel we're really, really behind. We have systems that go from the city to the airport, we don't have that any more, everywhere else you have that. The other issue we have transportation systems, Washtenaw County has its transportation systems, of course Detroit has its with DOT (Department of Transportation), and Oakland County/Macomb has theirs with Semta. What needs to happen is you need to have a regional transportation authority that is an umbrella for all those and everything goes evenly, as far as pay, as far as transportation, where everybody comes together and its equally involvement. One of the things that Amazon coming here, one of the things that Amazon looked at was you guys transportation systems, you really don't have that transportation system, which is a factor. Now you see Oakland County, Macomb County are now

saying “oh we need to have transportation.” So now the movement is going forward to have, to bring in regional transportation but it has to be under an umbrella where everyone comes under that one umbrella and everything is divided equally.

CB: I can tell you the reason it failed in Oakland County.

RM: Oh, I know why it failed in Oakland County [Chuckles]

CB: Public transportation only goes to Pontiac.

RM: Yeah, yeah

CB: And that’s a problem.

RM: And see the Q-Line was supposed to go to Pontiac and all of a sudden it stopped. Again, we have to start looking at, visually a open mass transportation because not only are you looking at transportation within but your looking at a lot of people who need transportation for employment, senior citizens who need medical facilities, for transportation to get them to their doctors, we have young people that need to be out, to go and see and experience other communities besides Wayne County. So, there are a number of reasons why we need transportation but again, it just be just local or regional, it has to be international as well as global.

CB: Yeah, I would have to agree with that. When, I’m not sure if you know even the answer to this. When they were looking at this public/mass transit in Michigan, did they even look at other cities like Los Angles, Chicago, and New York who have these mass transit systems. I know the one in California it goes from LA (Los Angles) out to places like Seal Beach and various places beyond. Did if they looked at those?

RM: I believe they did but I believe because we had some counties that were really persuasive it was not really initiated. Now, I think their going to say “look this transportation here in California, this transportation in New York, this transportation in Ohio lets bring it together, lets look at this, lets observe these and see how we can make it comparable to the transportation in Michigan.” I think its being looked at now because there’s a push to get mass transportation, as before it was like “um, we really don’t want to do this.” So now it’s more of a objective as far as looking and seeing how we can improve the transportation because now a lot of things is being determined by it. One is Amazon and now the see and when we talk about transportation, Kristen, we also have to look at the waterways.

CB: We do.

RM: I mean the Detroit River is the gateway to the world and we have to utilize that transportation as well. As far as our travel, as far as what we need to do is, as far as movement,

so its not only the transportation as far as tires but also transportation as far as air, as well as sea or water.

CB: Getting a transportation a system that hits, you know, Detroit

RM: It's versatile

CB: It can be very versatile.

RM: Right

CB: It hits the airports because those in Romulus even though there it says Detroit on them.

RM: Exactly

CB: Something like that I think would be absolutely amazing. I would like to see something like that in my life time but it might not until my children's but they'll benefit from my ground work.

RM: But the objective is to get it, at least get it started but it's started.

CB: Yes, yes.

RM: It might not be my lifetime or your lifetime but it's started and where we, okay, we look at how do we get this transportation from, going from Oakland County to Macomb County to Washtenaw County. Then we start, okay, that we've accomplished that now we start looking at how we get it from Michigan to Ohio, to Illinois, to the other. Now we've got that done, now we'll start looking at how we get it going from the United States to Mexico to another country. Again, we have, the only thing that divides us from Canada, which is another country, is technically is water. So, we have to start looking at these things but like I said it might come into, you know, we said our lifetime but a least let us get it started and each time we progress a little bit more.

CB: What promoting and I know this sounds silly but Amtrak. It's a railway. I remember going into Pontiac as a kid catching the rail to Detroit then taking it home.

RM: Yeah

CB: We don't use that like we should.

RM: Well you know, when we look at going back to the State Fair Grounds there's a track there that goes from there to Canada. There are underground tunnels that goes from Michigan to Canada, Michigan to New York and those things are being moved forward and being progressed now that were looking at how we're going to expand our transportation system.

CB: Underground tunnels? You're not referring to just the tunnel (interrupted by RM).

RM: Going to Canada underground, yeah.

CB: Yeah, and we have one going to New York?

RM: Yeah, because you have to understand that the New York, the Canada comes in, Canada connects New York and therefore what we do is we go from Michigan, Canada, to New York. So, you know, again we're looking at how we start moving from state to state, country to country.

CB: I hate being in the car so I usually fly [laughs].

RM: Yeah, well yeah. But, you know, you got to look at, this kind off the subject, you also have to look at how safe is our air lines now.

CB: I honestly don't think that's off the subject now because we're looking at a mass transit system and air is probably the largest other than automobiles that we have.

RM: And its being attacked now. I mean there's so many different things that have come about since 9-11 (September 11, 2001) that has caused our airlines where people are more or less saying "Well you know, I don't want to go through that. I'd rather take a train, I'd rather drive." You know the airport is still there but when you look at the security factors and the things you have to go through, people are looking at that.

CB: (had to pause briefly) Okay, so we were talking about the air and transportation.

RM: And how its being threatened by the number of, you know, attacks that's been goings on. As well as the security, you know, people feel well I don't want to go through this.

CB: I'll still fly, I hate driving [laughs].

RM: Uh hum (making sound of agreement).

CB: Amazon, now I know they came to, not necessarily the City of Detroit but I think it was Livonia. What do you think about that? How does it benefit our, the city?

RM: Well, employment. Employment, the industry as far as you have another viable industry that is going to come in. It brings competition to your current leadership, that's by/for the area. It just brings in a new vision and a new welcoming for something that has the potential not only jobs but also, again, puts us on that scope of as far as going globally.

CB: I know it looks like my notes are all over the place but they make sense.

RM: [chuckles]

CB: Now, I haven't asked anything beyond your childhood. What about your family? What do they think of you going into politics and taking everything, you've brought from your previous

experience? The military, the police academy, the degrees you've obtained. How do they
(interrupted by RM)

RM: You know, the folks, both of my parents are expired and me being the only child so there are no brothers and sisters. My son, who is also in the military, he's in the Air Force, he's in Europe now. He's proud of the fact that, you know, his dad has accomplished a goal seen since he was a child and my wife is appreciative because she's been in there hanging with me. We kind of have a parallel. She received her doctorate degree, in fact we went down this year for her to walk and so therefore we both have our ambitions and our goals that were kind of like paralleling, moving forward together. So, I think it's something that, you know, relatives are always proud to say "I have a relative that's in whatever." So, its been a positive move.

CB: You said that your wife moved when you were in Afghanistan and you didn't know
(interrupted by RM)

RM: In Iraq

CB: Oh, sorry. Excuse me, Iraq. Afghanistan on the brain. That was kind of funny [laughs].

RM: Yeah, yeah. I tell you because when I left people asked "Where do you live?" I don't know.
[laughs]

CB: Somewhere in Detroit [laughs]

RM: Right. Had she been out of town when I came home I wouldn't know where to go. You know, I didn't know where I lived and it just so happened she, when I came back into town she picked me up and brought me to where I lived.

CB: That's fantastic. That's going to stick with me for a while [laughs].

RM: [laughs]

CB: I didn't know where I lived [laughs].

RM: Yeah, I didn't know where I lived [laughs].

CB: Coming from a military background myself and having a career soldier. You know, I give you kudos for the military service and your son, he's going in the Air Force, we'll let that go
[laughs].

RM: You know it's a generation thing, what happened was my father was Army, I was Army and when I looked at it kind of like you look out for your kids. Go Air Force, you get the best, you know, of everything. You won't go through as much as we did in the Army and you definitely won't go through as much as the Marine will but if, you know, your going to go into the military. I kind of pushed him to the Air Force.

CB: I've done the opposite.

RM: [laughs]

CB: My son is supposed to be leaving in January for the Army.

RM: And what so funny about it is because we were both in Iraq. We were like eighteen months and Air Force was like six months and they cried about that and I'm like six months, God, we're three times that much and we're, a lot of the Air Force controlled the gates, they did not go outside the gates where we did.

CB: They stayed at the forward operating base, the FOB.

RM: Yes, so that was the difference there.

CB: You and your son were there at the same time?

RM: Yeah, in fact, well, we were there, I was getting ready to leave and he was arriving.

CB: So, a brief overlay.

RM: Yeah

CB: That is really all I can think of. Do you have anything else that you would like to share? Advice, any, just anything.

RM: One of the things I will say because I was running since 2005, it gives a lot of inspiration to a lot of, especially younger people, to say, you know, if you really want something, something that you really want to do you have to be persistent at it. You know, there is going to be some challenging points, there are going to be some time where you know, you feel like, it's not going to be accomplished but if your heart is really into it and stick with it your going to accomplish that goal and so that's one of the things I want to say. Be persistent, if your heart is into something, you believe in something just be persistent with it and it's going to come into fruition. You know and being religious like I am, I always like to give credit and honor to God for allowing me to accomplish the things because I think three I've never accomplished in my life. One was the police department where one of my goals was to become an inspector in the police department, well the highest rank that I made was Lieutenant although I ran Detroit Homicide section. The other thing in the military was I wanted to either become Air Assault or Airborne and I missed that by three days because we were moving out and couldn't stay. But other than that, everything that I've looked at I've technically accomplished. Now that I've made council is the latter stage, now life is complete.

CB: You said running since 2005 is this the first time you've won your seat, or?

RM: Yes, and I've come that close in 2005 I was in the top because at that time it was at large and the top eighteen went on into the general and it went back and forth, I was eighteen then I became nineteen. Then in 2009, I did just miss it by coming in eighteen. 2013 I went to the general and 2014 Saunteel Jenkins stepped down and I applied for it and was in the running but didn't get it. Now, in 2017 it came into fruition.

CB: You know, I think you've accomplished a lot in your life time.

RM: Thank you.

CB: And I'm sure I didn't even scratch the surface.

RM: [laughs]

CB: And I really appreciate that you came in today, you talked to me, and let me record you. And go back to several things, like wait a minute what about this again [laughs].

RM: Thank you, thank you so much for the opportunity I really appreciate it and hopefully there will give, being inspiring to those who have reviewed it. There is some hope for us and there is some things we can accomplish.

CB: There is, I do like some of the comments you made, stick with it if your hearts in it just keep going, just keep plugging at it because that's what you need to do.

RM: That's what, you know, really when you talk about where we came, especially, being black, you know you talk about civil rights and people just kept going and you got your civil rights. You talk about women's rights, women kept going and now they have rights. So, its about continuing that, that objective and that goal you want and its going to come together.

CB: I believe that too. Again, thank you so much.

Bibliography and Footnote Citation Forms

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