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Indianapolis

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MONTHLY

BURGERS!

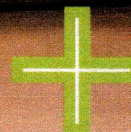
13
Juicy Picks

WITH

Yummy Fries
Crunchy
Onion Rings
Dreamy
Milkshakes
Crispy
Tater Tots



Including this
Green Chile
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Mayor Hudnut Lets Loose
on Indiana Politics

JUNE 2016 // \$4.95



INDIANAPOLIS

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Indianapolis

MONTHLY



76

At home with
Bill Hudnut

65

BURGER TIME!

In the past few years, gourmet burger joints have invaded Indianapolis. From new wave to old school, sides to shakes, *IM* has a thick, juicy, and totally meaty guide to the city's chargrilled scene.

EDITED BY TAYLOR ELLIS AND
AMANDA HECKERT

76

A MAN OF HIS WORD

Bill Hudnut may be in the twilight of his life, but the beloved former mayor's opinions are as sharp as ever. Here, he reflects on his time at the helm of our city and takes Indiana's Republican Party to task.

INTERVIEW BY CRAIG FEHRMAN

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BUS LINES

IndyGo's Downtown Transit Center is finally opening. For the people who use the bus every day, pictured here at stops throughout the city, the station is the first turn toward improving what has sometimes been a bumpy ride.

BY DARRYL SMITH



A Man of His Word

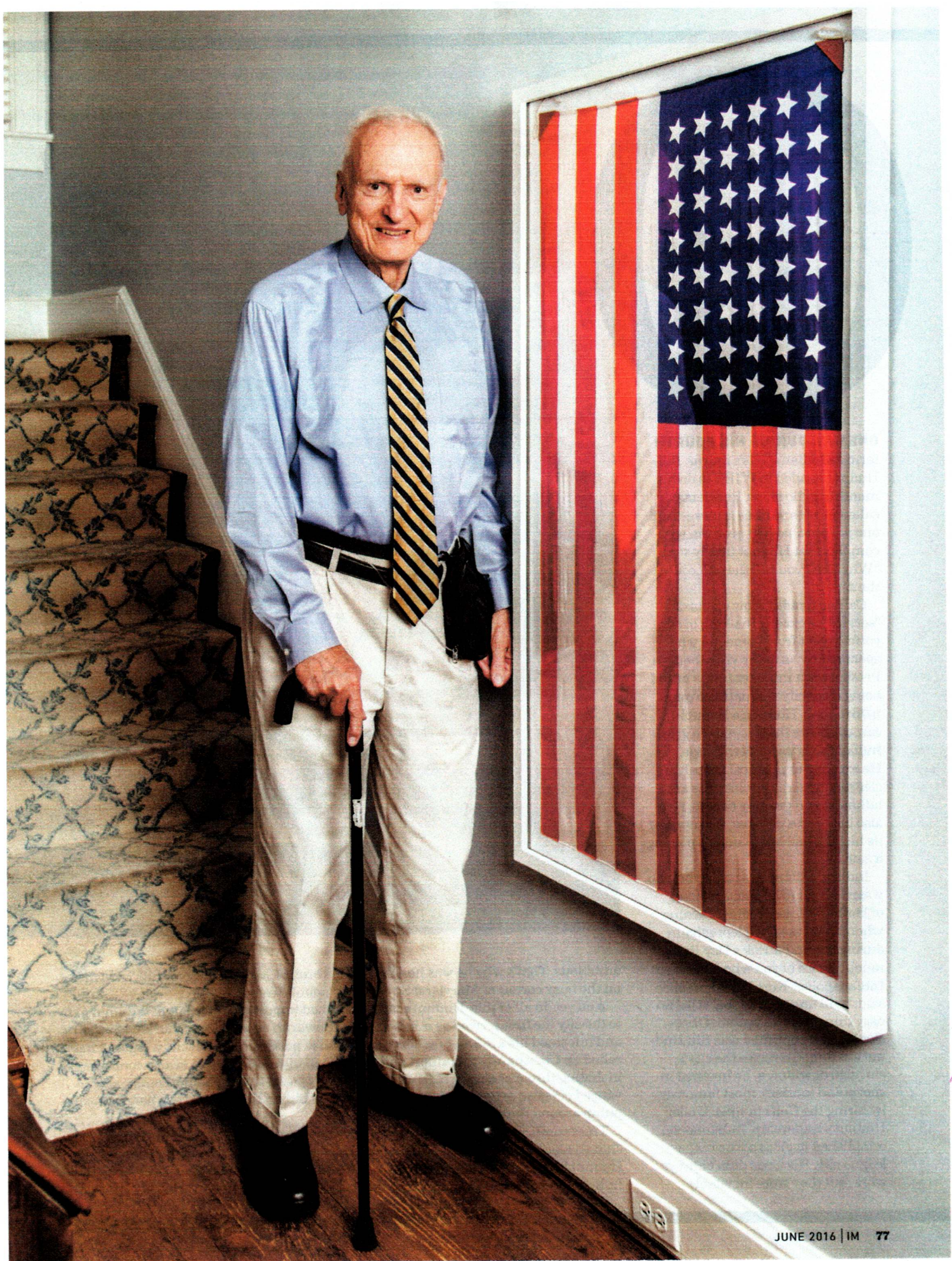
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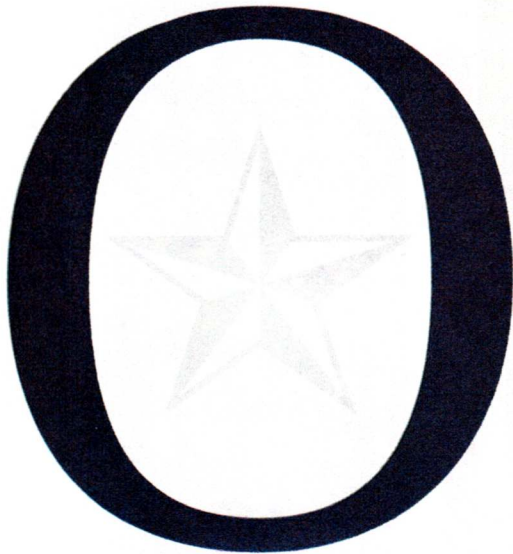


INTERVIEW BY CRAIG FEHRMAN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHEN VOSS





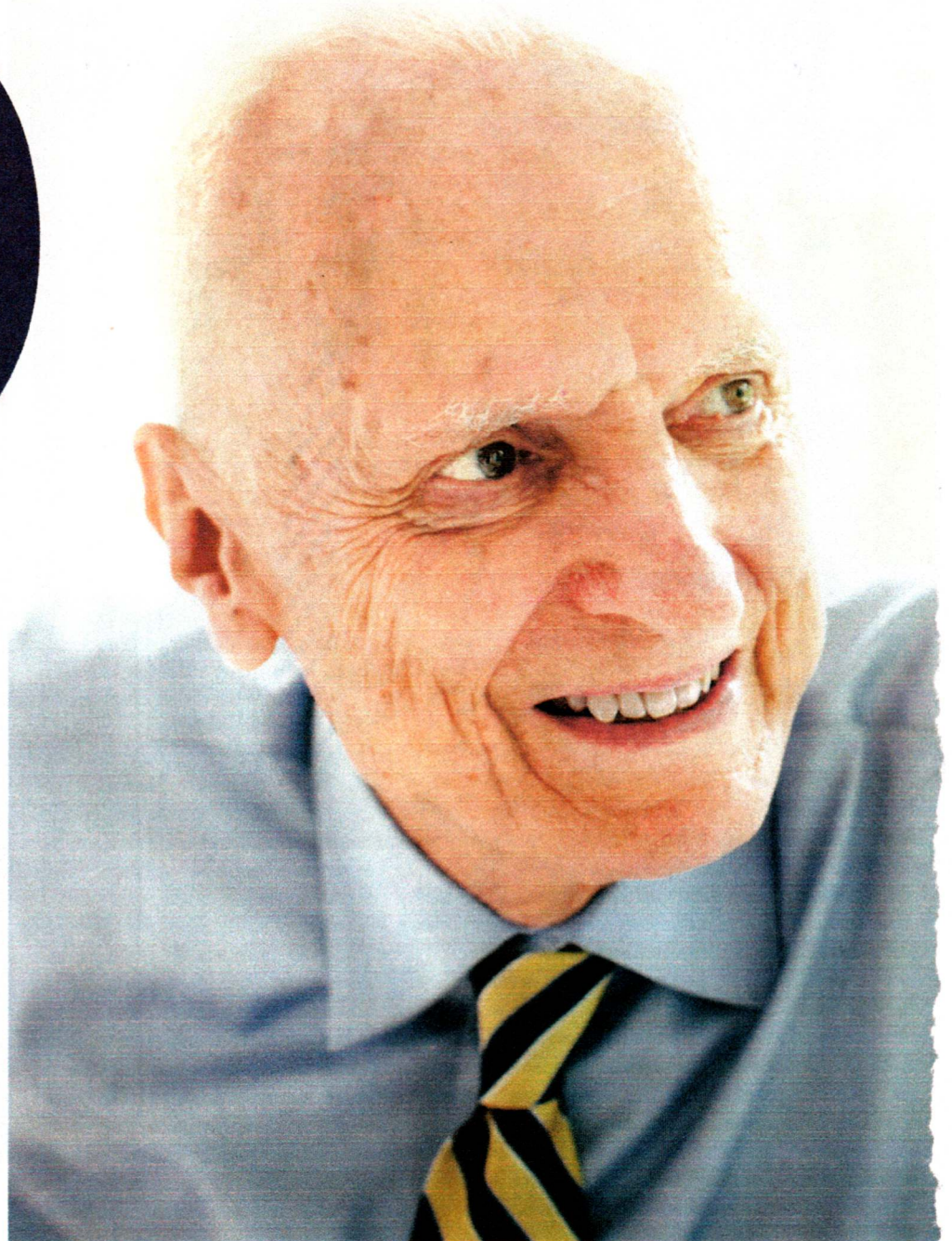


ONE DAY, DURING HIS FOURTH

term as Indianapolis's mayor, Bill Hudnut headed to WIBC to do his monthly radio show. Residents called in with various issues—until one person shared a problem so complex that Hudnut finally said, “Why don’t you call the office after the service?”

Calling a radio show a church “service” is exactly the kind of slip you’d expect from someone who spent nearly as many years being a Presbyterian minister (15) as he did being a big-city mayor (16). From 1976 to 1992, Hudnut, a Republican, did more than anyone to give Indianapolis its modern shape. He excelled at practical tasks like clearing roads after blizzards and talking down grumpy callers. He also inspired a city that, for much of its history, had been content playing it safe.

Indianapolis needed a mayor who wasn’t afraid to be a mascot (one of Hudnut’s finest moments came when he dressed as a leprechaun during the St. Patrick’s Day Parade). “Those of you who have seen Indianapolis,” Kurt Vonnegut once said, “will understand that it [is] no easy thing to be an optimist there.” But being an optimist was Bill Hudnut’s calling. To revive the city’s sluggish downtown, he invested in sports and tourism, most famously by luring the Colts in 1984. Under Hudnut’s leadership, Indianapolis established itself as a true major-league city. His ideas didn’t always work, but they were inevitably



ambitious. That’s why he was honored with a bronze statue of “Mayor Bill,” which sits on the busy corner of Maryland Street and Capitol Avenue.

And yet, in all of this, Hudnut’s faith remained important—it brought the Ohio native to the city (he first arrived as minister of the powerful Second Presbyterian Church) and informed his kind and inclusive approach to politics. More recently, Hudnut has relied on Christianity to comfort and strengthen him as he battles health concerns, including throat cancer, which was successfully treated with chemotherapy, and advanced congestive heart failure, which requires him to stay hooked to a heart infusion pump around the clock.

This month, city leaders from across the country will come to Indianapolis to exchange ideas at the annual U.S. Conference of Mayors. But even now, at the age of 83, Hudnut himself has wisdom to share, on his life and mayoral legacy—and on the ways Indiana politics can feel more theological than ever.

Q★A

Do you remember the first time you set foot in Indianapolis?

Yes, I do. It was 1963, and I'd been invited to give a candidate sermon at the Second Presbyterian Church. We were driving down North Meridian Street and I saw this great Gothic cathedral. It was very exciting for a 30-year-old guy.

What about the city itself?

It was a very conservative city with a sleepy downtown. Right before I became minister, the church had actually moved from the Circle out to the suburbs. The dominant mentality in Indianapolis was just getting along. When I became mayor I tried to change that, but as a minister I sort of lived with it.

And then you switched from preaching to politics.

In 1971, I was chairman of the Ministers for Lugar committee. That didn't amount to much, but I got the itch. I can't put it any better than that. I was beguiled by the roar of the crowd, the stem-winder speeches, the bunting in red, white, and blue.

Your first campaign was for Congress in 1972, where you served one term.

I can remember how nervous I was when a party boss made me stand up in his downtown office and give my little stump speech. They evaluated and critiqued me—this boss and his bright, young assistant named Mitch Daniels. Mitch became my first campaign manager, and the transition from minister to politician wasn't too hard. In both professions, you've got to like people and like solving their problems.

How did your faith shape your politics?

My feeling was you should not wear your religion on your sleeve. While I was mayor, I preached in a lot of different churches, in mainstream Protestant churches but also in a lot of African-American churches. I loved doing it. But in the churches, I did not wear my politics on my sleeve. And in the

public square, I did not wear my religion on my sleeve. It's not a wall of separation between the two. It's a membrane where you push it back and forth from one side or the other—but hopefully you never break it.

One of my professors in seminary was Reinhold Niebuhr, the famous theologian. And one of the things he taught us was the importance of modesty. He taught us your point of view was your point of view but not necessarily the point of view. There are truths about which men of good conscience will differ—that's

Hudnut speaks behind the St. John's Missionary Baptist Church pulpit at a 1987 memorial for Martin Luther King Jr.



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Revelations

On the CaringBridge health-update site, Hudnut writes poignant journal entries about his life, family, faith, and fears. Here, an excerpt from a January meditation on the year past and the one to come.

“Frankly, looking forward fills me with concern. Perhaps anxiety. Perhaps fear. Perhaps dread. How long will I be able to navigate? To keep my balance? To walk? To breathe? Will I decline into a condition where I cannot take care of myself? I dread having an outside caregiver coming in, or going to a hospice. But I know I'm not going to get better, just worse as time goes on. I dread becoming a heavy burden to my wife. And I fear what will happen in the outside world with wars and terrorists this year, and the way our political discourse has sunk to a terribly low level. I must confess, with all honesty, that I head into this new year with considerable feelings of angst. And yet, my head and heart, my education and upbringing, and my theology and faith tell me that there's more to the future than this kind of darkness. ‘Now we see through a glass darkly,’ wrote Paul in Corinthians. I climb out of this ‘slough of despond’ by thinking myself out of it.”

For more posts, visit caringbridge.org/visit/mayorbillhudnut



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an axiom of the Presbyterian church. You have to respect each other and yet do what you think is right.

This dynamic came into play your first year as mayor, when there was a controversy over Monument Circle's city-sponsored Nativity scene.

The Jewish Community Relations Council said it was a violation. My reaction was basically, "They're right." We were moving into a different era, and I sincerely felt we had to embrace a more multicultural view. The right wing of the church objected to that—one pastor said taking the Nativity off the Circle was the worst thing that had happened since the crucifixion. But I thought it was the proper thing to do.

But as mayor, you dealt most of the time with less celestial concerns.

Right. It was important to send a message that you'd be safe coming downtown, for instance. So I put a couple of horse-patrol police officers on the Circle, just to make sure people felt safe. There were lots of pragmatic things like that. I was a hands-on mayor.

You were also an inspirational mayor, especially when it came to downtown.

I said, "We don't want our city to become a doughnut, with all the development on the periphery. We want to be like a cookie, solid all the way through." That started with [former mayors] John Barton and Dick Lugar, and Unigov. But I was able to build on what they did, often by using public-private partnerships. We just had to keep on fighting for a lively downtown.

What was it like to come back to Indianapolis for the Super Bowl in 2012?

I was absolutely enthralled by the downtown, by the way it was literally lit up with that "XLVI" on the side of the new JW Marriott. It was a joyous experience, a celebration of the evolution of Indianapolis. I moved to the

Washington, D.C., area in 1996 [to work at the Urban Land Institute], so it was wonderful to see what had happened since I'd left. When you closed your eyes and thought about the tremendous transition that had occurred in the last 30, 40 years, it was thrilling.

You even rode the zipline at age 80.

I did. I was scared to death. It took them about five pushes before they could get me off the platform.

During your last term as mayor, you and your wife, Beverly, found out she was pregnant with your first child together—only to suffer a terrible tragedy.

It was 1991, and we thought it was going to be a routine ultrasound. Beverly was laid out on the hospital bed, and the doctor came in along with a bunch of interns, none of whom we knew. While the ultrasound was performed, the doctor told us it was a malformed fetus with spina bifida and anencephaly. There were maybe 10 other people in the room. It was a very tough experience, to be told that in front of strangers.

Bev and I talked about it for a day or two. We sat down with our doctor. We sat down with a pastor. It was difficult emotionally. We decided the best thing to do was to terminate the pregnancy.

We gave the baby a Christian burial. We called him George Matheson Hudson because we liked a hymn written by the author and minister George Matheson. We liked it so much we put it on the little baby's tombstone: "O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go."

It makes me wince to think what this new state law would have done to us back then.

You're talking about House Enrolled Act 1337, the law that will ban abortions based on fetal abnormalities.

It's unfortunate that the governor and legislature seem wrapped in an ideological cocoon. My goodness—I don't think you're put in government in order to force a particular religious viewpoint on people. If a woman believes in the pro-choice thing, she has a right to go her way, just like a pro-life woman has a right to go her way.

Laws like this one can cause problems beyond a particular issue.

It's the detriment of the public and the public perception around the country of Indiana. Indiana's reputation as a

welcoming state with Hoosier hospitality has suffered a blow from RFRA and now this new abortion law.

I know Mike Pence and like him personally. Around when he first came to Congress [in 2001], he invited my son Christopher and his Cub Scout den to the Capitol. He gave them a tour and treated them to a nice dinner at the dining hall. Mike was very gracious. But I disagree with his style of governance. And I vehemently disagree with the way politics is being used to enshrine a particular religious point of view.

Most of Indy's legislators opposed HEA 1337. How should the city respond?

These laws sacrifice pragmatism on the altar of ideology. But one of the keys for cities is to foster a spirit of civility and collaboration—within the city and with the state. That's how we tried to run my administration. The Hoosier Dome had to go through the legislature before it ever came through the city council. [State senator] Larry Borst shepherded it through the legislature. I have no idea whether Larry was pro-life or pro-choice. That didn't matter back then. What mattered was getting things done.

Optimism was your defining trait as mayor. Are you still optimistic about the direction of our city and our state?

I've got to be honest that I'm a little pessimistic right now, given the tilt of the legislature and the governor. But I am still hopeful about the future of the state and the city.

And what about the state of your health? You've survived cancer but continue to battle congestive heart failure.

I call Beverly my angel caregiver. In a sense, she keeps me going. Our son, Christopher, is going to graduate from college this spring. They give me a lot of courage.

In your book *Minister/Mayor*, you wrote that in seminary, Psalm 73 became one of your favorite passages. Does it still bring you comfort?

Of course. "Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou dost hold my right hand. Thou dost guide me with thy counsel, and afterward thou wilt receive me to glory." The key word there is 'nevertheless.' In spite of the fact that I have heart failure, in spite of the fact that I can't drive, I'm going to keep going. ■