

VIRGINIA WOMEN ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

ROANOKE CHAPTER

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Attorney: MARYELLEN GOODLATTE

Interview Date: April 6, 2023

Interviewer: SHARON R. CHICKERING, ESQ.

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SHARON CHICKERING: My name is Sharon R. Chickering, Esq., and the date is April 6, 2023. I am interviewing Maryellen Goodlatte, Esq., one of the first women attorneys to practice in the 23rd Judicial District of the Commonwealth of Virginia, encompassing the City of Roanoke, the City of Salem, and Roanoke County.

This interview is part of the Oral History Project of the Roanoke Chapter of the Virginia Women Attorneys Association recording the oral histories of the first women attorneys to practice in the Roanoke Valley.

In 1970 to 1971, there were no women attorneys on the membership roster of the Roanoke Bar Association or practicing in the Roanoke Valley, an organization which was incorporated in 1925. By 1978, there were fewer than ten women attorneys practicing in the Roanoke Valley, including our interviewee today, Maryellen Goodlatte.

We are conducting the interview in the Roanoke office of the law firm of Woods

Rogers Vandeventer Black. The videographer is Melissa Stephens, and the stenographer is Katherine Ford, who has generously donated her time and expertise to this project.

Maryellen, do I have your permission to record this interview?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, you do, Sharon.

SHARON CHICKERING: So please tell us your full name, where and when you were born, the names of your family members, and a little bit about your childhood.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Sure. Well, my name -- my name is Maryellen Flaherty Goodlatte. I was born in April 1952 in Norwood, Massachusetts. Norwood is a suburb of Boston. At that time it truly was a suburb, its own little small town. It's now been encompassed into the Greater Boston Metropolitan area.

But I had a lovely childhood. My parents came to the U.S. from Ireland, so became naturalized citizens, so I'm a

first-generation American. And, you know, had a marvelous childhood. Very, very Irish, obviously, in terms of its orientation. And Boston being a center of Irish-American activity, it was a, you know, very warm and loving childhood.

So having had a marvelous time, I was the oldest of four children. And I think that might be enough.

SHARON CHICKERING: Okay. So what is your educational background and your college experience?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Sure. Well, after high school I went to Bates College. Bates is in Lewiston, Maine. It's a small, liberal arts college. And it really was a dream of mine. I was planning, or sort of expecting that I would be a commuter, that I would commute into one of the Boston stage schools.

I applied to Bates, thinking that it would be an impossibility, but it turned out to be a possibility. I worked my way through Bates, and just had a marvelous

time there. I learned a lot during my four years there. It really expanded my thought about what I could do, where I could go, and it kind of expanded my world view.

SHARON CHICKERING: In what way?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, you know, I came from a very insulated world, and a world where even my going to college was a stretch. I was the first in my family to graduate from high school, never mind college. And the expectation was that I would get a job after high school. So college -- so going -- commuting into Boston was seen as a great step. Going away to Maine for four years was seen like a crazy idea.

At that point my dad had passed away, so my mother was a single mother. I was the oldest of four children. She -- and she's actually still around, I'm grateful to say. She's 99 years old.

SHARON CHICKERING: My goodness.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Still living in the Boston area. But, you know, that was a

sacrifice for her to kind of let me go. So I just felt free when I was at Bates. I had -- it was a small school. I liked that atmosphere. Great interaction with professors. Just a marvelous experience for me.

I then went on -- I was a major in history and in, minor in economics. Then went to W & L Law School from Bates, met my husband at Bates, Bob. He was in the same class I was. We moved to Lexington. He was a year ahead of me at W & L.

We had actually applied -- I decided late on in my college career that law school was an interest of mine. I pretty much thought that I would be a teacher, that was sort of where I was aiming.

But kind of halfway through my college career, one of my professors, a woman in the history department, really encouraged me to think strongly about law school and suggested that I could be of better use to society rather than as a teacher, although teachers clearly are

important. She thought that would suit me better.

She actually recommended that I take some math courses, thinking that math would be an aid in preparing for law school. I reluctantly did that because math was not an area that I thought was a strong suit of mine, but I did it. I agree with her in retrospect. Even today when young people talk to me about preparing for law school, I suggest they not be afraid of math courses, take math courses. It's a great way to build logical understanding into how they approach problems and problem solving.

But anyway, I did move on to law school. Bob and I moved to Lexington. He worked -- he went to W & L a year ahead of me. I worked for a year in Buena Vista with what was then the First National Exchange Bank. That was also a great experience. Because it was a small branch bank, I got to basically do everything. I got to do the administrative stuff. I got to make loans. I got to run the proof

machine. I got to be a teller. So I learned about a lot of banking, which ended up serving me well when I first began practicing law because I then represented -- I first represented United Virginia Bank. Back then it was United Virginia Bank of Roanoke NA, which became -- what did it become? Crestar and SunTrust and Truist and whatever else it became over the years, so that was just a fantastic learning experience for me. The following year I began at W & L.

SHARON CHICKERING: What was the difference between Bates and W & L in terms of women and...

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Oh, yes, a big, a big difference. At Bates, Bates's ratio of men to women was 60 percent men, 40 percent women. Interestingly enough, back then, I graduated from Bates in '74 along with Bob. That was -- that was a rigid ratio for them. I hope that's changed. I think that's changed.

But even back when Bob and I went to

Bates for a reunion in probably 2000/1999, around there, we sat in on one of the sessions that they used in order to make a final decision about who they would be admitting the following year. They thought that would be useful for us to see.

I learned then about the concept of male filler, which surprised me. Even then, in order to get to that 60 percent quota they had, they admitted men who were certainly not the academic equals of women, so they were the male filler. I thought to myself, oh, this is not so good. And I -- they've changed that, thankfully. But, you know, that wasn't all that long ago when that was considered to be an appropriate way to balance, you know. That was their idea of diversity back in the late '90s and early 2000s.

Then at W & L, it was '72 before they let women --

SHARON CHICKERING: Into college.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, they were forced to let women in. They were at risk

of losing their accreditation as a law school if they did admit women into law school.

So we were just a few and far between. My class was the third class that admitted women to W & L. And there were maybe, I don't know, five, six, seven of us. There weren't that many of us in, you know, in those classes. Obviously that's changed a lot as the years have gone, which is a really good thing.

But at Bates, I just embraced every aspect of collegiate life, very involved in student activities, very involved in lots of things.

At W & L, it was very different, very focused. Of course, at that point I was married, so my lifestyle was different at that point. Lexington at that point was very male. You know, we had a few women in the law school. We had no women in the undergraduate university. And of course, VMI was right next door. So it was an interesting place to be a female student at

that point in time. But, you know, I viewed law school back then as a means to an end. I knew what I wanted. I just -- and I've just kind of worked through the process. Law school was not, for me anyway, a time where I just loved law school compared to my experience at Bates.

I contrast that with my daughter, who went to law school. She's a UVa grad, undergrad in law school, and she loved law school, very involved in student activities. Very, even to this day, still involved in a lot of law school activities, so I think that was a good thing. I think I was a little bit too rigid back during my time. Maybe it was because of the flavor of what that world looked like back then. I just wanted to do the best I could. I wanted to be ready in classes, you know.

I think even to this day the Socratic method is still the preferred way of training lawyers. That was a little intimidating for me. It started out especially intimidating because, I think I

mentioned Bob was there a year before I started. And so I -- and we were newly married. So when he would go to the law library, which was where you studied back then, the internet was a new thing on the horizon. Everyone went to the law library. I would go too. I would read, I would do whatever I was doing. So I got know to professors at the law school and they got to know me.

So when I was a first-year student, they had a real problem with their software at the beginning of the year. They tended to generate kind of face-books for the professors with the names and the pictures of the students so they would know who to call on. So for the first few days they did not have that face-book. The only face they knew in the audience was mine. So on the first day in every single class I was the one called on, you know, for the whole class to address the professors' questions.

And I came home after that first day and thought, I don't think law school is

for me. It was a rough start. But I stuck it out and I'm grateful, I'm very grateful that I did. I just appreciate what W & L did for me, the training that I received there, the background, the ability to think as a lawyer and help clients, people solve problems. So looking back, I'm so grateful that I had the experiences I did at Bates, which kind of brought me out of my little world.

SHARON CHICKERING: Right.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: And then law school, which I never -- never thought I would get to go, never mind complete, and I practiced law. I'm very grateful for the opportunities I've had.

SHARON CHICKERING: Do you think that the professors treated you differently as a female?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I don't think so. I don't remember feeling that way. I started off on that very weird arrangement because they did know me. But I didn't feel that I was called out in any special

sort of way.

SHARON CHICKERING: Okay. And so you -- you graduated in 1978; is that correct?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I did, graduated in '78.

SHARON CHICKERING: And admitted to the bar in Virginia in '78.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Correct, correct.

SHARON CHICKERING: Okay. So what inspired your decision to come to Roanoke?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, Bob, my husband, got a job in Roanoke. He was a year ahead of me in law school. And he got a job working for the then Congressman Caldwell Butler, who represented the Sixth District of Virginia back in the '70s. He ran his district offices, but that position was in Roanoke. And I was really thrilled because I got to complete my term at W & L.

So I commuted from Roanoke to Lexington that last year, that was in the days of 50-cent-a-gallon gasoline, so it

was a little bit easier. And so that brought us to Roanoke. We were really not certain where we would have ended up, but that was a great position for Bob. He got to learn about this part of Virginia, got to know a lot of people. He did that for about a year and a half, almost two years, then opened his own law practice. So he was a couple of years behind me in the actual practice of law, but he laid a nice foundation for himself for what would be later a political career by working for Caldwell Butler.

SHARON CHICKERING: So what attracted you to Bob?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, for one thing, of course I knew him at Bates. Bates is a small school. You know, it was really his integrity. It was his -- the qualities that I saw in him that resonated in me.

Bob was, toward the end of our time at Bates, he -- and really when I got to know him really well, he was the president

of the student body, student government. And he needed to appoint a treasurer, and people were interviewed. I was one of them, and he ended up appointing me as treasurer, so we got to work really closely in terms of the student government at that college. That's where I really learned a lot about him. It really is those qualities that attracted me, and still do.

SHARON CHICKERING: So he started his own firm, and what did you do when you first went into practice?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: When I first went into practice, I worked for the firm of what was then Wetherington, Flippin, Melchionna, Bosserman & Burton, a great civil practice firm. I had -- during my last year of law school, I had the privilege of working for Bill Poff. Bill Poff needed -- Bill Poff was, as you know, just an amazing, he was kind of a lawyer's lawyer for all of us.

SHARON CHICKERING: He was.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: He was good

enough to give me a job helping, doing research, writing briefs. I would work in the Woods Rogers' library. That's how I got to know some of the attorneys in Roanoke and was accepted as an associate at the Wetherington Flippin firm. And I did a lot of, as I mentioned, bank work at the time, a lot of litigation in my early years at that law firm, and just really had a great start to my law practice.

SHARON CHICKERING: So tell me a little bit about how you were -- were you the only female at the --

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, yes.

SHARON CHICKERING: And how were you treated?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I was -- I was treated fine. I think they maybe didn't quite know what to do with me, didn't quite know how to treat me. But thankfully, I have a pretty rough skin, and I -- so nothing seemed to bother me. You know, clients would wonder about me, would assume that maybe I was a secretary or a

paralegal. But once they got to know me, they realized that -- that I was actually an attorney and I would be representing them or helping them in one matter or another.

But it was a great law firm. I learned a lot. In a smaller law firm, you know, you often learn sort of by doing and having some backup, so I did not have a long period of mentorship, if you will. It was sort of sink or swim because that's what a smaller law firm really expects of its attorneys. They don't have the luxury of letting you train for a year or two, but expect you to dig into something, ask questions if you feel like you need help, seek out others if you need it, but otherwise, to be as self-motivating as you can be as quickly as you can be. So I -- that worked for me. That's the type of person that I am, so I found that to suit me just fine.

SHARON CHICKERING: So did you have any particular mentors at the firm?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Really they were all mentors of mine in a small -- in a small firm. I learned a lot. Some of them had different types of practices. Some, again, were more litigation oriented. Some were more corporate. Some were tax. And I just felt -- I just felt like I was appreciated, that I was part of a firm.

You know, we were not sort of sole practitioners. It was a large enough firm so everybody felt like they were all in it together. And I value that.

SHARON CHICKERING: And how about the members of the bar? There were very few women. So how were you received by the male members of the bar?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Overall quite well. I, certainly some of the older members of the bar did not quite know how to treat me. I had some marvelous experiences with a number of them. You know, some of them were just way too deferential, way too deferential, and they didn't realize it until after they lost.

So, you know, that -- but I tried not to, you know, gloat. I tried to be respectful of them, but I just wondered to myself, why are you -- why are you doing this? But I had to take advantage of it, you know, in order, you know, to get, to do what I had to do for a client.

SHARON CHICKERING: Do you have any kind of specific example of what that difference was?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I don't want to name names.

SHARON CHICKERING: Oh, no, that's okay.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Right, right, right, but they were the older members of the bar. And they were extremely deferential to me. And, you know, they realized as time went on that they were, more than they should have been in that regard.

SHARON CHICKERING: And how did you -- how do you feel you were received by judges?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Wonderfully. I mean, I have felt from the start that we are blessed in our part of Virginia to have a tremendous judiciary. You know, Judge Ballou -- Judge Ernest Ballou at the time was marvelous to me. One of the, in fact, the first bench trials I had was with Judge Ballou.

And it so what happened that opposing counsel was a new attorney as well, Jim Joyce with Gentry Locke. We were coming out about the same time. Judge Ballou loved that. He loved the fact that he had two brand new lawyers facing each other for the first time in his courtroom. And he really was -- we learned a lot from him and just really appreciated him.

Judge Coulter was legendary as well. You know, he would want all new attorneys to come and get their picture taken with him, talk with him, invite them to his home. It was just marvelous. So they were just good people.

And I, of course, knew that Virginia

had a system of judges being appointed by the General Assembly. One would think that that might result in some difference of skill levels or one being more political than another. I'm grateful to say I just don't see that. I think whether the Democrats control the Assembly or the Republicans, you know, we have gotten great judges in our part of Virginia, so I'm appreciative of that.

I've also had experience with the judges in further areas beyond the Roanoke Valley. And I remember one in particular that I went to. I knew that -- this was not a judge in the 23rd Circuit. It was a judge further in Southwest Virginia. I knew that that judge was a graduate of W & L Law School. I thought to myself, well, I'm going to go introduce myself just to say hi to the judge before this case gets started. So I did that.

I went back in the judge's chambers and had a nice conversation with him. But toward the end, he said something to me

that, you know, shook me a little bit. He said that he was a proud graduate of W & L Law School, but felt they did two things really badly: One was to move to the new law school. My class was the last class that had a year in Tucker Hall, which was called the Colonnade. The old law school then moved to Lewis Hall, the new law school. He said, "We did not need that new school law. Tucker Hall was appropriate. That was the best place to learn how to be a lawyer." He went on and on about that. "Then the second thing they did was they admitted women."

I thought, oh, my goodness, here I am. So that, we kind of ended that conversation and then went on to the case at bar. But that was the only judge that I ever experienced who -- and he meant it. He meant it at the time.

Now, over the years I interacted with him a few times in the years following and he did mellow. He recognized that the times had changed and having women admitted

to the law school was right and just. But that was a -- that was a little bit disconcerting. I kind of stepped in it.

SHARON CHICKERING: I can imagine. So how long were you with Wetherington Melchionna?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I was with them until Jennifer, our daughter, was born in 1984. The firm had experienced, you know, like firms do, a bit of a breakup. So some attorneys left, and I was one of them. I was one of them. I went with Frank Flippin to what was then the Glenn -- Eggleston Glenn firm, the law firm. That's where I have stayed since then. It became Glenn Feldmann and now it was Glenn Feldmann Darby & Goodlatte.

SHARON CHICKERING: So when you started to have children, how did that affect your ability to practice law?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: It really did change my -- the type of my practice. I had, up to that point, I had really done more litigation work, but I recognized that

I couldn't just take off and go to, you know, Richmond or Newport News in three days for depositions. That just wasn't -- that did not make sense to me. So I began to retool my practice. I did a lot more land use, development work, things where I thought I had more control over my schedule, at least where I felt like I would not need to be away regularly dealing with the requirements of a litigation schedule.

SHARON CHICKERING: Uh-hmm.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: So that -- that really was what drove me to change the type of practice that I had. But my firm was very good about, you know, giving me time to do that. And I think long-term that worked out just fine for me. I did develop a laudable land use practice in particular, and that's been interesting and rewarding.

SHARON CHICKERING: So your children were born in 1984?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: 1984 and 1986, right, right.

SHARON CHICKERING: So your daughter is?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: She will soon be -- she will soon be close to 40. I mean, I know, I know. And I've got two grandchildren who want me to spend more time with them. They live in Arlington, so they are not too far away, but they are not right around the corner either.

SHARON CHICKERING: And your son?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Son is -- he went to Duke. And right after he graduated from Duke, he headed to a little startup in San Francisco called Facebook, which had been recruiting him, and actually wanted him to quit school. He still chides me for not letting him drop out of Duke and go to Facebook, you know, two years earlier. I told him he needed his education. Long-term he did the right thing.

But he's done great. He's in the technology world. He was in San Francisco for a number of years, now in Miami. There seems to be more of a tech community

developing around Miami. He's happy, he's single, but very much involved in the technology world.

SHARON CHICKERING: So during the time that you were pregnant, how did -- how did practice go? How did the judges treat you? How did you get accommodated around having children, nursing, those sorts of things.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Right. I think, again, the world has changed for the better for young women today. When I had children, it was not accommodating at all, at all. You know, I expected to have maybe six weeks at home with the baby. I had about two before I had to go back to the practice, you know. So today law firms are much more accommodating to the needs of young mothers.

I see that with my own daughter, who has two children, and appreciate very much the time that she was given to, you know, take care of those children, the time that her husband was given as well to help with

the rearing of really young babies. That's a really good thing. That was not the case when my kids were born.

SHARON CHICKERING: So were there any judges or fellow attorneys that you particularly admired during your practice?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, you -- yes. Judge Turk in the Federal Court. I mean, I just really appreciated Judge Turk. The way he had handled young lawyers was legendary. Some of his sayings are legendary.

Judge Wilson, Judge Sam Wilson, who is now retired. Of course, Judge Ballou was just a huge favorite of mine, starting with that very first trial that I had. His son, Robert, is now a U.S. District Court Judge, and he has a lot of those same qualities that Judge Ballou exemplified. I appreciate Judge Robert Ballou as, when he was a magistrate judge, handling a lot of mediations in Federal Court. And, you know, I just saw his dad almost in the way he handled a lot of those cases, so that

was just really lovely.

So again, we've just had amazing judges. Judge Strickland, I can't forget Judge Strickland. I'm just so proud of the fact that she was a circuit court judge. Amazing in every sort of way. I'm grateful for the drug court that she started. She started that program. That's made a huge impact on the whole of the Commonwealth. Just an amazing person. She was an amazing lawyer when she practiced at Woods Rogers. No doubt that she would have been a tremendous circuit court judge. I'm glad she had that opportunity.

I think it's time for there to be more female judges like Judge Strickland here in our circuit. We have had a number put themselves out, and I know how difficult it is to put yourself out for that process. But we need more, because I think they do bring a special sense of their own experiences to that bench that helps the practice of law and the general community. But, just we have a tremendous

amount of attorneys that have, and judges that have made a huge difference.

SHARON CHICKERING: So as we noted in the introduction, there were fewer than ten women attorneys practicing in Roanoke when you started to practice law --

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Right.

SHARON CHICKERING: -- at the end of the '70s. One of those was Judge Strickland, which just for the record, she was one of the -- one of the other oral histories we have done. She became a judge in 1992 and I believe retired in 2002.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, and still serves as a mediator with the McCammon Group. In fact, I've used her for mediation services because I just admire the way she thinks, the way she deals with people. All the qualities that made her a great judge continue to make her a great mediator.

SHARON CHICKERING: At that time how did you and the other female attorneys in the Valley get together? What was your

interaction with one another?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: We would keep up with each other. Angelica Lloyd was sort of one of the pivot points, as was Judge Strickland, just to try to reach out to each other, catch up with each other from time to time. You know, Linda Steele was one of the early attorneys, too, but she left. A lot of us were married at that time in our lives. Linda was not. And I think back when she was practicing law -- she has since passed away -- but there were few social activities for young professional women. Thankfully that has changed a lot.

I think Roanoke is now seen as a place where someone can work as a professional and still have a very active, vibrant social life. So she did leave the Roanoke area to practice law in a larger community. But there were few of us, and we did keep tabs on each other, tried to help each other as we could. I know that there's a much more vibrant group today,

which is wonderful, because I do think that women attorneys can help each other in all aspects of their lives, not just their practice lives, but their civic lives and their family lives too.

SHARON CHICKERING: Did you feel that that was the way the group was?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, yes, I did. I think today it's much more organized. Of course, now there is a Women Attorneys Association, and women professionals in general have more opportunities to interact than we did in the early years of my practice.

SHARON CHICKERING: And actually if I'm correct, a number of women attorneys in practice were also married to attorneys.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: That's true.

SHARON CHICKERING: Angelica Lloyd, who worked for Norfolk Western, and Diana Perkinson and Diane Strickland, Judge Strickland as we just talked about.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Right.

SHARON CHICKERING: And Betty Jo

Anthony.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Right.

SHARON CHICKERING: Do you feel that that affected the way that you -- your relationships or the way that you experienced practicing law in the Valley and the way you were treated?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I'm -- I don't -- I mean, I don't know that that made a difference in the way that we were treated. I do think it added another dimension to one's life. You know, obviously one has a professional life and one has a family life as well. And so your activities outside of your law practice kind of resolve around your family, your budding family.

So I think that, for me anyway, then it kind of went on for me in terms of the political aspect because my husband ran for office in 1991/1992, so then I had another element to deal with. That just compartmentalized my life maybe more than -- more than might be good.

So I do encourage young people today to, you know, continue with their friendships from law school, from college, and not let those parts of their lives just sort of be sacrificed to the immediate needs of family, you know, civic involvement and the law practice.

SHARON CHICKERING: So in 1992 when Bob was elected to the Sixth Congressional District, tell me where you were in your practice and what decisions you-all made about how you were going to handle this.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Right, right. At that point I had pretty much transitioned to not heavy on the litigation side. So I had already, with the birth of our children, at that point were pretty young. Our oldest was in kindergarten. Well, our oldest was second grade, the youngest was in kindergarten, so they were both in school, which was good. So we knew we would have to deal with the challenges of him being out of the area.

We decided that it just made much

more sense for us to stay in Roanoke. For one thing Roanoke was where my law practice was centered. Roanoke is where our children were going to school, second grade and kindergarten at Fishburn Park Elementary School in the city. We felt like that was the place for them to have a normal childhood and not to drag them up to the Washington area. So that made sense.

Obviously his being not home for a good bit of time meant that I had more responsibilities, but we worked that out. You know, that's not that uncommon. A lot of families have to deal with one spouse or another having a job that takes him or her away from the family for a period of time. So we just -- we made that work.

Maybe I am looking back on it with rose-colored glasses because I'm sure, I see how my daughter now is dealing with her two youngsters. And I know that it takes a lot of work to raise children, and Bob certainly was there every moment that he could be there. We brought our kids along

with us, you know, on the weekends when he was home and we were having to travel around the district. It's a big district. At that point it ranged from Roanoke in the south up to Rockingham County, Harrisonburg in the north, east to Lynchburg, west to the West Virginia line. That was a lot of communities that felt like they needed to see their congressman and his family all the time.

We tried to oblige. So we tried to make it a learning experience for the kids. We took them on every vacation that we took, we took the children with us. We really did not have a vacation on our own, which probably in retrospect was not the smartest thing to do.

I encourage my daughter and her husband to take breaks, then I go up to Northern Virginia and babysit with my grandchildren. Maybe I have an ulterior motive in suggesting that they go away for a weekend, but that's just the way we operated.

When we would take a two-week vacation, we would take the children with us. Now that, you know, to Europe, that was really before Bob got elected. That was more difficult to do once he got elected because we did not have the luxury of taking that much time off. They were always part of everything we did.

When I speak with people that are thinking about a political career, you know, I encourage them to have a really heart-to-heart with their spouse and significant other just to be certain that everybody is on board, and for them to recognize that, you know, there are going to be impacts on the family if when one person decides to go into public service.

So that -- they need to have that wide open, because I've seen too many cases of people that will do that, will get into public office, and then will find that they have to leave for one reason or another. And family is usually close to the core of the reason that pulls them away.

SHARON CHICKERING: Well, I know that in a *Roanoker* interview in 2005 Bob described you as a full-time lawyer, a full-time mother, and almost went full time on my first campaign.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, you know, that first campaign was just funny. Bob had never run for public office, ever. He had worked for Caldwell Butler, as I told you at the beginning, but then he had been in private practice for, you know, a decade or more, so he had to transition his law practice.

At some point he realized that he had given away all of his clients, so if he did not win that election, he would be out of a job, maybe a little extra motivation. But, you know, it was very exciting. You know, it was -- it was a busy, busy, busy time, but a lot of fun too.

We would have volunteers almost every night of the week at our dining room table, stuffing envelopes, licking stamps, handwriting things, you know, me among

them, doing all of the things that you need to do, driving, going to mass meetings, talk to the folks there at the nominating conventions led up to nominating a candidate to run for that seat.

You know, I thought that Monterey was a long way away from Roanoke; and I realized, well, it really isn't. I can get there and get back and speak to the group. So we kind of divided and conquered.

You know, I would go to some places and he would go to others in order to do everything you could because the great thing about an election, there's a deadline. You know that it's going to end, hopefully, hopefully; these days I don't know. But you know that it's going to end. You work as hard as you can up until that deadline. Thankfully he was elected. He enjoyed his years in the Congress and got to do some pretty cool things. Got to, you know, just had an amazing career, but it did involve a lot of time away from his family and did put a lot of

responsibilities on our kids, frankly.

You know, I don't know that I really appreciated that so much when they were going through it. I think I, now looking back, realize that was a lot to ask of a kid in kindergarten to have to deal with his dad being a member of Congress.

SHARON CHICKERING: Right.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: And what other kids did and didn't do to him, so...

SHARON CHICKERING: Right, right. Well, 1997/1998 you became the first woman president of the Roanoke Bar Association; is that right?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, yes, that's right. It took a while, didn't it?

SHARON CHICKERING: It did. Tell me about that experience and what you feel that you accomplished. Was there an objection to you, you think, based on --

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: No, no, I don't think, Sharon. I had been working on a number of committees of the bar. You know, the bar encourages all of its attorneys to

be active in committee. So I guess I was a known quantity, and, you know, you work up through that process. You, one year you are the program committee chairman, so you're responsible for getting all of the programs. Then you are the chairman, then you're the president of the bar, then the next year as the immediate past president you work on the foundation. That was one of the great things that I am grateful that I have the ability to be part of.

During my tenure -- Charlie Cornelison preceded me -- then it was me, then Charlie, Judge Dorsey who followed me. We began as a pilot program, well, we began the foundation, the Roanoke Bar Foundation. We started off with the scholarship. Jimmy Kincanon had been a prior secretary forever and ever and ever. We thought we would never, you know, know how to deal without Jimmy Kincanon, but established that. Funded the Kincanon Scholarships to young law students, but then wanted to do a little bit more.

We started the Barrister Book Buddies Program back then. That was a lot of fun. That was --

SHARON CHICKERING: I remember that.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: It started off as a summer pilot program because Roanoke City Schools at that time had made a real big point of stressing that by the third grade all children needed to be reading at grade level, so that was a real goal and mission of theirs. So we worked with the school system to create a pilot program -- it was just a summer program. And we were going to go in and provide, read to the children and provide books for them to take over their summer vacation.

So I went up to the Green Valley Book Fair, don't know whether you have been there. It's outside of Harrisonburg, Virginia. It's a great place. They're good about giving non-profits a bit of a break. So the bar, the foundation, bought a lot -- a lot, a ton of books so that we could give every -- every child in the -- I

think it was the second grade at that point, a book to take home with them over the summertime.

Then that just developed into what continues to be the Barrister Book Buddies Program. I think it's celebrating maybe its 20th year or something.

SHARON CHICKERING: They just announced they were going forward with it again this year.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yeah, and, you know, that is such a good thing. Education is so critical. So the bar wanted to be a partner with the school system to just find ways to make reading fun. So the Barrister Book Buddies Program was born. I'm really proud that that got started and that caught, you know, caught steam with the members of the bar.

I know that, I mean, I know I enjoyed that and I know other attorneys enjoyed that as well. The kids love it. The teachers appreciate it. And I think it's all for a good cause.

SHARON CHICKERING: So you also have received recognition as a leader in the legal community with several different groups and organizations. Can you kind of go through what all the accolades are.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, I mean, no, no, because I just figure a lot of that is a function of longevity, Sharon. There are a lot of worthy people out there. So, you know, I'm not -- I don't keep up with those. I appreciate hearing about them, but, you know, I just think as a lawyer you want to be ready, serve your clients well, serve your community well, and at the end of the day, feel like you did everything you possibility could and you did it the right way.

And, you know, I guess I started practicing law back when attorneys really did not promote themselves. That world has changed, obviously, not -- and then that's perfectly fine. So I just sort of come from that old mindset, I think.

SHARON CHICKERING: Well, I'll just

mention a couple and then we will move on. But you were named to the Virginia Lawyers Weekly Inaugural Listing of Influential Women in Virginia; is that correct?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes.

SHARON CHICKERING: And that you have been named to the Legal Elite by *Virginia Business Magazine* and voted as a Super Lawyer by members of the legal community.

Tell me a little bit about what your feeling is about the importance of recognizing women for their accomplishments or contributions in the law now. Do you think --

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I do.

SHARON CHICKERING: -- accolades are important?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I do. I still think that's important. Now, maybe my hope is that a couple of generations beyond me will find that that isn't a necessity. I am really grateful to see that women have risen to run law firms, to certainly be judges, be elevated to the highest courts

in the land.

So at some point I think we can stop focusing on those things, but for now I think it really is important. I think you want to encourage young women to, you know, think bravely and boldly and strive for those careers that will advance them up the ladder. So yes, I do. At some point my hope is that they are not necessary. But I think it's a way to distinguish somebody, a way to encourage young attorneys to continue to stay in the legal profession.

You know, we hear these days in particular about so many people in so many different professions not feeling as if they are getting a sense of reward from what they do. I don't want that to affect the legal profession because I really think we have a unique ability to make a difference just by the way that we have been trained. Hopefully the way that we act. You know, hopefully the way we recognize the rule of law. Hopefully the way that we treat each other civilly and

can be an example for others as to how to handle disputes.

You know, the legal profession really is a noble one, I believe. I'm grateful that I've had a chance to be a part of it. I want it to continue because I think society needs it.

(A recess was taken from 10:48 a.m. to 10:54 AM)

SHARON CHICKERING: Maryellen, you have a strong record of civic service in the Roanoke Valley as well, having served on the boards of the Transportation Museum, the Carilion Foundation, RCG Services, and the Roanoke Regional Partnership in its strategic planning advisory council; is that correct?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, and probably a whole lot more over the years.

SHARON CHICKERING: You are also past president of Downtown Roanoke. Have I missed anything?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Yes, but that's okay. Yeah.

SHARON CHICKERING: So what's inspired your commitment, civic commitment to the Roanoke Valley in this way?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, of course, part of it is the -- what I learned about the needs of the Valley through Bob's political career and understanding and interacting with local elected officials and others.

Part of it is because of my law practice, you know, which has probably an economic development focus. So a lot of the organizations that you mentioned, you know, see the importance of bringing good jobs, good opportunities, a vibrant, diverse base of commercial activity in the Roanoke region. That probably has encouraged me a lot.

I also, you know, from my own experience, feel like education is kind of the stepping stone to success. So a lot of the organizations that I have been involved with, the Education Foundation at Virginia Western, Carilion, and the school system,

you know, just kind of -- it was because I really want that to happen. I really want parents and others to invest in their children's education in terms of their actions. I'm not talking about their money. Certainly a lot of organizations raise money.

I love being part of the Virginia Western Educational Foundation that started the CCAP program, the Community College Access Program, which basically said to Roanoke City students if you get a C or better by the time you graduate from high school, we will pay for your community college education.

CCAP was started a number of years ago, and I'm really grateful to have been part of the group that said, yes, let's do this and raise the money to do this. That has grown over the years.

I now -- people more and more recognize the value of the community college system, not only for workforce development, but as a way for young people

to, in a cost-effective way, especially if they go through CCAP and it's free, get two years of college under their belt, and then transfer to another university. There are programs that are in place, UVa, Tech, Hollins, all kinds of local four-year colleges and universities to accept the credits from that CCAP program. That's just one example of things that really drive me to be helpful.

I would often go and speak to PTAs at the beginning of the school year, Back to School nights, and just encourage the parents to get involved in their child's education. You know, talk about the things I did when my kids were going through the system, things that they can do, simple things they can do so their children know that education is the key to success and how important it is to take that seriously and to invest the parents' time and talents into the education that their children receive because they -- it's not only up to the school system. Parents have a role in

that process.

So a lot of what I've done has just been motivated by, maybe my gratitude for having had the experiences I had, having had the education that I had. I had a great public school education. You know, I had opportunities to go to Bates, to go to W & L, to do the things that I've done.

I had parents that, you know, encouraged me to read and, you know, do well in school, so all of those things are important. And I just feel like today's parents need to kind of instill that sense in their own children and really value education, value education as a steppingstone to success. So that's one element of the civic activities that I do that really draws me in.

Of course, the broader one of a community development, economic development, some of that, again, is just driven by the work that I've done representing developers, representing sometimes local governments, to try to make

projects happen.

SHARON CHICKERING: So in the Roanoke Valley, there's only been the one attorney, woman attorney appointed to the circuit court bench, and that was Judge Strickland who served from -- I said it a little inaccurately earlier, from 1989 to 2003. And there have been only two women appointed to the general district court bench, which was Judge Strickland and then Judge Talevi who currently is serving. Then there are four women judges who have been appointed to the juvenile court in this judicial district.

What are your thoughts about these statistics and the role in or the importance of diversity on the bench?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: I -- we need more women. We need more women in all of those courts, I think especially at the circuit court level. I'm pleased that we do have a good J & D bench. That's important because that's a critical core. The general district and the J & D court

are where most citizens interact with the law. So I think having women attorneys elevated to those positions on the bench are really important, not just for the women attorneys to see that yes, we value your service and we recognize that you need to be on the bench, but really for the general community to see, because they do bring a lot to that bench. They bring that diversity of thoughts, diversity of experience, and I think they resonate with people that are before them. But especially in the circuit court, I mean, that's where matters, decisions that find themselves embedded in the law will end up.

So I feel like it's way past time for us having more women in our area on the circuit court.

SHARON CHICKERING: So what are your thoughts about the fact that for the first time since its incorporation in 1925 that the Roanoke Bar Association now has a fully female board and officers.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Isn't that

wonderful? I know, yeah, that's great. And why not? Why not now we're not imposing a quota, it doesn't need to be that way forever, we will let men on from time to time, but I think it's wonderful. It's just a natural progression. We have more law schools. The ratio, I mentioned the Bates ratio of 60 percent male, 40 percent women, really that is almost the law school ratio today in terms of 60 percent women, 40 percent men. Not that that's a ratio, but that just shows you that women in colleges are attracted to law school and what they can achieve as lawyers because they see women lawyers doing amazing things throughout the country. And they say, you know, I can do that too, and I want to be a part of that.

So I think it's just amazing. I'm grateful that we have that and, you know, that's something we should trumpet throughout the state and beyond because it's a good thing.

SHARON CHICKERING: So what other

life accomplishments do you feel that you have that you're proud of that -- either law related or otherwise?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, you know, that's a good question. I don't know. I don't know if there's anything. A lot of them are law related. I mean, I appreciate some of the pro bono things that I've been able to do over the years, some of the non-profits that I have been able to help foster their, you know, their missions, because I do think lawyers have an obligation to provide their services free of charge. And I appreciate Legal Aid, and of course, that's part of what we can do.

But for me, that was just a small part of my pro bono activity because I really thought that because my law practice was so focused on land use that I could be helpful to the non-profits that are kind of in that area.

Certainly the political world was fun for me and getting to, you know, be part of that. You know, I just remember being so

amazed when I first went to the House of Representatives when Bob was sworn in, thinking that here I am, an average person, an average person having this opportunity. And it really -- it is, just gives you an appreciation for this great country that we have.

I've had opportunities from time to time to travel abroad, to see members of our State Department and how they interact with other states and how they represent our country and our citizens in other states. I'm so proud of what they do and what we stand for as a country. And so I'm just grateful that I've had all of those experiences. It's just been pretty, pretty amazing.

But, you know, not withstanding all of the issues that we have and all of the turmoil that we -- that we view on TV every day and every night, this is an amazing country. And it's worth working to keep amazing. That's why I think it's worth encouraging young people, especially young

women, to get involved in a legal career because I think good lawyers can make a huge difference in the direction that we head, and hopefully keeping us, the type of country that we have been.

SHARON CHICKERING: So you truly have been a trailblazer, not only for women in the law in Virginia and in particular for the Roanoke Valley, but also for the preservation and betterment of the Roanoke Valley.

So what are your observations of the progress or lack thereof of the equality of women attorneys in Virginia and elsewhere and women on the bench?

Do you have any message you want to give women just coming into the practice of law today?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, I think that young women coming into the practice of law are probably smarter than I was at the time when I came into the practice of law. For one thing, they've got a lot of mentors out there. And I think they're

better able to feel free to ask questions and to stay in close touch with their colleagues, with their contemporaries, because we do have an amazing network of women across the Commonwealth. We learn from each other.

And I think young women are much better at doing that than I was when I first came into the practice of law. You know, I just think it's really important to have those dialogues. I think it's important for young women to get involved in the community. I think pro bono work is important of all stripes.

I think -- I still think public service is a good thing. I encourage people -- they don't have to be lawyers -- but I encourage them, get involved in local government. Get involved in your political party of choice because we need -- we need good Democrats, we need good Republicans, we need good Independents in our country.

We need people that are willing to do the right thing to further their goals,

their priorities, and to work together with others. I think we're lacking a little bit in that direction. And I think lawyers have a unique ability to bridge some of those gaps because, you know, as a lawyer in a case or in any kind of thing, we tend to understand the other person's side. We know what our side wants and needs and where we're heading, but I think we also, in order to represent our client, we need to understand what the other client, what the other side wants, what their objectives are.

And we'll talk to each other. We'll oftentimes find a compromise, find a solution, find something that's viewed as a positive for each side. Somebody gets something, somebody gives up something. As a society we need more people that are willing to take that approach to solving problems. And lawyers are it in my opinion, in my humble opinion.

SHARON CHICKERING: So what would you most like your legacy to be?

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Oh, well, I'm not -- I'm too young to be thinking about a legacy. I just -- I just really, maybe gratitude. I mean, I had an amazing experience to get to this point. I'm grateful that I did. I'm grateful that I listened to folks along the way that said, well, you can do a little bit more. You don't have to settle for this or that or the other. You can get here.

And so I think we just need to all listen to those voices that encourage us to do a little bit more, try harder, and try just -- try to just make a difference.

SHARON CHICKERING: Thank you, Maryellen, for participating in this oral history project.

MARYELLEN GOODLATTE: Well, I just thank you, and thank the Women Attorneys Association for doing this, Sharon, because I think it's great to, you know, for whatever value they may have, to record these histories. I'm glad you're doing it with the women who were here when we kind

of first started. That's great. So thank you. Thank you for volunteering. Thank you for doing all of this. I think it's a good thing.

SHARON CHICKERING: Thank you.

<p>'70s - 14:18; 30:9</p> <p>'72 - 9:20</p> <p>'74 - 8:20</p> <p>'78 - 14:6, 8</p> <p>'90s - 9:18</p> <p>10:48 - 47:8</p> <p>10:54 - 47:9</p> <p>1925 - 2:19; 53:21</p> <p>1952 - 3:16</p> <p>1970 - 2:15</p> <p>1971 - 2:15</p> <p>1978 - 2:19; 14:3</p> <p>1984 - 24:9; 25:22</p> <p>1986 - 25:23</p> <p>1989 - 52:7</p> <p>1991/1992 - 33:21</p> <p>1992 - 30:13; 34:8</p> <p>1997/1998 - 40:12</p> <p>2000/1999 - 9:1</p> <p>2000s - 9:19</p> <p>2002 - 30:13</p> <p>2003 - 52:7</p> <p>2005 - 38:2</p> <p>2023 - 1:9; 2:3</p> <p>20th - 43:7</p> <p>23rd - 2:5; 22:15</p> <p>40 - 8:18; 26:4; 54:8, 11</p> <p>50-cent-a-gallon - 14:24</p> <p>6 - 1:9; 2:3</p> <p>60 - 8:18; 9:9; 54:8, 10</p> <p>99 - 5:21</p> <p>a.m - 47:8</p> <p>ability - 13:5; 24:20; 41:11; 46:19; 59:4</p> <p>able - 55:9; 58:1</p> <p>abroad - 56:9</p> <p>academic - 9:11</p> <p>accept - 50:7</p> <p>accepted - 17:5</p> <p>Access - 49:11</p> <p>accolades - 44:5; 45:16</p> <p>accommodated - 27:7</p> <p>accommodating - 27:13, 18</p> <p>accomplished - 40:19</p> <p>accomplishments - 45:12; 55:1</p> <p>accreditation - 10:1</p> <p>achieve - 54:14</p> <p>act - 46:22</p> <p>actions - 49:5</p> <p>active - 31:18; 41:1</p> <p>activities - 10:14; 11:12; 31:13; 33:15; 51:17</p>	<p>activity - 4:5; 48:16; 55:17</p> <p>actual - 15:10</p> <p>added - 33:11</p> <p>address - 12:22</p> <p>administrative - 7:23</p> <p>admire - 30:17</p> <p>admired - 28:6</p> <p>admit - 10:2</p> <p>admitted - 9:10; 10:6; 14:7; 23:14, 24</p> <p>admitting - 9:5</p> <p>advance - 46:7</p> <p>advantage - 20:5</p> <p>advisory - 47:16</p> <p>affect - 24:20; 46:17</p> <p>affected - 33:4</p> <p>afraid - 7:11</p> <p>ago - 9:15; 49:17</p> <p>agree - 7:8</p> <p>ahead - 6:12; 7:17; 14:15</p> <p>Aid - 55:14</p> <p>aid - 7:5</p> <p>aiming - 6:17</p> <p>almost - 15:7; 28:23; 38:4, 21; 54:9</p> <p>amazed - 56:1</p> <p>amazing - 16:21; 29:2, 6, 10; 39:22; 54:16, 19; 56:17, 21, 23; 58:4; 60:4</p> <p>American - 4:1, 5</p> <p>amount - 30:1</p> <p>and.. - 8:15</p> <p>Angelica - 31:3</p> <p>angelica - 32:19</p> <p>announced - 43:9</p> <p>Anthony - 33:1</p> <p>anyway - 7:15; 11:6; 33:18</p> <p>applied - 4:21; 6:13</p> <p>appoint - 16:2</p> <p>appointed - 22:1; 52:4, 9, 13</p> <p>appointing - 16:4</p> <p>appreciate - 13:3; 27:21; 28:20; 43:23; 44:11; 55:7, 14</p> <p>appreciated - 19:8; 21:17; 28:9; 40:3</p> <p>appreciation - 56:6</p> <p>appreciative - 22:10</p> <p>approach - 7:14; 59:20</p> <p>appropriate - 9:16; 23:10</p> <p>April - 1:9; 2:2; 3:16</p> <p>area - 3:21; 5:24; 7:7; 31:20; 34:23; 35:9; 53:17; 55:21</p>	<p>areas - 22:12</p> <p>Arlington - 26:7</p> <p>arrangement - 13:22</p> <p>arts - 4:16</p> <p>aspect - 10:13; 33:20</p> <p>aspects - 32:3</p> <p>Assembly - 22:2, 7</p> <p>associate - 17:5</p> <p>ASSOCIATION - 1:1</p> <p>Association - 2:11, 17; 32:11; 40:13; 53:22; 60:20</p> <p>assume - 17:23</p> <p>atmosphere - 6:4</p> <p>Attorney - 1:7</p> <p>attorney - 18:3; 21:10; 52:3</p> <p>ATTORNEYS - 1:1</p> <p>attorneys - 2:5, 13, 16, 20; 17:4; 18:13; 21:19; 24:11; 28:5; 30:1, 5, 23; 31:8; 32:2, 16-17; 40:24; 43:21; 44:19; 46:11; 53:2, 5; 57:14</p> <p>Attorneys - 2:11; 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