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Andy Huse: Okay, it's April 30th 2013. I'm Andy Huse here at the Tampa—USF Tampa Library. I'm here with Linda Saul-Sena who's kind enough to join us on her birthday for our oral history. So we're going to start from the beginning. Where were you born? Tell us about your family.

Linda Saul-Sena: Thank you, I'm thrilled to be here. I was born at Tampa General Hospital. My grandparents moved to Tampa in the twenties. My grandfather had studied conducting at Julliard and he had to make a choice. He could marry my grandmother and join the family business, which had moved to Tampa, or he could tour with the—the family legend is Isadora Duncan and conduct the music. So obviously, he moved to Tampa and later, when he was older and really incredibly depressed, he suffered from serious depression, I always felt like it was a symbol to me that you should follow your heart and not necessarily do what your family wants you to do. But anyway, he did move to Tampa, my grandmother proceeded to cry for years cause she thought the people—specifically the women in Tampa were very uncivilized, that they didn't read. She had gone to Hunter College and—

AH: Yeah, she wasn't a typical lady.

LS: No, no, no, she was very open and cool. And so she had my mother at twenty-two but she went up North to have her cause she didn't trust Southern doctors. And then my Mom grew up in Tampa. She went to Gorrie [Elementary School], Wilson [Middle School], and Plant [High School], and so did I. And my grandparents started out living in Hyde Park,

but in 1938 they built a house on Davis Islands. And the reason my grandmother said that she liked Davis Islands was because it had curbs, it had sidewalks, it felt to her like an urban place which was similar to Yorktown where she grew up in New York. So, my mother married at twenty—at—lord, at nineteen.

AH: Okay.

LS: She married my Dad who had been in the Navy and moved to Tampa for a job. My family is Jewish and when my Dad moved to town, his boss, Joe Spross gave him a list of eligible girls and when he got to Joan S.—oh no, Joan P. at the time, he called her up and he introduced himself. He said, “Hi my name is Marvin Saul,” and she said, “Do you have a second name?” And he said, “Yes, William,” she said, “Okay, I’ll call you Bill.” So everybody who knew my father during and post my mother knew him as Bill, everybody he grew up with from Georgia called him Marvin.

AH: Okay.

LS: So it was kinda fun. Anyway, so they had two daughters. I was born when my mother was twenty-two and my grandmother was forty-four and we lived three blocks from my grandparents on Davis Islands. So I grew up in a very small family, but a very close family and the expectation was this: that you were very privileged to live in a nice house and so your responsibility was to do something with yourself. You should always try your hardest in school. I never got financial rewards for grades, but it always: you should be the best; you should do the best because you’re capable of it. My grand—my father was very interested in politics and I grew up—I learned how to read the newspaper upside down at breakfast, which turned out to be a very useful skill—(AH laughs)

And we always talked politics. And I always thought the women in the family were kinda frivolous cause they talked about parties and clothes and I was—I was pretty serious as a kid. I was the President of Gorrie School, I was always the Student Council person, I just was pretty ambitious, and my driving ambition was to get out of Tampa. I thought Tampa was really hot; I’ve always hated to be hot. In fact in my purse right now I have a fan which I keep with me at all times. (laughs) And it was boring and it was limited—

AH: Yeah.

LS: And when I was in high school I got to go on a student trip to Europe and it absolutely opened the world to me and I thought, “I wanna live in the world, I want to be around beauty and around all that the world holds.”

AH: So—yeah, Tampa was a much different place too, back in the time that we’re talking about, than it was today, right? I mean there was no—there wasn’t particularly any arts here.

LS: My—whatever there was my family was involved in, my grandfather helped to found, along with Tony Pizzo, at the end of the orchestra season every year he and Tony wrote checks to make up for the deficit. So he was really interested in symphonic music and my grandmother was very involved with helping Jewish refugees during World War II, and my mother was very involved with the art museum. My Mom was actually a pretty talented artist and she was an art history major and she influenced me a great deal. Then, my Dad was involved with the Cancer Society and something called NCCJ, which used to be the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and is now—then was called—well, now it’s called Community Tampa Bay, which works on equality issues. So I grew up with a family with very high consciousness about civil rights, socialist issues, a commitment to activism. My Dad was the treasurer for the George McGovern campaign.

AH: Okay.

LS: There were—everybody was a very staunch Democrat, but they were never particularly involved in local politics. I mean, they voted and they—my Mother was a member of the League of Women Voters and she actually joined the NAACP along with Helen Gordon Davis. So, I’m growing up on Davis Islands, which is a very close knit community, I’m going to public schools so my friends are all close by, the big deal was when you were allowed to cross Davis Boulevard cause that gave you access to the other half of Davis Islands and it was a very free feeling, safe feeling growing up. But some of my friend’s mothers were in politics. My friend Karen Davis’s mom is Helen Gordon Davis and my friend Lynn Hodes’s dad was Dr. Richard Hodes and he was the Minority Speaker at the House in the Florida legislature. And Stacy Frank is my sister’s best friend and her mother, Pat Frank, grew up—it was on the school board and then the House and then the Senate. So, there was always a lot of political consciousness around my house.

AH: Right. Well, Tampa had a reputation for a long time—it was really rough and tumble politics and a lot of corruption early on, things like that. So, at what point did you start to—I mean, was this after college that you really thought that you might get involved locally?

LS: Oh, we have chapters to go—

AH: Yes.

LS: Let's go on, let's press on.

AH: Okay.

LS: So, I went to college in New Orleans at Tulane—

AH: Tulane, yeah.

LS: Because I had this camp counselor who I thought was really cool and she went to Newcomb, the women's college for Tulane—

AH: Okay.

LS: I thought, "Well, if I go there I will be cool like her." So, I went there and discovered how passionate I am about cities, because New Orleans—this was in ninety—I started college in 1969; so two things were going on. First of all the anti-war protests, which were compelling, and the women's movement and then, also, New Orleans was poor. This was before the big oil boom there, so college was huge in terms of shaking up my world. I went to college—my mom loved to shop and she outfitted me in all these matching shoes and purses and dresses and jackets, and I went there and then I discovered blue jeans and rock and roll, and sex and drugs, and the fancy dresses stayed in the closet and I wore the same peasant blouse and pair of jeans and flip flops for the next four years. And, in fact, my mother actually burned—I don't know that she burned it, but my peasant dress disappeared never to—anyway, so college was great fun and a huge eye opener. And my junior year I went to Italy, to Florence, Italy for my junior year to study art history and it was heaven to me. Its walk-ability, its beauty, the cafes, the whole way of life, I love the Italian language—it was a complete seduction and I fell. I fell hook, line, and sinker. So, as fabulous and romantic and beautiful as New Orleans is, which I think is the most European of American cities, Italy was even more—

AH: It didn't quite prepare you for Florence, right?

LS: It was so fabulous. So, after I graduated—so, I grew up with this idea that I needed to be this good girl and go to school, but that after that I could really write my own script. My great-grandfather, Henry, who had been a dentist in New York—he had come from

Europe, gone to New York, worked, actually in a cigar factory in New York and put himself through Columbia Dental School. He was my grandmother's father. He left me 15,000 dollars, which seemed like a fortune, and what I did is, I thought, "I will go to Europe and I will be an expatriate and I will be a muse for an artist." I decided that—I stopped making art at the age of twelve, which in hindsight was incredibly stupid, but I was frustrated with my efforts so I thought, "I'll be this wonderful woman and inspire an artist." And—so, I—my grandmother Nene, I call my grandparents Nene and Freddy. My father's parents were—lived out of town, were very much not in the picture. My grandparents were hugely important in shaping my life. So, my grandmother Nene, who was such a character, when my grandfather died pretty young, he was sixty-four, she was fifty-eight or sixty, and she just decided—she was left well off, she stayed in the house, and she took up with her friend who was her decorator who was two years younger than my mother, and for the rest of her life they were an item. But she only saw him Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and I said, "Why?" And she said, "Because I've been married, I don't want to be bored, I can just see him Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, it will keep it fresh." (AH laughs)

So, my grandmother took me on a cruise to Europe and it was fabulous. We went our own ways, but we met up at about one or two in the morning for tea in our stateroom and it was very formative and my plan was to go to Europe—stay in Europe after the cruise. But prior to the cruise, after I graduated from school, I drove up the East coast to say good-bye to all my friends cause I thought I'd be leaving forever, who knew. And my friend Trevie (??) whose family lived in Connecticut, had a summer place on an island in Maine, in China Lake. So, I went to see her, stay on the island with her family, and I meet a guy. Well, I—her father was very, "I'm going to teach you how to water ski," and I'm a klutz, so to escape being forced by her father to learn to water ski, I went with other friends who were there to visit an organic farm in Freedom, Maine.

So, I went to the farm and fell in love and I fell in love with the man, I fell in love with the farm, it was the Age of Aquarius, it was skinny-dipping in Freedom Pond, it was the coolest thing. So, instead of staying in Europe and being an expat, I came back to live on a farm in Freedom, Maine. And my mother said, "Why?" And I said, "I want to live in Freedom." (both laugh) So, my—when my alumni magazine sent a form, you know, "So what are you doing now and how did your college experience prepare you for this," I said, "I can look out on the back forty and say 'Wow, it looks like a Constable.'" (AH laughs)

And it was very—it was very illuminating, because I went into this thinking, "This is paradise, this is utopia." In college, while I majored in art history, I minored in English and philosophy, and one of my favorite courses was the idea of utopia. So, I thought that if I lived in a place that was small enough, I could create a perfect environment. Everything would be pristine, the environment, the animals we ate, we raised, everything was very organic and—and what I discovered was that there's a real gap between what

you think things are going to be like and what reality is. And this was a big eye-opener for me. So, after a winter in Maine, I thought, “Man, it’s too cold.” One day, I’ll never forget, it was October, and I’m digging potatoes—now I thought, before I moved to the farm, that if I were living on an organic farm, digging potatoes, that I would be feeling one with the Earth, I would be feeling a state of bliss.

But, what I really did is, I ran through every show tune in my repertoire, it took me like, two hours, I got like, six potatoes, cause the ground was hard frozen, and my nails looked like hell, and I thought, “Potatoes are so cheap at Wholeys. I can’t believe that I’ve been spending two hours and I’ve got six potatoes to show for it.” So, there was sort of beginning to be this disconnect. And like, I didn’t shave my legs, cause it wasn’t politically correct, but when I looked down I really was not—and in Maine you don’t see your legs for six months at a time. (AH laughs) But when I did I thought (sound of disgust). So, it’s always a struggle between the ideal and the real. You know, Plato was on to something in the caves.

AH: Of course.

LS: So after, like by February, I said to my boyfriend, “I can’t do this anymore, it’s too cold.” So he said, “Well, why don’t we buy a farm someplace further South?” I thought, “Great idea.” So we got in the car, we studied soil maps and rainfall and we drove to between Virginia and West Virginia, cause it’s really super fertile. So we looked in Virginia, it was really expensive, then we started looking in West Virginia and I went to a health food store and there was a little, you know, piece of paper tacked to the wall—a bulletin, it said, “Organic farm for sale, 150 acres. Apple field, two acre organic garden, six buildings, 15,000 dollars.” I thought, “Well, of course this is what I should buy, that’s how much money I have to spend, that’s how much they’re asking, of course this is it.” So I called them up and they said come over. We spent the night there. It was wonderful, everybody, you know, “Om-ed”[chanted “Om”] before dinner and the food was really good. And the next morning they went to show me where there was a little waterfall where you could shower, and I thought, “This is great.” So I went to the waterfall and I thought, “This is like a Herbal Essence commercial.” (AH laughs)

You know, this is so pure, the air is pure, it’s pure water, it’s just—it was great. It was just what I hoped for. And then we went back and I said, “I want to buy this place.” Cause they had bought a bigger farm up the street, so—so we did and cut down some trees to prepare for the next fall, went back—went to the coast of Oregon for the summer, cause my boyfriend had gone to Reed College and we spent the summer on the coast of Oregon. I waitressed, he carved wood signs, then we went back in the fall to live on our farm. Turned out that it was pretty isolated, cause I was used to living with about five people in the house, and this is our house, which was big. In fact there were several

houses on the property and the people from the commune, wonderful interesting people, had moved up the road so we founded a food co-op and we became friends with about four families there. So the fall proceeded, we had no crops other than apples. I did everything a human being can do to an apple. So I spent all fall listening to NPR's confirmation hearings of Nelson Rockefeller. I am so grateful to NPR, it kept me sane, and peeling apples and doing things to apples. And then right before Christmas I was—to make money I was substitute teaching and my boyfriend came to pick me up and he was late.

And he finally came and I was exhausted. And I said, "Why are you so late?" I was really aggravated and he said, "What's the worst thing that could have happened?" And I said, "Our farm burned down," he said, "Right." So, turns out I thought that getting a chimney sweep was not necessary, I was wrong, and I thought that insurance was way to bourgeois a concept. Again wrong. So this two-hundred-year-old house, that was a log cabin with logs this big, I mean first growth logs, it was very beautiful. I mean the light motif through all this is these places are very beautiful and very high touch. It was big, black, flakes of soot. And I don't know if you've ever seen the art of Anselm Kiefer? He's a German artist, he's really, really good. He does a lot of things. But one of the things he once did with these giant burnt books, they were like, this big, and they were just soot. They were like paper that was burnt. Well, we had kept—I have a lot of books on the second floor, so it had got—they had been less burnt than the stuff on the first floor and it was just soot, pages and every now and then you'd see a word.

And my jewelry I'd kept in a wooden box that my grandmother had given me. It was a Russian lacquered box, so it's lacquer, which is very volatile and flammable. So all the jewelry melted together and it was such a—it was such a shock, cause I'd had this totally charmed life and I'd thought that, you know, I was doing good things, the angels were smiling and suddenly everything's gone. And I wrote a poem that night that was really (sighs). So once our friends up the street put us up, and then the next day I'd looked around and thought, "Man, not only did all our stuff burn up, but our food—co-ops food which we were storing, burned up. And we had been working on the house, we'd finally gotten running water to take a bath—oh, you couldn't take a bath. You were in a—we—you could take a bath in running water, in warm running water, but it was—everything was gone. So my parents said, "Come home," and we did, and then they said, "Do you want,"—my mother was just appalled at the whole thing. She said to me, "This is what comes of trying to be a hippie." My Dad was a total sweetheart and he said, "What do you really want?" Cause my boyfriend said, "Oh let's go back there and, you know, we can live in the other cabins—

AH: Sure.

LS: —we can raise more of a garden, we can do this.” And I thought, “You know, I really gave this a good shot and I’m really not cut out to be a farmer.” And another—the other farm we had a cow; we had to milk a cow every day. You do not get weekends off for good behavior and, so anyway. I thought, “I really don’t want to be a farmer.” So I came back to Tampa.

AH: Okay, so how old were you when you returned?

LS: Twenty-three.

AH: Okay.

LS: So, I came back and I thought, “Okay, what do I do now?” You know, I have a degree in art history, which is not the world’s most employable thing, and I thought I’d rather do something I really love than—for free, than something that I’m paid for where I’m not paid very much. So, I looked around Tampa and I thought, “What does Tampa need?” I was so audacious; it’s great looking back and thinking, “What chutzpa.” So I thought, “Tampa needs to be a cooler city and I went to the planning commission and I said, “I will work for free but you need to—this needs to be a better city.” So the guy who was my boss, who’s still super close friends, said, “I’ll tell you what, you need some kind of external structure. We’ll get you a—an internship through USF Urban Anthropology program and you can work for free.” So I did, and I loved it, and he saw that I was hard working, and I worked there.

I wrote the Davis Islands plan, I wrote the Hyde Park plan and the West Tampa plan. I wrote zoning recommendations to both the city and the county. Now the county at this time had two women, Fran Davin and Betty Castor, and three men all named Bob, and I couldn’t make this up. Bob Lester, Bob Curry, and Bob—the other one, Bondi. The Bobs always voted with the developers, the women always voted with the planners. It was so frustrating. And during this time I applied to graduate school in urban planning, which I guess I applied in the fall, you don’t hear till the spring and then you go the next fall. Well, it took so long for me to be accepted, that by the time I finally got accepted I thought, “This is too frustrating, these people aren’t listening to me.” They weren’t reading the plans we were writing. So then I thought, “People believe what they see on television.” So I wrote a grant to the Florida Endowment for the Humanities to get the money to make a movie called—and I made it—called “City Visions.” It’s about good urban public spaces and we got a 20,000-dollar grant. The people from the Humanities said, “This is not,”—I wrote a grant saying we’d fly all over the country and make this film. They’d said you’d—with 20,000 dollars that’s not enough money to do it.

So I said, “Okay.” I changed the grant. I said, “We’ll fly all over Florida,” but really what I did is buy cheap tickets. We—in these days—those days you’d—for like, 320 dollars you could fly for twenty-one days. So I had a filmmaker who actually was a USF Professor, Charles Lyman, and Bob Gilbert as an Assistant Filmmaker and Nancy Gilbert, Bob’s wife, as a sound person. And we flew out to San Francisco, we went to Portland, we went to Seattle, and I was so brazen I can’t believe it. I talked my way into the American Psychiatric Association Convention so I could interview people about the effects of the environment on your psyche. Cause I am completely convinced that beauty is super important and I wanted a certified psychiatrist to say so. And sure enough, they have something called “environmental psychology” and they—I did get somebody on the mic to say it. And I interviewed famous architects whose work I liked, I just called them up and said, “Hi, I’m Linda from Tampa and I’m making a film and I want to interview you,” and they said yes. So Lawrence Halprin, who’s a wonderful landscape architect, and we filmed things in all those cities and made this film, came back to Tampa and showed it. And I thought, “Man people are gonna just hop to. They’ll see ‘yeah you need public art, you need transit, you need cafes, you need places that are quiet, places that are boisterous.’” And people didn’t just change the city in six months. I was disappointed. (laughs)

AH: So tell us a little bit about those early plans that you wrote. First of all, were they adopted?

LS: They were adopted.

AH: Okay.

LS: And Hyde Park absolutely transformed. Absolutely. It was a slum. And I actually, without my boss’s permission, went to the school board. They were planning on tearing Gorrie Elementary School down because they said, “There are only old people in this neighborhood. There will never be young people in this neighborhood.” And I said, “No, trust me. We’ve done a study, there will be young people.” And the banks—the banks had red lined Hyde Park. Do you know what red lining is?

AH: No.

LS: Okay. You draw a line around a place and you say, “We’re not going to lend money there.” And while it’s technically illegal it was rife in the fifties and the sixties. And they did it if they thought black people were moving in, they did it if they thought the area was poor. So I talked to bankers and I said, “Why aren’t you lending money?” They said, “Because this is a sixty-year-old house and somebody wants a thirty year mortgage.

Who's gonna want a ninety-year-old house? There'll be no value to it." There was no consciousness that historic preservation was important. And I met my very best friend, Jan Abell, who is a terrific preservation architect, because she—her husband was a librarian and she—and a photographer, and she was an architect. So they're a middle class family. She was trying to buy a house a block and a half off Bayshore on Newport. It was a 4,000 square foot house and she was trying to buy it for—I think it was 26,000 dollars and she could not get a loan. So what she ended up doing was going—cause the white banks had all red lined neighborhoods. Now this is 1975, she went to a black bank cause in those days banks were kinda segregated, and the loan officer was Jim Hargrett who later became a representative and then a senator. And she went to him, borrowed money, bought this great house, and it educated Jim Hargrett about preservation. And then later as an elected official he was a big advocate for preservation, which was kinda cool. Cause there aren't that many African-American representatives who really get preservation and he totally did. And he bought some historic houses, subsequently, and fixed them up, which is kinda great. Anyway, so Jan and I became best friends—so she became my friend cause she said, "How come if you're writing this plan I can't get a loan," and she said "You've got to do more outreach, you've gotta talk to people more," and so we started having public meetings and it really made a huge, huge difference. Huge. And now Hyde Park looks better than it ever did.

AH: Yeah, well tell us a little bit about, I guess, the before and after—you know, Hyde Park traditionally, wasn't it a place where the help lived, way back when?

LS: No. That was Dobyville.

AH: Okay.

LS: Okay, so Hyde Park was originally built in—at like the 1890s. The most beautiful Italianate house was built on Newport as a farmhouse and then it really got going in like 1910, 1914. O. H. Plant platted Bayshore, they did something—well the first big thing that happened was Henry Plant cut a deal with the city. He said, "If I'm going to build this hotel y'all have to build a bridge." Cause all the development had been on the East side of the Hillsborough River and he built his hotel on the West side. So then a couple of guys bought up a lot of land, it had been farmland, they platted it and they created Bayshore as a roadway with a beach on one side and houses on the other. But what's significant is in most of the neighborhoods that developed at this time, you had the houses right on the water and the road behind the houses. So you didn't have public access to the water. This was very significant in terms of how it developed. The other significant thing is the Tampa Electric Company started a streetcar and the Chapins had a house at the end of Bayshore and of course the Lykes had the houses at the end, and they took the streetcar all along Bayshore to Ballast Point. And that was one of the main things people did on the weekends for fun is get on the streetcar, ride out to Ballast Point, and

enjoy the breezes. So, that was extremely significant in terms of the urban form that Bayshore took and that Hyde Park took. So we did that as a plan and it was hugely successful—

AH: Yeah and what I want to know is the specifics of the plan. What were—like what were some of the key features that you were changing?

LS: Okay, the biggest things that we did is, we said that all houses from Swann, south to Bayshore, would be single family. Up till this point there was a terrible slumlord named—I blanked on it. But anyway, he was taking these grand old houses and breaking them up into like eight or even twelve units. And they were renting—and these were—all houses were built very nicely initially, but they were being chopped up and rented like single room occupancy to really kinda street people. And then there had always been a little bit of multi-family in Hyde Park, but this kind of—those existing, maybe four unit or eight unit or twelve unit places were allowed to stay, but the single family homes couldn't be chopped up anymore.

The other thing we did is we consolidated the commercial uses around where old Hyde Park Village is now and we said that along Swann there could be office uses but they had to maintain the existing fabric. And we protected the area with a national landmark and then a later—not a national but a city protected preservation area, which made a huge difference. Huge. At the same time the [Lee Roy Selmon] Crosstown Expressway was being built which was good news and bad news. It was good news for everything south of it. It was bad news for everything to the north. From the north to the expressway to Kennedy [Blvd] became sort-of a no man's land and you had a lot of beautiful old homes torn down. And the African-American neighborhood called Dobyville that was where the help lived, that was to the west, right along the railroad tracks. And that became stabilized because of the Crosstown [Expressway]. So everything to the south of it remained in little houses and to the north basically got torn down, made into industrial uses adjacent to the railroad tracks.

Pause in recording

AH: We heard a little bit about Hyde Park and some of the changes. Let's talk about Davis Islands, what are some of the features of the plan that people might recognize today.

LS: Davis Islands—

AH: And how did it change?

LS: Davis Islands won an award in 1927 as a best planned community in America, so this is a cool story, and you might have heard it before. But D.P. Davis wanted to build Davis Islands—have you heard this story?

AH: I'm familiar with Davis, yes.

LS: And he was sued by the guys along Bayshore who thought it would mess up their fishing and their view.

AH: Okay.

LS: So, it went to the state supreme court, who said, "You can build Davis Islands—the city is allowed to sell him the land to dredge up, on the condition that he gives 20 percent of it to the public for public use." So that's why the fancy homes on Davis Islands face Bayshore and the less fancy ones, or the public land, is all on the East side facing Harbor Island which was originally industrial. And so that's why the city put a hospital on an island, which is so stupid in a place with hurricanes—

AH: Yes.

LS: But they did it cause it was free land. And then he built the amenities he was planning to build anyway, the tennis courts, the marina, the baseball diamonds, the park, and then the airport, that was all part of the 20 percent he had to give to the city to make the deal work.

AH: Okay, yeah Peter O. Knight.

LS: Exactly. So it was really brilliant in terms of planning. As a—so when I came in the 1970s to the Davis Islands plan it was a piece of cake cause you had a plan. And so you just had to unscrew up the things that had been changed and we basically codified the things that existed. The one thing that I'm sad about is that we didn't create a scattered site historic district. We tried and it just kinda fell through the cracks that—anyway. The bottom line is now the houses are that much older, and just a month ago we lost the original caddy house for the golf course that had originally been in the middle of the island, and I was very disappointed about that. When I was a kid they still had the country club, which had been abandoned for maybe twenty years and we knew it was

haunted, and it was really spooky and cool. But for me, writing the plan was fun, cause I grew up there and it was a way of kinda protecting what I knew and loved.

And the bad news was when the housing boom in the 50s and 60s got going; the initial golf course was turned into housing lots. So we lost the golf course and we got all these houses, which didn't have the sidewalks that Davis had originally planned. And we lost these banyan trees and some of the wonderful things that had been there. And as a kid, like, it was really fun to pick up bottles from building sites and turn them in for two cents and get a coke with the money you made and it was great. It was—writing the plan was good and it was adopted really easily and what I learned about elected officials is they love to do things that are easy and make them heroes. And what I also learned is that they're only educable to a point and I was very frustrated and, as I told you, I didn't go to grad school and I shifted gears. I left the planning commission and I shifted gears and spent six months teaching kids about architecture. In the olden days, in the 70s, the Endowment for the Arts used to fund artists in schools programs, so I taught with the architects in schools. And I taught kids about planning and they loved it. It was really fun. Anyway, the West Tampa plan basically said all the things that now are being said yet again, that Howard and Armenia should be two-way, that we should protect the historic buildings, that we should go for density around the main street and Howard and Armenia, create the density there, make it a transit stop. To be a planner, you don't have to be brilliant you just have to be doggedly persistent.

AH: So, in part of the logic of the turning of the one-ways, two-ways is that you don't have these high-speed highways running through—

LS: Exactly.

AH: Like—

LS: It really supports local industry, cause you can't just sail through there, you have to stop and look, and see what's there.

AH: Well that's the same thing people are talking about with Seminole Heights now too
—

LS: Exactly.

AH: —in Florida and all these other places where you’ve just got these highways running through.

LS: Which is—which was part of my frustration. You know people—I knew this, why didn’t they listen to us? So what I did, I was in a bad relationship, I left town. I made the film *City Visions* and I put it under my arm and I packed up my Mustang and I drove north. And I stopped and showed my film along the way. I stopped in Savannah and Charleston, I stopped in Chapel Hill, I stopped in Philadelphia, and then New York, of course. And then I went up to Boston, and at each stop I knew people from conferences I had been to and people who were urban planners or architects, and I showed my film and I said, “Do you want to hire me?” And when I got to Boston, the city of Boston puts on a summer program on the banks of the Charles River. It’s called Summerfest. And I got there and I—I mean, I have like, no money at this point. Although—oh, I didn’t tell you how—what happened to the farm.

AH: Okay.

LS: After it burnt down—so my parents said, “So, what are you going to do with a burnt-down farm in West Virginia?” I said, “I’m gonna sell it,” And they, “Well, how? Who’s gonna—Who, in God’s name, is gonna buy this farm in the middle of nowhere West Virginia?” It was literally on Hicks Route. (both laugh) And I said, “Oh, I’ll put an ad in the Mother Earth News,” and they said, “Right.” So for thirty-five dollars I placed an ad in Mother Earth News. As soon as it was published, I got fifty inquiries. I sold it to the first person for fifteen thousand dollars—

AH: Oh, nice.

LS: Perry Mann, the lawyer who helped me buy it, charged a hundred dollars to buy it, charged a hundred dollars to sell it.

AH: Okay.

LS: And it was done. It was pretty amazing, it was so simple. My parents were astounded. So I took the money that I’d gotten from selling the—buying—selling the farm and I traveled when I made the film *City Visions*, and then I took it to go up North and seek my fortune. Anyway, when I was in Boston I just was so charmed by this ballet—this free ballet on the banks of the Charles River. I thought, “I want to go someplace where there are good bread and circuses,” and I like the bread and circuses here. I thought instead of trying to transform Tampa, which is obviously not picking up on this real quickly, maybe

I should live to—move to a place that's pre-civilized. So I moved to Boston and got a job working for the Cambridge—you know Cambridge, Massachusetts is right across from Boston—the Cambridge Multi-Cultural Art Center. And this was funded by SETA—remember SETA money?

AH: Okay.

LS: Anyway, it was like I was making \$15,000, which is not much (laughs), to live in a real city, and so I went to Boston and got this little job. The role of the Cambridge Multi-Cultural Art Center was to take this glorious Bullfinch courthouse, built in 1802 on the banks of the Charles River, and make it into a multi-cultural art center. And the dynamics in the community were that you had an African-American arts community that wanted to have ballet, and dance, and visual arts performances there, music performances. And you had an old Portuguese community that was unbelievably, racially prejudiced. Which I was surprised, cause I thought people up north weren't prejudiced, but I was wrong. And then you had sort-of a no persons land around this courthouse, which had just been, kind of, abandoned for, you know, fifty years. So I was sent in as this perky, young planner, helper, assistant for \$15,000 to try to get everybody to sing "Kumbaya" to get the money to renovate it and to deal with all the legislatures and it was really fun, it was very eye opening. P.S., fast-forward twenty years, they got it done.

AH: (laughs) Okay.

LS: But after one winter in Boston I thought, "It's too damn cold," and I was offered a job by someone I had interviewed with on my way up the country in Philadelphia. Her name was Asa Eriksson (??) and she was the Director of the Architects in Schools Program. So I went down there and worked as a program assistant directing a national program where architects were in schools. And what I discovered was—I had to write a book on model programs—was that what made each program successful was one person who was passionate. It could be a teacher, it could be an architect, it could be a parent, it could be a guidance counselor, but it always took one total believer to kinda energize everybody and make the program a success. So I love living in Philadelphia. I live right near the center of the city. I lived in an old brownstone and walked everywhere and made good friends and did that for a year. And then the—we got unfunded. I used to say, "I never get fired, I just get unfunded."

AH: Now you lived in Boston though right, not Philly?

LS: I was in—no I lived in Boston for the Cambridge Multi-Cultural Art Center—

AH: Oh, I'm sorry, okay.

LS: And then I moved to Philly when I got this call from Asa Eriksson (??) to—

AH: Okay.

LS: To do the Architects in Schools Program.

AH: Oh yes, of course, all right.

LS: Turned out the previous guy who had the job sky-dove, broke his leg, she fired him in the hospital. I should have picked up she was not going to be a tender boss but—(AH laughs) Anyway, so then I came and did that for a year.

AH: Okay.

LS: And then we got unfunded, cause it was nationally funded, it got unfunded. So, then I worked—went to work for the Victorian Society in America, and I organized their tour in Newport, Rhode Island.

AH: Okay.

LS: So, all of this is feeding my passion for historic preservation. I'm living in an old place, I'm walking around, I'm learning a lot. I'm not making much money, but I'm making really good friends and it was an adventure. But meanwhile, I left Tampa because of a relationship, I returned to Tampa when he said, "Oh, come back, come back." I was turning thirty and—the phrase I used was, "A phone rang in her womb." (both laugh) It's like, "Hello, you're turning thirty. You need to get on with this if you wanna have a baby." So, I moved back to Tampa and P.S., the relationship went up, down, and sideways. We never married, we never had a child, but that's what—was the impetus of me coming back to Tampa.

AH: Okay.

LS: Then, there was something in Tampa called the Tampa Community Design Center. Legal aid provides people who can't afford it with legal services. We created this organization—it was Jan Abell and other young architect, plan-ery friends and I, to help people who couldn't afford planning and architecture. We did things like paint murals, “Bienvenido a Tampa” on the side of the Boys and Girls Club, we helped a black church that needed architectural help, we helped the Women's Center with the beautiful building that Helen Gordon Davis got funded on Davis—in Hyde Park. We helped people who needed help with architecture and design. So they had money for an executive director for four more months, they had fired the previous guy, and they said come down and help us, and I did.

AH: Okay, so now how long did that last? Was that just the four months?

LS: That was the four months and then I stumbled along making a little extra money teaching again for the Architects in Schools Program, and then I got a job—and then I decided, “You know, I need health insurance,” cause living—I used to say, “I don't live hand to mouth, I live grant to grant,” but nothing has health insurance. So I went to work for the Tampa Museum of Art. They needed the—they just were founded on the banks of the new building at that time, on the banks of the Hillsborough River, and so I got a job as their first PR person.

AH: Now you were probably thrilled, right?

LS: Oh thrilled, thrilled. Again, I'm making 15,000 dollars.

AH: That, did you have benefits with this one then?

LS: I had benefits and living in Tampa is cheaper than Boston.

AH: Yes, absolutely.

LS: So, I loved that and I did that and learned a lot about what it takes to do marketing. This was in 1984 so it was pre-computer. When I took a press kit to the press it had slides and prints and typed out press releases. It was completely different from how it would be done today, but allowed me to be engaged with all the creative people and it was really fun. And then, after working there three years, I got engaged to Mark, my husband, and I met him because of Jan Abell. He is an investment banker, but he wanted to buy an old cigar factory and renovate it into a cool bachelor pad. He wanted loft. So he took a course

she gave at the USF Continuing Adult Ed Program. They became friends, he said, “I’ll do the financial part, you do the architecture and let’s be partners and do an old building.” So they bought a—actually it’s an eight unit apartment house in Palma Ceia because she said, “You know the cigar factories are really a lot to take on. They’re in kinda marginal neighborhoods. It’s really a big deal. You could do—we can do this.” So they did it and she became friends with him and realized that I should meet him. She said, “He’s too young for me, but he’s good for you and he’s Jewish.” So we met each other and we’re crazy about each other cause he loved to travel, he—I could tell would be a great father and he was loyal. So we—and many, many, many other things, but anyway, we fell in love, we got married and we lived in this old building that she and the—

AH: Oh, wow.

LS: That Jan and Mark renovated.

AH: Okay.

LS: So, when we were dating, we were visiting my sister in New York. My sister went to New York to go to graduate school, never came back, started her own gallery, but she—wrote one of the first catalogs for the Tampa Museum of Art for a photography survey show. So it was fun. We got to work together professionally, me doing the marketing, her doing the curatorial stuff. Anyway, Julia was saying, “Well, I’m gonna move to Soho and have a gallery space there,” and Mark said, “I’m gonna start going to South America to do investment banking there.” So they turned to me, it’s like, “Well what are you going to do?” I said, “I’m going to run for public office,” and they went, “What?” (both laugh) And I said, “Yeah, the city is making terrible decisions, they want to take the rose garden next to the museum and make it into a high rise and there’s been no public conversation about the design. I’m gonna run for public office and I’m gonna insist that we have design standards and that its—the city’s beautiful and we need cafes.” So they said, “Well that’s cool,” and Mark said, “I’ll help you,” and so that was it. I decided to run. I was totally ignorant. Totally and completely ignorant, which has served me so well consistently throughout my life. (AH laughs) You know, the jump in and figure-it-out-as-you-go plan.

AH: All right.

LS: But what I had on my side, seriously, was a family who had always been engaged in the community and never asked anybody for anything, and I had a good orthodontist. Now I thought the reason that I should get elected was because I was very knowledgeable about land use, which is the chief area in which city council has a lot of power and

autonomy. But the real reason I was elected was because, I think, of my smile. I have a very friendly smile.

AH: You do.

LS: So I worked really hard and I ran citywide. I was so ignorant that I thought that, “Rather than run against Eddie Caballero, who had been there for many terms as a—representing where we lived in Palma Ceia, I’ll run citywide in a field of seven.” I mean, that is not a smart decision, but I didn’t know. I was really fortunate because my husband is very professional and strategic, and he said, “Linda if you’re going to do this you need to hire a professional strategist and campaign administrator.” So we did and the woman I hired was very professional. She had done it in Washington, she’d just successfully run Ron Glickman’s campaign for the county commission in Tampa. And what she did is say, “Okay, this is what you need to do: This week you need to send this letter, this week you need to meet with these people, this week you need to go to these forums.” And with her creating an external structure for me, and all my eager young friends working, I got elected.

AH: Wow.

LS: And my parent’s friends and my parents helped a lot. And, I had friends who weren’t even registered to vote, that had been so alienated by the Vietnam War and all that, they weren’t even registered. So, one of the main things we did was register people to vote.

AH: Wow.

LS: Yeah.

AH: So you won citywide against seven opponents?

LS: Which is pretty amazing.

AH: Very much so.

LS: In fact the development community—this was fun—they put up this woman named Sheila Savage, I mean that name scared me. But, they put her up cause they thought as a

planner I would be anti-development. But I always said, “I’m pro-quality development,” which I am consistently, but they didn’t believe it till after I had run and gotten elected.

AH: Okay.

LS: So I’m elected. I’m thirty-six years old, I am the only woman, there are six men, and I’m considerably younger than they are and I’m much worldlier in terms of travel, thinking, broad thinking, and the chairman was Tom Vann. He was a total good ol’ boy. He called everybody else “mister,” he called me “Linda.” He was so difficult. So I got to my first city council meeting and I sit down, and it begins with a prayer by a white male Baptist minister. All hell fire and damnation and we are nothing but clueless nothings and we are just supposed to channel whatever God tells us to do we should do. And this didn’t sit well with me. So I raised my hand and I said, “I think that since we represent the—a diverse group of people in the city, we should have diverse prayers, if we have prayers at all. And we shouldn’t just have white male Baptist ministers provide prayers.” Well, I mean, I just stepped in it. I didn’t realize how he would organize thirty ministers to come to the next meeting and tell me I was going directly to hell. It was crazy, it was just crazy, and that was sort of a learning experience by fire.

But, I didn’t really have anybody I felt I could ask how to do this. I just kind of went and did it. Then, the other thing I did that was hugely controversial, I was on the Public Art Committee—so all these guys want to be on the Sports Authority. That is the coveted seat, that’s how they made these secret deals about who would be chairman, cause this one would be on the Sports Authority and I’ll give you my—I was not tuned into any of that. I wanted to be on all the arts committees so I got to be, cause none of them were interested at all. One of the committees, Public Art Committee, was just getting going and somebody wanted to give us a painting. So picture this, Indian maiden in the center wearing virtually nothing. Drooling explorers on this side, drooling male Indians on this side, it was terrible. So I said, “This painting is—we can’t accept it,” and I ended up having to publically apologize to the artist. And what we did then is, develop a process where we have a committee that vets work and says we can accept this for the city collection or not, instead of me going out and saying, “That’s a terrible painting.”

AH: Right.

LS: You know, so I—sort of trial by fire but I learned.

AH: The—yeah it makes much more sense not to have elected official polic—

LS: Sticking her neck out saying—

AH: Yes, on the line for a piece of art. So, yeah tell us a little bit about more about the culture of—

LS: City council.

AH: Of city council.

LS: Well, first of all, at that time even though Sandy Freedman had been a council member, once she became mayor she was entirely dismissive of council. Now fortunately, George Pennington was her Chief of Staff and he was a tremendous diplomat. He had been the Headmaster of Berkley Prep, and I think that teaches you a lot of diplomacy, and he was very polished, very smooth, and very nice to the council members. The council at that time consisted of Tom Vann, Lee Duncan who had been there forever. And Lee and Tom's reason for being on city council was because they sold insurance, and this was a way of getting exposure. Then you had Eddie Caballero, god knows why he was on there. Perry Harvey, whose father had been a Civil Rights leader, and he was supposed to be an advocate for the black community, but he was very ineffectual.

And then three new people: Perry—not Perry Mason—Ronnie Mason, Larry Smith and myself. So the three newbies kinda banded together cause the old guys gave us no orientation, no clue, no anything. We inherited a staff person, fortunately I loved my assistant Rhonda Smalls, we worked together for twenty years. But you were plunged into this thing with absolutely no direction, so Ronnie and Larry and I started meeting at eight o'clock in the mascot room, our little meeting room, to just talk about what was going to be on the day's agenda. We invited the press cause we're under sunshine law¹. The press never came cause it was too early in the morning for them. And we got to really know each other and what kinds of issues were important to each other and that was very, very important in terms of helping all of us kind of find our sea legs and be grounded. But we each had very different ideas. Like my idea, one of the first ones—Jan Platt and I had been friends since forever, since she had been on council and I was a young planner and I was giving advice on planning stuff—so we said let's work together to get some initiatives through.

The first thing that we worked on was renaming Buffalo Avenue in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. So we cooked up this idea to have a joint meeting—the county commission, city council. I went to—so meanwhile, Tom Vann thankfully ran against Phyllis Busansky

¹This refers to the Florida Sunshine Law, Fla. Stat. sec. 119.01(1) (1995).

and lost, so we got Joe Greco in, who was terrific. Anyway, the chairman, Lee Duncan, said, “Well we can’t have a meeting—a joint meeting with the county commission,” and I said, “Why?” He said, “Because we’ve never done it,” and I said, “Well that’s a terrible reason.” So we did it. And we managed to have this joint meeting and we got Buffalo renamed in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. While Tom Vann was chair, we tried it just with the city and it didn’t work. The county tried it, they didn’t work—together we were able to do that. So, fueled by the success of that, Jan and I decided to work on the Human Rights Ordinance. And I know exactly when this public hearing was, cause in the interim I’d had one baby and, like most things, I didn’t know what I was getting into. And I didn’t know that you’re supposed to get your baby used to a bottle early on, so I didn’t. So I needed to be around every three hours to feed her, or she was just wretched. So Aliza, our most beloved first-born baby, was little. She was like, four months old when we had this public hearing. It was held at the brand new performing arts center and it was the most contentious public meeting I’ve ever been to. They actually were using metal—

AH: Detectors.

LS: Detectors.

AH: Yeah.

LS: And the vibes—if you could see vibes, they were like purple with anger. People were just furious on both sides. It was really, really intense. It filled the whole large auditorium at the performing arts center and you had a giant table set up in front with all the city council members and all the county commissioners. And we just listened to testimony and testimony. And the lights were so bright in our eyes, we couldn’t really see individuals too clearly, but the place was mobbed. And it was intense and people were saying some hateful things. So I had to take a break three hours in to go feed Aliza, that’s how I know the timing of this, and I went in the back and it was the most profound experience, because I went back there and she’s just this, you know, beautiful, beautiful, tender sweet baby. And it was so peaceful and it was so loving.

And it was such a powerful contrast with what was going on in the auditorium, so I nursed her and I felt centered and I thought, “You know honey, you’re going to be born into a different world. You’re going to experience a change.” And I just got goose bumps because it’s happened. It had happened with—from when she was a baby, now she’s twenty-four, the world has changed. I just got goose bumps up and down. And that’s—and then I went back out there and all hell was raised but we managed to vote on it, both the city and the county. Now the county, at that time, had great people. You had Phyllis Busansky, you had Jan, you had Ed Turanchik, Pam [Iorio] might have still been there. I’m not sure. But you had Sylvia Kimball—you had these enlightened, progressive

people on the county commission, so I used to hang out with them cause they were much more with it than the council members. And I got to serve on different committees. The MPO, the Metropolitan Planning Organization—I was very interested in that. They do—anytime you spend state or federal dollars for transportation, they have to approve it. As a planner, I knew that if you can control transportation you really shape things. So I served on that, actually, for twenty-four years, cause when I was off city council, cause of term limits, I had the governor—the governor at that point was Lawton Chiles. I had him appoint me to the HART Board and then HART appointed me, as their representative, to the MPO. So I got to serve continuously and then, when I got on council, I was on the MPO again.

Part 1 ends; part 2 begins.

AH: We're going to rewind for a second. I wanna hear about how you got into politics, because it's a long way from organic farmer work to politician, so let's—how did you get involved?

LS: When I was a little girl, we had white furniture in our garden and every morning it was covered with black soot and my mother would go and wipe it off and be angry. And finally she decided to figure out where the soot was coming from. We lived on Davis Islands and we were downwind from the TECO smoke stacks, and she became irate. So what she did is get together with a friend of hers and organize a civic association, Davis Islands Civic Association. She took me down to the drug store, sat me behind a table and had me try to sell memberships, I think it was a five dollar membership, cause she knew that you'd be more effective going down to city hall with a whole litany of people rather than just two individuals. So, sure enough, they got this civic association founded. They went down to the county commission, which was sitting as the environmental protection commission, and they said, "These stacks need scrubbers." The guy who was the head of the Environmental Protection Commission was Roger Stewart and he was great. He was a firebrand and he said, "Yes, they need scrubbers." So the commission fired him. So the citizens became irate, they were—the papers, they went down and demanded that he be rehired and long story short, we got scrubbers.

And my mother literally took me to the meetings and I saw democracy, small "d," in action. It was very energizing. When I was even younger, there was a Hyde Park Library on Swann Avenue, it's now the Realistic Artists building, but when I was a little kid, just learning to read, I could go there and get Nancy Drew mysteries. And they wanted to close it down because the county at that time oversaw the—maybe there was a separate library board, at any rate, we went to a meeting, it was just a bunch of old white guys sitting up front and mom and I were in the audience and we testified that, yes, we used this library, it was a really important library to the neighborhood. And we were outvoted. So I also saw that, even though you had earnest and true cause, you don't necessarily win, but that it's important to be engaged.

And lastly, when I was eleven, I went to Bayshore on Fourth of July to look for fireworks, and that year there weren't any, and I wrote a letter to the newspaper saying there should be fireworks, and they published it with my age, which was eleven, and a picture of fireworks and it made me feel like an individual can have an impact in our society. So armed with that checkered—oh and the next year there were fireworks, so it did work, but it made me feel like you have a responsibility and opportunity to be actively engaged with the quality of your community. So I thought—when I thought of running I thought, “Sure, why not,” not understanding that with the fundraising and smear things that the other people could say, it could get more complicated than this.

AH: Okay, wow. Now, so we just left a very dramatic point with you nursing your daughter in the—behind the scenes at the hearings for the—this was the joint hearings between city and county and the public for the Human Rights Ordinance. Now, let's back up a little bit and give us some background on the how the Human Rights Ordinance came about, why did it become such a flashpoint, et cetera.

LS: Well my personal background is that my grandmother, who I've spoke of previously, had gay friends. My parents had gay friends. I always grew up knowing gay people. So the idea—and I went to college in New Orleans for goodness sakes. (AH laughs) So the idea that there should be discrimination against gay people was always ridiculous to me and when I became a member of city council I thought, “This is something that I could do,” and of course I had gay friends and they said, “Would you do this?” And I said, “Of course, of course, it's important. You know we want to be a progressive city,” they were talking about Tampa being a place that young people would want to move. This struck me as something that was important for our community to be progressive and I was just flabbergasted at the initial backlash, but those are the same people who didn't want to rename Buffalo in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. They're just bigots. So my ideal has always been that I would outlive them and sure enough it's come to be.

AH: So, what year about was this that the Human Rights Ordinance came about and then what exactly did it do, or would have it done?

LS: Okay, it happened when my daughter was a baby and now she's twenty-four, so it was twenty-four years ago.

AH: Okay.

LS: And we had to wait till Tom Vann had been defeated by Phyllis Busansky, so we had a more progressive county commission, and we got rid of him on city council. That was critically important cause before that we didn't have the votes.

AH: Yep.

LS: And I don't remember what the final votes were, but it was not unanimous, but it was definitely more than a four, three majority. Maybe it was five, two—maybe it was four, three.

AH: Okay.

LS: But the usual cast of characters lined up on both sides, but it felt like with this more progressive county commission, with the winds of change shifting, that it would be possible. And we had had such success with the joint meeting in the past, that seemed like a good way to go. And we had the newspaper support. And what the—what we—what it did is—it was really simple. It said, "You shouldn't discriminate."

AH: That simple.

LS: Yep.

AH: And that got a lot of people upset?

LS: Oh, they were saying all sorts of ridiculous things, that people would come to school in drag, that men would be going into women's bathrooms, you know, all of the usual exaggerated fear mongering rumors. Which of course, were not true.

AH: And in some ways, we're still having, nationally, the same argument—it's still being played out today. I mean it's a long time later and the argument's come a long ways. Now we're not talking about discrimination we're talking about marriage, in particular, but it seems like—well some things haven't changed, but some things have, the argument's gone down the road in considerable ways in the last twenty-four years.

LS: But it's still an ar—you know what's—I was thinking. If you are—let's say you're white. It's so much easier for you to argue for civil rights than if you're black because if

you're black, it's so obvious and you're exposed in a way. If people say hateful things, it's more painful to you. So if you're straight, it's easier for you to argue for gay rights because you're doing it because of—it's a right idea. It's not directly impacting your life directly, directly. You're doing it because it's the right thing to do and it's because these are your friends and so—I was in both cases, Jan Platt and I were both in a very simple position. It was simple to be bold.

AH: Yes.

LS: Somebody asked me about things that I've done that were difficult. This was not difficult cause I felt so absolutely, completely that it was the right thing to do. Things that have been difficult have been sometimes a land use decision where you hear this side present a case. It's one way this side, it's another way and it's really a tough call. But this was an easy one.

AH: Okay, so it eventually passed, right?

LS: Yes.

AH: Okay.

LS: And then it was fine until Rhonda Storms came in and undid it. (AH laughs) But that was a whole right-wing shift of the county commission that no one had anticipated.

AH: Right. But then, today, Rhonda Storms is really nowhere to be found, at least in appointed office.

LS: True. But her terrible Human Rights Ordinance still sits in the county, although maybe they'll revisit it. Well they tried, it didn't happen.

AH: Yeah, yeah.

LS: Go figure. So I want to talk about something I worked really hard on that didn't—that was not successful.

AH: Okay, please.

LS: But I'm hopeful that I live long enough to see it. I have looked at beautiful, beautiful downtowns and community centers. One thing that they have in common are underground utilities. I'm a big tree lover and one of the biggest reasons that trees get what I call "the dread V cut," where they chop around so the power line can go through, is because of overhead utilities. So starting about fifteen years ago—twenty years ago, I started trying to get the utilities on Davis Islands undergrounded, and I didn't. We had a committee, we did a survey, we did all this. We did a great deal of work and we managed to survey the people on the island, "Would you pay up to 2,000 dollars of an investment to take the wires in front of your house and put them underground?" And the majority said, "Yes." So we went to Tampa Electric Company and said, "When we negotiate a new franchise agreement," because you know they have a monopoly to provide electricity in Tampa, "Would you be willing to put some money toward this undergrounding?"

And they said, "No." So I went to Pam [Iorio] when she was first elected mayor and said, "Pam, I've worked on this already ten years. I really want you to think about it. The franchise is coming up during your tenure. I want you to be very thorough and hard-nose and I want you to do three things: make sure that they put some money toward the utility lines being underground," cause Florida Power puts 25 percent of the cost in. "I want them to go into renewable energy cause right now they're just working off of coal," that was number two, "And number three we should not have a thirty year franchise agreement." Because in the world of energy things are moving so quickly—

AH: Very quickly.

LS: It should be like, five years. So I found a lawyer in Tallahassee, who is a rare breed of lawyer, who is not at all avaricious. He always is hired by the community. He was hired by a community that wanted to purchase back the franchise rights from a for-profit so they would own the ability to make the money and run their own utility company. This is in Winter Park. Anyway, so I personally spent money hiring this guy to help advise me on how to work with this legislation and to talk to the mayor and the city attorney and try to explain to them what our options were.

Then I had a committee that worked together with me and we went to the editorial boards. I did everything I could think of and the first vote on the franchise agreement, which did none of the things that I wanted to do, was four-three in terms of turning it down to—so that then we'd have the ability to go back and negotiate the undergrounding and the renewable energy. In hindsight, I really believe that one of the votes—one of the four votes, Joseph Caetano did it because he was either confused or corrupt. He absolutely had never been sympathetic to any environmental issues and I think he just got

confused during the vote. So that when we voted finally, it was a four-three vote and I lost by one vote. Mary Mulhern and John Dingfelder and I voted not to accept the agreement, which was now twenty-five years. Which I still think is ridiculously long. No commitment to undergrounding, no commitment to renewable energy and I have been on the least favorite persons list from TECO ever since. But interestingly, my husband is a stockholder, he owns a lot of different stocks, and I wore this very suit to their franchise agreement meeting, which was on my birthday about four years ago, right before this vote. And I said, “You know, you all really need to think about the franchise agreement that’s coming up and make these commitments to undergrounding because all these other utilities in Florida are doing it.” And I think if looks, if looks could have killed, I would have been dead on the spot. (both laugh) It was—

AH: Right. Well it’s interesting—and of course, every time a big storm comes by, we pay the price for having everything above ground.

LS: Our overwhelming price that we pay—I mean, I’ve done in-depth studies on this. It used to be that it was very expensive to dig, but now we can do directional boring, which is what, of course, Verizon did to get their lines in. And they didn’t charge the public a nickel. TECO had been making money renting space on its poles to Verizon and other cable companies, but now they’re using other technology, so TECO’s losing. So my ultimate fantasy is that we each have the ability, on our own roof, to have solar panels and be independent of the wires, and then we’ll just get rid of the wires. But I found TECO, as a corporation, to be extremely unprogressive and it was frustrating. And in every campaign they have always given generously to whoever runs against me. The first time I ran they gave money to Catherine Barja, because she wanted—she voted to allow them to put—takeover some city land to put a sub-station. And I worked with the neighborhood and we raised hell, this is on the corner of MacDill and Bay-to-Bay. So they ended up spending so much money on landscaping and a wall and pavers that they won the award for the nicest substation in the Southeast. (AH laughs) Which I thought was the height of irony.

AH: So they got credit for it, right?

LS: Yeah, well they spent some money covering it up cause it was this ugly thing. But my arguments have been two-fold. Number one: the aesthetics for the trees and for the ugliness of the wires, and number two: because big picture, long term, it makes sense to make the initial investment to put the wires underground and you have so many fewer outages.

AH: Yeah.

LS: We have outages all the time. And in Harbor Island, five, six years ago when we had Charlie and all those hurricanes at once, the people on Harbor Island had no outages. Their utilities were all underground. And on Davis Islands, where it's above ground, we had outages all summer long.

AH: Wow.

LS: Yep.

AH: So there's a couple other subjects that we haven't covered, and I want to get back to governance, too, and talk about some of this stuff. But first I want to ask you about having children while you're in office. So, you know first of all, you talked a little bit about being a woman and how that could be a challenge, (LS laughs) especially Tampa in the 1980s. So when did you—it wasn't long after you got elected that you had your first child right? How long—

LS: Right, it was about two and a half years.

AH: Okay, so this is what, '89 then?

LS: Right. Everything happened at once. It was a very busy time.

AH: Okay.

LS: The first thing I did is, I didn't want to tell my colleagues I was pregnant because I just didn't want any grief. They'd seem very unsympathetic. But I was fanning myself pretty hard (laughs) all through the fall.

AH: Okay.

LS: And then I had Aliza and I had, prior to having her—city council is supposed to be a part-time job, but I had treated it as a more than full time job. My husband did a lot of—my husband is an investment banker and he was doing a lot of international work. So I used to say, "He goes to London like I go to Publix." I mean, he was just always off. And—but—so I worked like all the time, like maybe seventy hours a week. But after having

Aliza it was like you're looking through a camera lens and what had been a wide picture suddenly is a rack focus down to this very small, exquisite baby face and that just was where I wanted to be. So I got off all of the extraneous boards that I was on, and there were many, and just focused on city council and the boards on which I serve for city council, like the MPO and the arts council. But I remember bringing her because I never had really taught her to take a bottle. If I had a 7:30 A.M. meeting, I just brought her with me and I—our public art committee met at 7:30, and there were some older men in the group and I'm quite confident that they had never been in meetings where someone was nursing a baby. It really freaked them out and I just thought, "Well, you know, it's a new world. They'll get used to it."

AH: Right.

LS: But she just became, as with so many young parents, she was the light of my life. And then, less than two years later, Gabrielle was born and I remember meeting—I was running for reelection, I met with my campaign strategist, and I said, "Do I have to go door to door?" I couldn't imagine how you'd go door to door with two babies, and she said, "Well it depends on who you draw as an opponent." So I prayed and I said, "Dear God, I will take on Attila the Hun next time, if I just don't have any opposition this time," and I was very fortunate. My—the other at large seat that was open, that people were running for, have like, you know, a dozen people running and I had no opposition.

AH: Wow.

LS: So that was fortunate. And then I took off four years because of term limits. I had been at large and so after serving those two citywide terms I took off for four years. At that point the girls were four and six and I became a Girl Scout leader and just did more things with them, which was great, although I really am the fastest change artist. I could come home from a meeting and be in play clothes in a nano-second. And then after—and then during those four years my best friend from when I worked at the Tampa Museum of Art, real creative lovely woman, Marilyn Mars, she and I created something called the Ybor City Ghost Walk, which was an actor guided walking tour through Ybor. So we interviewed all these interesting people who—I'm glad we did cause some of them aren't around anymore, like Adela Gonzmart, and Walter Heinrich was a beat cop in Ybor in the fifties, so he heard all these stories and I wrote a script, and it was five hours long. And then we hired a professional scriptwriter who said, "Linda honey, nobody wants to walk around for five hours." So we pared it down.

AH: So you still have the five hour script?

LS: I don't think so. (AH laughs) I think I just have the pared down one.

AH: That'd be interesting to see.

LS: It would be. But during those years I still served on the MPO, but that was really kind of it. I really—

AH: Okay.

LS: —spent time full time mom-ing. But I was going through some journals and what I found was this debate about—okay I have free time today for lunch, do I have it with a friend or do I go do something that's council related? Because my whole focus towards domesticity had shifted so much.

AH: All right. So the other issue I want to talk about, or subject I guess, is mayors. We were talking about—

LS: Yes

AH: —mayors and that you've served with several different mayors and how different the personalities could be, etc. So why don't you run us through the mayors that you've worked with and give us your own personal and professional impressions, I guess.

LS: Well, my first mayor was Sandy Freedman. She had been appointed when Martinez ran for governor and then she served and she was elected. So for my first eight years what I knew was Sandy is—as mayor and then the other council members. Many people assume that because Sandy and I are both Jewish women, grew up in Tampa, our families had always known each other, that we were really close confidants and I frankly expected her to be very supportive of me. I thought she'd see me as somebody who shared her values and we very much shared values about social justice and protecting neighborhoods, things like that. But she was actually very difficult. She was not particularly open at all, she was not supportive, she gave me no ideas, mentoring, insight, it was tough. It was really tough. Especially because everybody else, on the outside, assumed that she was being helpful, but she didn't give me any guidance at all and I found it relatively lonesome. There's this organization in Tampa called The Athena Society, are you familiar with it?

AH: I am.

LS: Well it's, you know, women who got together initially to support the Equal Rights Amendment and they met—they meet every Thursday. And my friend Jan, who introduced me to my husband, nominated me as member and I joined. So every Thursday, which was when I had city council, I would go to an Athena meeting at lunch time and it was this fabulous recharge and nurturance of good supportive vibes after having spent all morning with guys with whom I had very little in common, other than we each had a vote. I mean, it was really so important to me, psychologically, to have this community of bright women in Tampa to, sort of, give me spirit to go back to the afternoon meeting and the evening meeting and press on.

AH: So—so that's Sandy Freedman, anything else on her?

LS: (sighs) The—my favorite thing that she did was she always had a bowl of Dove chocolates in her office, dark chocolates. That was good, and she had a chief of staff, George Pennington, who was delightful to work with and that was important. The way that things are set up is because of Sunshine Laws. Council members are not allowed to talk to each other and being a very Goody Two-Shoes I obeyed that law. In hindsight, I believe that the city attorney at the time, David (sighs)—I can't think of his name, anyway, I believe that he was sharing information among the other council members, because we initially come up and four people would say the same thing and it was, like, uncanny. And it wasn't till I was off council, looking back, that I understood what was going on. So if the mayor wanted council to do something, she had the ability to speak with each of us individually, but couldn't talk to each other, except physically at the meeting, under the camera, and it was—it made it very challenging. What I decided to do to make things happen because of those constraints, I decided to use my good stationery, my ability to talk to the press to convene people, and a free parking space and a full time assistant and I just went off and did things. The first thing that I initiated was the Kennedy Boulevard plan and actually there are photographs of me, pregnant with Eliza, standing in front of what's now Mise en Place saying, "Someday this could be a great street," you know, this could be a wonderful boulevard. But, at the time there was a plasma center and a temporary jobs place and I called it the plasma path—

AH: Oh Christ.

LS: Because I mean there was just—it was nowhere and it was filthy. So I went to Sandy and I said, "I got this great idea. We can make Kennedy into a wonderful street." So she said, "Well come back with six more people who think this is a good idea." So I did. I got some of the property owners along there to buy into this and we went down and she said, "Okay I'll let my planner work on it," and then we had monthly meetings and we got

code enforcement involved and the police getting rid of the prostitutes. We finally got the plasma center closed, we changed some of the zoning and years later, I finally got a zoning overlay developed for Kennedy saying the buildings will be closer to the street. The other critical thing, are cafes. I believe in cafés. I think that real cities need to have places that people can gather, sit outside, and have a glass of white wine. It took me four years to get a café ordinance passed. The transportation people were so clueless. They would—they felt that if you sat outside at a café on the sidewalk, you'd be murdered by a crazed car.

So, I mean, they just made it as difficult as you possibly could. So what—when people ask me, “Do you have any advice for an elected official?” Or if you're thinking about running, my advice is, have a good home life, because if you look to this for satisfaction, you could lose your mind. It just takes forever to get stuff done. But Sandy was cooperative, but not initiating and not—she didn't say, “Oh cafés, great idea! Let's make it happen.” It was like slogging, slogging, slogging. Same with Kennedy, and that was frustrating. And I always believe that we should have a streetcar cause I had gone to college in New Orleans, so we finally, finally, finally got her to come around and support it, after she had dragged her feet for eight years. And I remember a trip to New Orleans to look at their streetcar while we were just about to get ready to fund ours and she said, “I've never been an obstacle to this.” And my response was a fantasy that her nose would grow, which I've had subsequently. That when people lie to you, that their noses would just get long cause she had been a complete obstacle. Anyway. (laugh)

AH: So—and the café ordinance was simply just allowing people to sit outside of the café on a sidewalk and to—

LS: It was to allow—

AH: —and consume their beverage there.

LS: To allow—oh, you had to go through a separate liquor zoning. You had to apply to put the tables and the chairs out. It was to allow a certain amount of footage of a sidewalk to be used for café tables.

AH: Okay.

LS: And umbrellas. And you would not believe the regulations. It is so overly regulated. It's like the size of the umbrellas and how the chairs are placed and the width of the

walking paths. And I've traveled all over the world, we here in Tampa have to be the most picky, picky, picky about this than any—I think it's ridiculous.

AH: What—

LS: And whether there can be dogs and whether the dogs can have bowls of water and I mean—I think we are way over regulated.

AH: I kind of heard the same thing especially from people trying to open their own restaurants and small businesses.

LS: Oh, we make people crazy.

AH: What is it? Why—

LS: I don't know. I don't know. Remember—

AH: Is this something that got built up over time?

LS: Remember Angelica, Viva La Frida's restaurant and she went through—she went through years of aggravation. I don't know why we make it so difficult. I've always been a believer that you should have rules about not tearing things down, but as far as creating things, I think that we're over-zealous. I think that we don't empower mid-level employees to make sensible decisions. They're afraid they'll be criticized for making an incorrect decision and so they don't make any decision. But hopefully were getting better. So anyway—so past Sandy—

AH: Yes.

LS: Then I took four years off for good behavior. And it was interesting; during that time Jim Davis had gone to run. He had been in the house—state house, and he ran for congress. So there was a void. The local Democratic Party, Helen Gordon Davis, came to me and said, "Would you like to run?" And I really thought about it for two days and Mike Deeson, who's a reporter from Channel 10, came to me and said, "Linda, don't do it." He said, "You're going to miss your babies, you're going to miss your house, you're going to miss Mark, you're going say to yourself, 'What am I doing here in Tallahassee

with this, like, obese lobbyist, smoking a cigar and haranguing you about something.” He said, “Just take my word for it, you don’t want to do this.” So instead, two women ran, Sandy Murman and Liz Alpert, who both had thirteen-year-old daughters. I thought this was very telling. And at this time Aliza and Gabrielle were four and six and they were very sweet. And my response ultimately was, if they had been obnoxious teenagers, maybe it would have been different, but they were these, like, delicious little kids, so I didn’t want to go. (AH laugh) And I’m really glad I didn’t.

AH: Okay, and so—so when you got back in office—

LS: I ran for a South Tampa seat and Dick Greco was mayor. Oh, and Bob Buckhorn had taken my citywide seat.

AH: Okay.

LS: And I told him, he also inherited my assistant Rhonda, I said, “I’m gonna come back in four years and I want Rhonda back,” cause we work together really well. We’re a team. She was organized and I love her. So sure enough, when I got reelected back, he let me have her as an assistant.

AH: Oh great.

LS: But I worked—that election there were four men running against me and I won without a—I won in the primary. I run—I won 50 percent of the vote against four other people.

AH: Wow.

LS: Which is pretty good.

AH: Yeah, that’s very good.

LS: Yeah. So then Dick was mayor. Dick Greco, I’ve always found unbelievably charming. I told you that when I was a young planner, he walked into the planning office to get a re-zoning, and he was so cute. I took off my glasses and I walked into a wall, cause I didn’t want him to see me with glasses cause I was vain. (Both laughs) Anyway,

so he was totally charming. He had ideas that are very different from mine, but I'm a gung-ho preservationist and he absolutely went to the wall. He saved the library downtown, the old Carnegie Free Library. He saved the German-American Club, which was absolutely crumbling. And he stabilized—in MacFarlane Park there's a house that was built in the fifties, it's Deco, that's pretty cool—he stabilized that. So, he was committed to preservation, which was kinda novel and good. I didn't like some of his decisions, but as far as accessibility as a council member, he was always open. He always said yes. He didn't necessarily do the things he had said yes to, but he was just extremely pleasant to work with.

AH: Okay and then after that we've got—

LS: And one of the things I tried to do, but I wasn't successful: city council, traditionally, had had our own attorney. So there's the city attorney that theoretically serves both the administration and city council, but council had had our own attorney and sometimes council and the mayor have different ideas. So it's helpful to have your own attorney. And when Dick had first gotten elected, when I wasn't on council, he had gotten rid of the position. There was some controversy about David Carr, who had been the attorney, investing with one of the council members, Rudy Fernandez who was a stockbroker, and whether that was really kosher. Anyway, bottom line was, the city council lost our attorney. And so when I got back on I argued that we needed one and I was unsuccessful in that. But, for example, I care about environmental issues and Dick was horrible on environmental issues. We were trying to get more water to flow over the dam, he opposed it, we finally ended up having a lawsuit from Friends of the River, and that's how we got water, literally, over the dam.

AH: Okay.

LS: So, not philosophically in line, but a really delightful guy. Then, next we had Pam [Iorio] who I had known since we were both young mothers. She had had a baby, I had had a baby, she had a baby, I had baby, and we had been on the MPO together and we had, you know, worked together in a variety of ways. She had been the supervisor of elections while I was running for election, so we'd had a professional relationship. And I assumed that we would get along swimmingly and I was wrong. Because she was very, very directive and I assumed she would be more collaborative and the two issues—I was initially the chairman of city council and she was the new mayor, and the Tampa Museum of Art was up for grabs and I don't know if you remember, but it had been approved under Greco's time and funded to do the Viñoly design. And then, when she got on there, she said, "Raise another ten million dollars" and "Raise another ten million dollars", and then she cut it off and said, "We're not going to go ahead with this. Let's see about putting it in the Federal Courthouse" and "Let's see about putting it"—who knows where. And so there was a lot of controversy and confusion. I had been, as I'd shared with you,

an early staff member from the previous art museum and I very much believed that downtown Tampa needed the arts and that we needed to have spectacular architecture. And she and I had a lot of angst over that issue. I started attending the museum board meetings to try to be supportive of them. The good news is, I'm very, very, very happy with the way things ended up with the Saitowitz design. I think it's very satisfying, but it was really tough and what came from that was, she supported Gwen Miller to succeed me as chairman of council. And Gwen Miller didn't bring anything to the party other than doing as the mayor directed. So it was very disappointing for me.

AH: Wow.

LS: So—and she hired all former military people to fill key positions and these were not guys—and they were all guys—who had the same world view that I did. You know, they were engineers and they were very linear, and they were nice people, they were hardworking people, they were honest people, but if you were to do a Venn diagram the overlap wouldn't be so large and it was frustrating.

AH: I see. So do you think that was mostly because she wanted—she wanted people below her to sort of—well like Gwen Miller, to sort of take orders or—

LS: Completely.

AH: Yeah. Make it much easier to get things done that way.

LS: Right, right, right.

AH: Yeah.

LS: And she was really, really risk adverse. I'd say if I were to characterize the greatest difference between us, she's very organized and very professional and very controlling. And she likes to be able to know how things are going to come out, and I'm much more sort of, throw it up in the air and see how it all comes together collaboratively. And so, our styles were very different and I expressed my independence and that was a challenge.

AH: I see. Well I—

LS: Oh, and the other issue that we really knocked heads on was whether city council should have our own attorney.

AH: Yeah.

LS: Because I again brought this up and tried to make it happen, and it didn't. It did, it did, but she didn't want it to and—

AH: Oh I see.

LS: We actually had some very heated words over that, but it was ultimately council's decision and we voted the money and voted the person and I thought it was very helpful to us.

AH: Well it certainly makes a lot of sense, so you can make some more independent decisions—

LS: Absolutely.

AH: Or assessments on your own, without having to depend on your executive's lawyer.

LS: Exactly, exactly.

AH: So—so what are some other issues that you got up in? You know we talked about the—you mentioned the river and the water flow and that's something that you had mentioned when you were going for this program a couple years ago. Obviously, the corps of engineers, the City of Tampa, got a whole lot of things wrong over the years and for a long time it was all about controlling water, preventing floods. And that was really the number one thing. The river, the ecosystem, the bay were all secondary concerns. So tell us a little bit about what you know and what are some of the things that you tried to do. You mentioned you wanted more water over the dam. Of course, the more water flow that you have in a river the healthier it's going to be. So tell us a little bit about that.

LS: I started a group—I started several groups, but one of them was called the River Round Table and it was created specifically as an advocacy group for the health of the river. There was a group called Friends of the River, that started while I was on council

that was—that successfully sued the city for more water over the dam, but it hadn't actually been implemented yet. So we were an advocacy group that began something called the State of the River every year. And we took the media and the mayor out on the river and showed different aspects of how things could be improved. One year, we went to a place where we literally had to hack through the underbrush. We thought it would be a great place for a boardwalk in Sulfur Springs, and actually that came into being and we created something called a Blueway.

A blueway is where you put canoes and kayaks in. It's like a greenway, but for river things. Another year we went to a spring off of 109th Street, which is very beautiful, that the city owns, that there's like, no access to, and we advocated for access to that. We did these every year to raise awareness of the river and what it contributes and how we can—we publicly, can increase public involvement in it and access and appreciation for it. So we went on different rides along it, walks, and this continues to this day. And as a council member, I got appointed to the River Advisory Committee. Now, you know what a McMansion is, it's a house that sort of out of proportion and makes the houses next to it look like shrimps. But it's—in my opinion, a very shortsighted way to build and it makes the scale of everything seemed skewed. On the river, we're having a problem, as affluence comes again, with docks that are disproportionally large, which can totally mess up the view of the people on either side because, if you have this massive dock that can hold three boats and it's two stories and it can really—

AH: I know what you're talking about. Yeah.

LS: Yeah.

AH: There's quite a few.

LS: And our river is so beautiful and so fragile. So I came up with a plan that I wasn't able to get through council and through the administration, to limit the scale of the docks and to require lawns to be a few feet off the edge so that fertilizer wouldn't flow into the river. Oh that's the other thing I worked on for years. I was on the estuary board and on city council and on this river committee to try and keep fertilizers from going in causing the problems with water hyacinths—

AH: Oh sure, yeah.

LS: And killing the fish and—so all of—I mean, I've just worked on this forever and I've been unbelievably discouraged to see how our current Governor [Rick] Scott has tried to

undermine all these initiatives by taking away the power from local governments to regulate fertilizer and set backs, and he's just seeming to put only developer-oriented, farmer-oriented people on the boards that control what can go in the water. It's very, very concerning to me. So I just spent like, a 1,000 years working on this. Another thing I worked on was something called the Preservation Round Table, that again, is brainstorming people from all different—you know green organizations and individuals and civic groups to figure out how can we best address issues. We have no dues, we have no leadership, we have no minutes, we just show up every month and put our brains together. But on the river group we have a guy from Temple Terrace, a staff person, and he shared with us—and Temple Terrace has the best rules in town—we were talking before about how Temple Terrace is—it's small but it has very enlightened governance. Good preservation rules and river protections rules.

AH: So—and there was another one, there was Urban Charrette, is that what it was called?

LS: Yes, yes, yes.

AH: Yes, and I'm familiar with this—I went to one of the early meetings and I think [Ed] Turanchik was there, but tell us about that too. And this isn't water related, but it's preservation.

LS: Well, it's related to the quality of the urban core and the premise of a Charrette—it's a French term that means, a cart that goes through a studio at the end of the day and everybody hurriedly finishes their drawings to roll them up and put them in the cart. So Urban Charrette means this intense design brainstorming that goes on around urban issues. This was founded by Taryn Sabia and Adam Fritz and they gathered together planners and architects. It's sort of the—it's next generation to the Tampa Community Design Center.

AH: Okay.

LS: And their focus is how to make downtown and all the neighborhoods more livable and more comfortable and have community gardens and bike paths. So, it was a brainstorming group and now another outgrowth is the Green Artery, which is a wonderful group, that's together. So I've subsequently formed something called the Livable Tampa Roundtable since I'm off council, to bring together like-minded people to support each other's initiatives. So even though I'm off council I'm still—

AH: You're still knee deep—

LS: Stirring the pot. (laugh)

AH: Oh right. So, I guess one of the questions that a lot of people have about you with this urban planning and stuff is: We got ourselves into a mess with—through lack of planning. You know, we've got sprawl everywhere and we've got neighborhoods that could be livable et cetera... Why did it seem so easy to get there and it's so hard to get out? Do you know what I mean? It seems like somehow—and it wasn't organically, it just happened that way, but people made a series of decisions that had an outcome—a certain outcome for the city, which lead to sprawl and all these other things. How is it that it's so difficult to reverse some of these things? Is it that it's just that expensive or is just a complete lack of will, I mean how do you see this?

LS: The reason that we have the urban form we have, is because of our dependence on the car and that when the interstate came in and sliced up our traditional neighborhoods, it's very difficult to re-knit a neighborhood that's been sliced by an interstate. You have to go eight blocks before folks who used to be able to walk across the street could see each other. As we have continued to sprawl—this is state wide—we finally—some of us are recognizing it's an issue and I am fortunate to be a member of Leadership Florida, so I've gone all over the state and looked at revitalization efforts. Every town is looking at these same issues and some are, more successfully than others, putting things together. We really need a transit system. When President Obama gave us the money for a high-speed transit—it was an issue I'd worked on for thirty years and I cried I was so happy. When Rick Scott said he wouldn't accept the money, I organized a protest. It was the first time I'd ever, like, done placards and gone downtown with a bullhorn and organized this whole protest, and we were not successful.

AH: Yeah.

LS: And so it's been very painful. That's what we need, we need a variety of safe ways to get around and then you'll have neighborhoods—neighborhoods in Tampa and St. Petersburg are really finding their voice. They're coming together; they're building the community gardens. They're creating the social infrastructure to make themselves healthy. So these days I'm writing for *Creative Loafing* about architecture and design and it's a blast, and it gives me an excuse to keep my hand on the pulse of what's going on. And there are tons of great things happening that I wasn't even aware of, particularly in Pinellas County. One of the initiatives that I'm very proud of, I started on this about twelve years ago—Bill Johnson is on the Clearwater City Council and I was on Tampa City Council and we said, "Wouldn't it be great to take Courtney Campbell," the bridge that goes between the two counties, "And make it beautiful. Not have tacky signs, make it

very pedestrian and bicycle friendly.” So we worked and it took us eight years to be designated as a scenic corridor. So we got the designation and then we had to do a plan. So part of the plan was to have a separate bridge for bicyclists and pedestrians and last year, through a miracle, it got funded.

AH: Okay, so that’s the new bridge?

LS: A miracle, it’s under construction right now.

AH: Yes.

LS: Last night I went to a USF class in Mass Comm[unications] who helped us with PR materials for it. It’s going to be called the Courtney Campbell Trail and it’s gonna be fabulous. It’s gonna be really long. The first half Tampa to the end of our bridge will be done by October and a year from then, to the Pinellas side. It will be a total of nine miles of separate, safe bicycle and pedestrian connection. So think marathons, triathlons, all this stuff, we can have it. Skateboarders, birdwatchers, fisher people—

AH: Oh and an amazing view too. It goes up high.

LS: Oh it’s (inaudible).

AH: Yeah, it doesn’t just—

LS: Oh yeah, it’s gonna be 45 feet.

AH: Yeah, yeah it goes as high as the regular bridge. Wow.

LS: Very cool.

AH: Yeah.

LS: Very cool, which is what gives you faith. You know, it took forever, but it got funded.

AH: Yeah. Well—you know the other thing that must be difficult though is to see things like mass transit go for a vote and for it to go down—you know, down and we're talking about, you know, pennies, you know, out of a dollar and people, you know, simply won't vote for it. Now, I guess you know, you talk about things are starting to change at the grassroots level in a lot of neighborhoods and maybe that's really where it has to change is just person-by-person, block-by-block. You know, the kind of thing where people start to realize that things could be done better. I mean, you know—

LS: And the Internet is a huge part of making it easier for people to communicate. But the group that I'm most proud of right now, is a group in Tampa called the Green Artery. It's twenty neighborhoods that have banded together to create a perimeter bicycle-pedestrian connection and connect their community centers, community gardens, parks. It's gonna be great and the good news is Bob Buckhorn, who I didn't—I didn't have a lot of confidence when he was elected, that he really understood urban issues as deeply as he needed to—he had totally impressed me. He's educated himself, he joined the Urban Land Institute Mayors Group, he traveled, he sent his staff to travel, he's becoming very savvy about what we need to do as a city to invest in these improvements for neighborhoods. And he was able to convince HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development] to take the money that we were gonna spend on the transit center and shift it into a plan for the center city. It's called the In Vision Plan and I'm very excited about it for the future. So I'm very happy for Tampa, I'm very happy for me right now, that I have more flexibility and I can travel.

AH: (laugh) All right.

LS: Our two beautiful, beautiful daughters are both in New York City right now. The older one is working for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the younger one is finishing up at NYU in Global Liberal Studies. And my sister, who went up there to go to grad school and never came home, is living quite close to them. So I have the flexibility, Mark and I do, to go up and visit.

AH: Well, you know, you talked about blessings in disguise before and you did run for a seat in the county commission—

LS: I did, in 2010, bad year for Democrats. It was the first time I'd ever run in a partisan race, and man, was that a bad year to pick.

AH: Yeah. So and—who were you running against?

LS: His name is Ken Hagan—

AH: Okay.

LS: And the biggest difference, I thought the absolute perfect way to describe the difference between us, when we were running, I was saying what we needed to do for jobs and economic development was support the CAMLS Project, that the University of South Florida Medical School did downtown, to train surgeons. And he said what we need to do is bring in Bass Pro Shops. So I think that kinda sums it up.

AH: Yeah.

LS: Sometime, you know, what my friends have said when I'm complaining that we need to do more of this or something, they say, "Linda maybe you are just trying to make Tampa into something that it just isn't and maybe you should, like, just exhale and go live someplace that's already civilized." But I have to say, I think our community—it now has more interesting things to do than there's time to do them. We have wonderful creative arts, we have a beautiful museum, we have a great photography museum, we have a wonderful performing arts center, we have independent theaters like Stage Works, which—I've worked on every single one of these boards. The Tampa Theater, I'm going to be the incoming chair. We have this vibrant, creative community and we've got neighborhoods that are recreating themselves to be more interesting than they ever were, and it's in the process of collaborating with people that I think the fun is. So, I love more than anything to travel and go to places that are just rich with possibilities, but it's fun to come back here and be part of the process of trying to help—help us all evolve.

AH: Cause if it can happen here, right? (both laugh) It can pretty much happen anywhere. Is there something that we've missed? I mean, and I guess, to reiterate, you know you had talked earlier about how difficult it was to lose that county-wide race and that there may be some miscalculations on your part and you've always kinda just charged headlong into things. (LS laughs) But that, in a sense, now you're in a really good place, right? Personally, professionally you're still able to be very a powerful advocate. You're probably able to say things in print in *Creative Loafing* that you were never able to say before.

LS: Absolutely. You know what I'd like to talk about for just a moment?

AH: Of course.

LS: When I was elected the second time, which was at large, it was 19—do a little math here—it was 1991. So it was pretty early on, and I wanted to do—I wanted to really work in tune and redevelop some neighborhoods. Sandy was the mayor, she was on her kick, “If you can bring me six other people who think it’s a good idea, I’ll let a staff person work on it.” So I looked around and I saw two neighborhoods where there were possibilities. One was West Tampa where things, it turned out, moved very slowly because the people in the neighborhood were so concerned that the other ethnic groups would get advantages that they didn’t have, that they just—it just—things did not move quickly there. It was very frustrating. But the other area was where we were just in the process of beginning to build an aquarium, and the aquarium was going to be located on 13th Street. As a planner and a marketing person I knew that 13th Street does not have a lot of cache as a name.

So, this area reminded me of an area in Boston from when I’d lived there which was behind the Italian Market. It was an old wharf area; lots of low brick buildings, big spaces and it had a lot of texture. So in Boston, what they had done is put middle and expensive condos in these old wharfs. Well, I saw this area as being perfect for renovation for both residential and keeping some of the industrials uses, which would give it some texture. Also, a good place for artists, who work in sort of industrial ways, like potters or bronze sculptors, to have their studios. So, I pulled together people, brought them to Sandy. She said, “Okay I’ll let a planner work on this,” and we developed a plan for the area. So the port people were just beginning to develop their concept for Channelside well, what—so, what happened was they’re getting ready to build this aquarium and it was on 13th Street and I pulled together people from this group and I said, “Let’s brainstorm a better name, because who wants this to be 13th Street?” and we solicited ideas. Adela Gonzmart said, “It should be called *la draga*, cause *la draga* means dredge and this area had been dredged out as a channel.” But I thought if we called it *la draga* that people would call *la droga*, for drugs, which used to be smuggled in, in the bananas, cause there used to be banana docks there. So Tom Hall, from the firm Tucker Hall, came up with the idea of calling it Channelside Drive, and I thought, great name, it’s descriptive, it’s identifiable, and from that we renamed the area the Channel District.

AH: Okay.

LS: And then we did a plan for it and one of my biggest disappointments was I—after years of begging, I got council to spend some of our community redevelopment money on an arts plan for the Channel District. Cause I saw this being sort of our Greenwich Village and we got this plan done. It took forever to get it—to hire the consultant, to get it done, great plan, it never got implemented because Pam [Iorio] had hired Mark Huey to be in charge of redevelopment and he—I don’t know whether he just didn’t have guts or whether she said, “Don’t let it happen,” but it didn’t happen. And Duncan McClellan, a

wonderful glass artist who now has a whole studio in St. Pete and is responsible for the redevelopment of the Channel District area, he was dying to buy the blond brick building on the North side of the interstate, that got moved during the interstate expansion. And he was working with Paul Wilborn, who Pam had originally hired to do arts stuff, and Paul tried his hardest. He asked me for help, I tried my hardest; we could never get the city to get its act together to sell that building to Duncan. So he went to St. Pete, made a huge success of things, and that building is still empty.

AH: Wow.

LS: So, it just made me nuts. I mean, those are the frustrations where I felt like we should have just been more aggressive in making it work for artists.

AH: Yeah.

LS: Anyway, it's been—you know there are the frustrations; there are the success—

AH: Right.

LS: As I'm writing about things for *Creative Loafing*, I look around and say there have been many successes, there are still—when things are built that are wrong it makes you nuts every time you drive past them cause—

AH: Right.

LS: In a perfect example, in the Channel District, the port built a very nice three, four story building on Channelside Drive. There's a globe, a three-story sculpture of a globe, that's lovely. If you are designing something you should have put that on access with Kennedy Boulevard, so when you look down Kennedy, you'd see the globe. No. It's like thirty feet south. It was, like, not well thought through. So what I'm doing now, in my writing for *Creative Loafing*, is I'm advocating in every article. I'm not trying to be objective. I'm being very much an advocate for good design and for everyone thinking about design, because it makes such a difference in the quality of our community. And in this issue that's coming out Thursday I'm talking about all the different authorities. I'm using the Aviation Authority as the example of people who get it. The design absolutely moves your mission forward. They've consistently done that since they came up with the innovative idea of separating landside and airside and having the people mover. And their new international terminal is gorgeous. Then, I look at people like the Port Authority who

blew it, you know, on the globe, but they have opportunities moving ahead. And then you've got HART, which during the time of Sharon Dent, used great design in its different transit centers and streetcar stops. They use public art. She had fabric woven with images of the Columbia's columns and the balustrade on Bayshore and the minarets from University of Tampa. I mean really innovative, cool things.

AH: You meant the Colonnades columns though, right?

LS: Yeah.

AH: Yeah, okay.

LS: No, actually I meant—

AH: The Columbia?

LS: The Columbia's. The Columbia Restaurant has that series of columns.

AH: Okay. Yeah, yeah.

LS: Which they'll restore after—

AH: Yeah, some of them got knocked—

LS: The trucks—

AH: Yes.

LS: After the trucks moved that—

AH: Understood, I know what you're talking about. Yes.

LS: Okay. Anyway. The point is, over time, Tampa has had some examples of good thinking and some very poor examples. And I'm just hopeful that as we'll move forward, we'll make better choices.

AH: Yeah. Well, thanks to leaders and advocates like you. Hopefully, we'll lean on the good side and stop making—you know, shooting ourselves in the foot as a community. Cause certainly, we can see that's happened over the years. But—well, I really want to thank you. Is there anything that we missed? Anything we overlooked? Course maybe you'll think of something much later, but you can always let us know and we just really want to thank you for taking the time on your special day, your birthday today, to sit here and talk about your career. We really appreciate it and from—on behalf of USF, I just want to thank you.

LS: Well, thank you for the opportunity. I really enjoyed it.

End of interview.