



TRANSCRIPT

Interview: The Millikens
June 6, 2006
Traverse City, Michigan

This interview with William and Helen Milliken was recorded for the public television special: "The Millikens." This is a transcript of the complete interview as conducted by Senior Capitol Correspondent and WKAR host Tim Skubick.

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TIM SKUBICK: Governor, your book suggests that you are very private person. In light of that, why did you agree to have a book written about your life?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I'm not sure that I entirely agree with the book that I'm a very private person. I supposed to some extent I am, but at any rate, I'd had several people over the recent years suggest doing that and I had kind of put it off. But, finally, when Dave Dempsey, a person that I admire greatly, suggested that and said that he would like to do it, I finally accepted.

TIM SKUBICK: Why did you put it off? Was there a hesitancy to open up your life to everybody so they could see?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No, no hesitancy that I know, it just unfolded that way and I'm quite satisfied that the timing was, was quite good.

TIM SKUBICK: When you set the book down, after you finish reading it, what did you want to rewrite?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I didn't want to rewrite anything, really. I felt that Dave Dempsey had done quite a remarkable job of research. He visited all the major libraries in the state, the university libraries, most of the morgues of the newspapers to get background information. He interviewed, I think literally, hundreds of people and I, having put the book down, as you say, at the end, I felt he had done a very credible and very honest job. As you may have noticed, the book is not entirely complimentary. In some sections, he was rather critical. But, I think the fact that he was objective in that way, gives the book a credibility that otherwise might not have had.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you do the project because you were concerned about the Milliken legacy, that you wanted something on the record as to what happened during your fabulous career?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No, that would not be the reason that I finally agreed to do the job. I think, essentially, I felt that I had served as governor for 14 years in Michigan, longer than anyone had served. And that that was part of the historical record of Michigan and I was pleased that someone of the stature and of the ability and the scholarship of Dave Dempsey could do that, to really record that era in Michigan history. Not only the record about me, but about the times in which I served.

TIM SKUBICK: How did you know in the 9th grade, that you wanted to go into elective office? You could concede that's unusual?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think it is an accurate statement, however, for some strange reason. My father had been active in political life. My grandfather, years and years ago, served in the Michigan Senate and I think I grew up with an interest in issues and public life and in politics. I remember, we used to sit around the table at dinner on Washington Street in Traverse City where I lived and the current topics of the day were constantly being discussed. And it was a natural evolution of an interest on my part.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you ever consider anything else besides this?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Frankly, in those early years I did not. My mother always wanted me to be a diplomat and she wanted me to go into the foreign service and she said, if I ever went into politics, she wanted me to be a statesman and not a politician, in the popular sense of that day. But, no, I think I always wanted that.

TIM SKUBICK: What did you learn from your mom and dad?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Many things. From my father I learned a sense of integrity. He was a very open, very fair, very honest person who said what he thought and would not dream of dissembling in any way. And I learned from an early age, I think the difference between right and wrong and I constantly, over my political years, even up to the present time, refer back to him in my own thinking and I'm grateful to him for what he did. My mother was quite a remarkable person. She was very intelligent, very well educated, extremely well read and had very definite feelings about the issues of the day. She belonged to an organization called The Women's League for Peace and Freedom. And all of her life, she believed that war was wrong and she sought to help be a factor and an influence in achieving peace for our country. So, I learned many things. They were wonderful parents. And I was fortunate to have had them.

TIM SKUBICK: You were quoted in the book as saying, "maybe I received more attention than was good for me, from my mom." I found that an unusual statement. What does that mean?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, it is a little bit difficult for me to talk about that, but my mother tended to dote on me and favor me and I felt that I wasn't sure in the end that that was really good for me. But, she adored...

TIM SKUBICK: Why would it be bad?

GOV. MILLIKEN: ...all of her children. Her daughter and her other son and me, but for some reason, she was quite attached to me.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, isn't that a positive thing. Why would you say that that maybe was not good for you? I mean would you have

GOV. MILLIKEN: Perhaps it was at the expense of the attention give my siblings. But I don't know and I really made that statement off the cuff.

TIM SKUBICK: But you stand by it, do you not?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I stand by it.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you think that organized religion, to a large extent, is hypocritical?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I don't think so. I think it is not hypocritical to those who believe deeply in it and practice it and attend church regularly and I respect them for it. In my own instance, organized religion has not been what I have sought and what I have felt I needed. To me, religion is an intensely personal thing and how one then handles that is up to that individual himself. And I have viewed religion from that perspective.

TIM SKUBICK: You would concede that many awful things have been done in the name of religion?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Oh yes, most certainly.

TIM SKUBICK: Hence, the genesis of my hypocritical question.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yes. I think in the name of religion, over the centuries, over human history, many terrible things have been done. But that does not make religion and what it stands for in the Bible itself horrible or wrong, it depends upon individual interpretations and individual need for the strength and the wisdom that religion can give.

TIM SKUBICK: Given what your mother felt about peace, how did she feel when you went off to war?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Oh, I think both my mother and father were distressed as every parent was during those days when millions of young men and women went off to war in World War II. I remember when my mother and father came to see me the last few days I had before I left for overseas, came to Topeka, Kansas. My wife came at the same time and it was a very disturbing and distressing time and they were, they were upset. And I was upset to leave them.

TIM SKUBICK: She gave you a Bible.

GOV. MILLIKEN: She did. She gave me a small Bible, a pocket Bible which I carried with me on almost every mission I flew with the 15th Air Force over Europe in the bomber and I carried with it and found sometimes great, great solace in reading a psalm or two before going over the target.

TIM SKUBICK: Where did you keep the Bible?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Right here.

TIM SKUBICK: Next to your heart.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yup.

TIM SKUBICK: It obviously worked.

GOV. MILLIKEN: It did. It helped.

TIM SKUBICK: You were shot down how many times?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well I wasn't exactly shot down, but my plane went down on a number of occasions. We lost in the course of our missions, three of our bombers that we had to abandon, once when we had to bail out of the plane and other times when we were shot up so badly that we couldn't return to our base in southern Italy. But, I survived and every member of my crew survived, even though in the course of those missions five of us were wounded at various times.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you ever think you would not survive?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Oh, yes. There were many times when the going was so difficult and so uncertain that we, none of us knew if we were going to survive another day. But we all did.

TIM SKUBICK: What did you extrapolate from that experience that you then brought back to your life here?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think one of the things that I learned from that experience was to understand and accept the idea of the beauty of life, the preciousness of life and that having survived those 50 missions, that I had an obligation to try to improve the world in which I lived and that was a force and a factor which has carried throughout my life. The preciousness of life and how sometimes we take it for granted and how we don't accept that life can be beautiful. And life is beautiful if we make it that way.

TIM SKUBICK: That war story is a great story for you, isn't it? You got a lot out of that.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I did, I did. And I think all of us did, all of my crew, all of us did.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you think the average citizen has a deep appreciation for the personal family sacrifice that a politician has to go through in order to be successful?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Before I answer that question, and referring again to the war, I think that during World War II, the entire country was involved in the sacrifice that had to be made in order to achieve the goals of defeating the tyranny of Germany and the horror of war. But today, we are not being called upon to sacrifice. We go on and live our lives, we sometimes we are oblivious of the fact that young men and women are in Iraq today and they are dying and we don't seem to understand or accept that fact. We are not called upon to sacrifice personally. The president calls for tax cuts for all of us and not for sacrifice to pay the taxes that that war is costing. And so, I think there is something morally and ethically wrong as we cope with this very difficult and this very tragic war in which we now are engaged.

TIM SKUBICK: We should not have been there in the first place?

GOV. MILLIKEN: We should not have been there in the first place in my judgment.

TIM SKUBICK: The argument was we were trying to give them democracy. Something you fought for in World War II.

GOV. MILLIKEN: But we haven't yet achieved that noble goal for them. And I think it's regrettable that we got into the war and now we are paying a horrible price in the deaths of our young men and women and the thousands of people, Iraqis, men, women and children who have died in this war. And I'm not sure for what, but now we are there and I do believe that now we must stay until we can avoid what otherwise is inevitable: a civil war.

TIM SKUBICK: Is this a Vietnam waiting to happen or has it happened?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think it has the elements of a Vietnam, but it depends now, of course, on the outcome and how quickly we can extricate ourselves from that war. But, it's a tragic war.

TIM SKUBICK: Alright, back to the question on the sacrifice that political families make. Does the typical citizen understand the depth of those sacrifices?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think probably not, I look back on my political career starting with the state senate and then Lieutenant Governor and then finally Governor, and I realize, and I've realized since I left office and even before I did, that my family had to pay a terrible price. That I was not there when, as I look back, I should have been there. And it's something that I have regretted all of these years: that I did not have the opportunity or take the opportunity to spend the time with my family, that I wish now that I had.

TIM SKUBICK: But isn't it true that if you are going to be successful at the level that you aspired to that almost by definition you have to do that.

GOV. MILLIKEN: It is a terribly demanding profession. It demands unlimited hours every day. I'm not trying to suggest that it's a sacrifice sometimes that is not worth making, because it enables one to make important contributions and to contribute to the betterment of society. But that it demands sacrifice within one's family, there is no question of that.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you always have the feeling that I've got to do that one more event, because if I don't, it could cost me reelection? I mean, was your mindset such as that, because a lot of politicians say that.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I would say in all candor that it was not quite that. I was not prepared to say I've got to do this one more event or I'm going to be defeated politically. Sometimes one can't and mustn't pay that kind of a price. Because if you pay that kind of a price, it means you're cutting corners, it means that you're willing to do anything to achieve election or reelection. And that's one of the problems that we encounter in our public life today as we observe politicians. That they are so many and so often willing to pay whatever price in terms of sacrificing their principles and their convictions for the sake of being elected or reelected.

TIM SKUBICK: What are the three traits that a successful governor needs?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I suppose one of them has to be endurance. It is a physically and mentally demanding kind of a profession. One of the other important qualities that I think an elected public official must have in order to be successful is a willingness to expend political capital for the sake of achieving a goal which is in the public interest, to pay the price politically. And if a politician is not willing to pay that price, is not willing to say, "This is something I will not, I will not compromise on", then that politician is not worthy of his or her salt.

TIM SKUBICK: What you're saying is that they need to take a stand on stuff they believe in and not worry about reelection?

GOV. MILLIKEN: That is correct. That is not to say that they foolishly ignore the demands and the requirements of an election or a reelection. But it is to say there must be a line which is drawn when a political figure is willing to say, this above all, I will be true to myself. And I will be true to the people who have sent me here and in the case of Michigan, to my Michigan. And if one is not willing to pay that price, then that person does not deserve to be in public life and too often today, we see political figures who are willing to pay that price and to compromise when they should not.

TIM SKUBICK: Could I ask for the third one? Endurance, spending political capital and a third to be successful as governor.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I think to be successful as governor, one has to be willing to pay the price of studying and understanding the issues. To be willing to do the scholarship and the training and the exercise in understanding what is at issue and what the requirement is to be the master of a subject. That is not to say that one can master every subject, but to do the homework. Those three elements are essential, in my opinion for success.

TIM SKUBICK: How does the current governor stack up on those three issues?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, no one of us is perfect, I would say. And the current governor has encountered some of the most difficult and complex problems that any governor has faced, at least in my memory. She has been willing to speak out and to espouse principles and ideas and issues that she feels are important for this state. I've not always agreed with her, but I think she has tried very hard to do a good job. I would hope that this governor or any governor and this is narrowing it down to a single issue, would be willing to recognize that as governor, a governor has enormous power, enormous authority to, in the broadest sense, to do good. I, during the time that I was governor, I recognized that the governor was the court of last resort to try to correct some of the inequities of our judicial system. And I tried in the course of my 14 years to recognize that some people in prison deserved to have their sentences commuted and to be freed. Some persons in prisons needed to receive pardons. A governor has the authority to study the background of a person and to take steps like that. I would hope and would have hoped, that Governor Granholm recognizing the enormous power that she has to correct mistakes or inequities would have exercised that authority more than she has.

TIM SKUBICK: She just recently had an example with regard to some female inmates, which she did not move on.

GOV. MILLIKEN: That's correct.

TIM SKUBICK: You were aware of that?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I'm aware of it and I have urged her to review each and every one of those records of about 14 individuals, women, and to, in the interest of justice and fairness, to recognize that, at least, some of them ought to have their sentences commuted and ought to be freed from prison. But she has been reluctant to do that.

TIM SKUBICK: But that decision, governor, is made in the context of a public which is crying to have something done about crime. This governor is running for reelection. Is it not a political risk to make that decision?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Life as governor is filled with political risks. And to the extent that a governor is willing, for the sake of principle, to take those risks, then it is important that those risks be taken and there comes a time when one has to say, "Politics be damned. I will do the right thing and I will do it now." So...

TIM SKUBICK: Have you told her that?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yes. I have talked with her on several occasions about individuals and the principle of using the power of commutation and I recognize those are difficult decisions, but only a governor can make them.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you think John Engler deliberately left a state deficit, knowing that when he left office, the chances that a Democrat would be coming in to kind of make it difficult for that Democrat? I know that's a very far-fetched thing, but you know John Engler as well as I do, do you not?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I know him very well.

TIM SKUBICK: And is he beyond doing something like that?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think John Engler did not deliberately leave Michigan in a state of heavy debt and deficits, but the fact is that when he left office, that was the inevitable result of the state of the economy and some of the policies that he followed. One of the goals of John Engler, and it had its political side as well, was to cut taxes. And he repeatedly attempted to cut taxes and the result was that when he ended his term with the taxes having been cut and other policy decisions made, the inevitable result was a state that was in a heavy condition of deficit. But was it a deliberate thing on his part? No, I don't think so.

TIM SKUBICK: Is this current governor in jeopardy of losing her reelection bid?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think it's a tough election that's coming up. The race has tightened in the last four or five months. It started out with the current governor in a heavy state of polls showing that she was doing extremely well and now it is tightening down as we are what, five or six months away from the election. I think it will be a difficult election for her. But, of course, she is a very articulate person. She is a very charismatic person. And she has fought many tough battles to try to keep this state going. She did not create the heavy unemployment that we have in Michigan. The automobile industry has been the major factor in that situation.

TIM SKUBICK: But it has been on her watch.

GOV. MILLIKEN: But it has been on her watch and it will be a political factor that she will have to contend with. But, who knows how this election will turn out.

TIM SKUBICK: Can somebody buy an election?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well I think that has been done around the country. We see a number of people in the U.S. Senate, we see a number of people in the governorships who have spent enormous amounts of money. It is one of the great threats in my opinion to our democratic system, the cost of elections today in the United States and in Michigan.

Someone told me the other day that, I think it was, Rick Robinson of the campaign finance reform group, that this election could add up to a total of about \$100 million. It is just inconceivable that that can be the case. Where does the money come from? Essentially, the money comes from special interests. People who have an ax to grind, who want once an individual is elected through the support of special interests to be able to go to that individual and exact a price.

TIM SKUBICK: What if it's their own personal wealth that they are using?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, we have that situation, of course, in Michigan today the Republican opponent of Jennifer Granholm has spent in excess of \$5 million of his own money, which is one of the major factors, I think, in his moving up in the polls, because he has been able to reach out to people. I think that we need to examine how we conduct elections in this country and the cost of elections and to do something about it. And one of the things that I've advocated for a long time is that we have, at least, at least, partial public funding of elections, so that the candidate for a political office is not totally dependent on special interests to buy the way in to an elected position.

TIM SKUBICK: Paint for me a picture of your Michigan under a DeVos administration?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Right now, it is too soon to know. I'm going to be meeting with Mr. DeVos in the coming weeks and we've set up an appointment and I'm going to be discussing with him some of the things that I think are particularly important in this election. But, it's too soon for me to know or to project into the future, what a DeVos administration would look like. But I intend to find out, I hope to find out and I hope to be able to say to him as I will to the governor, some of the things that I think are very important in this current election and I am hoping to say to Mr. DeVos that I hope that he will give a great deal of thought to the environment in Michigan. And the importance of preserving and protecting our environment, our water, our air and that he will genuinely advance causes and issues that will advance the cause of our environment. I hope, also, to convince him that Detroit is important to Michigan. I had a very close working relationship, as you know, with the mayor of Detroit when I was governor, Mayor Coleman Young. We started off on not a very safe ground and congenial ground.

TIM SKUBICK: It was rocky, governor.

GOV. MILLIKEN: It was quite rocky and you know it, because you were there. But, I genuinely felt at the time that what happened in Detroit had a major bearing on what was happening in Michigan. And that if Detroit were to go down, then Michigan would be also in line to go down. The two were inextricably tied together. And gradually, I think he began to realize that I was genuine about my conviction and my concern. And I gradually recognized that this man had a genuine commitment to his city, that he had qualities of intelligence and commitment that I highly respected and we, as time went on, began to work closely together, trust each other, work together and I think it ended up in the interests of Michigan and of Detroit that we did.

TIM SKUBICK: But current candidate for governor, Mr. DeVos and Ms. Granholm, if they cozy up too much to Detroit, they lose out state support and they could lose the election, governor.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, we come back to the same old idea that one has to express one's convictions, be willing to go to bat for them, be willing to take political chances for them and let the chips fall where they will. But, the future of this state is dependent upon a city of Detroit and our other major cities and the rest of the state and unless we accept that very basic fundamental fact, we will not have built honestly and openly and effectively with the problems that still plague us.

TIM SKUBICK: You have concerns about a DeVos candidacy?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I do in one sense. I think he has prior to his decision to run for governor, he has reflected some points of view that do not represent my own points of view. But so far...

TIM SKUBICK: Such as, could you share one?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I think his view of private education and his ideas about freedom of choice. Those issues have troubled me. I'd like to see on his part and I think we may very well see it, a commitment as well, to public education. But that remains to be seen. One of the things that concern me right now is that both parties, both candidates, seem to be talking about doing away with the single business tax which has been a source of great contention over a number of years.

TIM SKUBICK: Created under your watch.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Created under my watch. One of the reasons that we created the single business tax was that we had a conglomeration of taxes that tended to fall unequally across the business spectrum. And the attempt was to try to simplify it and to try to see if we could have a single tax that would fall equally and fairly on business. Well, in the meantime, certain inequities have crept in and I would acknowledge the need to withdraw that tax. But, everybody is saying, let's do away with the single business tax. Therefore, we do away with almost \$2 billion of revenue for the state, but no one, up to this point, is willing to say, how shall we replace it, what part of it shall we replace, if not all, or shall we replace all of that tax? And when you begin to think about the public services that are supplied by the revenue from that tax, that is a very fundamental question that ought to be asked.

TIM SKUBICK: Do the two candidates for governor have an obligation to the voters of this state to declare how they are going to replace that revenue before the election?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think it's highly desirable that they do that. But, at the very least, if they are not prepared to say in detail how the tax should be replaced, I would like to hear them say, I will replace that tax entirely, the full \$2 billion or I will cut taxes by reducing

the replacement say to a billion and three-quarters or whatever, whatever the ratio is. I think they are obligated to say that. But, to glide through the election without some further clarification, everybody says do away with the tax. But I'm more interested right now, are you going to do away with the whole tax or part of it and in what detail?

TIM SKUBICK: And not to give the people that information would be politically wrong.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think it would be. The question of total replacement or partial replacement, that would be politically wrong. I acknowledge that it is a very difficult thing and many voices need to be heard and both political parties need to be a part of it as to what that replacement tax burden shall be. But, that's difficult and that may have to wait.

TIM SKUBICK: If you were the CEO of a Michigan company today, would you be thinking about creating jobs in China and India?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, of course, that has happened a good deal, not only within Michigan companies, but across the entire country. That's a major problem that we confront in our country today. And...

TIM SKUBICK: Would you be going over there?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I don't know.

TIM SKUBICK: Why the pause there?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Because, of course, the companies are competing, they are in a life and death situation. And if they find that some components can be produced in another country at a much lower price, they may feel that that is an element of survival for them and for their companies that still remain here. But I would hope that we don't see more and more of that.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, is Mr. DeVos getting a bum rap from the Democrats on establishing a beachhead in China which he says helped to actually create jobs back in Michigan?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I don't know all of the details of that. But he may be getting a bum rap, yeah.

TIM SKUBICK: Well he said it created 300 jobs back in Michigan.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

TIM SKUBICK: That resonates with you.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I understand it. I understand it.

TIM SKUBICK: A couple of issues: unicameral legislature.

GOV. MILLIKEN: [laughs] Strange that you should mention that. I've just, in the last week, been contacted by people who are attempting to achieve a unicameral legislature for Michigan. I haven't talked with them yet. I don't know precisely how they plan to go about it. But my experience and my judgment would be that it will be a very difficult goal to achieve, however, desirable it might be.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you believe it is?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I don't know that, there is much to be said for checks and balances.

TIM SKUBICK: With all due respect, you've been waffling on this issue for 30 years, sir. I can remember asking you this years ago, come on, can I try to pin you down? If you have to vote on it today, how would you vote?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I would probably vote for it, but I would acknowledge that in the objective the goal that it is an almost impossible goal. And that we can spin our wheels endlessly to that end.

TIM SKUBICK: What do we gain by eliminating the state senate?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Or the state house for that matter. Well, the argument is, we save money, but that's one of the least of the reasons for it. We, perhaps, gain a more understandable legislative body, so far as the public is concerned. But, my father used to be in favor of the unicameral legislature years and years ago and he acknowledged then, as his son does today, that it is almost impossible to achieve that.

TIM SKUBICK: Why?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, first of all, you have so many vested interests in the current system. And it is unlikely that we'll see any change in that.

TIM SKUBICK: Would you concede if it got on the ballot, the people in Michigan would vote yea?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think the chances are they might.

TIM SKUBICK: Just like they did on term limits?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Uh-huh. And speaking of term limits, that was one of the major mistakes this state has made in a long, long time. It was a terrible mistake in my opinion. It meant that we lost and we continue to lose some of the ablest legislators we have, both senators and representatives, we lose the institutional memory that is so critically important. We lose, I think back to my own experience in the Michigan legislature, some

of the ablest people, some of the individuals who made the greatest contributions to Michigan were those who had been there for long periods of time, had developed the knowledge and the background and the experience and were able to serve the interests of Michigan so well. And then all of a sudden, term limits come along and we lose the value of that experience.

TIM SKUBICK: People wanted new blood.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, they can get new blood. We have the best term limits system going, which is simply election time, with no term limits, no arbitrary statement that the term must end on this particular date. Let the people decide.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, but the people who support term limits say, governor, it's tough to unseat an incumbent.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, it's not impossible to unseat an incumbent and we have seen that from time to time, many times. Well, during the time I served, there were plenty of incumbents who were unseated by the people, by the people who decided they had had enough.

TIM SKUBICK: So if you could, you would eliminate the term limit law?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I most certainly would.

TIM SKUBICK: Would you expand it as a compromise?

GOV. MILLIKEN: As a compromise, if it became necessary I would expand it, definitely. But I would eliminate it if it were possible to do so.

TIM SKUBICK: Ban on gay marriage.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think that is a terrible idea. Only in the last few days has the president appeared in the Rose Garden calling for a constitutional amendment to ban gay marriages. It was largely a political ploy. There is no chance, whatever, that it is going to happen, at least in my judgment. And I think that it is a terrible mistake to amend the United States Constitution to achieve that. We have so many more important issues to deal with in this country than to try to achieve a constitutional amendment to that end.

TIM SKUBICK: But the supporters of the amendment say marriage is under attack and this is one way to protect it.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I don't happen to believe that.

TIM SKUBICK: They're wrong?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think so, in my book. And to take a constitutional amendment route is totally wrong.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, what about doing it at a state level? Would that be okay?

GOV. MILLIKEN: That's certainly preferable to a U.S. constitutional amendment. But I don't think that is the way to go.

TIM SKUBICK: You did vote no on that then here in Michigan?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I absolutely did.

TIM SKUBICK: When you were governor, you supported "parochiaid", which was state aid to religious schools?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Uh-huh.

TIM SKUBICK: Does that mean you support vouchers?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No.

TIM SKUBICK: What's the difference?

GOV. MILLIKEN: There is not much difference now and I think probably if I were looking back, I would not have taken that initial route.

TIM SKUBICK: You were wrong?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Uh-huh. I've been wrong, you know.

TIM SKUBICK: Well at the time, you were accused in a very close election with Sander Levin in 1970 of taking that stance on "parochiaid" in order to court the Catholic vote. Do you plead guilty to that?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No.

TIM SKUBICK: Did the thought...

GOV. MILLIKEN: I felt at the time it was a justifiable approach to take. But I think that increasingly I have come to recognize the value of public school system in this country and in this state and the importance of properly funding it. And sometimes if we go the other route, we tend to undermine our public education system, which is so vital to the entire country.

TIM SKUBICK: You spoke passionately, however, about...

GOV. MILLIKEN: I did.

TIM SKUBICK: ...about the city of Detroit and there are parents in the city of Detroit who are not happy with the local school district. A voucher is a ticket out of that, perhaps to a better education. Doesn't that resonate with you?

GOV. MILLIKEN: It does resonate with me, but the answer to that is adequately to fund and to administer public schools over the longer period. And I hope that can be done.

TIM SKUBICK: But in the short term, the parents say, look, my kid in four years is going to graduate, I can't afford to wait that long, governor.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I understand that. And we are not going to change it over night.

TIM SKUBICK: Does this state need a tax increase?

GOV. MILLIKEN: [laughs] Well, I'm not advocating that we have a tax increase at the moment, but I think we need to recognize that we have had tax cuts at the expense of the funding of many public services, including education. I think education at the higher education level, the secondary education level, is the most critical function and responsibility of government today and we are not meeting our responsibilities. We are not preparing our young people for the world in which they live today.

TIM SKUBICK: You chuckled after the tax increasing, you said not today. How about tomorrow?

GOV. MILLIKEN: [laughs] We have developed an obsession and our political leaders have developed an obsession to cut taxes and sometimes to cut taxes at the expense of vital public services, including public health, including public education. And I think we have to be very wary of continuing to do that. It is politically popular to do that, I recognize it. But the politically popular thing is not always the right thing.

TIM SKUBICK: Isn't this one of those classic incidents that you spoke about earlier about standing up and doing what you think is right and set the political consequences aside?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: Nobody is doing that.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Oh, I wouldn't say no one.

TIM SKUBICK: Name two people that are calling for a tax hike?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I'm talking about in general the willingness of individuals to stand up to be counted. And there are plenty of very outstanding and fine elected public servants today.

TIM SKUBICK: Is the out-state Michigan attitude towards Detroit better, worse or the same then when you were in office?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think probably it's better. But, it is not good enough. There is still a tendency in certain corridors to use Detroit as a whipping boy. This age-old battle between Detroit and out-state Michigan, just like Chicago and downstate Illinois or New York City and upstate New York, it is an age-old battle that goes on. And we ought to stop it.

TIM SKUBICK: Racism is alive and well in out-state Michigan, isn't it?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I can see some improvement in race relations and feelings about race in out-state Michigan. When I served in the state senate, there was a rather strong racial feeling. I remember the Traverse City Country Club, for example. There was an enormous rock at the entrance to that club way back so many years ago. And it said, painted on the rock, gentiles only. An appalling thing, but all of that's gone and fortunately. I think people are more open today about race, more understanding, but by no means have we resolved all of our problems.

TIM SKUBICK: We have the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative on the ballot this fall. It grieves you, does it not?

GOV. MILLIKEN: It does. It does. We are spending all of that time fighting the battles, so-called battle of affirmative action at a time when we are increasingly a diverse state and a diverse country. And we're rehashing that. I think that's wrong and I am going to be speaking out quite frequently during the course of this effort to try to defeat the effort to ban affirmative action, for example, at the University of Michigan.

TIM SKUBICK: Speak to the people though that support it? The white people who believe, in their hearts, that they've been discriminated against because of these laws.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Sure I know. I know some of them.

TIM SKUBICK: You can see that they have been discriminated against.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I can understand some of their concerns, but what we need to understand is that unless we have the kind of affirmative action programs which the University of Michigan has adopted in its law school and its undergraduate schools, we aren't going to have the diversity that we need to, in the end, strengthen our state and enrich our state and improve our state. And it's turning the clock back if we should vote for that ban in this coming election. I think it is wrong and I'm against it.

TIM SKUBICK: Has your party exploited the race issue for political gain?

GOV. MILLIKEN: It certainly did during the Nixon era, when that was a deliberate attempt to, as you had phrased it, to exploit the race issue nationwide. And the party paid a price and justifiably paid a price.

TIM SKUBICK: Has it occurred since then?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Not to the extent that it had, but I would certainly suggest that in some measure that motivation for exploitation still exists across the country.

TIM SKUBICK: Didn't your former friend, the senior President Bush, play the race card in the Dukakis campaign with the Willie Horton add?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: That was wrong?

GOV. MILLIKEN: And that was wrong.

TIM SKUBICK: Is that one of the reasons why you and he are no longer friends? Is that a fair statement?

GOV. MILLIKEN: There are a number of factors. We haven't been in touch in recent years. He had, I recall in the course of that campaign and talked about the ACLU and he accused Governor Dukakis of being a card carrying member of the ACLU.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you still have your card, governor?

GOV. MILLIKEN: And I still have my card and I publicly stated that I felt the ACLU was one of the great organizations in this country fighting for civil rights, civil liberties and I publicly made the statement which appeared in the paper that I totally disagreed with George Bush. And that tended to alienate our relationship.

TIM SKUBICK: That would be an understatement wouldn't it? I mean you've never heard from him since then, have you?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Oh yes, I have.

TIM SKUBICK: You have.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Uh-huh, uh-huh, several times.

TIM SKUBICK: Under what circumstances? Does he call on your birthday or...?

GOV. MILLIKEN: He has called me and written me a couple of times. I'm not going in to all of the details of it, but no, we have not totally, had not totally cut off ties. But, it certainly cooled our relations.

TIM SKUBICK: Alright, I have a clip from a program that we did at the Executive Residence in 1976 in which we talked about your Republican party and where you felt it needed to go. Let's take a look at that now and then I'd like to have you respond to that after we look at it.

TIM SKUBICK: Alright, obviously, governor, in that tape you talked about the party broadening its base, including minorities, on a scale of one to 10, 10 being good, one being 0, how is your party doing?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think our party has a way to go still. What I said then, and I have just heard that tape for the first time in many years, I think that statement was right on target. Any political party needs to be a broad based party, any political party needs to eschew appealing to racist instincts in people. Any part needs to try to have a full umbrella representative of the entire country. And to the extent my party has not done that, I think it is wrong and what I said then was correct. And I stand by it.

TIM SKUBICK: The party has not improved since 1976 in your mind in that area?

GOV. MILLIKEN: It has some distance to go, but in some directions it has improved, it has broadened its base, it has sought to achieve support in various parts of the country which formerly it had written off. But I think it still has a distance to go.

TIM SKUBICK: The Democrats have played the race card on occasion too.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Oh, yes, sure they have.

TIM SKUBICK: Coleman Young did, did he not?

GOV. MILLIKEN: In a different kind of a way, yes he did. He played the race card in the city of Detroit, because he was defending himself from the kind of racial attacks that he had been subjected to all of his life.

TIM SKUBICK: Was that okay for...

GOV. MILLIKEN: And he was fighting back.

TIM SKUBICK: Was that okay for him to do that?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I don't think if he tried to play the white racial card that that was correct. But I don't think he really did that. He was defending his city and defending the kind of heritage that he had been a part of.

TIM SKUBICK: Before we call in the First Lady, I want you to take me back to the Kellogg Center, where you and Mr. Young... Why are you smiling? You know where I'm going with this?

GOV. MILLIKEN: One thing I've learned about you, Tim, is that you never ask provocative questions.

TIM SKUBICK: I try not to. Kellogg Center, you and the mayor of Detroit ensconced in a room in the back where you wouldn't let us in and it got very testy in there, but out of that meeting came the Detroit equity package. Take me back there, into that room with the two of you.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, that was, of course, many years ago and I was seeking ways where the state responsibly and effectively could be helpful to the city in its dire moments. And it had to be the kind of assistance that could be justified to the rest of the state and would be a material assistance to the city and to help it out of what, where the city was going was downhill rapidly. So, we met at the Kellogg Center and I should say in other meetings and constantly attempted to hammer out the kind of a program that could responsibly be given or made available to Detroit and the kind of a program that I could sell to the legislature.

TIM SKUBICK: Why was it so testy though?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Because we couldn't, many times we simply didn't agree on some of the points, some of the principles that we were articulating. My relationship with Coleman Young was always hard hitting, always candid, always honest.

TIM SKUBICK: And salty.

GOV. MILLIKEN: And salty.

TIM SKUBICK: He swore at you.

GOV. MILLIKEN: And I... Well, I can't say that I swore at him

TIM SKUBICK: Governor, did you swear back at Coleman Young?

GOV. MILLIKEN: But, we had some very tough moments over all of those years, but in the end, we always ended up respecting each other. And that's the way it developed for the so-called equity package for the city of Detroit. Out of it came a package which I promoted to the legislature, which I was able effectively to sell to the legislature and which was of material benefit to the city of Detroit.

TIM SKUBICK: Which your party has systematically dismantled.

GOV. MILLIKEN: The party has not provided the kind of sensitivity and understanding and support for the city of Detroit that I would like to see it. That's one of the things that I hope to be talking with the Republican candidate for governor about, when I meet with him. And it's one of the things that I continue to talk with the governor of Michigan, the current governor.

TIM SKUBICK: Who are you going to vote for?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I haven't made a decision, we are six months away.

TIM SKUBICK: Are you are leaning?

GOV. MILLIKEN: And it may be and very possibly I may not endorse anyone.

TIM SKUBICK: Why would you sit it out?

GOV. MILLIKEN: [laughs] That remains to be seen, I want to see how this campaign unfolds. I want to see what positions on the key issues the Republican candidate for governor and the Democratic incumbent governor take as we move toward the showdown in the election in November.

TIM SKUBICK: As we did in this program years ago, we've invited next your wife to come in, so let's invite Mrs. Helen Milliken in to join our conversation.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Good.

TIM SKUBICK: Mrs. Milliken, isn't he wonderful?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Absolutely, Tim.

TIM SKUBICK: That's a quote from the book, tell me about that story.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Which story are you talking about?

TIM SKUBICK: His mother.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, oh, oh.

TIM SKUBICK: How soon they forget. Isn't that amazing, governor?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh yes, yes. He really, his mother did think he was wonderful. And that's lovely too, but it obviously poses its issues as the wonderful son.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, she said this to you.

MRS. MILLIKEN: I was no, no, no I'm just saying it. I'm just philosophizing, but we managed to get things together.

TIM SKUBICK: Why don't the two of you just admit that you are Democrats?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Are you? Oh, I guess we've both been accused of many things.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, that one's not too bad is it?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I was raised in a very strong Republican family and then I got into politics and then I became very involved in the feminist issues of the '60s and subsequently. And I like to think that I vote my issues now.

TIM SKUBICK: So you're not a Republican?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I wouldn't say that. I still believe in some of the tenants of the Republican Party, but I've diverged also from some of them.

GOV. MILLIKEN: And I think that reflects my own view. I have no intention of leaving my party, but I of late have disagreed with many of its approaches and many of its principles. But nevertheless, there are fundamental issues that I agree with the party on and I intend to stay in the party.

TIM SKUBICK: What are those core issues?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Shall I start?

TIM SKUBICK: Yes, if you wish. .

MRS. MILLIKEN: I disagree fundamentally and totally with the Iraq war, I think it was the wrong war and the wrong time and the wrong place. I feel this administration has been totally unsupportive of environmental issues. I think it's the worst record of any administration in my life, as far as the environment goes. It certainly has not been supportive of civil rights. There are some very strong feelings out there that this administration is really, in essence, weakening our constitution, trying to set aside some parts of it for their own political needs. I think it's also been very poor in terms of women's issues, reproductive health issues, specifically.

TIM SKUBICK: So with all due respect, why do you still call yourself a Republican?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Well, I think there are a lot of Republicans who are fighting for these issues. And I think that sometimes supersedes the political nomenclature.

TIM SKUBICK: Uh-huh. Well, wouldn't you feel more comfortable on the other side?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I have been asked that a lot, but for now, I'm just threading my way through, Tim.

TIM SKUBICK: Are you thinking about that?

MRS. MILLIKEN: [laughs]

TIM SKUBICK: I'm sorry to ask, but I have to.

MRS. MILLIKEN: I mean threading my way through the issues and whether intense partisanship is the answer to these issues. Or if it isn't, perhaps really looking at the issues and what we believe in and what our values are and following those.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Let me interject this thought. We need in our country, two strong responsible parties. And I've always felt that if I disagreed with a direction my party seemed to be moving in, that it was my responsibility and my need simply to speak out and say what I think. I think our party has, in one area, has really moved in the direction with which I totally disagree and that is in the whole area of civil liberties. We, as a party, must return to those solid principles which have been the bedrock of our party over all of these years. But, we have deviated and I feel an obligation to speak out. But we need two strong responsible parties and I want to do what I can to make my party that kind of an organization.

TIM SKUBICK: But with all due respect, governor, you've been preaching to the choir. Your party is not listening to you, is it?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No, not so, because during all of the time I served, for 14 years, and before that time the years of George Romney as governor, we in Michigan were a party, I felt a responsible party, a constructive, progressive, enlightened party and in many respects, we can still say that there are elements within our party that hold those convictions and those views.

TIM SKUBICK: Goodness gracious, I can count on two fingers moderate Republicans in the Michigan House of Representatives.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Count them then.

TIM SKUBICK: You want to name names? Representative Dick Ball, Representative John Stewart, can you name any more?

GOV. MILLIKEN: There are others that I think on various issues take the important points of view that I happen to agree with. But, I feel a responsibility to continue to push my party to stand for the things that I think it ought to stand for and to represent a responsible approach to the issues of the day.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you share his optimism about the Republican Party?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Of course she does.

MRS. MILLIKEN: That's a great quality, his optimism.

TIM SKUBICK: However...

MRS. MILLIKEN: And I have hope. I have hope. This democratic process is a very complicated and lengthy one. We are thrashing that through right now over in the Mid East. Just what are we standing for and what are we trying to accomplish? And wasn't it Winston Churchill said, "Democracy sometimes doesn't work, but it's the best system we've been able to come up with."

TIM SKUBICK: Uh-huh.

GOV. MILLIKEN: And one has to say that the Democratic Party has hardly been meeting head-on some of the important issues of our day. And it's time they looked inward and attempted to correct some of the faults that they have, which is an unwillingness to speak out about the war in many corridors and unwillingness to recognize the deficit for what it is. They participate in the creation of this enormous deficit. They profit from the wild expenditures that are going on and the money that flows back to the states, the pork barrel. Neither party is perfect. But my responsibility, as I see it, is to try to make my party stand for the things that I think are in the public interest and I'll keep fighting for it.

TIM SKUBICK: Mrs. Milliken, you're quoted in the book as saying when your husband announced that he was running for the state senate, you were surprised. Why were you surprised?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Somehow in the courtship and the subsequent years of starting a family, I missed that driving motivation of political instinct that was in...

TIM SKUBICK: So when he popped it on you, you said, honey what are you doing?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes, I did. [Laughs]

TIM SKUBICK: You were aware of the familial thing, were you not?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes, yes, I was. But, I just didn't assume that was the path that was laid out. It was a big surprise to me.

TIM SKUBICK: What did you think he was going to be?

MRS. MILLIKEN: And a huge learning experience. I had no idea of where he hoped this was leading. He was still involved in the family business, Milliken's Department Store

and fully occupied with that and earning a living for his family. And I was pretty much immersed in that world and it changed a whole lot over the years.

TIM SKUBICK: Were you surprised when she was surprised when you said, did you sit down at dinner one night and say, honey I'm running for the state senate?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No not totally. She, for example, had no idea before we were married of my flying experience in Europe. I, of course, wasn't able to write her and tell her about it, because that was censored. But it was only years afterward that she began to understand and so it was with political life. In the beginning, she did not have this sense of direction and of goal that I had. That was my fault no doubt.

TIM SKUBICK: Is that true?

MRS. MILLIKEN: He never talked about his war experiences in those early days. I think that's true of a lot of veterans who fought in the war. It was too recent and perhaps painful. So I heard a great deal more in the last 10 years than I heard in the first 50. And understand a lot more about it as a result.

TIM SKUBICK: How did you adapt to the political wife thing?

MRS. MILLIKEN: It was a large learning experience, Tim. It was a path that I had never even contemplated. And in retrospect, I was very fortunate. It was a great learning experience.

TIM SKUBICK: What was the toughest part?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, trying to decide what was important for you to do in this position. And in retrospect, you realize how much more you could have accomplished for the good things that you really believed in, just because of the political situation you were in.

GOV. MILLIKEN: It was a very good learning experience for her and one of the things I must say that she has never hesitated to speak her convictions. After those initial early years, she was willing to stand up and she was willing to say, this is what I believe and I'm willing to express what I believe, publicly, no matter what the risk. And there were plenty of risks.

TIM SKUBICK: You did take some time though in getting to that point.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: Ten years, wasn't it?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes, approximately. It was a gradual thing. It was serendipity I think. The times, Tim, the women's movement was born and flourishing in the '70's. We had a

daughter who was in law school in Ann Arbor and educating her mother and her father about the issues of discrimination in our society.

TIM SKUBICK: What did she tell you?

MRS. MILLIKEN: She said, mother, you could be doing something that would help a lot of women.

TIM SKUBICK: And your first response was?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I always remember that. And I thought, I'm not sure what she's saying, but I'm absorbing it. And I subsequently did learn what she was saying and understood a great deal about it. And marched for the women's movement issues, for the ERA in Washington and we had a great learning curve there.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, how did your daughter sensitize you to the female rights issue, governor?

GOV. MILLIKEN: In the same way. Her law school class, for example, at the University of Michigan, was almost totally men and she pointed that out very clearly and very vividly. But as we went along, when we had discussions and we often discussed this, she made it clear that women were not doing well in our society and that I as the governor, lieutenant governor first and then governor, could do so much to help move this along. And I learned that lesson well and I've been forever grateful to her.

TIM SKUBICK: It must have been scary for you to step into that political arena. You're exposed, you'd be shot at, people criticized you, said nasty things about you.

MRS. MILLIKEN: It was a great learning experience, Tim. First time I ever appeared on "Off the Record", I was really very nervous about it.

TIM SKUBICK: Why? Why?

MRS. MILLIKEN: [laughs]

TIM SKUBICK: Your husband told you what it was like?

MRS. MILLIKEN: You were a formidable figure in...

TIM SKUBICK: But as I recall, you were quite...

MRS. MILLIKEN: ...the reporter's world.

TIM SKUBICK: You spoke from the heart. That's why you were good at it, right?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I don't know, Tim, but you do learn that that's what matters.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think the first time I ever appeared on “Off the Record”, I vowed afterward never to go back on it.

TIM SKUBICK: And you probably told her that, right?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I think he probably did.

TIM SKUBICK: But you had to be nudged in. People around you had said, Mrs. Milliken, you need to do this. Right?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes, right.

TIM SKUBICK: And you finally listened to them.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Right, right and I had a mentor, Ellie Peterson who mentored many women of that era. And my good friend, Joyce, was another mentor...

TIM SKUBICK: This would be Joyce Braithwaite.

MRS. MILLIKEN: ...nudging me along. Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: And do you have any regrets about that?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, I'm very grateful, very grateful. Women need to mentor women, because we'd never been allowed in to some of those hallowed halls. And gradually progress is being made, but it is gradual.

TIM SKUBICK: What's your assessment of the current governor?

MRS. MILLIKEN: It's very high. I think it's marvelous she's the first woman governor of the state of Michigan. I think she's bright, she's well motivated, she's done an incredibly difficult job in incredibly difficult times. Situations she did not create that were already here in place.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you share the same concern as your husband expressed earlier in the interview about the dealing with the people who are behind prison bars?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Very much so, because I know the issue he's speaking of the women's clemency issues and I'm familiar with the group that has been trying to redress the inequities in the system that put those women in prison for life for offenses that now are no threat to society and those women need and deserve to be released.

TIM SKUBICK: Are you concerned that the governor is not reacting because of the politics of the issue?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Frankly, I'm afraid that is the basis of the issue, because I think she's a fair and educated person.

TIM SKUBICK: How do you think this race is going to play out?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I'm very surprised at the closeness of it and watching it very closely.

TIM SKUBICK: And what do you see?

MRS. MILLIKEN: And I see a close race.

TIM SKUBICK: Why are you smiling, governor?

GOV. MILLIKEN: [laughter] 'Cause it seems to me you asked me the same question before.

TIM SKUBICK: I want to see if there is a division in the family here or not?

MRS. MILLIKEN: No division.

TIM SKUBICK: You do have concerns about a DeVos governorship?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes, I do have some deep concerns. One in the arena of women's issues, he is not pro-choice, reproductive rights, equality for women and I'm just not certain what he stands for yet. He's made a lot of glowing hopes for the state of Michigan, but I have not seen the implementation plans, for instance, in the single business tax.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you think any governor can turn this economy around?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I think all things are possible, really, Tim. And it's not going to be easy and it's not going to come immediately, but I think Governor Granholm has made some very bold and positive steps toward that turnaround.

TIM SKUBICK: It sounds to me like you are voting for her.

MRS. MILLIKEN: I haven't decided or announced.

TIM SKUBICK: You have privately decided though.

MRS. MILLIKEN: (laughs) Tim, you keep nudging me.

TIM SKUBICK: I'm sorry, but...

MRS. MILLIKEN: I haven't decided.

TIM SKUBICK: Okay and just to clarify, you haven't decided yet either?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I have not decided yet.

TIM SKUBICK: Why did you guys want to get out of Lansing so much? Do you know what I'm asking?

GOV. MILLIKEN: If I had wanted to get out of Lansing would I have stayed for 14 years as governor?

TIM SKUBICK: Yes, but you were always in the Lincoln, headed back here on Thursday night.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Not always.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Friday night.

TIM SKUBICK: Friday night?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Friday night.

GOV. MILLIKEN: I love northern Michigan. I love the Traverse City area, the natural beauty is invigorating and inspiring and when I could escape for even a few hours, it was a renewing experience for me to come here.

TIM SKUBICK: But just your use of the word, escape from Lansing, I find interesting. There must have been something about that town that you needed to escape from.

GOV. MILLIKEN: No, I wouldn't say that. I perhaps misused the word.

TIM SKUBICK: Which word would you like

GOV. MILLIKEN: It is the first word I've misused.

TIM SKUBICK: [laughs] In this interview, okay, but if not escape, then what would the word be?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Leave. In order to come to an area that was home to me from the moment I was born. And I love it here and I think its natural beauty is almost indescribable.

TIM SKUBICK: Uh-huh, did you feel the same way, that you needed to get back here?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I don't think to the degree that Bill did, but he was in the pressure cooker of the capitol and an unending stream of people waiting to see him and requests to be heard and to be decided on. And I was more the maintainer of the households - there

were three households then, Lansing and Traverse City and the summer residence on Mackinac - and the facilitator of the process.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, you could have both stayed in town and you could have worked fundraisers on Friday night, you could have gone to all sorts of dances on Saturday and stuff like that. How come you guys didn't want to do that? I love this laughing, what is...

GOV. MILLIKEN: We often did.

TIM SKUBICK: Be honest with me, Governor. There were parts of politics that you really did not find to be rewarding and working a crowd was one of them.

GOV. MILLIKEN: You know, that has been suggested in the book which has been written and maybe you are talking from background and experience in Lansing when I was there. But, I enjoyed many times the crowds that you say I sought to escape from. But sometimes when you live and breathe that day in and day out, night in and night out, you have the need to somehow seek private and privacy and solace and I did.

TIM SKUBICK: Given the choice of sitting here in this beautiful house and looking at that beautiful lake and working a crowd of 500 people, most of the people whom you don't know, you would pick here?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, not always.

MRS. MILLIKEN: It is a matter of balance.

GOV. MILLIKEN: It is a matter of balance.

MRS. MILLIKEN: I think he really enjoyed working a crowd and working a room. I had to learn that, it was very hard to learn.

TIM SKUBICK: Tedious work, isn't it?

MRS. MILLIKEN: It is hard work. But then, after he has enjoyed that and been regenerated by that response with people. Nelson Rockefeller expressed that same thought, that he really loved to work it. But then he wanted his time of renewal and respite and his focus was in the arts and in his gardens. He had beautiful gardens, botanical. The governors visited those gardens once and it was a remarkable experience.

TIM SKUBICK: But that was something that you have to learn, because coming from... What were you going to be when you grew up?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, Tim, I hate to even try to think back of how limited it was, because I was brought up in an era when mainly young women went off to college to get their degree and find a husband and live happily ever after, it's pretty limited, isn't it?

TIM SKUBICK: Was it love at first sight?

MRS. MILLIKEN: [laughs]

GOV. MILLIKEN: Let's spend some time on this question.

TIM SKUBICK: You would like to add something to that? Be my guest.

MRS. MILLIKEN: I knew immediately he was an excellent dancer. One of the best I'd encountered.

TIM SKUBICK: Where did you learn to dance?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, I can tell you one thing, it wasn't at dancing school.

TIM SKUBICK: Oh, you were self-taught? Come on, I want...

GOV. MILLIKEN: We all were. [laughter]

TIM SKUBICK: I mean, did your mother teach you?

GOV. MILLIKEN: No.

TIM SKUBICK: No, okay. But somehow you learned? Were you always pro-choice?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Ah, I didn't even realize abortion was an issue in our society until, in our early years in Traverse City, someone I knew became pregnant that simply could not, would not bear a child, had an illegal abortion. It was very terrible and painful and expensive and everything. Detroit was the only place you could find this. And it opened the world to me of the fact that women did not have free choice. Whether to bear a child or not to bear a child and whether their life could accommodate this. And a wanted child is a desperately needed thing in our society, too.

TIM SKUBICK: In light of that, do you think Michigan Right to Life has too much power, political power in this state?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I think it is a known fact, Tim, that in a Republican Convention today, statewide convention, only those candidates for state office that have been endorsed by Right to Life stand a chance of being nominated. The influence is pervasive. The Right to Life people control both houses of the legislature, the senate and the house. So we continue to get restrictive legislation that narrows and narrows the choices of women, as far as reproductive rights go.

TIM SKUBICK: But don't they have a right to control both houses? They played the game, they won the seats.

MRS. MILLIKEN: It's a matter of do you let special interests control the agenda of a political party. And I think that's true in Michigan.

GOV. MILLIKEN: In my time in Lansing when I was governor, that was not true about Republican Conventions. They were in a sense much broader and more open, but as Helen says, this is a more recent phenomenon in Michigan and I think it's regrettable.

TIM SKUBICK: Why?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Simply because it is a narrow focus and it tends to constrict thinking and openness and it is important to me that a party be open to ideas and not be narrowed down to a very strict dogma and that's what has now, apparently, happened.

TIM SKUBICK: So neither of you agree with people that vote single issues? Does that help the democracy or not?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I would hope that we would all have enlarged our horizons to the point where we do not have a single issue dominate our thinking and our actions.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you agree with that Mrs. Milliken?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I feel so strongly about the issue of reproductive rights, as far as women's rights go. We have come a long way, but we are not there yet in determining the course of our lives. If a 16 year old girl is forced to carry a pregnancy to full term, her life script is written for her. There is practically no path she can take in terms of education, in terms of betterment of herself, supporting her family. She has a child she didn't intend to have. And it is certainly a matter of deep concern.

TIM SKUBICK: But you are well aware that the Right to Life people, if they were here right now, would say to you, yes but the precious life of that baby also needs to be factored in.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Tim, this is a religious issue at heart. No one really, really can define when life begins. The Jewish religion says it begins at the moment of birth. The soul which is life enters the child. Right to Life says no, the moment of conception. Who, who determines what life is and where it begins and where it should be determined.

TIM SKUBICK: So this is an intrusion of religion into politics.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Absolutely.

TIM SKUBICK: Which is inappropriate in your mind?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Absolutely.

TIM SKUBICK: In fact, is there too much religion in politics today beyond this?

MRS. MILLIKEN: There is a great deal of religion in politics.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Very much so.

TIM SKUBICK: You both agree with that?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: Why is that wrong?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Because this country was founded on the separation of church and state, for obvious reasons that many of the people who came here wanted to escape the political influence of the church in their lives.

TIM SKUBICK: But you would concede that religious people have a right to participate in the political process, right?

MRS. MILLIKEN: They do, but not when they tell me what to believe and what I must do according to their standards and I think that the Religious Right is a tremendous political force in the whole national scene and I think that part of this Rosebush presentation, Rose Garden presentation yesterday on the marriage of gays, relates to the religious issue, because the churches are very much opposed to this.

TIM SKUBICK: The party is pandering to the Religious Right?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes. Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you agree?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I agree. I think the move in the Rose Garden was primarily, if not solely, politically inspired in order to strengthen the president's base which has been an important factor in his political success.

TIM SKUBICK: McCain for President. Do you like that?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Now that you mention it, I'm disappointed in John McCain, because in his recent visit to the South Carolina university of Reverend Falwell, he's accommodating that very Religious Right that he decried in his campaign for the presidency. He is saying, it doesn't matter, it is worth it. I can sacrifice this to reach my goal.

TIM SKUBICK: Political expediency.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Right.

TIM SKUBICK: He loses points for that in your mind?

MRS. MILLIKEN: In my estimation.

TIM SKUBICK: Were you ready to support him prior to that?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes.

TIM SKUBICK: You were. Is this a deal breaker?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I don't know, but it certainly a very powerful statement on his part.

TIM SKUBICK: Governor.

GOV. MILLIKEN: We have a long way still to go. I don't know.

TIM SKUBICK: On the McCain thing.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Yeah, I supported John McCain in his last race for president. And...

MRS. MILLIKEN: And he carried Michigan.

GOV. MILLIKEN: And he carried Michigan, not because of me, but he...

MRS. MILLIKEN: Partially.

GOV. MILLIKEN: ...he very decisively carried the state. I'm reserving judgment until I see again how this... We're two and a half years away from that time. So, it's too soon to know and there are a lot of interesting candidates that are on the horizon now.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you share your wife's concern though about this paying homage to Mr. Falwell?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I was troubled by it, his homage to Jerry Falwell and the latter has not been a great favorite of mine over the years.

TIM SKUBICK: Mrs. Clinton for president.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Um, she is someone I have agreed with in many, on many issues. I think she is an exceptionally bright woman. But I have become increasingly disenchanted with some of the positions she has taken, one of the most recent being coming out in favor of a constitutional amendment for flag burning. I cannot understand her pandering on this issue.

TIM SKUBICK: How close did you come to running for office?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Well, that's a question that I would have answered very differently if you had asked it 20 years ago, Tim. But you realize as you go along and become immersed in the issues that you can be, you can become an instrument for implementing some of the things you just very deeply believe in by being in politics. Probably the closest I came, maybe, was when Howard Wolpe came up here and talked to me and to Bill.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you sit in this room, was it here?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Right here on the terrace, right out there.

TIM SKUBICK: On the terrace. And you knew why he was coming up.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Yes, he called, well no he called and asked if he could come talk with me. And would we be home and I said, surely and he came and he wanted me to consider running as lieutenant governor candidate in that campaign. And Bill and I had tossed around the idea of why he was coming and so forth.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you figure it out?

GOV. MILLIKEN: I think we did.

TIM SKUBICK: Were you there at the time that he made the pitch?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh yes, we were right here, out here on the terrace.

TIM SKUBICK: So, did you come close?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, we said we'd think about it and I would get back to him in a few days.

TIM SKUBICK: That was a no then, wasn't it?

MRS. MILLIKEN: That was.

TIM SKUBICK: But did you, go ahead.

GOV. MILLIKEN: He is and was a very dedicated person, very bright, but that would have been a very ill-advised move, I think.

TIM SKUBICK: Why, why?

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, it was one reason among many reasons was that he wanted her name in his race. And it was already a losing proposition for him.

TIM SKUBICK: So, he wanted to use your wife to get votes.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Well, it was more than that.

MRS. MILLIKEN: It was obvious the Milliken name would help him.

TIM SKUBICK: Uh-huh.

MRS. MILLIKEN: And probably I would have helped him in the women's issues arena.

GOV. MILLIKEN: And other ways.

MRS. MILLIKEN: That wasn't...

TIM SKUBICK: But the fact that the dye was cast, why take the risk? Was that the final conclusion in the family here?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I think it was that we just didn't want to start a lifestyle again of back and forth to Lansing and...

TIM SKUBICK: You wanted to stay here.

MRS. MILLIKEN: He would stay here. [laughter]

TIM SKUBICK: We asked your husband earlier about the family sacrifices that have to be made and they are very real and he said earlier that the general public doesn't understand that. I assume you agree with that analysis?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Totally, Tim.

TIM SKUBICK: When you heard that answer, did it resonate with you?

MRS. MILLIKEN: It was just the answer that I would have given, but it's the same thing as not knowing what another person's life experience is, because you haven't lived it. And then you realize, it is 24/7 politics. Calls used to come in at midnight on our phone here. I was the phone answerer and the secretary and the housekeeper and it's constant, it just never, it never really leaves you.

TIM SKUBICK: Did you ever say, uncle, I've had enough of the politics?

MRS. MILLIKEN: [laughs]

GOV. MILLIKEN: Do you want me to answer that?

MRS. MILLIKEN: You may try. I don't think I did.

GOV. MILLIKEN: No, I don't think she did, I think she bore up well, but it was an enormous price sometimes to pay. And most of all, it was a price, a family price that was created. Our children because we were so deeply involved in politics and moving back and forth between Lansing and here, went away to school in the east, in boarding school. Looking back on that now with our daughter and our son, it was, was a terrible price that we paid for it and I'm sure that they paid. I don't know how we could have done differently, but and yet the regrets still linger.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you agree with that?

MRS. MILLIKEN: I agree with it. On the other side of the spectrum, it was a tremendous experience in that it opened many windows we never would have had the opportunity to look through otherwise and experiences that broadened your perspective.

TIM SKUBICK: Both of you are students of history. Let's assume that 30 years from now that somebody will actually watch this program. What do you want the Mrs. Milliken legacy to be? What do you want them to remember about you and your contribution to this state?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, I don't know, Tim, you know, all of us as we have tried to accomplish things in our given path have stood on the shoulders of others who helped us get there. But I think my involvement in the women's issues has been one of the landmarks in my life.

TIM SKUBICK: Do you think you made a difference?

MRS. MILLIKEN: We are not there yet.

TIM SKUBICK: You made a difference?

MRS. MILLIKEN: Who knows, who knows.

TIM SKUBICK: Well, instinctively if you had not done it, if you were sitting here today, you would have some regrets if you didn't.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Oh, absolutely.

GOV. MILLIKEN: No question.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Absolutely.

TIM SKUBICK: And governor, for you?

GOV. MILLIKEN: It was a great, it was a great experience and a great opportunity and I will never regret having made the decision to go into political life, because I think I may have contributed to public life a sense of doing the right thing and being willing to pay

the right prices to do the right thing. I didn't always make the right decisions, but I think I can honestly say and if I were to look back 25 years from now, I think I can honestly say, I had a sense of commitment to advance the public good and not advance my own political, narrow political goals. That I have contributed to, maybe in some small way, to a better Michigan. If I think I can say that 30 years from now, I will be satisfied.

TIM SKUBICK: Mr. and Mrs. Milliken, thank you for allowing us into your home. Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you again.

MRS. MILLIKEN: Our pleasure.

TIM SKUBICK: Likewise. Thank you both.

GOV. MILLIKEN: Thank you.

This interview with William and Helen Milliken was recorded for the public television special: "The Millikens." This is a transcript of the complete interview as conducted by Senior Capitol Correspondent and WKAR host Tim Skubick.

This on-line feature from WKAR is made possible with support from Web site visitors like you.

"The Millikens" is made possible, in part, by a grant from The Michigan Association of Public Broadcasters' "Statewide Program Fund" and by The Rossman Group a full service Lansing-based public relations firm providing consulting services to a broad range of local and statewide clients.