

Interview of Judy Anderson by Joe Guerzo 11-5-2018

Joe: Alright, today is November 5th, 2018 and this is Joe Guerzo and I'm about to interview Miss Judy Anderson. Hi Judy.

Judy: Hi, Joe.

Joe: Could you tell us your name and tell us your birthday?

Judy: Yes, my name is Judy Anderson. My birthday is December 3rd, 1947.

Joe: 1947. Okay, where were you born?

Judy: I was born in Rome, Georgia.

Joe: Okay. How did you end up here in Charlotte County?

Judy: My dad moved here to work for Michael Company, when it started in Port Charlotte.

Joe: What year was that?

Judy: It had to be 1957 because that's when we moved here. But my dad really come before then.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: Because my mom wouldn't stay. She come down and we went back about 3 times before she would ever stay.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: So, he actually come before us.

Joe: So, you think it was around '55, '56, '57?

Judy: Yeah, whenever Michael Brothers started. It was in the 50's, I can't remember.

Joe: Okay. How did your father get hooked up with them?

Judy: My dad was a plasterer and living in Georgia at that time. In the winter, you didn't have a lot to do because it was so cold and all. And my aunt and uncle lived here, so he come down and got a job with his business plastering, and so

Joe: So, you had an uncle and aunt who lived here even longer.

Judy: Yeah, I had an aunt that was living here.

Joe: How long did they live here for?

Judy: My aunt?

Joe: Yeah, like what year.

Judy: They came, I'm sure, in the 50's also. He ran the Imperial Gas station that used to be there on 41.

Joe: What was his name?

Judy: G.B. Quick.

Joe: Oh, this is your uncle? G.B. Quick. Okay, I'll have to look him up. But back to you. How old were you about when you moved?

Judy: Ten.

Joe: And where did you live?

Judy: We lived in Solana. Out in the Solana area.

Joe: I love that area. Do you remember what road?

Judy: Yeah, it was called Mark Avenue.

Joe: Okay. And what was that neighborhood like?

Judy: Well, you know, Charlotte County was... there was not a whole lot here. We just had downtown Punta Gorda and that was it.

Joe: Right.

Judy: So, you know, we grew up in a small community. Everybody knew everybody. All of us out in that area grew up together. As kids, we went to school together, and are still friends today.

Joe: Oh, really?

Judy: The ones that are still here.

Joe: What kind of stuff did you do as a kid in that neighborhood? Like what games did you play?

Judy: We just played outside. We didn't have TV's to go in and set or any computer stuff. My cousins, they would do a lot of fishing, you know, whatever. We would get together and play games.

Joe: Any favorites?

Judy: Nah. As long as we were all together, it was fun

Joe: Okay. What school did you go to?

Judy: Charlotte High.

Joe: Before that.

Judy: Well... you mean when I moved here?

Joe: Mm-hm.

Judy: Well, it was the little school, and you know, I can't even think of the name of it now. It burned down. There on Taylor Street. Some of the people that you've interviewed have told you about that school. I started there and after the school burned down, they moved us over to another little building for the rest of that year. Then I went to Sallie Jones.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: And then I actually... we did half the middle school back then. I actually started high school in the 7th grade

Joe: Is that how it was for most kids? So, it was kind of like a junior high and high school? And how big was your class when you started?

Judy: Oh gosh.

Joe: Approximately, of course.

Judy: Approximately, how many was in my class?

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: Probably, maybe 20, 15, 20.

Joe: And how many would end up graduating with you from Charlotte High School?

Judy: Just about...

Joe: About 20? The same amount?

Judy: Oh, no, no. When I graduated? Oh gosh, we had, I think a hundred and something. I'm not quite sure.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: I have just forgotten all of that. It's been so long ago. 1965 is when I graduated.

Joe: Class of '65, okay.

Judy: Charlotte High School.

Joe: Can you give us any description of what downtown Punta Gorda was like at the time?

Judy: Downtown Punta Gorda was great. We had... and like I said, everybody knew everybody almost here in Charlotte County. It was really family oriented. We had, um, a movie theater that Vic Desguin's family operated and ran. And, in fact, I used to pay 9 cents to get in to see a movie. Can you believe that?

Joe: 9 cents?

Judy: It's probably \$10 today.

Joe: It is about \$10 today.

Judy: And, we had some little restaurants, not a whole lot. But we had a drug store, Barnell's, Seminole's, right on the corner. And we had Barnell's, that burned down.

Joe: Charlotte Harbor?

Judy: And we had the Princess Hotel there, and it burned. And the old icehouse, I can remember that. I loved that. And it was just closely all right there, and we didn't really have a McDonald's or anything like that.

Joe: Did you just walk from Solana or did you have a bike?

Judy: No, my mom never drove. And we lived uptown also, at one time, but she walked everywhere she went. And we would walk. Once I started driving, the walking was over.

Joe: You started driving when you were 15 or 16?

Judy: 16.

Joe: I don't usually ask this question of most people, but I am familiar with Rome, Georgia. How did you feel about moving? Did you miss Rome?

Judy: No, I didn't miss Rome at all. I think I was just so young. I really had made those real close friendships, having to leave at that part of my life. But, no. I just, even though there wasn't a lot to do here, we'd go to the beach. I mean, it just made us all closer because we did things together. Our different families would get together and one of the great things I can remember we used to do, is we'd go out in the woods and cook. In fact, we'd get together, families would get together, and we'd just be out there all day long, having a ball. And, it was just such easy living. We didn't have to have movies or videos. We didn't have to have a specific place to go. Just as long as we all got together, we were happy.

Joe: Who were some of those families that you were friends with?

Judy: The Houses. I grew up with four sisters and me. I always said I was the 5th sister.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: And their mom and dad did a lot of fishing. And I would go over to fish at the creek with them, off of 74, on 27, and we would camp there. And have so much fun. You know, just such simple things. And the Nortons.

Joe: The Nortons?

Judy: The Nortons were around there. The Flowers.

Joe: The Flowers. I know these names.

Judy: But we all just had a... Tim Toles. We were just all right there together.

Joe: Sounds like a very pleasant way to grow up. So, did you have any brothers and sisters?

Judy: I had a brother.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: I was 19 months older than him.

Joe: Did you guys get along?

Judy: We got along. He passed away. He's been probably gone about 16 years now. He passed away. But, growing up, I would say yeah, we were close. We might fight a lot, but we were close.

Joe: What was your home life like?

Judy: My home life was wonderful.

Joe: Were your parents strict?

Judy: No, but you know what, they didn't have to be. I mean, when they told us no, it meant no. And I never ever... if they told me I had to be home at a certain time, I was there.

Joe: You were a good girl.

Judy: In fact, when I come home they would already be gone to bed. I was out to the movie, the drive-in or something like that. We did have a drive-in theater, which was a lot of fun.

Joe: I bet.

Judy: I'd make sure they know I was home. I mean, I woke everybody up. (laughs) It wasn't like no sneaking in and then I'm quiet, like 'I'm home'.

Joe: A lot of people say that because it was such a small town, you couldn't get away with stuff because you had other parents looking out for you as well.

Judy: Oh yeah, you did. Everybody, that's what I said, they knew who you was, they knew you by your first name and, you know, I can remember we didn't lock our cars, or stuff like that when we got out. Like we'd have to do today. But the drive-in theater, Vic Desguin also ran that. Oh, my goodness, we would go every Friday and Saturday night, and I don't know, well, when it wasn't football season. When it was football, we went to football. But I don't think that I can remember ever seeing a full movie there. We would just go in and all of us would just gather together and just have a good time. You know, see each other.

Joe: People made those kind of jokes, because they were making out during the movies.

Judy: No. No, no. And then I would see Mrs. Desguin, she'd be in the front, so we would see who was in there before we paid, to see if we wanted to go. So, I would always drive up there and say, 'I'm going to go to the concession stand and then get a pizza or get something. They made the best pizzas'. And she'd say, 'Go ahead'. And wave at me on the way out. I said, 'Okay'. So, we'd go in and we would get something, and we'd look around to see who was there. And if we wanted to stay, we'd circle back around and pay and go in. If we didn't, I'd just wave at her and drive on off.

Joe: I hear she was a very nice woman.

Judy: Oh, wonderful, wonderful. Such a sweetheart.

Joe: Yeah, she'd let kids in if they didn't have any money. And Vic was a very interesting guy.

Judy: Oh, Vic was so much fun.

Joe: He didn't tell me the pizza was the best, though.

Judy: Well, I think it was the best.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And, uh, it was good.

Joe: Cool. So, you grew up in the 50's, during the Cold War. Do you remember having to do any bomb drills or anything?

Judy: No.

Joe: You didn't do any of that in school?

Judy: No.

Joe: Okay. The other subject that I come up with school in this time period a lot is segregation. Were your schools segregated?

Judy: It wasn't when I started, but it did get segregated, yes. We had no problem, whatsoever.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: Because we were friends with them. It wasn't like some of these big cities with that rioting. That never happened here.

Joe: Well, they always said there was a different neighborhood for the black kids. Did any live in Solana?

Judy: No. They all lived up in Punta Gorda.

Joe: Right. In that area just on the other side of the tracks. So, you don't remember any incidents of things that may have happened?

Judy: No, with the blacks.

Joe: With the blacks and white kids.

Judy: No.

Joe: Nothing about Wampus?

Judy: Oh, that Wampus was a character.

Joe: That's the one story...

Judy: It still is.

Joe: That's the one story I'm learning about and I'm still trying to figure out the truth of the matter. Did he hold someone outside the window by his foot or by his neck?

Judy: Well, I don't know. I can't swear to that, but I have heard that.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: But he... that Wampus. I don't even know how to explain Wampus. He's just... he's a good man.

Joe: Can you do me a favor and introduce me to him and the thing on Saturday?

Judy: Next time you're around and we're together. I would love to introduce you.

Joe: So, your parents didn't have a problem with them de-segregating the schools?

Judy: No. None, whatsoever.

Joe: You never heard any parents or anything? Nobody complained? Kids never said anything?

Judy: No.

Joe: I get that same reaction, like how did your parents tell you about... Did they ever explain to you why you went to school, when you started school, without black kids in the class?

Judy: And I know people are probably thinking, you know. I've talked to the press before about this because they've interviewed me about this at the school. You know, we were just small. We were a small community. And like I said, we knew everybody, and we didn't have a problem with that. We accepted it, I mean, you know, it wasn't like five or six hundred people were coming. It was people that we knew or the ones that we had... And you know what, if you want to know the truth, they were probably more nervous than anybody.

Joe: Yeah. I would be.

Judy: Because they didn't know how they were going to be accepted, I guess, coming into our school. And I think it was a good thing. They had to, I think, send them down to Dunbar or someplace. That's terrible to bus the kids that far when there's a school right there.

Joe: Right.

Judy: So, we never had a problem with that. If anybody ever had a problem with that, I was never around.

Joe: So, what kind of things did you do in high school? Were you in clubs? Or sports or anything?

Judy: Oh, the pep club.

Joe: Pep club? What's that?

Judy: It was like the football, or sports.

Joe: Was it like cheerleading?

Judy: No, it's not a cheerleader. It's just a group that goes and you know, helps the cheerleaders out when they did their thing. No, not really. I wasn't a big sports thing myself. I loved sports, but I didn't participate in sports.

Joe: Okay. Choir?

Judy: No, I can't sing. I wish I could, I'd serenade you all the time.

Joe: Okay. How were your grades? Were you a good student?

Judy: Oh, I was a terrible student.

Joe: Really? I find that hard to believe.

Judy: Oh, I was. It was a struggle for me, but I loved school. I mean, if I was sick, I would cry if my mama was going to keep me home. I loved school that much. I wanted to be there. I never wanted to miss it. I loved my teachers.

Joe: Any teachers that you remember fondly? Specifically?

Judy: Ah, yes, I loved my typing teacher, Mrs. Deaton. And then Jo Overby was my shorthand teacher. And Sally Jo Baldwin was my PE teacher and I just loved all 3 of them. And they were very young. They just come to us almost right out of college.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: They were not that much older than we were.

Joe: So, are they still alive? Are they still in town?

Judy: Barbara Deaton and Jo Overby are. Sally Jo passed away. I mean they were... I was so close to them 'cause they were our age. You know, just in their early 20's. Right out of college, so. We were like 15, 16, 17.

Joe: What made them such good teachers, in your opinion?

Judy: I think they could relate real well with us. And they were fun

Joe: Right.

Judy: I always that if you make something fun, you're going to really learn well.

Joe: Yeah, that's true.

Judy: And really want to try hard. Now that's not saying that my other teachers wasn't great. They were too. But, I think because these were younger, that we associated better or more with them.

Joe: Who would you say was your main influence while you were growing up in Punta Gorda? Whether it was family or friends...

Judy: My main influence while growing up? Well, let's see. There was probably a lot of them. I loved Tosie Hindman, because I went to work for Tosie. Me and her oldest son graduated together. We went to school together. So, you know Tosie has always been such a role model at that time.

Joe: How old were you when you first met Tosie?

Judy: when I first met Tosie? Oh gosh, I don't know. Not long probably after I started high school. Or got in like that with her son. I'm bad on dates.

Joe: That's okay. Don't worry about that.

Judy: I told you I was going to be boring.

Joe: No, this is not boring at all. You're talking about a lot of people that I've already talked to. Tosie, the Quednau family, and Vic Desguin. So, this is all coming together. I'm piecing it all together.

Judy: And you know one thing that I can say in a small city where we grew up. It's getting bigger now, as we all know. But, you know, anyone that was in office, your judges, your commissioners, your property appraiser, tax collector. All of those people were so friendly out of the office. I mean, they would all have time to sit and talk to you or speak to you, 'Hey Judy' or whatever. Where I came from, oh, they would not do that. A judge would no more think about associating with you as they did here. That's the reason I said we were oh so close-knit. Our doctors and everything.

Joe: Do you remember some of the names of those politicians that you were just talking about?

Judy: Well, I can remember Judge Rose was our Circuit Court Judge. Mrs. Yeager was the Tax Collector before Vic was elected to it. Mr. Longhorn, at that time it was called Tax Assessor, not Property Appraiser. I remember him in there. No, that wasn't Mr. Longhorn. Mr. Longhorn was the Clerk of Courts. Mr. Roberts was the Tax Assessor at that time. But all of them, they were just... I don't know, they were just ordinary. I mean, they didn't think that because they had these positions, it didn't make them better or anything else than anyone else. So, that's just the position they held. But you know, in some of these bigger places, they do. If you're an elected official or a judge, I mean, hey...

Joe: So, in high school, did you date much in high school?

Judy: No. I loved everybody. If I went anywhere, I wanted to go with the crowd. So, I didn't. No, I didn't.

Joe: What were your plans after high school?

Judy: Well, what I actually did, I didn't go to college. But back then I don't think that many kids went to college. Just really the smart ones went on to college. So, I had to get me a job and I remember going around and, you know, putting applications in and I was up at the Courthouse. That's when Tosie was there. So, I went in, and she says... she hired me to do typing, because back then, we had to type every registration form in triplicate. So, we didn't have computers or anything.

Joe: What was Tosie's position at this time?

Judy: Supervisor of Elections.

Joe: So, this is mid-sixties? After you graduated in '65? She was Supervisor of Elections at the time.

Judy: She was elected in '64.

Joe: So, you started right out of high school doing that?

Judy: I was 17 when I started to work there with Tosie. And it was really supposed to be just part-time to do the typing, and it was a full-time.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: It turned into a full-time job, so that's what I did. I mean that's... I never, I grew up there. I grew up in that office and loved it and just, you know. Never dreamed that one day I would be elected Supervisor of Elections.

Joe: Right. And we're going to get to that, but at the same time, so, life is obviously going on at this time. I know you probably don't want to talk about your ex-husband, but I was just curious. How did you meet your husband? If you don't mind. You don't have to talk about it.

Judy: I don't mind. He actually lived out in Solana, also. Him and my brother were friends.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And I think that's how I met him from that. And I told all my friends that I hung out with. They were all married.

Joe: How old were you when you started dating your husband?

Judy: I was 21... when I got married. But I got tickled. I told them that I got to get married, because all of you got married and left me. I'm the only one left. And out of all of them, they probably thought I would be the first to do all of that because I was more... you know, the outgoing type thing. But, I just loved being around everybody. So, we met.

Joe: What was his name?

Judy: Nick Neil Anderson.

Joe: Oh, so you did keep his last name.

Judy: Well, you know, we had a son. And his name. I didn't want to change my name and be different than his.

Joe: Okay, Judy. So, I guess I should have asked you this earlier. What was your maiden name?

Judy: Culpepper.

Joe: Culpepper. I knew that. You told me that before. Okay, so, how did you... did you just start hanging out or did he ask you out on a particular date?

Judy: Yeah, you know... I've just about forgot about that part of my life.

Joe: You don't remember?

Judy: Yeah, he asked me out. I mean, we would see each other out at... like we had a royal castle and places like that. We saw each other, and he asked me out and so we started dating.

Joe: How long did you date before he proposed?

Judy: Oh, probably a couple years, several years.

Joe: Do you remember how he proposed?

Judy: Hmm?

Joe: Do you remember how he proposed? Was it romantic?

Judy: No. He had been drafted.

Joe: Oh.

Judy: And I don't know, we were, I think at his house. He lived with his mom. I think he said something like, 'Do you want to get married?' And I went, 'What?' And it's like 'Yeah'.

Joe: You said yes?

Judy: Yeah.

Joe: Right away?

Judy: Yeah.

Joe: Okay. So, you said he got drafted. Did he go to Vietnam?

Judy: He got drafted. He went to Vietnam.

Joe: Okay, who did he serve with? Was he in the Air Force? Army?

Judy: Army.

Joe: Okay. How was that for him? Did he ever open up to you about it? Did he tell you any stories?

Judy: No.

Joe: Was it rough on him?

Judy: Not that I know of.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: My brother also went to Vietnam and he was a Marine.

Joe: Oh, yeah?

Judy: And he... it was hard on him.

Joe: That's why I asked. So, your husband never opened up, but your brother did tell you some things?

Judy: He didn't do the fighting part. I think he worked on the machinery, like drag lines, clearing roads and stuff like that.

Joe: Your husband?

Judy: Yeah.

Joe: But your brother...

Judy: But my brother actually was out in the field.

Joe: Oh, okay. And he just passed? He passed away 16 years ago?

Judy: Mm-hm.

Joe: It would have been interesting to talk to him as well. So, before he left for the army, what was he doing when you guys were dating? Did he have a job as well?

Judy: I think he was working in construction, I believe. I'm not quite sure, but I think he was. I can't...

Joe: And this whole time, you were still working?

Judy: Oh yeah.

Joe: For Tosie?

Judy: Oh yeah. And, um, you know, it's really funny. It's not that I don't want to tell you, but it's just I can't remember. I mean, I've been divorced what? 43...

Joe: 43 years?

Judy: 43 years. That's just been so long ago that I don't even... Memories that I don't even care to remember.

Joe: Well, how about your kid? How far into your marriage did you have your kid?

Judy: Hmm?

Joe: Your own children.

Judy: I have one. A son, Keith.

Joe: And when was he born?

Judy: he was born in '70.

Joe: Okay. Did that change your career path? Were you still working for Tosie?

Judy: No, I still worked for Tosie. And actually, Neil didn't see Keith. I think Keith was about 5 or 9 months old, I can't remember, before he ever saw him.

Joe: Oh, because he was in Vietnam.

Judy: Mm-hm. But no, when I went to work with Tosie, I never left her until I retired.

Joe: Okay. So, you basically had one job for your whole life?

Judy: I had a few others. I worked at a grocery store for one time.

Joe: Which grocery store?

Judy: B & B.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And then it changed to "U-Save".

Joe: And that's before you worked for Tosie?

Judy: Yes.

Joe: Alright, so, your husband comes back from Vietnam. Do you mind me asking when you divorced?

Judy: We divorced... I don't know if it was '75 or '76, but it was... we were only married 6 years.

Joe: You don't think maybe his experience in Vietnam might have led to you guys growing apart?

Judy: He was, um... I don't know how to put it. I don't want to bad-mouth him.

Joe: Well, we don't have to do that. But you wanted to be divorced.

Judy: Most definitely. Well, in the beginning I didn't, but oh yes, I'm the one that got the divorce.

Joe: How did your son react?

Judy: He don't even know. He doesn't even know his father.

Joe: Oh, really?

Judy: He was 5 when we got divorced and...

Joe: His father left town or something?

Judy: No, he lives right here. He remarried a girl named Judy.

Joe: Oh, that's right. You told me that. That's funny.

Judy: That was a good friend of his. Her and her brother. He brother was Neil's best friend. And they ended up getting married and um... No, it's always just been me and Keith.

Joe: And he didn't want to have anything to do with Keith after he got remarried? He didn't want visitation rights or anything?

Judy: No, because... I just told him to leave us alone.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And I appreciate him honoring that.

Joe: Well, I guess we'll move on to your professional life, because I wanted to know about this, especially with the election tomorrow, here in Charlotte County. So, you continue on with Tosie for how many years, basically as her assistant?

Judy: Well, you know, I started out there just as a typist. And there was only one other woman that worked in the office, Wilma. Wilma Spriggs.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: Tosie and Wilma, and then me. And I did all the typing and I registered people to vote. I couldn't even vote because the voting age was 21 back then.

Joe: That's right.

Judy: So, I registered people to vote, but I couldn't vote. And, I just, you know, kept going up. I don't know that we really had that many titles, as far as I did everything that needed to be done. I would sit down and take our voter books and put paper clips for the commissioner. I mean the commissioners would sit down with our big books and take paper clips and clip them on who they wanted to serve in the jury. And then I would type the jury list up and take it to the Clerk of Courts. And that's when they would cut it and put it in like that. So, I mean, you know, I qualified candidates.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: But, I guess, once Wilma retired, then I basically became the assistant Supervisor.

Joe: What year was that about? Approximately?

Judy: Oh gosh, I don't know, because Gail Campbell was hired to come in and me and Gail were very close. She was my right arm. She worked for me. She was my assistant up until she retired.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And, um, she could finish my sentences. She knew exactly what I was thinking. It was so great. I could go off and trust anything to her, because she was a great, great person and an employee. We were good friends, as well as work associates.

Joe: Is she still around today?

Judy: Mm-hm. She lives over in Englewood.

Joe: You think she'll be at the dinner on Saturday?

Judy: No.

Joe: Okay, so you became Tosie's assistant. And this is in the 70's? I'm just trying to guess.

Judy: Yeah, it would be in the 70's.

Joe: You said you helped the candidates file...

Judy: To qualify.

Joe: Who were some of the interesting candidates that you met along the way?

Judy: You know, when I first worked for Tosie, we qualified the candidates, but like their Form 6, which was a financial disclosure form, they had to do that with the Clerk office. The Clerk of

Court. And then, our association had to change the law and make the law to where we did everything pertaining to elections of candidates. It made it easier if it's all done in one spot.

Joe: So, local candidates have to disclose their earnings as well?

Judy: Uh-huh.

Joe: It's kind of interesting how our president today doesn't have to send his tax returns in.

Judy: Isn't that remarkable?

Joe: Yes, interesting.

Judy: (laughs)

Joe: But we'll stick to the subject. So, I guess I was just asking, who were the most interesting candidates that you met in your long history?

Judy: There's been a lot of interesting candidates. And, you know one thing that I think a lot of people don't understand about being a candidate. It's hard. It's not easy out there campaigning. I got to tell you, because I did it.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And when I ran, there's so many places you need to be at. So many organizations want you to be there to talk, you know. And you want to be everywhere you can be> And, I mean it's just like it's hard sometimes to try and get everything in at one time, and to get out and let people know who you are. I was very fortunate for me, because I went everywhere with Tosie. When she made speeches, when she schooled the poll workers, I was there. And everywhere she went, she'd always say, 'Judy's here'. 'Judy's here with me'. 'Judy's back there. When I get through, you all go talk to Judy and she'll answer any of your questions'. You know, stuff like that. So, when I ran for office...

Joe: You knew what you were doing. You learned everything.

Judy: Well, it's not so much as that, but on my signs, I made Judy bigger than Anderson, because everybody knew me by Judy.

Joe: (laughs) Yeah.

Judy: So, it stood out more. You know, the Judy was big and the Anderson, because Tosie always said, 'Judy' or 'Judy's here', you know. And also, I trained the poll workers. Tosie trained them as long as she was there, but I was with her.

Joe: So, what does that involve? You go to each polling place?

Judy: No, you have a session. I'd go to Englewood and hold one for all the precincts over there, all the poll workers who were going to work over there. And then we'd do the auditorium. I

probably did maybe 12 schools before election. Training them on what they had to do. I didn't let an employee do my poll worker training, I did all my poll worker training myself.

Joe: Was there a specific reason you did that?

Judy: Hmm?

Joe: Was there a specific reason you did that?

Judy: No, I just... growing up with Tosie, I did most of the stuff from that and I just felt better about doing it. It was hard for me to go from employee to boss.

Joe: Right. Even as the boss you were doing this?

Judy: Oh yes, as the boss, I didn't ask my employees to do anything I wouldn't do. I mean, in fact, everything they did, I had done.

Joe: Right.

Judy: Except the IT department. I didn't know computers and stuff like that.

Joe: No...

Judy: But, when they had to stay and work at night or overtime, I was right there beside them. I would stuff envelopes, I would key stuff into the computer. I mean, I did, issue absences, I did all of that. You know, I felt like, I didn't want to just leave them there and say, 'Well, goodbye. See you in the morning.' I worked with them, right beside them.

Joe: Do you think it really helped that you were assistant to Tosie and learned a lot from her?

Judy: I think that that... that's what I loved. I loved the work. I loved my hands in, doing it. And the other part, as a boss, you've got employees, so you're supposed to...

Joe: Delegate?

Judy: Yeah, delegate different work for them to do and that was real hard for me.

Joe: Right.

Judy: Start to delegate. I mean, I was Tosie's secretary and everything else, you know.

Joe: How long was that?

Judy: I worked for Tosie for 22 years.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And, um, when I got a secretary, I still did my own stuff. And I can remember one day, she says, 'You know, I'm your secretary, I can do that.' And I'm like, 'Okay.' It was so hard to let go.

Joe: Right.

Judy: But then once I did, I finally started saying, 'Hey, you know...'

Joe: You can do this for me, please.

Judy: But I was still right there.

Joe: What would you say the biggest thing you learned from Tosie, in those 22 years?

Judy: Tosie always said, the biggest thing and I can always remember. I can hear her saying it right now, is that, 'Judy, you remember one thing. This is not your office. This is the people's office'. And she said, you always remember that. Don't ever refer to this as "my office". And when I would go make speeches, I would tell people that. I would say, 'You know what, that is your office. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to work there, to serve you. But I said, 'That is your office'. Not mine. Everything isn't mine, mine, mine. I'm an employee of yours.

Joe: Right.

Judy: So, I think that's one of the biggest things. Another thing is Tosie was such a friendly person. Such an outgoing type of person. I think I Picked up. In fact, someone told me, 'You're just like Tosie'. Or something like that. Which I take as a compliment.

Joe: Yes.

Judy: But, she was a people person, and I am too. I love people. And she related a lot of that to me.

Joe: Everything I've heard about her in the other interviews were very positive, as well. I guess that's a good way to transition, so, how did you end up taking over Tosie's job? Was that her idea? Did she come to you with it?

Judy: Yes. No, well... I was going to have to look for a job either way. And I'd been there 22 years, so I just decided that I'd run. If I didn't win, then I would have to find another job.

Joe: So, you weren't even 40 years old at this time.

Judy: No. So, I said, 'Well, let's do it.' Then, when I did it, I was like, 'What did I get myself into?' You know, Tosie didn't have to campaign. Tosie campaigned all the time. I mean, she was so well-known and so loud. People just...

Joe: They knew her.

Judy: No one ran against her except for the first time she ran. And then there was this one other guy that ran against her, which was ridiculous, but anyways... I shouldn't say ridiculous, because he was a nice guy, but to have to go up against Tosie, was, you know.

Joe: So, start with your first campaign. Tell me what it was like. People didn't know you as well? So, you had to make a lot of speeches?

Judy: You know what, my first campaign... I didn't have anybody to run against me after my first time.

Joe: Really?

Judy: I was unopposed the rest of the time.

Joe: Bach then, you could run as a Democrat and win in Punta Gorda?

Judy: When I ran, it was very rare that a Democrat would win. That's why I'm telling you, without the Republican vote, I would not be elected.

Joe: Was Tosie a Republican?

Judy: No, Tosie was a Democrat. See, at one time, Charlotte County was all Democrat. And then the Republican Party came, and they got to be real strong and everything, but we were real good friends with Republicans. So, anyways it was... Vic was always elected as a Democrat. And they elected me as a Democrat. And once I was elected, I was unopposed the rest of the time I was in office.

Joe: How long was the term?

Judy: It was 4 years. Each term was 4 years.

Joe: I'm trying to think what year this was when you first ran. Was it in the 80's?

Judy: Yes.

Joe: If you were born in '47, it must have been the mid-80's.

Judy: I'm thinking it was '88. Yeah, I think it was '88.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: When I ran.

Joe: Who were you running against in that first campaign?

Judy: No Democrat. I was the only Democrat, but there was 2 Republicans: Maureen Saunders, she was an interior decorator here. And Mr. Biscop, and I can't think of what his first name was. He was a very nice man. Such a sweet, sweet man. And them two had to run against each other. She beat him in the primary, so me and her had to run against each other.

Joe: Okay, how was that?

Judy: Interesting.

Joe: Did you have to debate her?

Judy: (laughs)

Joe: Oh yeah?

Judy: Oh yeah.

Joe: I wish I could have seen that.

Judy: We would go to speak at engagements and the Democrats would line up on one side and the Republicans would be on the other side. And then, with each office, whoever was holding the forum or whatever it was, would call us up and have questions for us. You know, we'd have to answer the questions.

Joe: Were you nervous?

Judy: I was so nervous I was sick. I said, 'Can you not see my knees knocking together?' They would laugh at me on the Democrat side. I wasn't really outspoken like I am now. I was more quiet until I got to know you. One on one, I was fine. But to get up and look out at all those people, I'm like, 'Well, I think I'll just throw up now. Get it over with.' And the news media there with the cameras going, you know. They said I never looked like I was nervous, but I was.

Joe: That's good.

Judy: But, I can remember this one particular forum we went to. They had questions for everybody and someone told me that was on the script that were having it, 'They have questions for you all, Judy and don't you be nervous because it's questions that, you know, you can answer'. And I said, 'Okay.' Well, when we got there, to the forum, the sheriff candidates were there, the property appraiser, tax collector and clerk of courts. You know, all of that was there that had to be there. I don't think the clerk... no, she wasn't opposed. But anyways, when it comes to my turn, they said, 'Well, we have no questions for the Supervisor of Elections candidates'. And I thought, 'hmm.' So, she says, 'We will give you all a certain amount of time to just talk if you want to'. And I thought, 'Oh, okay'. So, she went first. And I'm sitting there listening to her and then I went up and I says, 'Well, let me correct'. So, I just started correcting everything.

Joe: That she said?

Judy: Yeah, she said some things, not everything, but some of the things on how it was done. And really, she wouldn't have known some of that because she had never been involved in that. So, it was hard for her to have to do that. But I can remember, I can see the cameramen smiling because I'd never been so... I'd say, 'That's not true'. Or something like that. I guess they'd never seen that side of me, so when I got back and sat down, all my Democrat people said, 'Oh my gosh, I can't believe you cut loose. It was so funny'. But I'm like, you know what, I don't know what made me do that, except I knew that some of that was not correct.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And it needed to be corrected. And then we went to a Rotary speaking engagement. I can remember she went before me again and they asked both of us the exact same questions. And they asked her, why did she think that voters didn't vote. Why didn't the voters get out and vote? She told them that it was the... she thinks it was the caliber of candidates like they had running. Her Republican friends just turned around and looked right at me.

Joe: Uh-huh.

Judy: And I'm sitting there just smiling, waiting my turn. And so, when they called me to come up. And I would never be disrespectful to her, because I thought that she was a good person, a nice person.

Joe: Right.

Judy: She just was Republican, and they wanted a Republican in there and not a Democrat.

Joe: Of course.

Judy: And so, when they asked me that question, I said, 'Well, I don't know'. I said, 'I can tell you what we do to get the people to vote'. And then, I just started going off on how we have registration drives, how we have the candidates' forum, how we advertise in the paper, how the news media helps us, how all of you that are having this now, is helping us. I said we go all over. And I said, 'You heard the old saying, you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink'. And I said, 'No, I don't know why. And it's not because we aren't trying or not doing enough'. And I said, 'If anyone, including anyone of you all, has any suggestion on what we can do more, then that's what you need to be doing. Just letting us know, so we can do this'.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And I said, 'We even go into the schools'.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And do things like that. And there all just sitting there smiling at me and I'm just a... and you know I had the advantage because I worked there, and I've done all of that.

Joe: Which is probably why you deserve the job.

Judy: But I'm saying, you know, you've got to correct when something isn't right. You can't let it go by.

Joe: especially if you have first-hand knowledge of it.

Judy: Right. And I just, I mean, I couldn't understand why being a Democrat, that someone wouldn't like you, just because you were a Democrat.

Joe: Back then, it was acceptable. Nowadays, it's just...

Judy: It's not.

Joe: It's a deal breaker for a lot of people.

Judy: But no, I tried. I tried to be as honest as I could be to everybody about it. I tried to let them know that once I was elected, I wasn't just serving Democrats, I served every citizen in the county. And I can remember the Republicans, they wouldn't let me come to their meetings and speak to them, because I was a Democrat. And when we got a new voting system, we were going all over demonstrating it, so people would know how to use it and everything. And they wouldn't let me come to their meeting and bring it. My staff, I can remember, got upset and said we're not going. You're the Supervisor. All you're doing is going over there and show them how to use the equipment and everything. But there was this one Republican group in Rotunda West in Englewood that invited me, and I think he took a lot of heat for that from their party.

Joe: Oh, really?

Judy: But I told them, I said, 'I can't come and talk to you because you all are Republicans and you don't allow a Democrat. He said, 'Judy...' and I always had people call me Judy, not Mrs. Anderson. And he said, 'You are our Supervisor and you have some information we need to know'.

Joe: Exactly.

Judy: And he says, 'I don't care. We want you here'.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And I went, and they accepted me, and I explained. I took a voting machine that we were using, and I let them come up and see how it worked. I talked to them, answered any questions they wanted to know or whatever. It was great. He had me several times.

Joe: Do you remember his name?

Judy: No, right now I don't.

Joe: That's okay.

Judy: I can't think of his name right now.

Joe: I want to go back to that first election, and you said you were a Democrat running in a mostly Republican area. Was it a close election?

Judy: No. It wasn't that close. Well, she got... I mean, I got a lot more votes than her, but she did really good as being a Republican and not really being... because most Republicans, and there are a lot of Democrats who will vote straight party. They don't care who you are or whatever. You know, a lot of people would hurt your feelings. They would just try to be rude.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And I can remember putting my signs up and I would find some of them thrown in the garbage behind buildings where they'd go pull them up. And I would just get them and clean them up and put them somewhere else. That kind of stuff went on. I remember a good friend of mine. She wanted her next-door neighbor to meet. And this friend of mine was a big Republican. But she wanted her next-door-neighbor to meet me because I was a Democrat and she was a Republican and she wanted her to know who I was and where I stood on the office and everything like that. I remember, I said, 'Sure, I'd be glad to go with you over and talk with her'. Well, the first thing that that she told me when she opened the door, she said, 'Well, first off, let me tell you, I will not vote for you because I am a Republican... and you like the Kennedys and I don't. And that's another reason I wouldn't vote for you'. And I'm like okay, I said 'Well, I respect that'. You know, I was in her home and I said that, and we talked. I think Marcie, my friend, was just sitting there with her mouth open. She couldn't believe what this woman was saying to me, after Marcie had thought it would be a good thing. So, when I left, I told the woman. I can't remember what her name was now. I said Mrs. Whatever, let me tell you something, thank you first for inviting me in your home, I appreciate it. And secondly, I said, 'It doesn't matter how you vote. You vote for who you want to. The important thing is that you vote'.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: Don't "not vote".

Joe: Right.

Judy: And I said, 'I appreciate where you stand and how you feel, because you have that right'. And I left. And Marcie, we went to get something to eat after and she sat there and cried and cried. I said, 'Why are you crying?' 'I am so livid, I am so upset that she would treat you that way'. Well, after I was elected, and I was over at my friend's house, the lady next door saw me and said, 'I just want you to know that I voted for you'.

Joe: Aw, that's sweet.

Judy: I said, well thank you. I don't know that she did, but I said, 'Thank you so much'.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And then I would have people that told me they voted for me and they weren't even registered.

Joe: (laughs) So, you knew they were lying! Of course.

Judy: But I thanked them because it meant so much to me that they even cared to even think about me.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And of course, they had family and friends that they knew that probably voted for me and everything, but they were and it was...

Joe: How many terms did you go through? Or how many elections did you have to go through?

Judy: Well, I was the Supervisor for 16.

Joe: 16? So, 4 full terms?

Judy: 4 terms.

Joe: Wow. Okay, and how do you go unopposed? Is it because everybody knows they have no chance to beat you the second time?

Judy: I don't like to say that because, I mean, I had people to come in and tell me, "I'm going to run against you". And I said, 'That's fine' I don't care. I said, 'You know what, we live in a country that allows us all to do that'. I said, 'I have no problem with you running against me'. I'd rather not have you run against me, but I don't have a problem with it. And really, I loved being unopposed, because then I didn't have to worry about having to campaign, I could actually do my job that you have to do before elections. Because campaigning is really a full-time job. But, then when you're a Supervisor, your name is on everything too, that you mail out to people, you know, and they can see that and all. But I appreciated them, but then I had others that came and said, 'Judy, I would run, but I would never run against you. I would love to have this position, but I would never run against you'. And I always thank them for that, too, because I thought it was nice of them. I also had Republicans wanting me to change my party, from Democrat to Republican.

Joe: Oh yeah? You never did. Never even considered it?

Judy: Never. I've never been anything but a Democrat. And I will always be a Democrat, even though, there's times I get mad at them, too.

Joe: Of course.

Judy: But I'm a Democrat. I can remember them coming in and saying, 'Well, we can't support you and help you if you don't become a Republican'. You know what and I said, 'That's okay. You know no one knows how you vote when you go in and vote'. I said, 'Or they're not supposed to know'. And I said, 'But let me ask you something. If you could convince me to change my party that easily, what would make you think that I couldn't change on other things?'

Joe: Exactly. Good point. That's a great point, Judy.

Judy: And they looked at me and were like. And I said, 'You know what? I am who I am, regardless of what party I am. Being a Republican is not going to change who I am'.

Joe: Right.

Judy: I said, 'So, if it's so bad that no one likes me just because I'm a Democrat...' I said, 'There's nothing I can do about that'. I said, 'You should like the person for who they are and what they're doing. Not by what party's behind them'.

Joe: I wish we had a little bit more of that today. So, your first election, you had a son, Keith. He was almost old enough to be on his own. Did he help out? Was he very supportive of you?

Judy: Yes, he did and his friends at school. I had the young kids campaigning for me.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And when I was in a parade, the cheerleaders, some of his friends that were cheerleaders, they cheered for me. They did a cheer for me going down there and some of my workers that work with me, they were handing out candies on the side. We'd go down and they were so cute. They were all for me.

Joe: That's great.

Judy: And I had Mike Haymans, which I'm sure... I don't know if you've talked with Mike yet or not. But he wrote a song about me.

Joe: I bet he did!

Judy: And he sang it. He even knows it today.

Joe: Maybe I'll ask for it on Saturday.

Judy: You should ask... no, don't ask him to sing it then. But, he did. I don't know if he knows all of it now, but he wrote a song, and it was so cute. But, I had Judge Casanueva, he's a Republican, but Judge Casanueva was an attorney then, he wasn't a judge. And he taught at, well, he worked for the State Attorney for a while. Then, he was also an attorney and he had me come out, he taught at Edison, some classes.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: He had me to come speak to his class and I really didn't want to, because I didn't think I was a good speaker. But anyway, I said, 'How long do I have to talk?' He said, 'You can talk as long as you want to'. But he was like, '50 minutes'. I can't talk no 50 minutes, because that was like a lifetime or whatever.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: I want you to know I got there and started talking and I talked his whole class, the whole hour or 2 or whatever, and they still had to stay and take a test.

Joe: Really?

Judy: Well, they would ask questions, and I would just talk, and I was so relaxed. And he would just kind of grin and he told me, he said, 'See, talk about what you know and it's not hard'.

Joe: Just like this interview. Remember, I had a hard time getting you in this interview. And you're talking quite fine and we're not even...

Judy: We're not even half-through.

Joe: I have so much more I want to ask you. So, just for the people out there who might not have any idea what that job entails, can you just give us a quick overview of what your position was and what your responsibilities were?

Judy: The responsibility is you are the overseer of all elections, registering every eligible person to vote, but it doesn't end there. I think a lot of people think that we only worked at election time, just to do the ballots, but that's not true because there's a lot into preparing a ballot. Because when you've got different districts, you know, you've got different ballot styles.

Joe: Right.

Judy: I think one time we had up to 12 or 13 different ballot styles at one time, I can remember, because you got a different senate and representative races that go over in different precincts. So, there's a lot to that. And then, you have to maintain the records. You have to do purges. Years ago, it's not that way now, but years ago, if haven't voted in so many elections, you were notified, and you were removed from the voting records.

Joe: Right.

Judy: Because you were not active, and you'd have to re-register. But they didn't do that now, they're there, but if you don't vote... I can't remember exactly how it goes, but it's kind of like an inactive thing and they can re-instate you with your address and everything, with a new voter whatever. But, we had to do list maintenance and stuff like that and it was just, I mean, absentee ballots was unbelievable. You know, doing things like that. And just finding precincts, poll workers... There was just so much. When we were in an election year, we would start at the beginning of the year getting ready for the first primary. We used to have 3 elections in one year. We'd have the first primary, the second primary and the general. But, they took the second primary away. No, we just have the first and general, which gave us more time, because the first and second were so close together.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: Not the first and the second, it was probably the second and the general were so close together that when we're through, we would have that first primary election all done and ready to go before they have the election. We were already working on the general election.

Joe: Right.

Judy: Because you have deadlines. We have a calendar where we have certain deadlines for certain things. Overseas ballots have to be mailed out on a certain date, no later than whenever we have to get them in the mail. Putting a sample ballot in the paper, that has to be in there on... It's just so many things were deadline things that we had to do. So, it was a lot of work, and a lot of people didn't realize that.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: I mean, you don't just come in 6 months before an election and say, 'Oh, do the ballot up and send it out'. I mean, it's a lot of work.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: A lot of work.

Joe: And you ran unopposed 3 more times. Wow, that's a testament. Not a lot of people can say that. I'm surprised the Republicans never put someone up against you.

Judy: They didn't, and I think one of the nicest compliments I got when I got ready to retire was I had some of them to ask me not to retire. They wished that I wouldn't retire. And then I had a very strong Republican person, to tell, when we went through the presidential election in 2000.

Joe: Perfect segue. I was going to ask you about the election of 2000.

Judy: They came up, this particular Republican lady. This reporter says, 'Well you're talking like a Republican', or something like that, which I thought was uncalled for, because there was nothing wrong with Democrats or Republicans. I said, 'I am a Democrat'. And this person said, 'Yes, and we support her 100%. We wish she was with us, but we still support her'. And I thought that was one of the nicest compliments that I had coming from the other party, because, I guess, I had earned their respect over the years.

Joe: Well, that was a very historical election. What exactly was it like that night?

Judy: Oh my gosh. That was one of the best elections that we had had in Charlotte County.

Joe: Oh, really?

Judy: I can remember, I thought, oh, this was such a good election. We went home. I was happy. I went to bed, and the next morning, my son gets up and come in there and says, 'Mom'. I said, 'What?' Because I was tired. He says, 'You're going to have to have a recount'. I said, 'Keith, get out of here'. He said, 'Mama, I'm serious'. He says, they're really, over on the east coast...' And I'm like, what? Anyways, I got up. Well, I can remember feeling so sorry for the supervisor over there.

Joe: Over where?

Judy: Over in Palm, Palm Beach. Theresa Lapore was the Super there, a very nice woman. And you know, this is coming from news media and people that are representatives and all up there who didn't understand elections and the process.

Joe: Right.

Judy: How tirelessly we work to get it done, and she went through a lot because of her ballot layout or whatever, which both parties approved thought it was okay. And then it all started over there in Broward and Palm Beach... and I think there was another one. I don't know if Miami-Dade was one of them or not. But anyways, it was a nightmare for them. It's like, what? I think they had the punch card with the chad and everything.

Joe: Right.

Judy: See, I didn't have that. I wouldn't get that here.

Joe: That's good.

Judy: I had paper ballots, where the machines counted it, but you had to blacken the oval.

Joe: Just like we do now.

Judy: Yeah.

Joe: We still do that.

Judy: And, so anyway, I would listen to the news every night, and we're sitting there thinking, 'Oh my goodness, poor Theresa'. You know, they're just not understanding. The things with the punch card, the reason I didn't like them... well, we had more of a retirement area over here than she did, and it's harder. The print is not as big in all these cards. But, once you punch a hole, you punch that out, it's out. Some people would take a little chad and stick it back in because that wasn't who they wanted to vote for. And they would put it back in, and then vote. Well, when it went through those machines and it would shake it, that would fall out.

Joe: So, sometimes you would have 2 holes?

Judy: And then there would be an over-vote.

Joe: Right.

Judy: Right.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And different stuff like that and people not doing... And that's one reason why I wouldn't have it, because I was afraid that instead of requesting another ballot, they were going to do that, and then it was going to cause, you know, more problems.

Joe: So, if you made a mistake in our system, you could just another ballot, and tear that one up.

Judy: But, I mean that's with anybody. You can get up to 3 ballots if you spoil your ballot.

Joe: Right.

Judy: We just, you know...

Joe: So, you can make 2 mistakes. (laughs)

Judy: Right. Even on our paper ballot, people were blackening every oval on the ballot.

Joe: Would you just throw those out?

Judy: There were some that wouldn't even blacken the oval. They would circle who they wanted and then they would write me a note like, "I want this one" or "I'm not voting for any of these crazy people".

Joe: (laughs)

Judy: And you know, you don't see that when you run it through a machine and that's going to come out as a blank ballot, if you don't blacken any of the holes.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: Or any of the things. See, there was a lot to go with ballots. And you won't believe how people would vote.

Joe: Right.

Judy: I mean, it's unbelievable.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: And um, I know people think that I'm making this stuff up, but I'm not, because we would get those ballots and handle them. So, anyway, she was going through all of this, and all at once, we all got pulled into it. Everybody.

Joe: So, you had to do a recount here?

Judy: Yes. Well, no, I think they stopped ours before we actually did it, but I had to... We had people, the Republican Party, and they come to me and said, "Judy, we don't want to do this. We don't feel like there's anything wrong here. But they're asking us to put people at every elections office". You know, the Republicans. They guarded our office.

Joe: I remember that.

Judy: We had the police outside guarding it. They would come and sit outside the vault, to be sure that we didn't go in and out of the vault to do anything. And if we did, they could walk

with us to see that we wouldn't, you know, they had to do that. Well, the ones that come to me, they would sit there and bring their papers or whatever and I'd tell them, 'Here's the refrigerator, help yourself. Here's the bathroom. Here's the water. Y'all go for it'. They rode to the post office with us to get any ballots and we had this big old bag that was locked with a key. The Democrats did none of this, this was Republicans. They would come back and go with us to take one little ballot out, or however many were in there, put it in there. And then we had, we're going to have to stop here shortly, you're going to have to get back to work.

Joe: No, I'm good.

Judy: Then, we had news media. I talked to everybody: CNN, NBC, ABC, Fox, all of these networks up in New York and out of state, and news reporters. We educated them, because they really didn't know what to ask. They would ask for something and then we would say, 'Are you talking about this?' And it's like... yeah, that's what it is. So, they didn't even know what they were asking for.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And so, I finally got to where I told them, 'You know what, guys? It's beautiful down here in Florida. Why don't you all just come down here. I'll be glad to show you everything we got and let you understand it'.

Joe: That's good.

Judy: Well, they didn't want to do that. And you know, news reporters, and I hate to say it, they just like a story. And if everything's good, that's not a story.

Joe: Right.

Judy: But, anyway, I had to get a sheriff's deputy to drive me to the airport in Fort Myers to pick up our chip that we were going to use to do the recount.

Joe: I guess that's what I want to ask. Do you get the paper ballots? Do you have to go through each one? Is that how a recount takes place?

Judy: Yeah, you had to run up... but, it would only pick up that one race. It wouldn't recount...

Joe: It wouldn't recount everything.

Judy: That's why we got a new chip, just for that one race.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And then it would just redo that one race. Well, when we left work that night, there was deputies that guarded our building, so that no one could go in.

Joe: Really?

Judy: Until the next morning. I mean, really, it was like, ah. And I can remember that we had... they had to pay to do it, the news people had to pay to do it, but the only ones that could handle the ballots was my staff. We couldn't just hand the ballots to them and let them go through it. So, they had to sit and hold the ballot up in front of them and let them examine the front and the back of the ballot. And they'd pass it to the next one and let that person look at it on these ballots.

Joe: Wow. It's so tedious.

Judy: But we did it. In fact, I had to go to a conference, so I had to leave. And they called me and said that they were almost through and could they stay later for this person, they were fine on staying so they could get through. And I said, 'Certainly, you can do that'. But, I can remember we had, I think it was 9 ballots that we had to count, because you know, overseas, they get an extended period. It has to be postmarked by election day, but they get an extended period. We give them so many days afterward to get their ballot and then we have to open it, and that's military or any overseas worker, you know, within that. So, I think we might have just had 9. It was my attorney and me, and the judge, and one of the county commissioners. We had the Republican party, a Democrat attorney, we might have had a Republican attorney, or whatever, sitting there. News media everywhere in my conference room and people from the party. They wanted to come in and watch.

Joe: Wow.

Judy: For 9 ballots. We opened them, they examined the ballots. No, we didn't open them. Well, we would open the ones and count the ones that they were okay with. We hadn't opened the ballots, but if they weren't signed, if there's no signature, then that ballot was no good.

Joe: Really?

Judy: If it was postmarked after the election was over, that was no good. And, you know, just different stuff like that.

Joe: You really had people forget to sign their name on those?

Judy: Mm-hm.

Joe: Really.

Judy: A lot of times. So, anyway, if the signature did not match at all, we couldn't accept it.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: But we would pull the registration form and let them look to see that the signatures didn't even look the same, and we would show them the date. But this one Democratic attorney, he was just about got on my last nerve. I was tired anyway. I was over putting up with all that. It was like, you know we have done everything that we could do possibly for you people. You

know what? The law is the law. But he was him-hawing around on this one. So, finally, I just said, 'Listen', and this is so unlike me. I said, 'I happen to know the law. I know what the law says on that. And if you would look for me to get the law book and open it up and show it to you, I will be glad to do that'. Well, my assistant was behind me and she was about to pass out, because she's thinking, now where's that in the law, I know it's there. My poor old attorney, I think he's about to pass out, because none of them could believe that I was even saying anything, but I was over it. We had worked hard, and we were trying to do everything. We knew that everything was done right. I could understand them questioning, but it was something so plain that you knew. And he just kind of looked at me and smiled and said, 'Yeah, that's okay', and passed it on down. But I thought, we were there all day long for 9 ballots.

Joe: For 9 ballots. How many were actually accepted? Out of those 9?

Judy: I can't remember now.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: I mean, you know, probably not that many because if it wasn't signed properly or done, and that would be the question they would have if it was something like that. But I can't remember that. We had one of the best elections we had ever had.

Joe: And it pretty much swung for W in this county, I imagine.

Judy: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Joe: How did the whole thing get called off? How did you find out?

Judy: I don't know. Oh, the Secretary of State finally just certified the election as Bush, the winner.

Joe: Because of the Supreme Court, right after they came down with the decision.

Judy: You know what I said though. I was telling somebody that if Gore. He should have, from the very beginning, requested a recount for the whole state of Florida. He shouldn't have wasted all of his time over there on the east coast. It drew it out longer and longer until it drew everybody into it.

Joe: Mm-hm.

Judy: I can remember Theresa Lapore setting up there being grilled by the senate. She said, 'You got to understand, when you've got poll workers and they're more elderly, because the young people are working, or they're parents or going to school'. You can't get as many of them to work on the polls. And she said they are long hours. You have to be there at 6:00 in the morning until we're through at night.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: And this one lady says, 'Well, why don't you have double shifts and let them go in and take a nap? Or sleep and rest and let someone else do it?' And I remember sitting there looking at her and like, what? Are you kidding me? They can't go in and take naps. And you can't have double shifts. If you did, whoever comes in second is taking over from that one who was there first, you don't know what kind of problems they might have had.

Joe: Right.

Judy: Who is going to have to take over? But that was because they had no clue what was going on.

Joe: So, do you think if Gore had done that, and just got a full state recount...

Judy: Do I think he would have won?

Joe: Possibly?

Judy: I don't know if he would have or not. Nothing would have changed in our county because I think Bush beat him pretty good here.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: And, but see, I think what he did is he just went on to the Democrat counties, because I think Palm Beach, at that time was big Democrats in Miami.

Joe: Oh, he was trying to be strategic.

Judy: I think that's where it went.

Joe: Well, that was very interesting on 2000. The only other things I wanted to ask you about were Donna and Charley and maybe how that affected your job; Charley, of course. Do you remember Donna? That was 1960.

Judy: I do remember Donna. That was my first hurricane.

Joe: Yeah? Was it?

Judy: The house we were staying in, the roof blew off of it.

Joe: Oh, really?

Judy: So, when the eye came, my dad loaded... 3 families of us were together, and we all loaded up in our cars and went to Charlotte High School, before the second part came. So, we stayed over there until the hurricane was over, and there was some water and stuff like that. But, you know, as bad as Donna was, it seemed like it was. The reason it wasn't as destructive, I feel like, is because we didn't have as many buildings back then.

Joe: Of course.

Judy: We had more open space.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And a lot more stuff like that. Now Charley, even though Charley wasn't that wide, because it only went so far into Port Charlotte.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And Englewood got nothing from it. Well, if it had not been as fast as it was, it would have destroyed... it would have flattened us.

Joe: Really?

Judy: Because it was very destructive, but we have a lot more buildings, we have a lot more, um, more damage and more things to be done.

Joe: More things to destroy.

Judy: And it was an election year. I had to have an election. A big election.

Joe: That's right, it was. That's what I was going to ask. First of all, you were still in Solana for Donna, right?

Judy: Oh yeah.

Joe: And you lost your roof?

Judy: Not in our house, in the people's house that we were staying in.

Joe: Oh, okay. But your house was unscathed. When Charley came, where were you living at that time?

Judy: At my house in Deep Creek.

Joe: Oh, you're in Deep Creek.

Judy: And I had my aunt there, my nephew, and my son's in-laws, and Keith and Mary, and Joe was just an infant.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: He was not very old. And, of course, me. And my dad had just had 9 hours surgery the day before, on his leg.

Joe: Oh, wow.

Judy: And he was at the medical center in Punta Gorda, and they had to airlift him to Sarasota the next day, because it took a real hard hit there.

Joe: Really?

Judy: So, I had my dad up there in not really good shape. I had completely lost my voice. I guess it was from all the stress. Me with an election, them trying to get a hold of me about we had to check on the damage, if any damage was done to our voting equipment.

Joe: Was there still a primary in August that year?

Judy: Yes.

Joe: So, you still hadn't had the primary yet.

Judy: It would have been in September. And so, we lost a lot of polling places. I didn't know if my poll workers... who was working and who wasn't going to work.

Joe: Wow.

Judy: So, they sent the Supervisor from Miami-Dade over here to help me. And my real good friend was Supervisor in Lee County. She had retired, but she came back from; she was on vacation in Georgia. She came back here to help me.

Joe: Oh.

Judy: And, um, they brought their whole, divisions of elections brought their trailers and set them up in our parking lot and they had to come in. We had to re-route security procedures. We had to be sure what polling places could be used, because we had to move a lot of them in.

Joe: I was going to say, certain polling places got destroyed, so you had to move them?

Judy: Yeah. And then, I mean, a lot of what we had to redo a certification of the voting equipment and the director of the division came down for that. And when I went to have our poll worker training, I got on the radio and I did as much as I could, but a lot of people didn't have any electricity, so it was hard for them to get any information.

Joe: Right.

Judy: So, when I showed up for the day of the training, every poll worker was there.

Joe: Oh, wow.

Judy: Even though we probably wasn't going to need them all. I told them, I said, 'Everybody will work that wants to work. Those that don't want to work, I understand'. They had lost their homes. I mean, these people come to work for me, because they would not let me down, they said. And they had lost their homes and things.

Joe: That's awesome.

Judy: So anyway, I remember this one man comes from Tallahassee, from the state. He says, 'Judy', on election day he says, 'I've just got to tell you, you have some of the best poll worker I have ever seen'. He said, 'They are meeting the voters at the door and thanking them so much

for coming out to vote'. Taking them over to the table to get signed in, then leading them over to the person at the booth. When they got finished voting there, that person would take them to another one that would lead them back out and thank them so much. He said, 'I've never seen anything like that'. And he says, 'And you've got, really, more than you need'. I said, 'Every one of them can stay. They've lost their homes. They want a little bit of normal to their lives'. So, they worked all day, and when I got to the conference later that year, the division director got up and said, 'Where's Judy Anderson?' I thought, 'Oh, my god', in front of everybody. It was at the banquet. I stood up and she said, 'Judy, I want to ask you. How in the world did you get as good a voter turnout as you got? You got a better voter turnout than other counties that did not even have a hurricane and what you went through'. That made me feel so good, because I thought, you know, they just wanted a little bit of normal back into their life.

Joe: Right.

Judy: And that was something normal that they did.

Joe: That makes sense. So, that was the primary. Did things calm down a little bit, by the time the general came around?

Judy: Well, we still did the same thing. We had the same polling places, because they weren't going to be up in that time.

Joe: Right.

Judy: These places, some of them were destroyed. So, yeah, it just went on to, you know.

Joe: Right.

Judy: But I'm telling you, it was... it was an exciting time. The governor sent generators down. The governor gave me the forest ranger stuff out there on 41.

Joe: Oh.

Judy: They were assigned to me and they come to me and says, 'We are to do anything you want us to do. Take water anywhere, set up anything. We have been assigned to you'. The governor did that.

Joe: Was this your last election? I'm trying to do the math. Sixteen years, was that 2004?

Judy: No, that was 2000, so 2004 would have been my last election.

Joe: Yeah, that's the year Charley hit.

Judy: Yeah. I'm sorry. I'm thinking of the presidential election.

Joe: Did that have any effect on your decision?

Judy: Oh no. I already... I had not qualified, so I was not on the ballot. It wasn't me.

Joe: So, you were just running it, I see.

Judy: I was the Supervisor then, I hadn't qualified. I wasn't the candidate.

Joe: So, the hurricane didn't convince you not to run.

Judy: It didn't convince me at all not to run.

Joe: You just wanted to retire. You went out on your own terms?

Judy: Yeah, I was ready, 38 years, I felt, was enough. I was the type of person that, when you felt like, you didn't have something that you really wanted to add, and you weren't as energetic, happy and joyful about starting new things, as you should be, That's the time when you need to let someone fresh come in and start doing their ideas. You know, start doing things.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: And I just felt that way. And also, my parents weren't in the best of health. My dad wasn't. I felt like I needed to have time with them.

Joe: And you had grandkids at that point.

Judy: Mm-hm. I had grandkids, which I love dearly. It has been an experience. A little girl from Georgia would've never dreamed that she would have been an elected official, and actually an elected official in something that's as important as voting.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: And you know, that's what I used to say about these people. That's one issue that you really should take seriously, because to start with, the candidate has to qualify there or you're not going to be on the ballot.

Joe: Right.

Judy: You have to come through us before you do anything. And then I says, 'And we're responsible to get their names and their ballots out there and to get the voters out to vote'. So, that is one of the most important offices, and not because I held it.

Joe: Right.

Judy: It is one of the most important offices that we have.

Joe: it's an important civic duty that I'm hoping everyone is going to do by tomorrow.

Judy: It's the right to vote and tomorrow's an election. I'm excited to see how it's going to turn out.

Joe: Me too.

Judy: I can actually sit back and relax and enjoy it.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: Where as before, I'm like, this better go okay or this. You know, you don't even think about who's winning or not winning. All you're thinking about is it's all going okay.

Joe: Are you ready for your final question?

Judy: I've got one more question?

Joe: That's it. Yeah. I always ask people who've lived here a long time. So, what do you think the biggest difference is with the Punta Gorda you grew up in and the Punta Gorda we see here today in 2018?

Judy: Well, you know, I miss the Punta Gorda I grew up in. As far as the small-town, everybody. But I also know that progress has to happen, we've grown, and I think that that's wonderful to the point that there's more opportunity and stuff for people. We've got a lot of young kids now in our schools. We didn't have that many back when we were small.

Joe: Yeah.

Judy: And a lot of restaurants, a lot of businesses that have come in here. And even though we, so many times you'll hear us old-timers, and I consider myself an old-timer now. Say, 'Gosh, I miss, I miss Old Punta Gorda, when we knew everybody'. But yeah, we love what it is today because there's so much out there that we can go to, and see and do, that we can do over here in our own county, instead of having to go to Fort Myers and Sarasota, or any place like that.

Joe: We should just cherish the memory and I'm glad I have people like you to paint that picture for us, which is what you just did for us.

Judy: Oh, I do cherish that memory. I'm so glad that I, and I 'm glad that my son grew up here, too, because it was small enough for him that you know I could still keep a rope around him. I knew where he was. And I knew people out there was watching him and I knew where he was.

Joe: How long did he stay here before he moved? I know he's in the Tampa area now.

Judy: He was, um... Keith, I think they've been married 21 or 22 years. So, they left not long after they got married. But, he went to Tallahassee first and he got his Masters, at Florida State. And my daughter-in-law got her PhD at Florida State.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: So, then they moved to Memphis.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: And my daughter-in law was a professor at the college there, and my son got a job at St. Jude's.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: In the research department.

Joe: Oh, he's in science? Is that what he does?

Judy: Well, now that he's come back, he's in South Florida now. He's the director of sponsored research.

Joe: Oh, okay.

Judy: But, what they do with that is they do grants. They just do a lot of stuff. I don't even know what all they do.

Joe: So, they work at USF.

Judy: Mm-hm.

Joe: That's why there in Tampa.

Judy: And she is a professor at the University of Tampa.

Joe: In what? What is she teaching?

Judy: Political Science.

Joe: Excellent.

Judy: She has her degree in Political Science.

Joe: I think you might have had an effect on your son's choice for his wife. You were in politics.

Judy: I don't know, she's a sweetheart, and they're doing well for themselves and I'm so proud.

Joe: Okay.

Judy: You know, it's something that... uh, I don't have to worry about them.

Joe: Well, thank you so much for your time. You said 45 minutes. We went an hour and a half. I told you it would fly by.

Judy: Have we been here an hour and a half?

Joe: An hour, twenty-nine and 49 seconds.

Judy: Did you run out of tape?

Joe: No, no. This thing can go on forever. I just know I should probably get back. Plus, I know that I can always count on you for a follow-up interview.

Judy: I know that sounds so stupid.

Joe: No, no. You did excellent. Excellent job.

Judy: When you go back and listen to my voice and I'm stuffed up.

Joe: Well, thank you so much, Judy.

Judy: You're welcome, my darling. I'm glad you finally got me.

Joe: Yes, I did.

Judy: We'll talk some more.

Joe: I know. When I hear back, when I do the transcriptions, I might come back with some follow-up questions. Thank you for your time.