

Q: This is September 21st, 2006. This is Mike Smith interviewing former mayor of Detroit Roman Gribbs at the Walter Reuther Library at Wayne State University in Detroit. Well, Mayor Gribbs, we are starting out on a long interview, and as they say, let's start at the beginning. If you would tell us where you were born and a little bit about your parents?

A: I was born December 29th, 1925, in Detroit, Michigan. My mother's name is Magdalene; my father's first name is Roman, like mine. And we lived in Detroit. My dad was working at the Ford Motor Company in the foundry of the River Rouge Plant at the time. Both of my parents emigrated from Poland, so I'm a first generation Pole. However, when they came here, they came here separately, didn't know each other. My dad came over here somewhere around 1910. I really don't have the accurate year. I know it's a little later than that because I remember my father was serving in the army of the Emperor Franz Josef of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We have a picture of him on a horse. But they just his photo, and put his face on an image of a horse and rider -- in the old days, that's how they made the photographs. This picture is obviously before World War I. He served with that organization and

learned how to be a blacksmith. After serving a year, I'm told that he was sent back home and told we'll call you when we need you, sort of a reserve status, I assume. And his friends said, if you have any money, get out of here, because there's going to be another war. And he did. He came to the United States by himself, probably at the age of sixteen years old. I'm only guessing. He came to Detroit. I don't know why specifically except that he had friends and heard that he might get a job here.

Q: Could you pronounce, and perhaps, spell the last name?

A: G-R-Z-Y-B. Roman Grzyb. It's pronounced GRI-ZIB.

Literally translated, it's "mushroom." Grzyby, plural, means mushrooms. And I thought it was a very unique name, but I have since come to know that there's something like 25 persons in Michigan with that same spelling, G-R-Z-Y-B, and only two of them are relatives. His brother Victor also came to the United States, and each of them bought farms. They lived just three miles from each other. The two of them worked the farms, would drive to Detroit and work: Victor worked at Dodge Main and my dad worked at Ford Rouge. They traveled together, roomed here, and then came home on weekends. They'd leave Friday night and return to Detroit on Sunday evening, and that's how we were able to scrape enough money together to keep the farm going. My

mom also immigrated to Detroit by herself. Her father, my grandfather, had come to the United States earlier. She remained in Poland. I remember her saying that she was a chambermaid at a fairly substantial estate in Poland. Her dad then saved some money, sent it to her and brought her over here to America. He then lived on Renville Street in Detroit. My mother had only three years of education. At any rate, ultimately, my mother and dad met, married and resided in Detroit. That's where I was born. My brother Walter only lived until he was about seven or eight years old. We were living on the first farm at that time. My brother Stanley was the second child, and he lived about a month and died. My brother Joe was the third child. He was two years ahead of me. I was the fourth child. As kids, of course, I remember Walter, when we lived on the farm, but vaguely, of course, because I was approximately five years younger. At any rate, my parents married and my father was obviously from peasant stock in Poland and so was my mother. They had an abiding conviction that if you really want to live a good life, you've got to save your money and have some real estate. They didn't trust banks in those days. So as soon as they had a down payment, they bought a farm near Riley Center, in St. Clair County, Michigan. A hundred acre farm.

Q: Where did you live in Detroit? Do you recall?

A: I remember Ewers Street, near Michigan Avenue and Junction.

Q: So, in the West Side Polish neighborhood.

A: It was all West Side, yes. This was a Polish neighborhood; Saint Hedwig was the church that they attended. And there may have been another parish in between. Ultimately, when they moved back to Detroit, it was in the St. Hedwig parish, after they left the farm when I went into the service.

Q: Could go back to describing the farm?

A: Well the first farm was about a half a mile from Riley Center, which had a population sixty or so. The town had a gas station and a grocery store, a church and a school.

Q: This is in Michigan's thumb area?

A: In the thumb area. It was about sixty miles north of Detroit. I was very young and my parents were unable, during the Depression, to make the payments and there was a foreclosure. My father had been laid-off, and although he had paid off more than 80% of the mortgage, in those days, mortgage borrowers lost everything. I do recall very vividly when we had the auction sale, when we had to sell all the equipment, the horses and the cows. It was traumatic. But they foreclosed on the farm, so my parents had to move.

Q: Do you recall the year?

A: No, I really don't. But it had to be about 1930, '31, maybe '32. My brother Walter died while we were on that farm. I remember the funeral. And I think I was three or four years old when they had the funeral. I have a vivid recollection of that. But not much beyond that. We lost the farm in Riley Center and came to live in Detroit. And we were on welfare. I remember that. We got bags of prunes and things from the Welfare Department. But, within a year and a half or so, Dad was rehired by Ford Motor Company, and within a year or two after that, he'd saved some money and bought the second farm. That's the farm I lived on during my teen years until I went into the service. And that farm was near Emmett, Michigan, about four miles from our first farm in Riley Center. When we moved there, my brother Joe and I were able to do a lot of the work. In summertime, we had a hired man, single fellahs that would stay and live and work the farm under my Mom's direction, and my Dad's direction on the weekends. Ultimately, when Joe and I got a little bigger we could do most of the work ourselves. We only had plow horses at that time, no tractors. This is all 1936 and '37 on to the forties. It was a memorable time, of course. We had no electricity on the farm for several years because we were

off the main road. We never had running water. That was typical for farms at that time, although some of them had pumps inside. But ours was outside. We had a regular hundred-acre farm with a team of horses. We did sell milk. We would milk cows every morning, every night. Between the three of us, myself and my mom and my brother, we each milked two in the springtime at least. So, we were milking from five to seven cows and selling milk, and that was our stable income. After a couple of years, we were able to buy a Fordson tractor. During that era, Ford came out with the little Fordson tractors, and the price was much lower. I remember the neighbors would have John Deere or Farmall tractors: I envied their ability to do so much more work with the tractors. So, we bought the Fordson. By that time, Joe was in high school and I was in the seventh or eighth grade. The tractor had lights so we could plow in the nights. We were able to sell the horses and do all the work with the tractor. Between the two of us, we worked the farm and simply hired people during thrashing time when you needed a larger group of people to do the work involved. My brother quit school after tenth grade, because he was then working the farm full time. Then, he decided to become a priest. He joined a seminary of the Maryknoll Fathers, a missionary order of priests. He

decided to go to the seminary. My dad was very disappointed because, among other things, he was losing the one that's running the farm. The priests offered to help him make up the last two years of high school in one year, and then sent him to college. And he did that. So, he went to Akron, Ohio, did the two years in one, went to the various colleges of the Maryknoll Fathers and became a priest. After his ordination, he was sent to South America, to Bolivia, South America, as a missionary priest, and worked and lived there for 43 years. He did different work at different parishes in Bolivia, but that remained his field. He also went to Guatemala, Africa and other places. In the meantime, I remained on the farm and I was unhappy about milking cows every day, whether it was Christmas or New Year's Eve and so forth. Every morning, every night. In 1944, we had a wonderful cash crop of beans that brought us, as I remember, over four thousand dollars. Normally, we were lucky to get five hundred or a thousand dollars of annual income from a cash crop. The majority of our crops were wheat; oats and hay were for the cattle and the horses. We didn't have a large enough farm for large cash crops. When I was a senior in high school, we had the tractor, so I worked two farms, on a share basis, for the neighbors next door, so we were really

farming almost 250 acres. But, the cash crop that brought us four thousand dollars -- I remember that paid off the balance on the mortgage and that was a glorious time.

Q: You've just told us about working the farm. I think anyone who knows about farm work knows that it's a tough job. But, at the same time, you're completing high school. What were your studies like and what were your aspirations during high school?

A: Well, I guess I was a typical farm boy. Planes would fly overhead. Those were war years and I wanted to be a pilot: I wanted to get away from the farm. My grade school education was in a one-room schoolhouse. It was marvelous time. One teacher teaching eight grades. She lived in Memphis, Michigan, drove to this Riel School, R-I-E-L. I walked to school every morning, every night, two miles each way. But I had a marvelous teacher named Miss Cottingham, and she was inspirational and bright. There were three in my class in the eighth grade when I graduated from grade school. She taught me, among other things, the value of education and I enjoyed the learning, so I went to high school. For ninth and tenth grades, I went to Emmett, Michigan, which was three miles away. That was a Catholic parochial school, with only the ninth and tenth grades. Sister Teresa was the principal, and God bless her, she was

inspirational. Father Farrell was the pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church at Emmett. He was such a saintly guy. He inspired my brother, Joe, to join the priesthood. After tenth grade, I went to Capac High School, a public school that was seven miles in the other direction. They had a bus, which I rode occasionally, but I also had a Ford Model-A, my first car, for which we paid a hundred dollars (laughs). I drove it to school nearly every day.

I was good in school. I was second in my class in high school. Number one was a young lady that had all A's. I had a few B's in my grades. But I really enjoyed it, played football, had a couple of letters in football. It was important in those years to have a sweater with a big C on it for Capek. My experience in high school was also a success and inspirational. However, I decided that I've had to get away, instead of being a farmer, to try something else. I didn't know exactly what I was going to do, but just to try something else. The war was ongoing at the time and although I was exempt, I told my parents I was going to join the service. I had been deferred from the draft because we were then farming 250 acres -- it was a lot of food. It was essential during the war, and I was the only one running the farm, so I was automatically deferred because of that. But I decided that I was going

to give it up and I told the folks, which led them to sell the farm. By the time I was able to sell the crops and animals, then take care of the farm details, and get into the service, the war had ended. I enlisted anyway for 18 months. It was one sure way of getting off the farm. I went to Fort Dix for basic training. I was picked by --

Q: This is in 1945?

A: Yes. The fall of '45, early '46. After the basic training, we were visited by a Major Stowell, S-T-O-W-E-L-L, who was the commandant of the military police at West Point, the military academy. He came to pick out five, six people, and he offered me the opportunity to join him at West Point. I jumped at it, of course. It was a great opportunity. So that's where I served my almost eighteen months. I was discharged a little early, in early '48.

Q: What did you decide to do when you were mustered out of the army?

A: Well, I had been with the MPs, becoming a corporal, then a sergeant with command authority, and I wanted to be a state trooper, based upon that experience. West Point had sent me to a couple of weeks of the FBI school while with the MPs, and I really enjoyed it. I never thought really that I would want to go to college. I started to work at People's Outfitting Company, a department store here in

Detroit. When my brother came home, he says you've got to go to college. I said, well, I don't know whether I could do it, although I was second in my [high school] class. I had a question about whether I could cut the mustard as a student in college. He said, "you gotta go, at least for a year and you gotta do for me. You got the GI bill, they'll pay for at least a couple or three years, so go and try it." So I said I would. Joe said that, of the colleges here in the city of Detroit, you've got to go to that Jesuit college, that's the University of Detroit. So I said OK. So I did. And I was very pleased. I worked very hard and I aced it. I had all A's the first semester, and I had all A's and a B in the second semester, so I figured I could do this. So that opened vistas and doors that I never even dreamed about. I just finally went in there and made some decisions at that point. When I first started college, I thought I'd go into sales and retail management. I was doing that with the People's Outfitting Company on a part-time basis, making good money. Everybody was buying appliances after the war. After about a year, I said no, I'm going to get something more substantive, so I took up accounting. I thought I'd be an accountant and head for a CPA. After getting a couple of those classes under my belt, I decided no, I want to do something else, something

that's closer to the people. So I then decided on law. I was a very good student at the University of Detroit.

Q: When did you graduate?

A: I graduated from law school in '54, but they had a program at that time -- you'd need three years to get into law school, but they also said and offered the opportunity for those of us that got out of the service that if you get all of the required credits that you need to qualify for a degree in the first three years there, they say the first year in law school would be applied for that degree, so I ended up getting two degrees in six years, because I did everything necessary for an accounting and economics degree in undergrad in the three years. So I ended up with two degrees from the University of Detroit.

Q: I see that you finished third in your law class as well.

A: Yes. I graduated magna cum laude as an undergraduate, but in law school, I was third in my class, just under the cum laude level.

Q: So you had a successful college career, what did you decide to do once you graduated with your law degree?

A: I had no relatives in business and no business friends, and it was very clear to me at that time that you'd need trial experience, and the best place for trial experience is the prosecutor's office. So I applied with the prosecuting

attorney who was, at that time, Gerald K. O'Brien, and his chief trial lawyer --

Q: The prosecuting attorney for Wayne County.

A: Wayne County, yes. His chief trial lawyer was Joe Rashid, who taught criminal law at the University of Detroit. He later became a circuit judge. As a student, I did some work for the Archdiocese of Detroit as a guest speaker to community groups, and Joe Rashid was in charge of that. And so we got to know each other, so he suggested that I apply for the prosecutor's office and he'd recommend me to Gerry O'Brien. I got the appointment and so I became an assistant prosecuting attorney as soon as I got out of law school.

Q: This was in 1954 or '56?

A: Right, well, it was in early 1955. When I graduated in 1954, you couldn't take the Bar Exam until September. The results came out in January of '55, so it was early in '55, right after I got my credentials that I became an assistant prosecuting attorney, and did that for almost nine years at various levels of responsibility.

Q: What did you learn from being a prosecutor? Why didn't you stay in that field rather than turn to other occupations?

A: Well, I wanted to get enough trial experience -- and it was great, because I was in the courtroom every day. I was

assigned to either the Recorder's Court division, which is all criminal work, or in Wayne County Circuit Court, which had all the crimes that were outside the city of Detroit. My first assignment though, after some internship work, was to the criminal division in Wayne County Circuit Court. In Recorder's Court, I was assigned to a judge for about a month at a time. As soon as I finished one case and the jury went out, they would bring in the next case. I would read the police report and the information and spoke to the officer in charge: "Are you ready to go? You have the key witness?" "Yeah, they're all outside." "All right, bring in the jury pool. We would select the jury. So bang, bang, bang, it's one trial after another. You really learn the art of persuasion. And you get an evaluation by the judges and the opposition. I went up the ladder very quickly and I handled some more important cases. Joe Luisell was the outstanding criminal attorney at the time, as was Al Summers. I was very honored to be asked by those in charge at the prosecutor's office or the trial people to take on responsible cases, whether they were mafia cases or others. One of the cases that was very delicate at that time. These were the sit-ins at First Federal, a local bank in the Detroit area. The sit-in people were charged with trespassing and disturbing the peace, and other

criminal matters. That trial received a lot of notoriety. The complaint against First Federal Bank was that they were not hiring enough blacks and so people would come up to the cashier and sit down on the floor.

Q: What year was this?

A: Probably in '62 or '63. I remember that these persons were asked to leave, and they wouldn't, so Commissioner George Edwards would have a squad of police officers gently pick them up -- they were of all ages -- and carry them to the paddy wagon and book them for interfering with the business and trespassing, or a number of charges. The Wayne County Prosecutor, Samuel Olson, asked me to be the prosecutor in those cases, and they would try fifteen at a time before various judges in Recorder's Court. I was at that time an experienced senior attorney, so to speak, and it was a delicate matter to charge them with a criminal offense. There was always a question of the racial aspect of it because they were sitting-in because of inadequate hiring practices for the black community at that time.

Q: Were all the sit-downers students?

A: Oh, no. They were adults of various ages.

Q: Were all of the sit-downers African American?

A: No. There were mixed black and white. In fact, one of them was either a teacher or a professor at Wayne State

(laughs) which I remember that because if somebody would come up on the jury that had a connection with Wayne State -- I had to query them considerably to see if they were objective enough or knew the parties or were in sympathy with the goals.

Q: Were there reoccurring sit-downs during this era?

A: They sat-in would over a three or four week period. At the beginning, they would take 'em in, book them and then -- and not charge the sit-downers. So, they would come back at another time, a week later or so, to the downtown office of First Federal and sit in front of the cashier's window and they couldn't do business. If there were three windows open, the sit-downers would get into three lines, then they would sit there in protest and they were finally charged. The civil disturbance warnings not enough to get them to deter or stop, so the prosecutor decided to charge them with trespassing. I'm not sure of the actual charge. Maybe failure to follow a police officer's directive. It was a misdemeanor. There was a lot of good legal talent on the other side. I remember one case we had eighteen defendants, nine defense attorneys and me on the other side - I got to know a lot of the lawyers. We would disagree, of course, as to the facts of the case and so forth, but I've earned a lot of good friends during those trials.

They understood that somebody had to do prosecute and that I did it in a reasonable fashion. After the first convictions, the sit-ins stopped. Nobody that I know of went to jail. All were placed on probation. It was well covered by the press. It was a very delicate, sensitive matter to handle appropriately.

Q: Was this a high profile case for you? Did you get a lot of PR on this?

A: Yeah, but most of it was negative. (laughter) Or at least a lot of it was. You know, the black community was spearheading the sit-ins and a number of social groups were supporting them, because the allegation was that they [Detroit businesses] were not hiring enough blacks. So it ended up being of great notoriety for principled people who wanted to do something to establish the injustice of the failure to provide the black applicants with an opportunity to work there at First Federal. I didn't want to particularly try the case, but they wanted someone to take the heat -- (laughter)-- the social heat and to do the job, so they asked me to do it and I said OK and I did do it. I suppose that there were -- because of the publicity and the ramifications and the social impact and import, I had a number of people that would not let me forget the fact that, hey, I was the bad prosecutor that convicted them of

a misdemeanor. And it was not my favorite job, you know. If I convicted a murderer, that's OK. But if I convict a trespasser who has a social objective in mind and the facts are there and the jury agrees -- and it was a jury decision. I would present the evidence, just like any case we prosecuted the jury decides guilty or not guilty. So when they found them guilty, they gave up. Somehow First Federal began to set into a process that satisfied those groups and they ultimately ceased the sit-ins.

Q: Now, this brings up a point that I'd like you to elaborate upon. You chose a career, an early career for a number of years, as a prosecuting attorney. Of course, you could have chosen a career as a defense attorney or a corporate lawyer. How did you choose this career and what did you feel about the role you were playing as a lawyer?

A: Well, I was a graduate of the Jesuit school for six years, both in undergrad and law school. And, among the things that they impressed me with was the idea of public service. I note that, in this building dedicated to Walter Reuther, that very astute phrase of his on the plaque in the lobby, complimenting those that are in the public service, that it was noble and not as rewarding financially as other interests. I was determined to do something in the public service arena -- teaching or a public prosecutor or

otherwise a public attorney, and that was to do something good besides just making a living. I joined the prosecutor's office for that reason. I intended to stay there three to four years to get that experience of trial work under my belt and then go into private practice.

Early in my career, I was the number two attorney for a big case dealing with a garbage truck system that was costing the city of Detroit a lot of money. The DPW drivers and the disposal site managers would cheat on the weight of the garbage, pocketing the overcharges paid by the city of Detroit. It was a lengthy case that received a considerable amount of publicity. The point is that I got very interesting cases, one after another, that kept me staying longer and longer. But, finally, after about eight and a half years, I did resign from the prosecutor's office and went into private practice.

Q: This was in 1964.

A: Yes, '64. And I started to practice law and I was always interested in politics. I was elected a precinct delegate in the 17th Congressional District for the Democratic Party while I was in the prosecutor's office. At that time, the assistant prosecuting attorneys did not have any tenure or any continuity of staying, no civil service status. If the prosecutor is not elected and you were an assistant, he

goes and you go. So, I was involved in the political arena to help Gerald K. O'Brien.

Q: So you practiced law, private law, for...

A: I went into private practice with Shaheen -- Gribbs and Shaheen. Before that was Shaheen, Gribbs and Brickley. Jim was a classmate of mine, Jim Brickley, who ended up being Lt. Governor of Michigan. And, then a justice of the Michigan Supreme Court. Jim and I were classmates. When he graduated, he went directly to work for the FBI. When Jim returned, he had an office in his Dad's office, Brickley Dairy on Six Mile. He wanted an office downtown, so Joe Shaheen had a room and a conference room, so the three of us put the names together. I practiced part time and Shaheen, Gribbs and Brickley was the law firm -- nominal only, but we helped each other, referred to each other a little bit, but not a formal partnership. Jim went on to other things. He became a chief assistant for prosecutor William Cahalan attorney, then District Attorney under the federal system here in Detroit, and later, president of Eastern Michigan University. He went on to become Lt. Governor with William Milliken, and was then either appointed or elected to the Michigan Supreme Court and he finished up his career there. I then joined with Joe Shaheen and his brother Ed, and the firm was Shaheen,

Gribbs and Shaheen. We had a full-time practice: we were in the Guardian Building. And I was a criminal defense attorney. I was defense attorney. I had switched sides. I never even sent out an announcement because I had a fine reputation as a trial attorney with the prosecutor's office. Whenever a tough case came up, if it had to go to trial, many attorneys would say, hey, try this case for me and here's the fee and so forth. I made a lot of money. I mean, I really was doing a lot of work in the criminal courts -- some civil -- and I was very happy. I was looking to determine whether or not I should stay in the private arena or go back to the public arena. That's when I entertained the possibility of going to the Peace Corps. Now mind you, by that time I had five children. I wanted to do something in the public arena and the Peace Corps was very successful, and they needed administrators. I went to Washington, DC, and was interviewed there several times. Finally they said, OK, offered to send me and my family overseas for at least two years, where I would manage a whole country. For example, they had an opening in Morocco where there were about 120 Peace Corps volunteers. I would administer that activity there. And they had another one open in Sri Lanka. It was not Sri Lanka then. It was -- what was it called?

Q: Ceylon

A: Yes. That's right. They said we would have to wait because the current director was going to leave in three or four months. In the interim, I had been after -- well, I should back up a little bit. After I practiced law, I tried cases for nine months in front of different judges. And I finally decided, hey, I could do more -- better than that one or that one. So I want to be a judge. So I -- that was my goal. I said I'd love to be a judge.

Q: And this was around 1966?

A: Yes, right. In fact, I ran for judge in 1965. There was an opening in recorder's court. And there were three nominees. Vince Brennan, Andrew DiMaggio and myself. Vince Brennan led by a mile in the numbers, and DiMaggio was second and I came in third. I was glad I came in third because DiMaggio couldn't catch Vince and Vince ended up winning the election. It was a formidable name, Brennan, in the political arena: he was way ahead of everybody. I then decided to take a position as a traffic court referee, which is like a city magistrate. The referee handled all the misdemeanor cases, traffic violations, everything except jury trials. So, if you got a ticket for going ten over, you'd go before a referee. It had a little courtroom, you sat with a robe on and made the decisions,

but technically the decisions were simply recommendations. I could find you guilty and if you didn't like what I did, you'd go right upstairs to one of the three judges, because it was a recommendation to the judge. If I recommended not guilty, they'd walk away, wouldn't pay a fine. At any rate, I did that for about a year. I then decided to do something else and that's when I applied for the Peace Corps. I decided I couldn't be a judge because I wasn't electable at the time, even though my name had been Anglicized. My brother changed his name when he went into the seminary, and I did it after the service. The name is G-R-Z-Y-B -- Grzyb in Polish, as I indicated. But we pronounced it as Gribb, and Joe put an S on it, Gribbs and spelled it G-R-I-B-B-S. And so I followed him a year later.

Q: Why did you decide to anglicize your name?

A: Because nobody could pronounce it the way it was, G-R-Z-Y - - Grizzib, or Zibby or whatever. It was not a political name. In those days, these were foreign names, none that really have stature. Election-wise, either you had an easy name to recognize, especially for judicial positions, or you needed an Irish name. Now, I didn't change the name for political reasons because I changed it during my college years. It was just easier to understand and

communicate. When they said Roman Zibby, whatever, I also had to say no, no, no. So we had it anglicized. Gribbs. So, when Joe anglicized it to that, I did as well. While I was waiting for that assignment from the Peace Corps, an opportunity came up to become sheriff of Wayne county. It came up by sort of a strange route, but it's an interesting story. I'm really going back -- Andy Baird was the sheriff for as long as anybody could remember. He was a tottering 87 year old or something when he died on the job. Then Peter Bubek, director of elections in the city of Detroit, was appointed sheriff. And he did some things that were not very wise. If you gave him a contribution of a hundred dollars, he'd give you an honorary badge. The police were complaining that they'd stop someone and that person would say, "Hey, I'm an honorary sheriff. You shouldn't give me a ticket." He also had a rather large scandal that they called a chicken coop scandal, and that hit the press, of course. The sheriff of Wayne County has an out-county detachment of police for all of the townships in Wayne County that did not have their own police force. And he had jurisdiction all over the county, of course, and what he would do is if somebody got a ticket from the out-county police detachment for whatever, he was known, or he was accused of calling up and saying, hey, I want you to bury

that ticket. It was influence peddling. Anyway, he was indicted for fixing tickets as sheriff. Romney was the governor at the time. This was a criminal offense. What had happened was he would call the Sergeant in the out-county division, say, "Sergeant, you're in charge, I want you to take that ticket -- Joe is my friend -- and handle it." So, the Sergeant would strike the ticket or cancel the court appearance, but he kept all of those tickets. The Sergeant had about a half an acre and he had a chicken coop where he raised chickens. He kept all of those tickets in the chicken coop. Bubek was accused, and the Sergeant was under investigation, and he said I'm only doing what the boss told me. I put down the name of the callers on every ticket, whether it was a deputy sheriff or Bubek, the sheriff. And, so he says, "I'll show you." He took the investigating team to the chicken coop and they -- this is known as the chicken coop incident, of course -- and he had all the tickets, so they used him as a witness and charged Bubek. Ultimately, the criminal case was dismissed.

Governor Romney decided to remove the sheriff for malfeasance, and began proceedings. Bubek then resigned because he would lose his retirement from his many years as elections director, city of Detroit. When he resigned, then under the statute, the prosecuting attorney, the chief

probate judge and the county clerk appoint the sheriff in the interim and that person had to run for office at the next election. They could not agree on a candidate, and finally, my name came up, as I hear of it, but they didn't know whether Gribbs would take the appointment or not. When asked by Jim Brickley if I was interested, my first thought was, hey, I'm a lawyer, I don't want to be sheriff. And Jim said to me, "you always wanted to be a judge. Get in there and do a good job as a sheriff, you'll be elected a judge." And I said OK, that makes sense. So I spoke to my wife, and we decide that, if offered, I'd take the job. When the committee returned a week later, I was everybody's number two guy, so they appointed me Sheriff of Wayne County. That was early in 1968.

Q: June '68?

A: Yes, that's the correct time. And then, I had only had three months to run as a Democrat for sheriff. As a result of my very good work as sheriff, I believe, I got good publicity and ultimately because of that, I was elected and then became a prospect for mayor, which is another story. But it was fun that I was everybody's number two, but nobody's number one on the list, which isn't all bad. Jim Brickley was a personal friend, and at that time he was chief assistant working with William Cahalan. He's the one

that called me. He said, well, stick around, be by the telephone, because if they're going to give it to you, they want you to come over and accept it publicly. And I did and it was a wonderful experience because all of a sudden you're running a police department. The sheriff's department had about 500 employees, a jail that had about 1400 inmates, and an out-county division that was a police department. It was a challenge. It was police work and I knew a little bit of that with a background working with the prosecutor's office and the police in Detroit and out-county, and even going back to my work as a military police in the service. So I jumped at that and I had a lot of fun. The city had just gone through -- that were terrible riots of July of '67. I only had one appointment, the undersheriff. Everybody else was civil service. So I could only appoint one person. And I said to Jim Brickley, I need somebody that's experienced in police work. I'm an attorney with very limited experience. I needed somebody that had experience, and I could use a black man, because of the racial tensions and problems he could help address. He said, I got just the guy for you. His name is Bill Lucas. He's an FBI agent and he's here assigned to Detroit and he had worked with a guy that works for me, my chief assistant, -- this is Brickley talking now -- my number one

guy in my office is Jerry Tannian. Jerry Tannian and Bill Lucas were both FBI and worked together in Detroit. Jerry was born in Detroit, but the -- Bill Lucas came from New York. I interviewed him, and I was impressed with him. He had a great background. He had gone to Fordham Law School. He'd been a New York policeman, and as such, he was assigned to escort Bobby Kennedy while he was in New York for a visit and Bobby asked him, "what do you do?" And he said, well, I'm a law student at Fordham. Kennedy tells says Bill to get his degree, come see him. So, he did graduate from Fordham Law School and joined the Attorney General's office in Washington. Bobby Kennedy was U.S. attorney general at that time. Lucas joined the FBI when Kennedy left, and he was assigned to Detroit. I interviewed him: Catholic, Fordham, police background, man of integrity, and seven kids. So, I appointed him under-sheriff and we had a great couple of years together.

Q: So becoming sheriff was a real surprise to you?

A: Absolutely out of the blue, yes. I never thought that I'd be a sheriff, you know. I did a good job. I have to preface my remarks by saying that my predecessor was not a good administrator, so that everything I touched, in a sense, got good stories, good press. For example, we had 1400 inmates. The kitchen was in the basement. Had six

floors of cells. And the food would have to go up, of course, to feed 'em three times daily.

Q: This was the Wayne County Jail?

A: Wayne County Jail. And when I became Sheriff, I walked around and talked to the inmates. One of the inmates says, "God almighty," he said, "Sheriff, they serve us coffee in buckets. By the time it gets to the third floor, it's cold. When it gets to the sixth floor it's ice cold." So I ordered the purchase of big coffee pots, and hot plates by the guards on each floor so that these huge coffee pots would be taken upstairs, put on the hot plates, and they got hot coffee. And it made 'em less boisterous, you know? Little things like that made a big difference. There was one with dietary knowledge to supervise the kind of food that they would buy. The food preparation was also not very good. Most of the time it was soup, baloney sandwiches, no fruit, nothing that you needed, you know, for a sensible diet. Some inmates were waiting for a trial for three or four months or more. And, the jail was overloaded. It was built for 900 and they were double-bunking just about every cell. So we had from 1200 to 1400 inmates, all on a temporary basis. So, I hired a dietician that established a program of healthy food for the inmates.

Anyway, I had a lot of good help, good people, it was a useful time and a fun time.