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Day 1

Elaine Bloom

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DAN ROYLES: [00:00:01] So this is Dan Royals. I am interviewing Representative Elaine Bloom at the offices of Plaza Health Network in North Miami Beach on July 31st, 2018.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Yes.

DAN ROYLES: Thanks for having us.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: It's a delight.

DAN ROYLES: Frisia Corrales is assisting me and this is for the Elaine Bloom Oral History Project. So just to start out could you tell me about your early life?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:00:34] Well, one thing I can tell you about my early life is that I never ever thought that I would wind up being a legislator and writing laws. It just wasn't something that little girls dreamt about when I was growing up. But my early life was that I was a very good little girl, a good student. I was very fortunate to be able to move through the elementary school process quite quickly because of the way things worked with respect to timing. So that I, by the time I came to seventh grade, was a year ahead of myself. By the time I finished ninth grade, because seventh, eighth, and ninth were wrapped into two years at that point in a special program, I was two years ahead of myself. Which means when I graduated from high school, I was technically only 15 and a half. I entered college on my 16th birthday. I attended public school in the Bronx, New York. It was PS 80 and fortuitously, probably the very first week in school, which I entered on my sixth birthday because I was born in September, there was a fire drill. Somebody asked me a question when we were outside awaiting instructions as to what to do next, and I must have said something back to the little girl who talked to me. The next thing I knew I was sent to the principal's office and my mother was called to school. That was not a very auspicious beginning, but apparently I never did that again. The class was crowded and they didn't have enough seats for all the children. They took six children who had tested on some kind of a system and thought to be able to advance on their own, and they put these six children into what was called the “one B” class. So, we were “one A” children in a “one B” class. I finished all the workbooks and they made me part of the “one B” class, and that was the process of how I started to accelerate. I had a wonderful time in elementary school. Junior high was to stay right there because the elementary school became a ninth grade school just in time for me. I was in this program called “Special Progress” and I had excellent teachers. I remember so very many of them opening my eyes to science projects and to history and into geography. Then I took the test for the Bronx High School of Science, one of New York City's special schools. Mainly because my older brother, five and a half years older than I, Hershel, had gone to Bronx Science and therefore I should go too. Bronx Science turned out to be a wonderful place for me. There were three boys to every girl. And what that meant is that for whatever reason the girls were not encouraged to go into the sciences, but the boys were. I had a great time there. I wound up as the captain of the cheerleaders, which is interesting because I
was a quiet child, but obviously not that quiet. When I graduated from Bronx Science, I was fortunate to go to Barnard College. Barnard is the women's college that was associated with Columbia University, which over the years since that time has chosen to remain as a women's college associated with Columbia University rather than become co-ed. I had a marvelous experience there. The beginning of my sophomore year, I met the love of my life in a beautiful story, a fairy book story. It was love at first sight. I met him on October 8, 1954. He was already out of law school, out of Columbia law school. He graduated from Columbia College and at this point was awaiting his appointment to start work at the United States Department of Justice in Foley Square, New York. We were married December 11th, 1955. He had an incredible career and we were very blessed to have each other. After finishing my work at Barnard, I became a part of the research department at CBS television. I had been a government major so I was assigned to do reports for the FCC on television programming. I became pregnant about three years later, not even, it was two years later. Ultimately, I was able to have independent freelance work doing the same stuff for the research department of CBS television, but at home. Then, in October of 1962, we made the decision to move to Florida. Basically, it was because we had very, very dear friends who we missed terribly after they moved to Florida. We came to visit them here in this beautiful climate. We came late December and needless to say, it was a wonderful experience for somebody to leave the cold up north and the snow to come here. We decided instead of making my husband's career in New York, why not do it here, where life could be lived a whole lot better, we thought? That was how we made the decision to move and it was probably the best decision we ever made. Our very, very close friends, who were like brother and sister to us, made things much easier. My parents moved at the same time, so it was really a very good way to do it and that's the story of my early years.

DAN ROYLES: So you mentioned a brother, Herschel, who also is in your household when you were growing up.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:07:34] I only had one brother and he played the violin in the high school orchestra at the Bronx High School of Science. So, I presented myself to the music director of the school and said I don't play the violin but I do play the piano. He said, “how good are you?” I said “not that good.” So he let me play for him and he said, in truth, there were at least 15 kids who were better than I. He didn't want me to wait around for my big moment for the piano. He asked if I would be interested in learning another musical instrument. I said “of course.” We looked around and I chose the timpani. So, believe it or not, I can play whatever else is needed to accompany any orchestra. That was a wonderful part of my life. Also, at the same time, I should say that I always sang. I sang in the auditorium of my public school very, very frequently, when they had assemblies. Then they would say, “ and now, little Elaine Bernstein, will sing something from this, or from that.” So, I definitely was geared to being able to perform. In third grade, a teacher actually told me that I shouldn't speak. I shouldn't raise my hand and talk anymore because she told me I had marbles in my mouth. Needless to say, that was very hurtful, so hurtful. But I never told my mother who was a stay at home mom. Even though she was very busy with organizations and running to meetings all the time, she would have been there for me, but I never told her this. Which goes to show that you really need to try to pry things out of your child if you think there may be anything that's bothering them. My
mother and father were wonderful, beautiful people, both immigrants to this great country. My father came as a seventeen-year-old in 1920 by himself. He had an older sister who was here to greet him. He already had a trade. He had a skill. He was a watchmaker. He knew how to handle and fix watches. He [turned] that into being a very successful person, into ultimately owning his own jewelry store on 8th avenue in 38th Street in Manhattan. He worked very hard. He worked six days a week for the most part of my early years. He sent, in the earliest years before I was really aware of all this, he sent a check, or actually a postal money order to his mother and three half-sisters, who were still in Poland. He would send the check every month. He sent his check on the first day of every month and he sent it on September 1st, 1939. About six weeks later, it came back undeliverable and that's when he knew that his mother and his three half-sisters had perished because the Nazis had marched from Germany into Poland, right where they were and that affected him greatly. My mother was from a beautiful city, which was in Austria, when she was born. But during World War, I kept on changing lands between Austria, and Poland, and Germany. In 1975, as a matter of fact, Phillip and I, with our son David, went to visit that beautiful little city Ternopil in Austria. I saw then why my mother who was five feet tall when you stretched her, always stood very erect and very proud. Because it was really a beautiful, elegant kind of an environment and she was very proud of where she came from. To tell you something unique about her, she came to this country in 1922 as a fifteen-year-old. You wonder what people bring with them when they travel such a distance trying to seek a new life. She brought with her eight giant leather-bound books of the poetry of Anne Schiller. That was her favorite treasure that she carried with her. She was always a person who quoted poetry and who read a great deal and knew what was going on in the world. My years growing up, my father was rarely home in time for supper, as far as the children were concerned. When we did get together as a family, which was as often as possible, we discussed the current events of the day. I remembered hearing about what was going on in the world even as a very young child. So, certainly during the years of World War II, I was very, very young, but I had an understanding of things going on. Then, after World War II, there were so many times that I have recollections of my parents discussing world events in my presence and bringing us into the conversation. So, that was my childhood and that was probably my preparation for being so acutely aware of what is going on in the world around me politically. I used to say that if things had been different, my mother could have been elected to Congress in the 1940s when she was definitely very, very involved in making sure that people were knowledgeable about what was going on. My parents moved here in 1962 with us. Now, I look back on it and I realize that they were really only in their fifties and my father was almost sixty, which means that they were quite young. They got involved with community organizations themselves in order to stay current and to stay involved and alert.

DAN ROYLES: [00:13:59] So that-

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:14:01] That's what set me up.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah, but that moment at the beginning of the war when the check came back.
HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Postal money order because in those days-

DAN ROYLES: For, yeah, the money order.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: My father talked about it all the time, that's why I remember that.

DAN ROYLES: What do you remember about how-?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:14:18] I don't even remember that happening because I was a baby, but that was how he knew that his own personal family had been already affected. I suppose what I'm really trying to tell you is that as the child of immigrant, I'm so acutely aware of how wonderful this country has been for people like my parents, for people like me, it's really an amazing story.

In later years, I was often called upon to make a speech at the swearing-in ceremonies for new citizens. I was told to look around the room because among these people here are the people that your child, if not you yourself, may someday serve in the legislature like I do. That's only in America.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah, what were the organizations that your mother was involved with back in New York when you were younger?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:15:27] Okay, she was a Hadassah President. That sort of says it all. She was always, or her portfolio in organizations, would always be like American affairs or education. I mean, she was always very politically involved and knew what was going on. My parents were both very strong Zionists and something that I do have a very clear memory of is my mother sitting at a table with a list of the countries of the world that were members of the United Nations. The date was November 29, 1947 and she was clicking off who voted yes and who voted no on allowing Israel to be born, then Jewish state in the Middle East. They were ecstatic. Then, I went with them as a child. They didn't believe in babysitters so they took me with them to events where Israel bonds were being sold in order to support the country and where US bonds were being sold. I remember that too very vividly. But they were very into that kind of activity. My mother, well, I'll fast forward a little bit and tell you that before I was married, my mother, together with some of my girlfriends from college, created the event that would be my bridal shower. She got me to go to a lovely room in the Plaza Hotel, by telling me that it was for a meeting, the League of Women Voters. I actually put on a hat because in those days we wore hats to meetings. We went to the meeting of the League of Women Voters and there were all these wonderful young women who were my friends sounding surprised. So, [my mother] sort of told me, “now that you're getting married, you need to become a member of the League of Women Voters.” Obviously, that started me off in the right mode. But as I said at the outset, little girls didn't grow up thinking that they could ever be in the legislature, but I was certainly geared to being involved with issues from the earliest days.

DAN ROYLES: [00:18:04] What did you think your life was gonna look like, if you didn't imagine how it actually unfolded?
HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:18:12] Well, when I was married, I was eighteen, a junior in college, and I don't think I really thought in terms of what my life was going to be like. I had an ultimate goal. I thought of going to law school. But as events intervened and I postponed it, that was probably the only thing that I might have said that might be a concrete portion of my life. When I thought in terms of my life as a lawyer, it was as a lawyer in the sense of helping people, some kind of a public interest lawyer. I knew a number of people who were in [specialized] fields and working for government agencies as lawyers. So, that was probably what I must have thought of as my future too.

DAN ROYLES: When we talked before, you told me about when you were first married, that you took care of your brother in law who-

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: No, my brother in law's children...

DAN ROYLES: His children.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:19:34] Yes, we were married in December of 1955. As I said, I was eighteen and in my junior year of college, I actually finished all of my coursework at Barnard in January of '57. I was class of '57. At that point, you were allowed to take what was called a comprehensive exam that finished your college career, which I did. I thought I would go from there and start looking for a job because you couldn't enter law school in February. That was what I thought would be happening after I graduated. Unfortunately, my husband's oldest brother, he was the youngest of four, and this brother was about seventeen years older than my husband, was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. I'll never forget it. He was at Memorial Sloan Kettering and they sent him home to die. My brother-in-law and sister-in-law had four children, two in their teens and two littler ones. The decision was made that it would be easier for him to be at home without the children making noise and all the rest of that so, they sent the five and seven year old to live with Philip and me. I had never really been much of a babysitter. I've really had very little experience with young children. I thought I did a great job with these two. I enrolled them into the neighborhood public school, the kindergarten and second grade, for the time that they were with me. I took them to Alexander's department store to get clothing that they wanted and book bags and all the rest of that stuff. It wasn't until years later that I learned that both of those children thought I was terrible because they blamed me for being available to take care of them and taking them away from their father. So, it colored their feelings about me for years to come. Unfortunately my brother-in-law passed away in March of that year, so it was only about two months that they had been with me, a little less than two full months. They then went back home, and then I began the process of looking for a job. Somehow rather, I went down to the CBS company. It didn't matter whether you were going to radio or television at the time. That was a central hiring place. I didn't know it at the time, but all the males were young men and were sent to the mailroom. M-A-I-L, the mailroom. It sounded very unimportant, but within a couple of months they were all scattered throughout the entire building in all kinds of jobs. The young women, if you were luck, landed a job as I did. I landed a job in the CBS radio
division in the research department working with a woman who headed this unit of research. She was a Barnard graduate herself. She had to do her own typing. I, in my capacity working for her, had to do my own typing. So, that should go to show you how women were treated there. Eventually, the research department was also affiliated with the CBS television, so we took that on as well. I prepared reports for the FCC on program content, which sounds important, but it really wasn't very important in the scheme of things. I did have fun though at CBS Television meeting people in the elevator. Very often, you met important people going up or down. I worked there from April of 1957 until December of '58. Then, while I was gonna stay at home, is when my daughter was born at the end of March 1957. I did this kind of independent freelance work for CBS Television on more types of reports and I kept doing that for a period of time. So, that I do remember. That while I had the baby in my lap, she would sometimes peck at different keys on the typewriter as I was trying to write these reports. So, I must have done that until about the time that we moved to Florida in 1962. What I also recall is that it must have been January or February of 1959. There was a career day event at Barnard and I was asked to come back as a recent graduate who had worked at CBS Television and talk about life on the outside and I did. I believe it or not, when I was asked what I expected to do with my life, it's coming back to me, said that I would probably do what my mother was doing which was give leadership to community organizations and I would be a volunteer in fields that I thought were important. So, I guess I fulfilled my mother's vision more than triple because had she been able to serve in a legislative capacity, I know she would have. I've had a lot of other ancillary opportunities that worked with that, including being part of the legislature, which we'll go into in the future, I'm sure. I was also a lobbyist, so I was always an advocate and I guess that's the key forward.

DAN ROYLES: When you're working for CBS, where in New York were you and Philip living?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Yeah, well, as soon as we married, we moved to an area called Riverdale which is the westernmost side of the Bronx on the Hudson River. I mean, yes, along the Hudson, and it's the part between Northern Manhattan and Yonkers on the west side of the Bronx. It was a lovely area to live in. In fact, just a few months ago, when my son and I went up for a family event in Westchester County, we took a detour one day and went and visited to see what it looks like today and it's still a beautiful area to live. [It was] very convenient to New York [and] to Manhattan, whether by subway [or] bus. It's probably not convenient with a car because I don't know what you do with a car when you get to Manhattan. It was tough 50 years ago and it's tougher now.

DAN ROYLES: And you had grown up in the Bronx as well?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: I grew up in the Bronx. I grew up in an area [that] was called the Moshulu Parkway area in North Bronx. My parents moved there. It was the end of the line for the D train. But the D train could take you right to Manhattan, so that was convenient. We lived right across the street from the entrance to the subway. A few months ago, when we went to that trip to see Riverdale, we also went to take a look at the old neighborhood and it was still
a very nice place to live. My son-in-law's mother grew up just a few blocks away from me. She went to the Catholic school there and I wanted to show that to my son. We thought we were in the same area, but it had some kind of a different “Eastern Right Church” on the name, and I was very confused because I'm sure that the area still has a lot of Catholic families. Then we discovered that they had built a new St. Brendan's around the corner. The community, I would say, was a third Jewish, a third Italian, and a third Irish, all generally tied too closely to recent immigrants and we all understood each other. That's still functioning.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah. Going back to your mother's work with Hadassah and your parents’ kind of position as Zionists, in 1948 or the years following, was there ever any discussion about emigrating to Israel?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:29:44] Actually, no. They did not have the flexibility. My father as I said, worked very hard. He made a good living, but it wasn't an easy life. So, I think that was one thing, but they were always very encouraging of anybody who they knew was moving to Israel. They did know that my father had some cousins who had gone there. So, [they were] who we ultimately met when Phillip and I and our children went on our first visit to Israel, which was 1970. So, that was very exciting as a matter of fact. But my parents never did talk about that even though they were strong really [and] very committed to Israel's safety and security in the future. My brother, who as I said was older than me by the way, after Bronx Science, went to NYU uptown University Heights, where got his first degree. Then, he had his second degree as an accountant at the School of Commerce Accounts and Finance, which was part of NYU downtown in Washington Square. He was an accountant and controller. That was his field, a CPA all of his life. My brother passed away just four months ago.

DAN ROYLES: I'm sorry.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: So, my big brother…

DAN ROYLES: So, when you moved to Miami, it was to join friends of your's and Philip?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:31:56] It was to build our life in Miami, in Florida, rather than build our life in New York. For whatever reason, my husband at the age of 30, when he celebrated his 30th birthday, really thought that maybe it's because his brother had passed away in his forties. He really thought that life is short. [You] have to put as much as you can, right away, as fast as you can. There was a copy of the law school bulletin of some sort that came out and had an article. There was really a sort of scary article which said of the people who graduated from Columbia Law School and stayed and worked in New York, x percent would be perish by the age of fifty. For whatever reason, he took that message very personally. A few weeks later, a classmate from his class actually dropped dead on the streets of New York at some kind of a hidden element. That was a big shock to my husband. Then somebody, a fairly young-ish man who lived in our apartment building passed. That was another big blow to him. Then there was, I think, a third person if I remember correctly who shocked him by having a serious health issue or something. That's what sort of made him start to think about the fact that our dearest friends
kept on saying, “if you live in Florida, you’ll live a better life, you’ll live a longer life, you’ll enjoy life better.” He began to see the wisdom of that message. Then we had come to visit our friends for the first time in 1961, I guess. Then, earlier in ’60, maybe the end of ’60, and then ’61 and now we came back home and we were talking about it. We sort of felt that we had to make the decision. Now was the right time to make the decision. Instead of building your life and your practice and everything you are doing, he had done very, very well after law school, as I said earlier. His first position while he waited to hear from the Department of Justice was in the New York State Controller's office. He had a job in Albany. When I met him in October of ’54, that's where he was working. He had gotten a very high salary for that time out of law school. Then, he got the appointment to the Department of Justice which, thrilling for him, would be in the US Department of Justice. In the end, he trusted the vision which was a field that he had particularly been interested in. Then, he stayed there for few years and then went to a private law firm called...it'll come to me...Sparrow, Feltstoner & Prager at 270 Madison Avenue. So, he was actually a Madison Avenue lawyer. He had some incredibly important cases, including one where he was representing the company of Rosenthal China out of Germany. His [opposing] person turned out to be somebody who became a close friend, Arthur Lyman, a very famous lawyer in New York afterwards. Phillip actually beat him, so I was very thrilled with that at any rate. Somehow or another, he came to the attention of someone from the New York Attorney General's office, which was located in Foley Square in Manhattan, right near where he had been in the Department of Justice. They asked him to come to work at the Attorney General's office to revitalized their anti-monopoly bureau, which was sort of parallel to the US Department of Justice’s Anti-Trust Division. The connection was that there was a man who happened to live in our apartment building in Riverdale, who was the number two guy in the New York Attorney General's office. We were friendly, and he must have talked with Philip and then recommended him for this position. So, he got the offer, but it came with something that was even more important. He could drive this gentleman, who didn't drive, down to Foley’s square everyday and have a parking space in front of the state office building. Having a parking space in New York City that is designated for you is unbelievable. In fact, when he announced to his peers that he was moving to Florida, everybody said “how can you leave, you have a parking space?” At any rate, Phillip had a great career in New York City. When he came here, he came to a firm: Myers, Hyman, Kaplan, & Catsman. They paid him half of what would be a normal salary because he had not yet known that he had passed the bar, which he did. By the way, to take the bar exam in 1962, you had to apply six months in advance and it cost, I believe, a $250 application. $250 in 1962 was like $2500 today. It was nothing to sneeze at. So, he had made the commitment and he came and took the exam in July of ’62 and we moved here at the end of September. He already got a job, but he didn't know whether he had passed the bar. Fortunately, he did pass the bar. Just to add another little kicker to it, my father, who had all of his life been a watchmaker, said “you never know. I might need to get a job here sometime.” He was almost sixty-years-old when he moved, not even sixty. To become a watchmaker in Florida you have to take a personal exam. You could make an appointment and someone would test you in Tallahassee. That's because they didn't want people coming from around the country to Florida in the winter and taking away all the positions or jobs from watchmakers. Anyway, my father drove up with Phillip, so Phillip could get sworn in. I guess he had to get sworn in in Tallahassee. My father left him and went to take this exam. The exam consisted of the examiner
coming into a room, putting a watch on the table, then taking a hammer, bashing it and saying, “put this watch back together. [That] meant he had to make parts, which of course he did. He passed his exam and Phillip was sworn into the bar. So, that was in November of ’62. [Phillip] had already been at this law firm for a month and they had obviously promised him when he passes the bar exam, he'll get a better salary. But after a year, they didn't, so Phillip left and joined a friend in a local office [that had] a little law firm. It was from there they went on until, ultimately, in the mid-1970s, [Phillip] became part of a firm that was a New York law firm based in Miami, that had an office in Miami. So, he was back to his milieu in terms of New York type legal activities as well. So, that's to give you a little aside on my father's integration into society here, too. I forgot where we were going.

DAN ROYLES: I mean, when you moved to Miami, what did you think? Did it live up to your expectations of what your friends had? What did you expect?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:41:27] Well, just before we moved I had a miscarriage in the sixth month [of pregnancy], which is something not pleasant for any woman to go through. I was busy taking care of my daughter. I didn't have a car, I was sort of landlocked, but shortly after that, I became pregnant and our son was born the following summer. It was while I was in the hospital there that the other bed was occupied by a young woman who had these very lovely young women come and meet her and visit her. She had one after another. They were brighter and more knowledgeable and more exciting as the days came on and those days I just stayed in the hospital for about a week after birth. I would say to her, “where do you know all these lovely young women from?” I didn't say “young,” but all the “lovely people from” and she said they were all people who were friends of hers from the Shores Division of the National Council of Jewish Women. So, within a few months after my son was born, I wanted to be able to join those people. I actually took my baby in a stroller or on a carriage to the meeting, and that was how I got started in National Council of Jewish Women. So, that would have been 1964 and ’65. Then in 1965, I was given the opportunity to become the state legislative chairman for the National Council of Jewish Women and that meant that I would represent, do whatever I could do, in the name of people who were members of the National Council of Jewish Women from all parts of Florida. My husband thought that I needed to see things firsthand. So, one week we took a trip with our little daughter in the back and we left the baby with a woman who is now a baby sitter. My parents would come and supervise. We took a trip and we drove up to Tallahassee for me to see the Florida legislature in action. We came there doing one of the special sessions that were called for reapportionment. It sounds strange now when you're thinking back about it, but it wasn't until the Supreme Court ruled one man-one vote, that we actually got Florida to the point where each member of the legislature had to represent an equal number of people to each other member of the legislature. It wasn't like that in the past. All of Dade-County had only, I think two members of the legislator out of one-hundred and twenty, so you can imagine that things were quite different [back] then. Then, after we apportioned, we had twenty-two. So, that was a very important time, but that was my introduction to seeing what the legislative process was like. We already knew some people who were in the legislature [that] had already worked on a couple of campaigns to help people get elected to the legislature, which is what I had done in New York, as well.
DAN ROYLES: Okay, what was your first impression of Tallahassee and the state legislature and that process?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:45:42] I was impressed. There were maybe one or two women, period. So, I wasn't looking at it from the standpoint of "I'd like to be there someday." It wasn't even something you could think about, which is amazing when you consider that nine years later, there I was.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: But I heard, [from where] we sat in the galleries [as] we watched, I heard people making grand speeches. I was very impressed with it. So, it was a very interesting process. I'd never seen it up close before. When I lived in New York, I'd never been to Albany. This was before the age of being able to watch these things on TV. That's another amazing thing. I mean, today you can watch congress in action if you're really committed to [it], which you can watch C-SPAN and watch everything going on right in front of you. Today, we have the legislature on TV. So, it's a very different world.

DAN ROYLES: So, when you were with the National Council of Jewish Women, you were state legislative aide?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:47:08] So, I was the state legislative chairman. We would get together in an orderly way and choose issues that we felt were important to us. It might have something to do with children, it might have something to do with healthcare, it might have something to do with women. Those were generally the issues that we were involved in when it came to the legislature. Actually, in 1971, actually 1969, I remember being involved with something called the Abortion Reform Coalition. We were just looking to make sure that if a woman was pregnant as a result of rape, incest, or some other terrible problem that occurred, that -in those days, there was absolutely no allowance for abortion- we needed to make some change, we thought. That became an issue that I was very involved with from that point forward. In 1971, the Abortion Reform Coalition sent me to Tallahassee to represent this group of many organizations in Miami, in Dade County, just to try to get some kind of reform for this issue. I was chosen because I was the mother of two, married to husband number one, and I was considered a safe person to send up. I will never forget that. That was my first involvement personally with the legislature. I walked into the House of Chambers because they held this big hearing in the House of Chambers and somebody on the other side of the issue had made sure to bring probably children from a Catholic school, I presume. They all had a big button on that said, "if abortion were legal, I would be dead." They were all looking at you as you walk into the room, and I made my presentation. I was very surprised by it. But also in 1971, in February, I was appointed by Harold Greene, then a commissioner in Dade County, to the New Commission on the Status of Women. It's now called the Commission on Women. But that was a parallel to a newly created Commission on the Status of Women at the state level and there had been groups with the same name in many states and communities across the country.
Roxy Bolton, who was a very strong leader for the women’s movement, had asked everybody running for Dade-County Commission in 1970, if they were elected, would they create a commission on the status of women for Dade-County. A number of them had said yes. Well, she went before them in January of 1971 and said, “you all said yes, here’s a bill that had been written while you’re staff, we hope you’ll pass it.” And they did pass it and then in February of 1971, I was appointed. I believe we had nine members on the commission and there were three per member, so it was twenty-seven people on this commission. The women who were reformers and activists and interested in pushing the Women's Movement were on one side. There were some whose commissioners had been against the whole thing, but they had to make appointees anyway on the other side. So, maybe there were twenty-one plus six. However, they all agreed on me because I was Mrs. Philip Bloom. I looked safe and I became the founding chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. Among the things we did is we expanded the housing ordinance and we expanded the various issues in law in the state and in the county. We even created the first daycare center for children, for the children of county employees. So, we did a great number of things under that heading of the Commission on Status of Women and I’m very proud to say that they’re still going strong.

DAN ROYLES: [00:53:05] Those oppositional members of the commission, were they other women, or were they men who had been appointed to the commission?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:53:14] There was only one man and he was supportive.

DAN ROYLES: Okay.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:53:17] So, there were women who had been appointed. Some of them were allies of a woman from Illinois named Phyllis Schlafly and I forgot what her organization was called, but they were anti-everything. They were anti-equal rights amendments, they were anti-anything affecting women. It was really tough, but from my experience as a leader in the National Council of Jewish Women, I knew how to get around people who were not agreeing with me on every issue. I was able to work with them and we found other things we could work on where we could agree. They agreed on child care, they agreed on healthcare. They agreed on a lot of things, but they certainly didn’t agree on the Equal Rights Amendment and the issues affecting abortion. Now, later in 1970, actually in 1972, I think was the year that Roe v. Wade, it was 19-.  

DAN ROYLES: [00:54:33] ’73.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:54:38] Yeah. I actually was put into the position of having to debate Phyllis Schlafly and people like that on different occasions. Yes, it was very, very difficult and what I usually said was it doesn’t matter whether abortion is something that I would decide to do for myself, for my child. But I had no right to take away the opportunity of somebody else to not make that decision for their own family members, their own physicians, for their own purposes. I have found that over the years, I think, most people share that feeling even if it’s not something that they would do. Actually, in my case, I mentioned earlier that I had a miscarriage in the sixth
month [of pregnancy]. Just because this is gonna be looked at by people who are lawyers, they need to know that, when that occurred in June of 1962, I was not able to even have the normal procedure to follow that in a hospital until I brought with me the sounds of all the products of conception. I had to actually have it in my own plastic bag in order to have the doctor be able to show that he was not performing an abortion in the hospital. Sounds gruesome, but that's what it was like.

DAN ROYLES: That's horrific.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:56:28] It's more than horrific. When you tell somebody who thinks that they're carrying the child that it's dead and it's going to come out, that's what you got to do. My story was not unique. You'd find that was what happened before the ability to do the dilation and curettage procedure, which is normal after that kind of activity, after that process. That's why this could happen again very easily.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:57:13] Then, actually, I had several other pregnancies that ended by themselves and after I had kidney surgery in 1967, I was told that I had to be careful and not have another pregnancy. This may sound even more gruesome, but there was something called the...do you mind if I talk about this?

DAN ROYLES: No, please.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:57:55] Okay, I've forgotten now what they called it, the device, the coil that was implanted. The doctor told me that it had a 2% failure rate, which meant that out of his two-hundred patients, the probability of four people having pregnancies even with the coil was possible. Guess what? I wound up being one of them and I actually ultimately know three other people who had the same problem. I had to go to New York to have an abortion, because I did not want this to, in some other way, kill me with my kidney problems. So, that's another reason why a woman's right to make decisions about her own body along with her own family, her own doctor, her own religious consultant leader, it's so essential. We are facing a very serious problem on the national level if that gets taken away.

DAN ROYLES: [00:59:23] Was it a difficult decision to make?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [00:59:28] No. No, because once you knew that it was in there, I didn't wanna risk my [life]. I had two wonderful children. Wasn't worth risking my life. Yeah. So, and you'll find that if you go deep in talking with a lot of women, there's gonna be something like this in their backgrounds. So, therefore, when I'm known for being somebody who is very staunchly supportive of a woman's right to make decisions about her own body, I've been there. I understand what it's all about. Years later, during the years that I was out of the legislature, 1979 to '81, I had a radio program, a daily radio program at WKAT which was a talk radio station. I did something to build listenership and a support for the station. I created like a whole
women's panel and I brought women from all kinds of organizations together, including the women who were opposed to everything that I was fighting for. We made a decision that we would work together on a lot of issues. We would never discuss abortion or the Equal Rights Amendment because those were the issues that we fought over. I will never forget how we made a determination on one of the issues that was most serious. It still is a serious issue which is not really being dealt with. That issue was incest. We heard about it from people who were church affiliated people. I mean, this was a serious issue. So, that's another kind of thing which is sort of swept under the rug and not talked about. These are all issues that are dealt with in the legislative process, another good reason why you need to have women actively involved and running for office and serving in office and agitating. I'll give you a cute story. When I came to Tallahassee, in my first session in 1975, a few weeks had passed and I had already sort of gotten my stride. The person who was the majority leader of the house, a man named Dick Clark, whose brother was Steve Clark, the mayor of Miami, at the time, realized that I took this very, very seriously. If there was a bill or amendment that affected Dade County and it went down to defeat on the floor, I would run up to the place where they would print out the roster of who voted yes or no. I would see if there was somebody I could go and convince and say, “look, Dade County really needs this, so this is really a good issue” and I would find people who would say, “yes, I will. I understand now. I'll vote with you.” But now, I had to find somebody who was willing to stand up and say, “I voted no on this bill. I was on the prevailing side. I'd like to reconsider the motion by which it failed.” That was important because there were people who would say, “all right, if you bring that up, I'll vote with you,” but they didn't wanna be the one to make that motion. I did this a number of times. So, Dick Clark, the majority leader, saw that I became valuable to him as an asset because I would fight for Dade County's issues, not just for my own. It must have been two thirds into the session, I get a message from outside sent in, “The governor wants to see you in his office.” It's like the principal is calling you to his office. I went down to governor's office and I said, “is there something you wanted to talk to me about, Governor?” He says, “yeah, sit down Elaine.” He says, “I'm getting reports about you,” and he says, “people tell me you don't give up, you don't. You're very persistent, you're this, you don't leave them alone.” So I said, “and what's wrong with that?” He says, “well, there are people who think that freshmen should sorta be seen and not heard.” As he was saying that, he said, “I remember when I first came to the Senate, to the Florida Senate from Pensacola. I was told the first year you're not supposed to say anything,” he said, “but I said to everybody who would say that to me, my constituents don't have time to wait around, they need me to speak for them every day.” I said, “well, Governor, that's sort of where I'm at, too, I can't waste time here.” Then he turns and says, “well, it's not that you're persistent,” he says, “you're really trying to get the job done.” All of a sudden he changed his whole tone and now I was the good guy because I was making sure that I didn't leave a stone unturned, if I could help it. That sort of was my guiding light all the time that I was in the legislature.

DAN ROYLES: [01:05:32] So, maybe you can tell me about your decision to run in 1974.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:05:37] Well, I was on the Commission on the Status of Women and I had served as Chair. In that position, I was going to meetings of all kinds of organizations around the community, urging women to run for office, the city council, the school board,
whatever it was, because we needed to have women's voices heard everywhere. This was consistent with my responsibility as the Chair of the Commission, as a member of the Commission. I went to Tallahassee. Well, somebody actually came to our home, I'll have to think of his name, and he called me one day, he said, "I'm very active in the Democratic Party here." He said, "we really think that you should run for office." Me? He says, "yes, your background, all the things you've done." By the way, by this time, what I failed to tell you was that in October of '73, I had, when Israel was attacked, the Yom Kippur War, there was a fundraising drive that was started at the Greater Miami Jewish Federation for the Women's Division. I went to that and women were saying things like, "I have $572 in my bank account from when I was teaching. I'm gonna give the whole thing." They were all trying to jump over each other with trying to make contributions to help Israel. I stood up and I said, "well, I don't have any money in my own name." But I had just finished being not only Chairman of the Commission on the Status of Women, but also President of the Greater Miami section of National Council of Jewish Women. So I said, "I'm gonna get a job. My husband wants me to professionalize all that I've been doing. Whatever I make over this next year, I will donate." Now, I had the opportunity and I actually had several things that I did apply for. I had been thinking about doing something at FIU because somebody had asked me if I wanted to work with the Institute for Women, that was what it was called. The woman who headed it, a Dr. Charlotte Tatro, was willing to hire me as a half-time person. I took the job and you have to remember that I had always been a volunteer, so now being paid half-time meant, what is half-time?, for most people that would be like 20 hours a week. But for me, I was there before she got there in the morning and I was there after she left at night and I drove her nuts. Then, in April of that year, she had asked for permission to take a trip to India. Somebody wanted to sponsor her on some kind of a trip. The university, whoever was responsible, said no. One day I came into the office. She wasn't there and she didn't show up. We called her home and they said she had left on a trip. Well, there were some very hard feelings and I was instantly given an upgrade to the acting director, now at full salary. That's where I was. At around this time, I had put together a special event, I think it was for flight attendants, who were called stewardesses at the time, at Eastern Airlines. It was a Saturday event for them and it was supposed to help them determine what they wanted to do with their futures, as if I knew how to help people determine what they wanted do with their futures. But I led this session and I had them work on a piece of paper outlining where they wanted to be one year from now, five years from now, the usual kinda thing and how did they feel about themselves, what did they wanna be. Just because, I took a piece of paper and I started writing out my own wants for the future and I used the term that was common at the time, I wanted to be a change agent, I wanted to help bring about change. I'm giving you this as a background because about a week later, I got this call from, well, his last name was Lieberman, I'll try to remember his first name. He said that a number of people in the Democratic party, such as it was, were talking about me, "would I run for the legislature?" So I said, "I'll think about it," he said, "can I come and talk to your family? Can I invite myself to dinner?" which he did. So, he talked to my husband, to my children, and I had said my kids are young. But they all thought it was a great idea, so I arranged to fly up to Tallahassee to take a look around, to look at how the delegation was working there now that we had quite a few people in the delegation. I had a wonderful friendship with Martial Harris, who was one of the leaders of the delegation. But I knew a lot of people already because I had worked with them on
the issues for National Council of Jewish Women. I had held events and had them as speakers
and when I went up to Tallahassee, I decided to go in to visit one of the people I did not know
from my own delegation. We were represented by six people and the person who I'd went to
see was next door to Barry Cutin, who I knew, but I didn't know this man, George Baumgartner.
So, I waited outside his door and he had three young people in there and he was the chair of
the sub-committee that had to do with collective bargaining in the Commerce Committee. I
heard, because the door was opened, I heard him talking to them. They were speaking on
behalf of seasonal workers and migrant workers. There apparently had been some legislation
which he had not given help for, and they were trying to convince him to change his mind. He
pretty much threw them out of the office, which wasn't a very nice thing for me to see, as a
constituent. I walked in and introduced myself, shook his hand and I said, “I'm here to speak
with you, probably,” I said, “about the equal rights amendment” or something like that. I said,
“but before I do that, I heard these other people speaking about migrant workers and one of the
issues come before you. I would really like to tell you that I support what they're trying to do,”
and he says to me, “you don't have the right to do that! When your nails are dirty, you have dirt
underneath your fingernails, then you can come back and talk to me!” Who? What? What's
happening here? I stood up and I said, “thank you very much and goodbye,” I never talked to
him again. Fast forward a few weeks later, I was invited to somebody's Bar Mitzvah or
something. My friends were there, Marshall Harris was there, Bob Shannon was there, a lot of
these people who are now in the Legislature were there. I said, “I think I've decided who I'm
gonna run against, I had seen them when I was in Tallahassee,” and I told them who I was
running against. I was gonna run against this fellow, George Baumgartner, because he wasn't
right on my issues. They said, “but he's one of the team,” and they said, “you should run against
Ted Cohen.” I said, “no, Gwen Margolis, who I don't know, has already declared that she's
running against Ted Cohen.” So [they] said, “well you can run in that race too.” I said, “no, it's
enough to have one woman and the last thing we need is to have women fighting there, no
women currently in the legislature to speak of.” So that's what I did. I ran against Baumgartner
because he was wrong on so many of my issues. But all of these people who were his friends
from the legislative process, they couldn't do anything to help me. However, I was very, very
fortunate because in 1974, this was the only year where there was a limit on how much you
could spend in each part of the election, they had made a law, which two years later was wiped
out by the Supreme Court. But it limited the first primary. You could only raise and spend up to
$15,000, for the runoff, up to $10,000, and for the general, $25,000. That was hugely helpful to
me because that meant that the incumbent I was running against couldn't collect $100,000 and
use it against me. He could only raise and spend $15,000. What happened though [that] was
unusual, in addition to all the other things, was that the head of the teachers union, I'll think of
his name in a minute, for whatever reasons, wanted to help Baumgartner because he had
apparently been okay with teachers union issues in his capacity as the U-Collective Bargaining
Subcommittee Chair. Petro Nila was the name of the teacher's union person. All of a sudden,
just at the last minute, he has a young woman, who's a teacher, file to run. She was African-
American. She was a teacher. She was very young, very inexperienced, unfortunately not very
knowledgeable. She was the niece of one of the most active African-American leaders in the
community, Charlie Hadley. Well, when Charlie Hadley heard that this young woman had been
put into the race to mix things up more and to help George Baumgartner, he called me and said,
and I knew that he was very close to Congressman Claude Pepper, who I always thought of as Senator Claude Pepper. Because Claude Pepper had actually had Charlie working for him and I think Nelly mentored him but had paid for his college tuition and sent him to college in Tallahassee. Charlie had some kind of a government job. Charlie called me because he knew of my work in the community through the National Council of Jewish women. He knew me, he liked me and he was really upset to know I had done this to this young women who was his niece. But she wasn't getting out and Charlie had to let everybody know that he was supporting me, and I actually won with sixty-one percent of the vote, so that was really incredible.

DAN ROYLES: [01:18:58] That was the primary, or the-

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: The primary.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: But there was no Republicans in those days.

DAN ROYLES: So you won.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: That was it. Not even a run-off, right?

DAN ROYLES: And I imagine that you must've encountered some other obstacles to running as a woman.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:19:19] Well, I absolutely did. Some of my colleagues in the delegation tried to help my opponent. So, they would make sure that their supporters in a lot of these big buildings that already existed on the beach, and in what now is Sunny Isles and all over what is now Ventura. In those buildings, if my fellow legislative members of the delegation had connections, they were not helping me, they were helping him. I would go to these buildings and if I would have somebody as a friend would, in fact, invite me in and walk me around the pool area. Well, first of all, when you walked around the pool area and you talked, “how do you do? I'm Elaine Bloom. I'm running for Florida Legislature.” [They] would say, “do you have a husband? Yes. Do you have children? Yes. Stay home and take care of your husband and children.” That was said, countless times. The answer was, there were lots of obstacles, there were many buildings that I was not allowed to go into because they would tell the front office people, the door men or whatever, don't let any candidates in, etc, etc. So, yes, it was not easy. My husband was wonderful. He became a wonderful campaigner. We would go someplace like on Lincoln Road and shake hands with people, “Do you live in this area? If you're out of town thank you, but we’re looking to meet local people.” We just did a huge amount of hand shaking and talking and having events. I said it was made easier by the fact that he could not spend a lot of money on television, which was already being used and even on print media because you could only spend so much. I don't think I would've gotten elected if he, as an incumbent, had been able to raise money. Was it easy to raise money? Absolutely not. People who would easily write a hundred dollar check to a candidate would give a woman twenty-five dollars and women
at that point did not know that it was up to them independently to make contributions. Very, very few contributions from women. It was a whole different ball game than it is now.

DAN ROYLES: I think when we talked before you mentioned, because this is 1974, this is the Watergate election.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:22:05] Yes, some of the things I would say is that yes, I am a woman, but the men have had a long time to demonstrate how well they can take care of things and if you look at what's happening in Washington now, we need more women. The women would cheer and the men would boo. But it was, it was definitely a watershed moment, because of that.

DAN ROYLES: Did you think of yourself as a Watergate, a Watergate baby?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:22:34] No, not really, not really, it was... No, it was very...a very, very sad, scary time. But, look, I had some wonderful support. Claude Pepper, who was a mentor to me was very, very helpful. Bill Laymen, member of congress, was very helpful to me. Of course, as I mentioned when Marco was running in another race against Cone, she was running against Dr. Morton Terry and Charlie Intrigio. She had two heavy weights, really, and she wound up in a runoff with Morton Terry who, ultimately, he was the person [at] what is now the Nova Southeastern University College of Medicine, which became part of Nova University. There was a very highly spot-lighted election and she ultimately beat him in the run off, but I was very lucky. I came out ahead, you know, in the first primary and I didn't have to go forward. So, that was, that was terrific. Then in nineteen-, well 1976, I had one opponent, who, I don't even remember his name, we beat him very handily. Then in 1978, when Bob Graham went for governor and George Firestone was running for secretary of state, a lot of people came to me and said that they represented two of my main issue areas of education where I was state county's principle person in the legislature. In the house, Bob Graham was the one on the senate. I was the one on the house and George Firestone was very involved in economic development and I have been very involved in economic development, with the International Banking Act and the Free Trade Zone, Bill, and some other things. So people said, we need you in the Senate for these two particular issue areas. We need you to run for the Senate. So, I ran against a colleague, Paul Steinberg. It was a strange campaign, the first time that the punch card votes were used. We never knew what hit us. We lost by only a few hundred votes at the end and didn't even know enough to ask for a recount. So, we heard there was all kinds of, you know, canary, but that's noble, that time. So, that was how I left Legislature and then went into two new careers before I went back into Legislature during 1986 in the special election.

DAN ROYLES: [01:25:56] When you got to the legislature the first time, what did you want to accomplish there?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:26:04] All of these issues that I had been working on, whether they were issues affecting families or children or health or equal rights. These were very, very clear for me. I was placed on committees, like the education committee, and I right away became the
key person on that committee for Dade County. Towards the end of my first session, somebody who was on the Appropriations Committee didn't show up on Mondays and Dade County did a voice on these subcommittees that dealt with education of the appropriations. So, they ask the speaker at the time if he would place me there and he did. So, I was put into the process of the Appropriations Committee right from the beginning. Then, I knew that I had a responsibility to bring back different pots of money that benefited Dade County, whether it was the schools, whether it was the cultural arts. There were so many areas that I was able to be involved with and also healthcare...Jackson Memorial Hospital. I mean, I'm dealing now with some of the issues that I worked with even then, which is really funny. But whatever it may have been, I right away got involved in something that ultimately led to my being appointed the Chair of Committee on federal state, Appropriations, because I was very aware of the fact that so many programs were dictated by Washington. Sometimes, Washington required you to do XYZ by law, but other states weren't doing it and they were still getting the money. There were lots of different issues. So, I even ultimately chaired that committee and we went to Washington to meet with people who had written the law and said, "your state's not doing it as you're getting the money." I learned a lot and that was the most important thing. I learned a lot because women in the legislative process were unique. We took it very, very seriously. I can make this generalization, that women read the bills. We were prepared, we were even better prepared than the men, all the time, some women more than others. I was known for asking questions at the committee level. Somebody would appear before us from the agency. I didn't take what they said as gospel. I would ask questions. I got a reputation with the people in the agencies, "watch out for her. She knows what she's talking about." They didn't know that I didn't know what I was talking about, but I asked questions.


HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:29:30] But if you ask the question in such a way that they think that you really know the answer, it was something I was able to develop.

DAN ROYLES: So, is that one of the things that you learned?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Mm-hm.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah. How else did you find Tallahassee? Having been there before, but coming as Legislator, was it different?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:29:55] Oh, very. There was a lot going on that distressed me. For example, you had to learn to be a part of the group, but I was extremely cautious because I didn't want anything to tarnish my reputation. I didn't want anybody to say to my husband, “how could you let her be up there by herself?” I actually wasn't by myself. That whole first year that I was up there, I had different women friends come and stay with me and my son, who was about ten, eleven at the time...twelve? Eleven...and was in sixth grade. His teacher was a union rep in the school. She was ecstatic that one of her student's mother was in the legislature and she said, “of course we can have him be on independent studies when he's in Tallahassee.” So, I
would bring him with me in the morning and he would volunteer in the mail room, for example. Then, he would run around the building, wherever, and he knew his way around, and whatever assignments he was given. He would run into somebody like Governor Askew and Governor Askew would say to him, “well David, what are you doing today?” And he says, “well, I just was in Marris Hall and there's a meeting going on of the XYZ Committee.” [Governor Askew] said, “what were they talking about?” David would tell him. That was the conversation. There was a big article in the Tallahassee newspaper about this little kid who wandered and learning so much, literally. The next year, my daughter, well...my daughter, was up with me part of that year too. But, I always had somebody with me so that I never would go into a cocktail party or, God forbid, the bar. I didn't go the bar. There were several places that people would go. That was not for me, but I would go to the cocktail parties that were hosted by organizations. However, I didn't go alone. If I had to have my son with me and I didn't have some friend with me as well, I would leave him parked outside the room on a chair in the hotel lobby, for example. Go in, say my hellos and then come out right away. I quickly learned that it was very important to go to these functions, not only to meet the people from the organizations and let them know that you're paying attention to their issues, but also to meet your colleagues because you had to make friends with them. You could fight about an issue, but you had to be friendly. You had to do it with dignity and kindness and that was a very important thing that I learned right away.

DAN ROYLES: [01:33:37] When you talk about having somebody with you all the time, were you concerned about reputation, about like, impropriety, or that?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Yes.

DAN ROYLES: [01:33:48] Really?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:33:51] Yes. There was a lot of impropriety going on up there.

DAN ROYLES: I can imagine.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:34:00] We talked earlier about the 1965 year with all the reapportionment sessions. The legislature spent so much time up there that I believe the number is approximately one-third of legislators got divorces after that year. Yeah. Yes, there's stuff going on there all the time.

DAN ROYLES: And then the bar...I would guess, that's where the male legislators go to?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:34:28] Yes, but as the years evolved, there was a number of women who felt comfortable walking in. I just didn't, even when I came back, 1981 to 1985, as a lobbyist. For in those days, I represented the Jewish Federations of Florida, something called the United Protestant Appeal, which sounds like it's at least a giant organization, but it was a group of Protestant churches here in Dade County that wanted to be visible. I worked with the fellow who represented United Way, so I would in effect say that I represented all three of those wonderful organizations. Adon Taft, the religion editor of the Miami Herald, called me the leader
of the God squad. So, during those years as a lobbyist I had to make a decision. Would I go into the actual bar which everybody goes to? I only went in when there was a gathering in the upstairs room for an organization. I did not ever become one of the people who sat at the bar. It's not my cup of tea, but I was able to avoid it, and it's okay.

DAN ROYLES: [01:36:00] Do you think that that shapes your career in the legislature in any way or-

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:36:05] Well that was what...but, no I don't think so. As a matter of fact, just yesterday I had an opportunity to speak to somebody who I haven't seen in years. He served in the legislature from Jacksonville from 1974 to '78 while I was there and we met through some other occurrence. He called when he saw my name, etc. We talked and he said he still remembers me as a woman, as a young woman with dark hair, etc. etc. I said, "well the dark hair's no longer dark." He said, "and you were always a perfect lady." So that was the reputation that I had and that was fine with me. So, what I think some of the people reviewing this might want to know is was there a difference between the way I was treated when I was a lobbyist and when I was a legislator and the answer is yes. There was a number of occasions that showed the difference, but one particular thing that I do remember is when Clarence Thomas was being considered for his Supreme Court seat. I'm doing a blank on her name...the lawyer came before the woman.

DAN ROYLES: [01:37:39] Anita Hill?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:37:40] Anita Hill.


HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:37:42] ...came before the committee, and she was so mistreated by the committee. I was sitting at a meeting of the Grand Rapids Jewish Federation Board and a note got sent in to me that my office called very important. So, I go out and I called my office's [number], before the cellphone with everybody but, I went and called my office and I'm told that, channel six wants to interview me. They wanna find out whether, as a Legislature, I've ever experienced what any kind of things that Anita Hill was discussing. I said I'm sure I'm willing to talk about that. So, they came and they interviewed me right at the federation building. Went outside and I'm asked did anything like this ever happen to me. They wanna find out whether, as a Legislature, I've ever experienced what any kind of things that Anita Hill was discussing. I said I'm sure I'm willing to talk about that. So, they came and they interviewed me right at the federation building. Went outside and I'm asked did anything like this ever happen to me. I said not when I was a legislator, but when I was a lobbyist. "Well, what happened?" I said there was a Legislator and he used to try to find time that a woman would be alone in an elevator and one time he caught me in an elevator. He actually put his hands against the wall sort of locking me in and I pushed as hard as I could. Just then, the elevator opened. I went home and I said to my husband, "we have to watch the eleven o'clock news because I was interviewed about.." and I told him what I was interviewed about didn't say a word. Anyway, now at this point, I'm back in the Legislature and I'm telling about what happened during the years I was a lobbyist. The piece airs and afterwards my husband says to me "I don't believe you." I said, "what?" He said, "well, you never told me about it when it happened." I said, "well, I was afraid if I told you wouldn't let me go
back.” The next day, I get a phone call from Elaine Gordon and she says, “I know who it was,” and that particular person had actually done that to almost all the young women. They used to come to Elaine Gordon because she, at some point, always chaired something that gave people an opportunity to talk about harassment. We didn't talk about it then as that way, but that's what it was, and she was right. Then, this person was ultimately picked up in a men's room, so he apparently harassed men too.


HON. ELAINE BLOOM: He was a Republican. *Laughs*

DAN ROYLES: Sometimes it happens that way, doesn't it?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: But, so when you ask whether it was a place of propriety, no.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Unfortunately.

DAN ROYLES: Is any state legislature faced with propriety?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:40:48] Well, I can't speak for all them, but I don't know...I think that sometimes... look we see what's happening in Congress, there are obviously things.

DAN ROYLES: [01:41:01] Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: ...and I think that the current Me Too movement is gonna have a very significant effect.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah, it already has.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:41:12]: But, for the future of, particularly of young women, I mean I've been very fortunate that that's probably the worst experience that I had, but did I ever hear people saying things? You bet, but that was the only time that I felt threatened. Although, I shouldn't say that. There was a certain state senator I was sent to negotiate with him about something to do with the budget. My second year in the Legislature, and I won't say who it was, but if you can figure out who, I would be negotiating with. It was after the hour that a lot of the senators kept their liquor in their drawer and at five o'clock, would help themselves. It was past that time and I went to see if I can negotiate a change, that if we made an amendment of some sort with and he started what I knew was gonna be chasing me around the desk. So, I actually ran out of his office, so yeah.

DAN ROYLES: [01:42:39] Literally chasing you around the desk?
HON. ELAINE BLOOM: But to say, it was after the hour that he would have had something to drink, so it was...his inhibitions were obviously down.

DAN ROYLES: Right.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: There were places that you knew that you didn’t go when you were invited.

DAN ROYLES: Like where?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:43:02] Different places where people went for dinner. I don't know who the companies were because I don't remember if I ever really knew it, but there was something. People went to have dinner at the trailers and I don't know who. That was my first two years I remember hearing about that, “don't go to the trailers.”

DAN ROYLES: Because if you were invited there it meant that there was-?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Stuff...yeah. So, if I tell you this I hope that doesn't mean you won't let your daughter go to school at Tallahassee, but I think that the whole attitude towards women, and that women have about themselves, is all changing for the better.

DAN ROYLES: [01:44:03] Yeah. So, talking about being a legislator in the more prosaic sense, I suppose, I imagine that when you’re there you have kind of different pressures or you're kind of serving different sets of interests. You have your constituents, you have your delegation, you have the party, you have your own moral and political compass. How do you balance all of that?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:44:35] Well, the thing that is least important in your mind is the party, unfortunately. Which means that I don't think people think in terms of, “will this be good or bad for the party?” You have to think about your constituents and the degree to which you think about your average constituents versus how much one thinks about your special constituents who are lobbyists because they are also constituents. It makes the difference between whether it's somebody who really spends their time working on what we would call the public good, or working on special interests. To a great extent, there's a balancing that goes on because what is a special interest to you might not be a special interest to me and vice versa. For example, I'm considered an anti-smoker and I spent a lot of energy on bills relating to no smoking and different arenas. In fact, when you go to the airport and you hear Florida’s a Clean Indoor Air Act state. I don't think they still play that, but they used to play it for years and years, “no smoking in the airport, you have to go outdoors” and so forth. In some states you, and some airports you have lounges where there are usually glass enclosed, and you really can't see the people because of the smoke being so thick, but I was very significantly involved in trying to change the law and in changing the law to stop smoking. Whether it's in schools, or in facilities, and stadiums, and hospitals, and restaurants. I really got involved very heavily in all of that. Yet, one time I remember when I was seeking re-election, I got a significantly large gift, a contribution, not a gift, from the lobbyist for a lot of the tobacco industry. I happen to see him
and I said, "I'm really surprised after what I did to your clients." He said, "well, we know you're bad on our issue but you're so good on so many other issues that we want you there." Okay, that sounds very happy with that and that could be said about a lot of things. Now, you've seen the piece of work that shows a hundred bills that I passed. It doesn't mention the smoking bill because I don't want to offend a potential voter who happens to be a smoker and curses every time he has to walk out of a restaurant or whatever. What's interesting, by the way, about the restaurant issue is that originally I was only able to pass it so that fifty percent of the restaurant territory had to be no smoking. By the next year, the restaurants came back to us and they had been so unhappy. Originally, they said, "please, make it a total restaurant because it's impossible to block off fifty percent." So, once you do a good thing sometimes it just spreads by itself, but I'm very, very pleased with the wide variety of issues I was able to work on. I was in the Legislature during a wonderful period of time when I was allowed to file as many bills as I wanted to. I was allowed to tack amendments onto other people's bills and get things done that way. Today, the Legislature, the House, operates on a basis of limiting. I think they're only allowed to file four bills each session. Well, that's absurd because you file things that you think need to be investigated, need to be changed. Either you succeed or you don't. I probably filed twenty-five bills in a given session. That's why I was able to pass so many things.

DAN ROYLES: [01:49:37] I wanna ask about the special election when you returned to the House.


DAN ROYLES: Why was there a special election?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:49:53] My former colleague in the House, Barry Kitain, who represented my actual district that I lived in called me in December of 1985 and said that he was going to run for Governor in '86. He was gonna resign, effective immediately, on this and this date. He wanted me to be aware of that because, number one: he wanted me to run for his seat.; number two: he didn't like the people who were already talking about running. So, he was in effect trying to say, "I don't want them to walk into it." So, I talked it out with my husband and he thought it was a great idea and I had already...I'd been doing the lobbying for the federations and the United Press and Appeal for four years and it just seemed to work. There was something else that was good about it. It was a finite period of time. Here, I would announce the beginning, he would announce his retirement, resignation, and I would right away say that I'm gonna be running for the state. This whole happened on a Sunday, as I remember, and I had cousins visiting from the North. It was the end of December. They were both school teachers. One was a principal. So, they were visiting during their vacation time and this all happened so fast and I said to Philip in their presence, "you know we've got to talk. We've got to make...it's okay you got..." and as soon as we decided I let him, Barry Kitain, know. He must have let newspapers know, or the TV, because while my cousin was still sitting there, suddenly there's a TV station calling and I go outside to do it outdoors and with these trees and the grass and the whole business and it looks so nice. They just could not believe their eyes. They came visiting from some place in Westchester County and I'm on television and I'm talking about running for
re-election. It worked out and I came back with eighty-two percent of the vote.


HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:52:34] And it was a brief period, two months...and it was wonderful. It was very, very affirming. In fact, not only did Barry Cuton...ultimately he did not win, but he was not alone in running and there were so many people running office that time. I was asked by several people running to be their running mate. That was what was so surprising because they saw me as this giant vote getter in a special election, it was very surprising. I said, no, I cannot do that because these people just bled for me, the people who worked so hard to get me reelected.

DAN ROYLES: [01:53:29] What was it like returning to, well, you had been in Tallahassee as a lobbyist, but what was it like coming back to the Legislature?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:53:37] It was an amazing experience. Doing a blank right now...Rosemary, now a federal judge. I had my husband came up to swear me in. She was a Supreme Court judge at the time and my husband both swore me in officially in the House Chambers in front of a whole huge amount of Legislators who were present because the Legislature had already opened. So I was sworn in right away and it was like a homecoming. It was great. The deadline for filing bills had already passed. I was given next to a couple of weeks, so everybody who had a special bill that came up out of the blue, out of the end of the opportunity to file bills had to come to me. I was the one only one left who could file these bills, so I got some very positive bills to introduce and that was helpful. I was just treated very, very well and I knew I was right where I belonged. I would be able to say that legislating the second time around is better than the first.


HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:55:16] Because I knew my way around. I was very familiar with the process. When you're a brand new Legislator and you're a newbie up in some place like Tallahassee, you really have a lot to learn. One of the bad things that the legislature did, thanks to some people who pushed them, was a constitutional amendment to limit Legislators to eight years. Four terms for a house member and some senators get to serve ten years because if it's over a period of reapportionment, they changed the district numbers, so that, theoretically, you're not running for the same office when they change the numbers in the year two of a ten year cycle, but eight years for a house member, it's just too short. It takes them a couple of years to learn the process and right now the agency people, and to a great extent the lobbyists, really run the show. That's a difference. When I served in those years, we had some very experienced Legislators who'd been around for ten, twenty years more. The new people learned from them. We watched. We learned from them. Generally, as a matter of fact, seasoned Legislators will often ask to in effect mentor new legislators. But now that process is so much more structured by the fact of being term limits, so that makes a big difference.
DAN ROYLES: [01:57:20] Did you have any particular mentors?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Did I have mentors?

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:57:23] I had many. Elaine Gordon was a mentor to me. She was there two years before me, but also, I received a big award two weeks ago at the Florida Healthcare Association event. So, I happened to bring up, when I made my thank you comments, that when I came to the Legislature...I mean at Fortune, was the chairman of appropriations and I knew that I needed to know him, so I worked with him. We worked on a number of bills right from the very beginning and he was a man who owned a nursing home and also was a pharmacist and had his pharmacy connected to the nursing home. So, I learned about, originally, nursing home issues and senior citizen issues from him. Believe me, I wanted to learn as much as I could because one thing that I had back here in Dade County was lots and lots of senior citizens. So, the answer is yes. I had many many mentors.

DAN ROYLES: [01:58:41] So when you came back, had the environment in the Legislature changed? Had the place changed?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:58:49] Well as we said, I was there -

DAN ROYLES: Right.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [01:58:55] ...as a lobbyist. So the...It's different. Yes. When you are there as the Legislator, it's different. No matter how friendly everybody was to you before, as the lobbyist, you're the outsider still looking in. Now, you're the insider. It's very, very different. One thing that I learned naturally, I suppose, even though there was so few women in the legislative process, as Legislators, when I was first there, there were many women working in the committee staffs, in the agencies, in the departments. I was treated then with respect and then, when I came back as a lobbyist a few years later, they were very, very helpful to me. They moved up the ranks and, even today, there are still some people that I went back and I saw them in January and boy...they remembered me for the way I treated them twenty years ago. So, that makes a difference and then people that you've treated well, treat you well. So, it all works together.

DAN ROYLES: [02:00:17] So, when you were there as a Legislator and as part of the delegation, you talked about the importance of those kinds of personal relationships. I mean, who were your friends and who were your allies up in Tallahassee?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:00:34] Well, it's interesting because you kept on shifting allies as the topic changed. There were people, for example, I mentioned the no smoking bills. So, there were some people who were certainly anything but allies on that, but I worked with them on something else. They were probably not part of my healthcare group, but they might have been
part of my transportation or my...maybe appropriations for the art. There were so many issues. Legislators come, for the most part, in two different packages. There are those who are specialists and there are those who are generalists. The specialists are people who perhaps might be lawyers in a particular field, or they might be builders, or they might be police officers. It wasn't until 1998 that there was a nurse in the Legislature. So, until that time I took it upon myself to always represent nursing issues. You understand what I'm saying? I was a generalist. So, I learned about new topics as things evolved. You needed to be open to ever changing topics as I came into the Legislature in nineteen-seventy-five, for the first session, 1975. When we were stalling until an economic cycle of that was, it was not terrible, but it was slowing down of the economy. I've been through times when Florida has had sufficient money for its issues and in times when Florida has definitely not. You learn how to roll with that. Right now we're in a cycle in Florida where, unfortunately with the current governor's direction, there's been such an effort to cut taxes that it's hurt people, it's hurt education, it's hurt schools at every level. Right now, as we're sitting and talking about these things, we're gonna have issues on the ballot for the Constitution Revision Commission that are harmful. People won't know about it because they will put on in ways that are improper. I don't know what the Supreme Court's gonna do or not do when it considers some of them. So, we have cycles of inflation and we have cycles of deflation, so all of this is what helps make a legislative process easier or tougher. I became involved with the budget process. Actually, in my first year, as I identified, with respect to the schools, the Dade County school budget, but it was not that year but from the second year on, I was on the Appropriations Conference Committee every single year, which fights out the remaining issues on the budget where the two Houses differ. So, I learned a tremendous amount on the job, and I'm very, very lucky that I was able to work on it and learn it.

DAN ROYLES: [02:04:34] And so then you became Speaker Pro Tempore.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:04:38] Speaker Pro Tempore, Bo Johnson, was a very nice man from the Panhandle of Florida and a good Legislator. He aspired to be Speaker. Coming from the Panhandle, from a small town, he felt that had a lot of friends and they were very supportive of him, but he apparently felt that if he had somebody from one of the major counties running with him as Speaker Pro Tempore, that would enable him to say that I will be open to taking care of the big counties and the small counties. There were different issues. There's no question, but that you see things differently based on where you come from in Florida. We talked about issues. He was not somebody that I naturally gravitated to, came from total different backgrounds. Totally different issues, and yet, one of the long nights of the session at the end when we were battling with the senate back and forth about issues, we just started to talk and we discovered that we had a lot of commonality in the way we approached things and some of the feelings that we had about significant issues as well. He said...he asked me if I would be willing to, in effect, run with him. As far as I could see, there was no downside because there wasn't any money from Dade County that we were opposing and this meant that for that session, if he was able to win the support that Dade County, would have major voice. I keep saying Dade County because it wasn't until the middle of the 1990s it became Miami-Dade County.
HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:06:57] It must have been 1990 that a wonderful man named Sam Bell was expected to be next speaker. Sam Bell came and spoke at a session at the North Dade Campus of FIU and somebody asked him, “will Florida ever impose a personal income tax?” He said, “well the Constitution says we can't do that.” Now, he says, but perhaps someday the people of Florida will change their mind about a personal income tax. Now did he say, “I'm for a personal income tax?” No. He said someday this might happen. Well, the Republican who was running against him, Hart, heard about what he said and he misstated it in ads. Suddenly, he ran against Sam Bell up in the Daytona Beach area. “You've got to stop Sam Bell because he's gonna want to impose a state income tax,” which of course, you can't do because it's prohibited in the Constitution. At any rate, that man beat him by just a few votes. So, Sam Bell was not gonna be there to be the speaker. Sam Bell was supposed to be '90 to '92. Then, somebody else '92 to '94 and we would be '94 to '96, but as it happened, without Sam Bell, the man who was hoping to do at '92 now was running for '90 and he got everybody around to support him because it became a free for all. So, we all supported him and that was TK Wetherell and he ultimately became the President of FSU, but TK Wetherell was the speaker and now that moved us up to '92 to '94. So 1990, TK Wetherell became speaker and then '92 to '94, Bo Johnson and I were Speaker and Speaker Pro Tempore. That was a wonderful experience. First of all, I was included in all of the discussions that were going on, on anything, whether I liked it or not because he did have a lot of issues, North Florida type issues, that he was more concerned about than I, but I wanted to know what was going on and for the most part I was included. He allowed me to have the experience of presiding quite often. So, I really had a wonderful, wonderful time. A wonderful colleague from a small town in the north of Florida, named George Crady, became a specialist and expert on the rules. He took it upon himself to train everybody who was acting as speaker or speaker pro tempore, anybody who was gonna be in the chair a lot to know the rules. So, he lectured me and he guided me and he was always there if I needed help with, “how do I handle this?,” but it's essential that you know the rules. If you know the rules of procedure, you can do a lot of good and that applies, by the way, for any kind of a meeting, any kind of an organization.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:11:01] I don't know, anything to do with hunting, guns, prisons. I mean, there are more issues that affect them there because they have more prisons. They have more hunters. These are more natural resource orientated things, more criminal justice orientated things, areas that I was not desirous of becoming a specialist. As I said to you earlier, that these people were specialist or generalists. I was a generalist, but I soon became more knowledgeable about areas. Even though I wasn't a specialist with knowledge, I've made myself more knowledgeable, which was essential, but I made the speaker more interested in things that he had not been involved with. We were both interested in education. That transcends everything. We were both interested in healthcare. That transcends, although it's a different scene from South Florida to North Florida, but we got involved in a lot of other things because of
my interests in them too.

DAN ROYLES: [02:12:15] What makes the healthcare concern different by region?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:12:20] The fact that we have a lot more...I mean they have rural hospitals. We have hospitals fighting with each other for turf right in the same vicinity. I mean, there are differences of that kind, but that's an important aspect of it, how you look at the certificate of need legislation, for example, which legislature has tossed out for a lot of healthcare related things. So I mean, that's one of the kinds if issues you might look at. You also have different staffing problems, different hiring problems and different arenas.

DAN ROYLES: [02:13:09] How are you doing?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: What do you mean?

DAN ROYLES: [02:13:12] Like in the interview?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:13:13] I'm fine.

DAN ROYLES: Okay, because we can break, or are we going?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: I'm fine.

DAN ROYLES: Okay.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Do you still have tape? You still have?

DAN ROYLES: Yeah, I think we probably have about an hour and a half of battery left. Although, we might not wanna. What time is it? Do you know what time it is?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: There's a clock on the wall over there. Do you see it? Pretty close.

DAN ROYLES: That's four-thirty.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: It's about four-thirty.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah four-thirty.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Okay it's fine.

DAN ROYLES: [02:13:50] Okay, so let's talk about some of the major legislation then.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Why don't you look at that list then?
DAN ROYLES: Okay. For this, I mean you've mentioned the free trade zone bill, the International Banking Act...

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Those were areas that you wouldn't have expected me to be involved in, right? Where do I come to have international banking?

DAN ROYLES: I mean, Miami has a lot of money flowing in and out of it right?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:14:28] Well, I captured the international banking activity for the southeastern United States that almost went to Georgia, I captured that for us. Georgia adopted its legislation in 1975. In December of 1975, the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce hosted a mission, a bicentennial mission to South America to Caracas and to Bogota. The head of the delegation was Governor Reubin Askew, who at that point had never been out of the United States. This was his first overseas trip as Governor, but the real active head of the mission was the Mayor of Miami, Maurice Ferré. It was a mission for men only. However, my husband, as a lawyer on Brickell Avenue at the time, had a client who was in an Edge Act bank. Edge Act banks are subsidiaries of major American banks, like Bank of America has an Edge Act. They were resident here, but they were only certain functions that they could perform and this person from Bank of America happened to be talking to him on a date in December and said, “I was supposed to go on this greater Miami Chamber of Commerce mission that's leaving whatever day and I can't go at the last minute. Can you take my place, I've already paid for it.” At that time, I was in Orlando for a year, meeting of a Juvenile Justice organization of something that I was part of, that I had been appointed to as a Legislator and no cell phones. I got back to my room late and I got a message from my husband, “call home.” So he says, “how are you doing? I'm doing fine. When are you coming back?”, he says. I said, “well, I'll come back tomorrow night.” He says, “too bad you can't go with me.” Tells me about this trip to Bogota and Caracas. I said, “why can't I go with you?” He says, “well, you'd have to be here. The plane leaves at 3, etc etc.” As I said, originally it was men only. They had some open seats on the plane and they said, “well, if you want to bring your wife or significant other as long as they occupy the same room in the hotel with you, because we don't have more rooms, you can take somebody who's female.” So I said, “I will make my presentation at this meeting tomorrow morning, I will leave, I will fly back to Miami, my car is at the airport.” He said, “we have to get some kind of vaccination in order to go.” “Okay, I'll pass the Dade County Health Department. I'll get my vaccination and I'll run home and I'll change the stuff in my suitcase and I'll meet you at the plane.” Whatever it was, must have been four or five o'clock, but anyway, I was able to do all that including getting the shot that I needed. I came home. I wrote a note to my parents because they had been coming over to sleep at the house. Phillip was home so they were coming over to be with my kids when they ate dinner or something. Bottom line, I got to the airport. The last person and they had a special area for them and as I'm running down the concourse with my little cart, this is before you had wheelies. There everyone was applauding because I was gonna make it on time. However, once I got there, if they had a Senator, George Firestone, going with them on official delegation visits, like to the president's office or to the mayor's office, whatever it was, they had to take me because I was a house member of equal stature. So suddenly, I was part of this official delegation. They said, quote, “when you're sitting at lunch with the camara de
commercial, the chamber of commerce members from Caracas, talk to them about coming to Florida to do business with us.” Okay, the man I was sitting next to at the chamber of commerce louche spoke no English. I spoke very little Spanish, but we got on fine and I was able to ask him, “you’re a banker. If we change the law so that you can do business in our country, will you change the law so we can do business in your country?” He said, “yes.” Anyway, I came back. It was a wonderful trip. I had a great experience. I came back and I found out that Georgia had recently passed it’s own international banking act, but they had not yet opened up to any companies to be able to file to come in to do business under it. So, I had some people that I knew who had told me about the Israel discount bank and some other banks that were operating sort of undercover, not really open because they could only service their own customers from abroad. I told some people to please call whoever they know in international banks in the world and tell them that Florida was going to have an international banking active and it will be much better for them to locate in Georgia because we are the hub. Everybody is coming to Miami from all over South and Central America. Everybody knows that, right? And if you wanna come from Europe, you wanna come to Miami to get to South and Central America. I ran into a buzzsaw in the Commerce Committee, in the subcommittee on banking because Tom Gallagher, who was the only Republican member from Dade County, I mean a House member Chair of that subcommittee, and he said he wanted to have some of the bankers from Miami contact him. I didn’t have any connection to those bankers and there was really no reason. He was trying to, I don't know, he might have been trying to impress somebody, but at any rate, once he sort of put a lid on it, the people who had said they would vote for my bill looked at me and said, “I won't do it.” So, I let the bill in effect die in that subcommittee because otherwise, it would've been killed. It’s better to pull back on a bill and not have it die by votes. Then, I tried to find out what the problem was and I found out that there were some people from the Florida Bankers’ Association who didn't want international bankers. However, there were some other people who desperately wanted. So, I did my homework and the next year we were able to pass the bill through the subcommittee, the full committee and ultimately in spite of some games being played in the Senate side, it was the House version that passed first, so it became the House bill, which meant that I got there and something then happened. It was due to go into effect on January 1st of 1978 and we got a call from Claude Pepper in Washington that there was a bill that somebody was bringing before the House Rules Committee in Washington. That, if passed by Congress, would have put a lid on any new areas to be able to do international banking. *coughs* Sorry.

DAN ROYLES: [02:23:48] No worries.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:23:56] I went to Washington with Gerald Lewis, who was our controller [in the] State of Florida and had the banking division under his department. We went to Claude Pepper’s office and we sat there while Claude Pepper went down the list and called members of his committee and said, “John, when we have the committee meeting this afternoon, I need you to vote no on so and so's proposal, it would knock out Florida's international banking.” He actually called whatever number of people he needed until he had whatever he needed, and he says, “okay, we're set.” That afternoon, when they met, they killed that guy’s bill and that didn't block us. In that January 1st, 1978, the International Banking Act
went into effect. According to the people at FIU who would teach about this, it's, I think, a $4 billion economic activity in the State of Florida annually. So, I'm proud of that one. We also did a bill to create free trade zones in Florida. I don't know where the other ones are, but we wanted to have at least one here in Miami. That means that people can import stuff, do something on it, and export it without paying any taxes or any duties or anything else on it. So, it's good for Florida business, good for Dade County. So, that was an area that I had never ever been involved with before, but because of that trip to Caracas and Bogota, that was how that happened.

DAN ROYLES: [02:25:49] Serendipitous.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:25:51] Serendipitous. Now, the Chamber of Commerce would never, ever consider doing an event and say, “only men could come.” Can you believe that? It was 1975.

DAN ROYLES: [02:26:06] Yeah. What other legislation are you especially proud of?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: I'm very proud of so very many of them. If you take the piece that was put together when I ran for Congress in 2000...as people talk, you wanna meet a candidate who does something different, so this shows one-hundred pieces of legislation is how Elaine Bloom gets things done.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:26:38] If you talk about healthcare...and there were fourteen things and there were another ten under, thirteen under crime and under women's rights, five areas. Environmental had another ten, education, senior citizen, government reform, the arts, children and families, economic development. So, there were several areas that I was specifically invested in because of where I come from. There is no question that the whole arena of healthcare and senior citizens was very important to me because of coming from Miami. There was no question that the environment was important to me because we are in a fragile environment. There was, again, there was no question whether transportation issues. I chaired the, forgot what it was called, the Intermodal Transportation. I wrote the bill that created a whole transportation plan for Florida, literally. We still don't have what we need, but that was one of the areas I was involved with. When it came time to repair the MacArthur Causeway at Fifth Street, there was a giant transportation bill covering all kinds of other projects and we were not in it. I practically stood on the table and said, “I won't move from here until you put my project in,” and they put my project in with something like $100,000 for a planning grant. Once I had that money and I knew it, go in, and that's how we got to have the expanded Miami, the causeway between Miami and Miami Beach. Those were the kind of things I knew how to do. We talked about economic development, that was obviously very important to me. That's where the banking thing comes into the arts, significant in every respect to me, personally. Tourism, how could I not be the person? I was the leader of the tourism caucus. Those were the kind things that I had to be involved with. As I said before, I was a generalist so it was okay. I learned about each new
area as I needed to.

DAN ROYLES: [02:29:14] So was healthcare a concern just because Dade County has such a large senior population?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:29:18] Well, I told you about the time that TK Weatherall became the Speaker of the House two years early. It was my turn to be called in for my talk with the Speaker and he would tell me what committee he would give me to chair. Because I was a senior member, there was no question I would have some kind of a good committee to chair. I come in expecting that he would appoint me to chair education. I had always been on education. He says, “Elaine, you’re gonna chair healthcare.” I said, “what do I know about healthcare?” He said, “you’re smart, you’ll learn.” I said, “why me?” He said, “Lois Frankel expects to be the chair,” he said, “she was a trial lawyer. If I appointed her, the Florida Medical Association would cause a revolution, have a trial lawyer handling it.” So, I understood what he was saying and I said, “very well, I’ll learn as much as I can, as fast as I can.” Lawton Chiles had just been elected governor and I talked with some people and they said to me, “if you want to get to Lawton Chiles about an issue, the best way you could do it is to talk to his wife, Rhea.” I said, “that sounds very good,” and I met with Rhea and I said, “I'm now the chair of healthcare and there were certain things we need to do,” and I outlined some of them. She said, “I'll talk with Lawton,” and he had some things that he was very interested in because he had been in the US senate. He had worked on a lot of major issues, including healthcare, but he was interested in maternal and child health, so I had to bring him into another area. We actually created an opportunity for Florida to have its own healthcare plan. This is just unbelievable, the senate was able to pass the bill that we put together and I missed by two votes. There was somebody, who was an ophthalmologist, who I knew and we wanted to create a plan and there was a definition of our primary care doctor. The dermatologist managed to get considered as primary care because of something on your skin, you know, with your skin. Well, similarly if it's your eye, you now it's your eye. Well, we couldn't keep on doing everybody's different exception, so we had to say no to the ophthalmologist. He, therefore, held on to the supporters that he had. We were shy two votes. So, that's how we didn't get a total healthcare plan for Florida, which would have been an insurance plan that anyone who had not been insured for a full year before could now apply for. That was remarkable. I had done meetings all over the state the prior year and we know what needed to be in the healthcare plan. We really had done an excellent job. Another bill that we did pass [was] what we call CHPAs, Community Health Purchasing Alliances. So, if you had fifty employees or less, one to fifty, you could buy your health insurance from an alliance where insurers would offer policies for small groups, but they would in effect, band together. So, you might have five companies who offer a policy, and you have two employees, you have three people, three people to be insured. But if you’re grouped together with somebody who has forty employees, and somebody who has twenty-two, and somebody who's single and you are able to buy it at the same rate, that would save you a lot of money, and will also be good for the companies. We created this, we had these CHPAs, Community Health Purchasing Alliance Boards in every one of the health districts, and they worked. As soon as Jeb Bush came in as the Governor, the insurance companies managed to get him to help them kill them off, but you probably hear
people talking even now about if you could band together small employees. Well, they talk about that, but this we had and it was the Bush year to kill it just because his brother had killed it in Texas. So, am I proud of that? You bet. It was a very good thing. I mentioned smoking before. I think that's...even though it's not one of my one-hundred big ones on this sheet, it's a biggie. I think it's made a huge difference in the way people's lives are lived now. Unfortunately, there's still people who smoke more than they want to and it's very hard for them to get off it, but you don't have smoking the way you used to have it. You couldn't escape from smoke, and now, you could live your life pretty much in a smoke-free environment.

DAN ROYLES: [02:35:21] When you talk about being a generalist and learning about all of these different areas of governance, what do you think it was that prepared you to do that? Because that's obviously not how every legislator operates.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:35:45] I think a lot of Legislators do operate that way because you're thrown into a situation where you're gonna have to make decisions about what kinds of things that you really know little about. So, you either know who's lead to follow and that's a very good thing to know who you trust. You figure out fairly quickly who knows what they're talking about and who you tend to agree with. Then, if you don't know something about an issue, you'll take their word for it, but I would say that they probably are still...I don't know what the actual percentage is of lawyers, for example. When I served, it was generally one-third of the Legislators were lawyers, which is not a large percent. Lawyers tend to be better prepared for this job. Lawyers tend to be very articulate about the issues that they know about, but as you see, more and more average people getting elected. They know that's changing too and I suppose that's all for the good. One of the areas that I was very dedicated too, and only had a few little successes, had to do with guns, for example. At one point, and I'm not quite sure whether it was 1987 or 1988, the law preventing somebody from carrying a gun openly expired. Somehow, rather, it had an expiration date and it expired October 1. We had to quickly do something and there was a movement at that time to have gun licensure tied in to your being a resident. That's what the bill had included so that in order to pass this bill, that would now get us out of having people carrying their guns openly. I mean, just think of it, people walking around with a holster. It turned out that this would have been a problem for some specific people. Who are the some specific people? The Israeli Consulate because Israel has its own diplomatic people who are here, and they have their own guards. They don't hire somebody who's not a trained Israeli, that makes sense, but they don't have them stay here more than six months. They rotate them, they send them home, back to their country. If you have to be a resident for at least six months before you can have a license to carry a gun, that would interfere with that process. So, we had to now have some exception and guess who was sent to the person, the woman representing the NRA, to negotiate this issue with her? Me. She was very difficult to negotiate with, very difficult, no matter what it was. She's still there. She's still their lobbyist, Marian Hammer, but I had a few good people on my side obviously, helping me, and we finally got that done. After Columbine, I tried to do something else relating to guns. It was very difficult, but finally, I got a bill passed that included language that said a judge in the juvenile court could sentence somebody who had been involved in some juvenile kind of offense to watching, being an observer at a county-based hospital where they would have to watch gunshot victims
brought in for care. It was, believe it or not, hard to pass that but it did finally pass and it was just a way of saying that you wanna get some of these young punks who think that guns are good to see what it really looks like. We failed so badly with gun control when Dade County voted its own gun control bills. The State Legislature voted to co-op the local government's ability to do anything like that, and that's what they've done on several other issues too. So, that's someplace where I feel very badly that we haven't been able to do more. I just hope that through some miracle, things change and we're able to stop things like the sale of assault weapons, stop things like people being able to buy guns without any checking on them. The gun show loophole is just as stupid as can be. Even private sales, I think need to be, people need to be able to, if they have a gun, they need to be able to be checked. So, that's one of my failures that we didn't make more progress there.

DAN ROYLES: [02:42:18] Were there other challenges that stand out in your mind from that time in Tallahassee?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: The challenges?

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:42:47] Oh yes, well, as I watch what's happening with education and the attempts to take more and more money away from public education and give it to schools, they're trying to reduce the amount of oversight that these county school boards have even on the charter schools, which have become super powerful now. There's actually a constitutional amendment that would take away, kinda control of the charges goes, just stupid in my mind. Yes, sometimes you have to say that something's stupid. There are a lot of issues, as people very often ask me, do I wish I were back there? I said the answer is, “I wish I had the power to do what I was able to do twenty years ago,” but right now, you can't do it anyway because the Legislature, the way it's constituted, it's a whole different ball game.

DAN ROYLES: [02:43:34] How?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: There's a different party in control and they do things a whole lot differently from the people that are I was used to working with.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:43:45] Also the fact that, as I said, the House limits members on the number of bills they can file and how they can affect change. As many bills as I used to take issues from my bills, if they were already gonna pay us and I take specific parts out of it and amend it to somebody else's bill, which would make it better, some other area. As good as I was in doing that, my late great colleague, John Cosgrove, used to do it even more. He was a good lawyer and he figured out how to do these things all the time. I had some really excellent, colleagues I was very proud of, so very many of them, regardless of party.
HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Well, I mentioned John Cosgrove, and they were, but there were a lot of other people who were, who I watched. I actually served with Bill Nelson my first two years he was there. He was there for the full years that I was there and then I guess he ran for Congress. He was super, super bright, super capable. He still is. He's doing a good job in the Senate, the US Senate.

Dr. Royles: [02:45:10] Anything else you wanna say about the time in Tallahassee?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:45:16] I was, I'm a very lucky person. It was like a dream position. I'm very, very grateful to the wonderful people of my district who kept on electing me and backed me up on so very many of the issues. I'm extremely fortunate to have had the experience that I had. I grew up at a time when women couldn't do things and managed to emerge as a young-ish person at the right time just when women were starting to do things. I was a leader, if you will, of the women's movement because I believed that women have as much capability as men. I mean, individual people have to be judged on their own individual capabilities, obviously, but the fact that women were not able to do things means that we were, the world was short-changed all these years. So, I'm very optimistic as I see more women coming into the process and I hope lots of them win their offices this year. I think women do tend to approach things somewhat differently than some men, maybe all men generalize, but I have seen in my own experience that women tend to be more open to a lot of new things. Some women, maybe there were some that don't, but I've seen a lot of women able to take on challenges that they had never had anticipated and handle them well. So, I'm very encouraged by the fact that more and more women are coming into the system. When you think about it that I started out, almost forty-four years ago, that's amazing. Could I have done it if I were not married to Philip? Probably not, because my husband was an incredible human being, very, very smart and very, very caring and always encouraged me. He felt that I had talent and he wanted me to use it. I felt that he had talent and I wanted him to use his talent. So, he was a great judge. People always asked did I get advice from him and I said, “I don't tell him how to rule and he doesn't tell me how to legislate.” But the answer really is, that I would ask him questions about different aspects of law and various occasions, different things. They would be changes that were made in a law because of things that he would tell me, that I would learn about. Not necessarily bills, but little changes, amendments that I was able to put in different places, give you a very quick example. There was a case that came before him that I asked about more details where a woman worked as a saleswoman in a dress shop in a very fancy, elegant boutique in Bal Harbour Shops and she got a better paying job in another company's dress shop. The first company sued her under a covenant not to compete. We were talking about it, and I said, “even if she has customers, they're not buying because she's the saleswoman, they're buying because they like the dress.” So, they'll go from one place to the other, maybe they'll try something out, but that shouldn't...she's only the saleswoman. She's not the manufacturer. She is not the store owner. She doesn't make a huge profit on it. So, I went to one of the committee staff, that handled bills like this. I said, “do we have anything like this?” So I wrote into the law that affected covenants not to compete, something that made it easier to
eliminate that for people who are at the low end of the scale, rather than at the high end of the scale. I mean, I can understand it if you're selling wood planks and you're going to another place that sells wood planks, but if you're selling something that's totally different, you know it's not...you shouldn't do that. So, that was an example of where, because I questioned him about a case that he was before him, I learned something. Did this happen often? No, but it was interesting and just another evidence of how symbiotic it was. I wasn't the only woman who was married to a judge, by the way. There was at least one other person during my time there and we both had the same similar experiences.

DAN ROYLES: [02:50:59] But he was also quite a-

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Larger than life…

DAN ROYLES: Large figure…

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:51:04] Larger than life. He was known for his seven thirty in the morning calendar calls and he didn't leave his office at night until he saw what was on the calendar for him. He would go through the cases and he knew what was coming up. So, when somebody would come before them, he knew what to question and people enjoyed the way that he handled that to such an extent that today people walk up to me and tell me that they miss him and they missed being in his courtroom because it was interesting and exciting. If you wanted to watch a show, there he was, and he was funny, he was. He could make things very cheerful, and happy, and he was a wonderful human being. He created something that's living on after him too. He was elected in 1984 and in summer of 1985 he created something called the Summer Intern Program and he invited the law firms, the big law firms, all had several interns, small law firms usually didn't, but he welcomed summer interns to a program that he designed and he would have phenomenal speakers, like Janet Reno and major judges. He would have somebody make a presentation on how to present evidence, somebody make a presentation on some other aspect of trial work because he felt that his young law students were not exposed to what goes on in courtrooms. You can go to law school for three years and never know what a courtroom is like. So, he did this in order to expose them to the real courtroom and also have them hear from major people in the community. Once in a while, I would be a Speaker on...do you know who your Legislator is? Talk to them about changing the law if they see something wrong with it. Anyway, that program, he became so popular that he would do it three or four times a summer. He retired from the bench in 2003 and he then became part of a law firm of counsel. That law firm picked it up and ran it with some other people and with the judges, first in the East Circuit Court and then ultimately in the Federal Court. I recently ran into somebody who told me that he made a presentation before it, and Judge Huck quoted him in Federal Court this past Summer, so this past July. So, it's still alive and I would say that there were thousands of young lawyers out there who were exposed to the courtroom because of Phillip's work and he loved it. He loved teaching. He never taught at FIU because he had retired by the time FIU is open, but he did teach at University of Miami School of Law. I think it was Wednesday morning, it's seven thirty in the morning, a litigation skills program for an hour, and students gave them really…I would read the reviews and they were terrific so he...and he loved
teaching. He did teach at FIU when I was working there back in 1974 as member there part time and then the full time administrator of the Institute for Women. He, Chuck Perry, was then the President of the university, and he asked Phillip to teach a course on commercial law to business people, business students I suppose. Something there. So, he did have an FIU connection right from the start and obviously, I worked with every president of FIU from Chuck Perry on.

DAN ROYLES: [02:55:28] Was he, meaning Philip, was he different in private versus public? Because sometimes people who have a very outgoing person, larger than life person. Some of them are a little bit different in their private lives.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:55:46] No, well, you might have not known it from looking at him, but when we were homeowners, he loved cultivating his rose bushes. I mean, he...he...yes, he...there were certain things that you wouldn't have expected that were part of his life. So, he was a little bit different, but he was a very, very kind person. He didn't have an easy time of it. He worked hard as a youngster. He excelled from high school on. He was a leader. This was what we put together for his 60th birthday. Let me find...and it has his pictures. Little boy, 1938, graduating from law school in '54, with his mother in fifty. *shows Dr. Royles photo* That's him as a 4-year-old, but what I wanted to tell you is that he was, do we have that picture here? He was the chief justice of their student court in high school. They, knowing when students got into trouble, they had to come before the student court and the student court would give them a sentence of something. The story he loved to tell was a friend of him said, “listen, sentence me to stay in school and do my work because otherwise, I have to go to my father's store,” and have to do work that he didn’t like doing. At any rate, the kid that this was affecting was not doing well in school, but because he was sentenced to stay after school and do whatever you had to do if you were held back after school, he finished all of his schoolwork. He graduated and he went to college and he had a big career which he later on, got in touch with folk to say, “I wouldn't have done this if not for you.” So, there is no mention of his being the chief justice of the student court. It's that it was always a given in his mind that someday he would be a judge. He didn't tell me that, but that was really what he expected. Then, when he decided that he wanted to become a judge, he had to run for the office, and it was a big job but he did it 1984.

DAN ROYLES: [02:58:40] And at that point that's kind of interesting because he expected to be a judge. You didn't expect to be a Legislator, but when it came to time for him to run for judge you were the experienced candidate.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:58:54] Mm-hm, and he would have told you that the reason he got elected was because I called people that I knew in North Dade, I called people who were in South Dade. It was. I made all the contacts all over and even though I was out of the legislature at the time, but people remembered me kindly. It was a giant job to run county wide. You need to respect anybody who does it. It's an enormous county and it's a difficult job to run county wide, but he loved the experience of running and when the campaign was over and he won, where are we going today? He was quite a guy.
DAN ROYLES: [02:59:39] You also, I'm sure, knew how to run a campaign, you had worked on other people's campaigns, you had worked on your own campaigns.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [02:59:47] Yes, the answer is to a certain extent, yes, but it's so different. I worked on people's campaigns making sure that the volunteers who came into the office knew what they were doing and had assignments and did work. Whatever it was, whether it was addressing envelopes because in the old days, that's what you had to do as volunteers, or going out in the community and ringing doorbells, but you had to give something to hand out. I didn't have the knowledge of how to structure a campaign. I was very lucky to have some wonderful people helping me along the way. One of whom is no longer with us, but he was really terrific and that was Bob Levy, who was a lobbyist in Tallahassee for many, many years. After that, a very good guy, he helped a lot of organizations free, no charge, because he felt an obligation to be of help. He was a decorated Vietnam war veteran still with shrapnel in his body and as a matter of fact, there's one of the bricks in the courtyard of the capitol. The old capitol sits across of the new capitol. So, he has people of certain rank, he is one of the people memorialized there, but he helped veterans, including somebody like Larry Hawkins who was in a wheelchair free of charge, because he sort of felt that they had taken the bullet that he didn't. He was a very good guy, but he was a very bright guy. So, he knew how to structure campaigns. There were quite a few people who worked on my campaigns over the years that I really have great respect for. It's not easy. And it's very different from what we do today. Everything is totally different. Campaigning today is totally tied to the Internet and even with all the mailings and the giant postcards that keep coming in the mail, it's very different. So I have respect for that too.

DAN ROYLES: [03:02:20] Was it different...You talked about a countywide campaign versus a district campaign. Is a Legislative campaign different from a campaign for judge?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:02:38] The answer is yes and no. It's different in that a candidate for judge cannot tell you how they feel about issues. So, you don't talk about...no, I'm gonna fight for gun control. The last thing you can say is how you're gonna vote on something if it comes before you, but you just had to get somebody to believe that you're a good person and with a good background and capability, and will do the job. So, it's hard, and it's an enormous county and as big and occupied as it was thirty years ago when Philip ran thirty-four years ago. It's even more densely populated now and more ground to cover. So, my hats off to anybody who does it. It's tough. The hardest part about about campaigning probably for me was asking people for money.

DAN ROYLES: Mm-hm.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:03:42] When you're asking people for an organization that's a “do-good” organization, they're doing something that's gonna benefit some kind of population, or the earth, or the environment, or whatever it might be. When you're asking them to invest in your campaign saying, “help me, believe in me, help me get to this office,” it's a lot tougher, so hats off to everybody who does it.
DAN ROYLES: [03:04:13] And so sometimes I saw a couple issues of that, or examples of that, in the papers. So, this is something that you had used to communicate with constituents? *points at flyer of Hon. Philip Bloom*

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:04:26] This was done for a birthday party.

DAN ROYLES: [03:04:29] Right.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:04:31] But the constituent, this was done for a campaign, “Keep our Elaine Bloom in Tallahassee,” and this was a piece that was put together by some very talented people. You know, they talked about voting for me because of all these wonderful things that I did. It had pictures with some of my colleagues. All kinds of tourism, our number one industry, government efficiency, families, build the record and tells you about the things that I did. But then, you have another piece that I don't see. Underneath there. *points to pile of documents on the table*

DAN ROYLES: [03:05:28] This one? *points to one of the documents*

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: The one at the bottom.

DAN ROYLES: This one? *points to another document* The update.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:05:33] Yes. Now, this is something that we used to send out as a legislative update and the legislature. Now this is, the House, actually paid to print it, to give you a report to your constituents. Beginning to talk about building stronger marriages, I created the task force on marriage and the family unit to try to help people stay together, for better or worse. I require people who are getting a marriage license to show that they've had at least three hours, I think, of education on what the laws are that affect children and families in Florida. You can have a judge waive it and give you permission to get the license without waiting and without showing it. This is instead of the blood test, that's what we have in Florida and believe it or not, my ultra conservative Christian groups loved my bill, very supportive. This was education, here I went to a White House breakfast to discuss children's health care and other issues relevant to Florida. In 1994, December of '94, I was at the White House for their annual, one of the annual Christmas parties, and Bill Clinton put his arm on my shoulder and said to everybody who would listen, “I only hope I can pass here in Washington what Elaine already has been doing for children in Florida,” because we actually started what became the Children Health Insurance Program...yeah.

DAN ROYLES: [03:07:33] Do you wanna talk about that?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:07:35] No, that was notable. I was chairing health care. We started that project which lead to....what do we call it here? It's CHIP nationally...Children's Health Insurance Program, KidCare, Florida KidCare. So, it was something that we started, but it
evolved into a big, big, big program.

DAN ROYLES: Which they were able to implement?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Yeah.

DAN ROYLES: [03:08:04] Nationally? Did they use Florida as a model for that, or?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: No, actually Ted Kennedy was able to use Massachusetts more as a model, which is okay. I was invited to be part of Hillary's original healthcare team, but that was the session of '93 when I would've been Speaker Pro Tempore, so I didn't wanna leave Washington.

DAN ROYLES: Right.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:08:38] I mean, I didn't leave Tallahassee to go to Washington for those meetings. So, I was not part of that, but that was also an exciting opportunity. So look, I am a very lucky woman, that's what I keep on saying. I had incredible opportunities, I came along at the right time in history and I just hope that I've passed on enough opportunities to the people who are following me.

DAN ROYLES: [03:09:10] Can we talk about the 2000 election?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Sure.

DAN ROYLES: Okay, tell me about the decision to run for the House of Representatives.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:09:21] Well, I mentioned that the unfortunate turn of events for term limits and everybody suddenly who had served eight years by 2000 was out. I had thought about running for a Senate seat, but somebody did a poll and found out from the poll that I could beat Clay Shaw, so somebody came from EMILY's List. They said that they had done this poll and this is these results, we will help you. I was one of the original people who helped fund the original EMILY's List process, so I knew it was great opportunity. There was something that I definitely saw as a strong possibility and we will never know exactly what happened. I had been told towards the end of the campaign that the Diaz de la Protea brothers were running an absentee ballot program in Palm Beach county, which would mean that they had people who were taking absentee ballots to maybe facilities like nursing homes, or other places and getting people to sign. All I know is that it was an incredible experience, so incredible. I was thought to be in such a good position that at the Democratic National Convention that year, I was given the opportunity to speak as part of the flock of people who were running for the House. The Senator who became the senator of New Jersey, God, I forgot his name...he made a lot of money in the stock market. Then, he was governor, I think, of New Jersey.
DAN ROYLES: [03:11:53] Not Lautenberg?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: No, but-

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:11:56] At any rate, he was the senator candidate who was presented the first day of the Democratic National Convention and I was first house member, in fact, while some wonderful group of young men were singing the Star Spangled Banner, the first Star Spangled Banner. Then, first, I met a clergyman, then the Star Spangled Banner and then I was supposed to speak, and I started to tear up. This nice man gave me his handkerchief and the only person who ever said to me, “I saw you were crying,” was my husband. Remember, he couldn't be there, he could only watch it on television because he was a judge. He was never able to be in any of my elective activities. He was able to go to Washington with me-

DAN ROYLES: [03:13:02] Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: ...because that wasn't political, but he couldn't go to any convention. He couldn't go to any events for my campaign. It was tough.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah, I'll bet.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:13:15] Yeah, at any rate, it was a really incredible experience, and the campaign itself was an enormous task...was from Lincoln Road to Jupiter, a large amount of territory. I used to say some day the people who will follow me into this will have a STOL, short take off and landing backpack. That they can go up and go across, like in the Jetsons.

DAN ROYLES: [03:13:54] Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:13:56] But it was a wonderful experience. It was very difficult, but it was wonderful. At the end, on election day, there were so many strange things. One precinct in Broward County, because we rode around and shook hands with people outside the mine in a lot of areas. So, one area I went to, somebody came out and she said, “I live in this district and I went in there to vote for you and it had somebody else’s name on it.” They mixed up precincts. The ballots were in the wrong place. A woman who was running in Palm Beach County, she went to vote for herself in her own precinct, and she had a wrong ballot. So, it was a lot of problems all over the place. When she couldn't vote for herself in her own precinct, of course it was the wrong ballot. She had a different ballot. She had my ballot. It was just lots of problems all over on election day and, as a matter of fact, we had all these stories collected. We had people ready to testify because you had to chronicle all of this. Then, with what happened at the national level, I said to everybody, “don't worry about me. Just work on the presidential campaign, Al Gore.” Something happened though that you will not believe. Election day was Tuesday. I went home after one-thirty in the morning and having been on all the TV stations, “big winner,” went to sleep and my husband got up at six o'clock. He called my brother in Long
Island and said, “I just wanted you to know, I'm sorry to wake you, but I wanted you to know that Elaine won.” He said, “no, I just went online and it doesn't look that way.” So that's when we checked and found out that after two o'clock, they had found all these ballots in somebody's drawer in the elections division. That was when Al Gore had to rescind his concession and I had been warned by Louise Morris' wife, Mandy Morris. She had said to me, “watch out for the absentee ballots.” I said, “what are you talking about?” and she said, “you'll see.” Well, I didn't know what to look for and what to say to anybody, but apparently, that was their special talent. Those absentee ballots were never evaluated as to whether they were legitimate or not. The people's signatures, it's tough, but that's what determined the course of history because that was how Al Gore lost. When Clay Shaw left his headquarters, at wherever he was celebrating with his people, we happened to be watching, whatever time it was, it was after midnight, quite a bit after midnight and we were watching the TV. Clay Shaw, saying goodnight, and the interviewer says, “but you're down x number of votes.” He says, “that's okay, they haven't counted the absentee ballots yet,” and we all looked at each other and said, “I wonder what he means?” So he left his gathering at a time when he was losing, which no one would usually leave and went home because he knew that they hadn't counted the absentee ballots. So, that was sort of like a proof, after the fact, that something had gone on. When I ran into Clay Shaw a few years later, at a restaurant downtown, he said something to me like, “you really beat me, you know?” or something like that. I said, “but what I was also gonna tell you is that during the last weeks of the campaign, when things got very, very ugly, big pharma began an ad buy, huge ad buy, showing ‘Elaine Bloom makes all people choose between food and medicine.’” I had been on the board of the start up generic drug manufacturing company name located in Broward County. At one point, it was the largest non-governmental employer in Broward County and what did generic drugs do? They bring down the cost of drugs. Well, they were trying to make big pharma, or whatever it's called, pharma had done this ad buy and they were saying that because of me, old people had to choose between food and medicine, while I was making all this money, which of course, I wasn't. I actually loaned myself a huge amount of, for me, several hundred thousand dollars, in order to have some kind of an answer to this, but it was a small buy compared to what was going on and it was troubling. At some point of that time, I felt twinges in my chest. I'd had a mammogram, so I knew I was okay, but on the Friday after election day, I went to see my doctor, just in case. He said, “there's a cyst there. I'll try to remove what's in it.” He couldn't. He said, “I'm sending you to a doctor who's gonna have a thinner needle.” I went that next Monday and it was determined that I had breast cancer. So, I said “not to worry, I'll do whatever has to be done,” and I had the surgery on November 30th. Then people said, ”well, you're lucky you didn't go to Washington.” I said, “no, if had have been able to, I would've taken my chemotherapy Monday mornings and still taken the plane to Washington, don't worry.” That's what I had going on then, but I still think of the campaign as a wonderful experience even with all of that because I came this close. When I went with Phillip to a college reunion up at Columbia afterwards, they had one of their history professors, was the scholar in residence, and he said, “you're the footnote in history.” So I said, “thanks.” It's okay, and that's... it's okay. I tried my best. It didn't happen, but I gave it my all and I know I did that. I was in a store at one point a few weeks later, but those days by this time we're carrying phones. The phone rings, and it was Al Gore. He just wanted to find out how I was doing, which I thought was very nice. We still didn't know what he was, it was still hanging yet. So, the whole history of
the United States and the world would have been different and I do believe that because if he had read the President's daily briefing of August 6th, 2001, he would have not have ignored the fact that it said that there were these people who were taking flying lessons in different places. The only thing that's unusual is they don't wanna learn how to land. Are you aware of that?

DAN ROYLES: [03:23:09] Yes, I have heard of it, yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: Yeah, that was, one of the FBI people had reported that. Al Gore would have taken note of that and understood it.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: So, that's the history.

DAN ROYLES: Yeah.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:23:22] However, having said all that, I was able to do a whole lot of other things in the intervening years since then. Then in March of 2015, I got this incredible call from somebody I knew, who said to me that his board of the Plaza Health Network wanted to offer me the position of being the President and CEO because of my knowledge of the healthcare industry and my commitment to senior citizens and people with health issues. At that point, you know Philip was not doing great as a Parkinson's patient, and I ask him what he thought. He said, “do it. I want you to do it.” I said, “well, you won't be able to complain if I have to leave for work.” He says, “don't worry. I'll never complain,” and to his credit he never complained when I left for work. I had a wonderful person taking care of him during the day. Of course, I had to care for him at night and it was very good for me because it gave me an opportunity to get out of my own problems and handle somebody else's. I'm very, very grateful for this opportunity to be of further help to the community, the community I love.

DAN ROYLES: [03:24:51] Well, we covered a lot, more than I thought we might be able to cover today, but if you think about having a legacy or how you want people, or think people will remember you, what do you think about?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:25:19] It's a strange question, but you know, having lost Philip in January, it's almost seven months now. I know how his legacy still hovers around me continuously. I hope that my legacy is that I showed people how you can care about issues and you can get involved in issues and you can make a difference in things. I hope that I made a difference. I hope I made a significant difference in people's lives and in the future of Florida. I have wonderful children. My daughter Ann, my son David, and their husbands...and I have grandsons, terrific, wonderful grandsons. Dawson, who’s nineteen and about to be a Sophomore in college, and Donovan, who's fifteen and about to be a Sophomore in high school. My daughter has a grandchild so that makes me a great-grandmother, and Freya is a year and a half. You know, you live on through your children, grandchildren, but I hope that with all the things that I was privileged to be part of, I live on through some of my deeds as well. I have to
recognize that to some extent, that is true, I hope it's to a big extent.

DAN ROYLES: [03:27:30] Is there anything else that you want to say, that you didn't get to?

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: [03:27:32] If you look through this, these items, *points at documents on the table* and see some more things that you want to talk about, for example, when I got this international fine arts honorary doctorate, you'll see some of the things that were written by people, from the Attorney General and the Governor and members of the Legislature and the school board. I mean, just different people. So, that'll give you some ideas too, I suppose, and I'm available if you wanna continue this discussion.

DAN ROYLES: [03:28:07] Sure. Well, thank you very much for this discussion.

HON. ELAINE BLOOM: No, it's been my pleasure.

DAN ROYLES: [03:28:12] It's been mine too.