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# Family, Community, and a Life of Politics

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STORYTELLER: Tom Roberts

**EDGEMONT** I was born and raised in the city of Dayton. I grew up in a large family with six brothers and three sisters (ten total). I attended Catholic schools during my childhood and adolescent years. I graduated from Chaminade High School, attended Sinclair Community College, and then graduated from the University of Dayton in 1977 with a degree in communication arts. This degree was versatile and helped me not only pursue a possible career in radio, but it also surprisingly propelled me into the world of politics.

Growing up in the city of Dayton was a great experience. Our neighborhood was very close-knit, and we as kids never ran out of fun things to do with one another. Being from a large family, we always had five-on-five basketball games



in the alley near our house, or we used to play baseball together. Also, there were about twenty to thirty other kids that were around our age in the neighborhood. We always knew how to make the best out of everyday. My parents had a big influence on me, because they helped build my ethical foundation through values and good principles. Living with all of my family and friends gave me a strong sense of community that still lasts today.

I first learned about politics when I was in high school. I was very close with one of my brothers, and he urged me into the political realm. My first job in this area was in the Clerk of Courts office. In my spare time, I helped people run campaigns, and this gave me some very good experience. I thought about working as a press secretary for candidates because of my background in communication. I served in the Ohio General Assembly in both the House

(1986–2001) and the Senate (2001–2009). My family was very supportive and had so much to do with my successes. I joke around and always say that we are similar to the Kennedy’s, because we almost had a small built-in political machine. Many people in my family helped support me and helped run my campaign, so I didn’t need too much outside aid to run for positions.

In 1997, I began to work with the Ohio Fellow Leadership Program at Sinclair Community College. It helps students to become principled leaders for their communities. Also, because of my long political history, I was asked to join the NAACP here in Dayton. I served as a political action chair for this great organization. This position was perfect for me due to my extensive political background. I now help members and the community understand what bills are being sent to the legislature, and I help anything the organization needs revolving around civic engagement to help my fellow community members. **THROUGH THIS JOB, I AM ABLE TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS SOMETHING MY PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS ALWAYS TAUGHT ME TO DO.**

In today’s Dayton community, I believe that many parents are doing a lot to help their children. I sometimes hear kids today say, “I’m

bored.” Due to the large influence of electronics, children nowadays are much too involved with their phones and social media. When I grew up, my peers and I didn’t get bored very easily. We were creative and always found new ways to entertain ourselves. I remember my mother telling me once that I played a whole baseball game by myself. I played the field, batted, and even announced the entire game. It may sound silly, but I was creative enough to play and have a fun time alone without a phone or other electronics.

When I used to listen to music or watch television, all the lyrics and programs were filled with very positive messages and images. This made our music and T.V. inspirational and something we could be optimistic about. Nowadays, music has very pessimistic messages, and much of it promotes drug use and violence. When the youth of today listen to these things, especially at a young age they are more prone to these types of issues (even if they are not aware of it). Also, television and social media are filled with sad and vulgar images, which can harm the youth. So, parents can help reduce these influences by trying to keep their very young children away from this bad media as much as possible, even though they cannot fully prevent them from see-

ing/hearing them. If children can be in a close knit community with friends and family, they will feed off of each other’s enthusiasm and live happily together. This can be done by replacing technology with old school play.

I would love to see the city of Dayton go back to a simpler time. **PEOPLE SHOULD VALUE A LONG LASTING AND MEANINGFUL FAMILY RELATIONSHIP, JUST LIKE I WAS BLESSED WITH. COMMUNITIES FLOURISH WHEN PEOPLE CAN OPENLY COMMUNICATE AND BE PERSONABLE WITH ONE ANOTHER.** My time spent in the city Dayton with my large, loving family was unforgettable, and helped shape me into the person I am today.