

**David Briley Lunch – Transcript II**  
**2/19/2007**

[Before the tape recorder clicked on, Ned asked David Briley about his trips through Latin America.]

**David Briley:** Which is actually a pretty incredible thing for me it was at least. It really helped me activate a part of my brain that had never really been activated.

I learned to speak Spanish which was important, and I got exposed to how really lucky I really was as a person in terms of the real poverty, and what real poverty really means. From the total lack of Health Care, down to when I spent my first summer in Ecuador and lived with a family and the maid who was there, she had a very young son, and she was very young too, her son had rickets, which causes a curvature of the spine from a lack of vitamin c, is what you get rickets from. At the same time, every morning we would get orange juice to drink. I guess it took me a while to figure out what was going on there.

I traveled by myself, and so I became a lot more self-sufficient and lacking in fear. I was not afraid to do some things that I otherwise might have been afraid to do. I've done some things that, as a parent, if I did some of those things now I would say that it was incredibly risky and I can't believe you did that...but it helped me grow as a person, just getting the opportunity to do that.

**Sean Braisted:** What about your time in San Francisco; did you learn anything from your time there that you can bring to Nashville?

**David Briley:** I got my law degree...

**Ned Williams:** Back to reaching out to Republicans...just kidding.

**David Briley:** The thing that you need to learn from a place like San Francisco, and that Nashville needs to stay focused on, is that it's a city of neighborhoods, and that each one of those neighborhoods is what makes people want to go there from all over the world. If you want to make Nashville a place that is as attractive to the rest of the world as San Francisco is; you go to each neighborhood and empower them to determine a destiny for themselves and you stick to the plan for their future. That is the thing we can learn from a place like San Francisco, that empowering neighborhoods will make a city successful.

**Sean Braisted:** Obviously, also in San Francisco, places like Chinatown are a huge attraction...and there are a lot of people who are criticizing places like Nolensville Rd which have a lot of Hispanic businesses. Granted, it's not as developed as Chinatown, but is there anything you've learned from there about how different immigrant populations can and native populations can grow together and become more harmonious? Is there something you can do as Mayor to bridge the gap between native southerners and Hispanic immigrants?

**David Briley:** When you think about San Fran; I think the better neighborhood to think about is the Mission District. Which is now predominantly a Hispanic district, but was once an Irish District or an Italian District; it's been all these different kinds of districts over time as these different waves of immigrants have come into San Fran. Each wave has generated both its own challenges and its own sets of opportunities for that city. Like everybody I'm opposed to Illegal Immigration, but that's not something, unfortunately, that the City of Nashville has a whole lot of authority over. We have immigrants in our community...Period. They are here today, so are we as a city going to try and push all immigrants away because we are concerned about illegal immigration? That would be the wrong conclusion, I think for me.

What we need to do is acknowledge is that it's not a homogenous group of people. We have lots of Sudanese, Kurdish, Somali refugees here totally legally; and they are going to be part of our community whether we like it or not. Keith Urban is an immigrant. Nissan has tons of immigrants working there. Bridgestone/Firestone, which is a Japanese corp is based here in Nashville, and go through their offices one of these days and here all the different languages being spoken there: Portuguese, Japanese and Spanish; all kinds of languages.

We cannot as a community act in a way which pushes everybody into a corner with the same label. What we need to do is reach out to everybody in a way that is proactive and that clarifies what the minimal levels of conduct are going to be in our community. At the same time helps immigrant communities become empowered so that they become a vital part of the economy here which is what will happen here. Everybody knows that second and third generation immigrants are an incredible economic powerhouse. Do we all want to benefit from that? I think we do, but we have to figure out a way as a community to weave them more into the culture here and not push them into a stereotypical corner which is not really fitting.

**Ned Williams:** I have a follow up. You mentioned corporations that are attracted to Nashville. What do you think is attracting them? It's a little bit of a loaded question but what would you say causes it?

**David Briley:** I think there is not a single thing. I don't think you can say "this does it" or "that does it". I think its some very simple things that we have; we're a Southwest hub, and that has attracted some people here because some of the corporations that do a lot of travel have to be in a place where there is Southwest because they are so efficient and inexpensive. I think a lot of it is the income tax. I think it is the high quality of living generally. I think it is quality education, in the region, I think for example, living in Williamson County you get a good education for very little money there. It's a problem for Davidson County; it's an economic disincentive to live in this county versus Williamson, but that's part of the attractiveness of the region. A low cost of living, generally. The ability to buy a fairly large house for a low amount of money...I think that is sort of the laundry list of things that attract people here.

One more thing; there is still a highly educated workforce in the region, generally, that is not overtaxed in terms of too many jobs for too few people.

**Sean Braisted:** I'd be remiss if I didn't ask you about this. One of your programs when you first ran for Mayor but then decided to go for vice mayor, was municipal broadband and there was a commission that basically found that it wasn't needed. If nothing is really improved in Nashville over the next four year do you plan on ever bringing that issue back up and perhaps having another study?

**David Briley:** I guess 1 ½ or 2 years ago, I personally believed that we needed to consider a municipal overbuild of broadband technology. I sponsored legislation in the council that created a task force that included the private and public sector and interested groups to look at the issue and the conclusion of the task force was, well there were many conclusions, but the principle conclusion was that within 5 years we needed to have 100 megabit symmetrical service at a low cost for the entire county. Which is very high speed and not generally available in most communities at a low cost in the United States. We also concluded that the first step is that the private sector should essentially come to the public sector and say, "here is what we need from you in order to be able to do it." At this point I haven't heard that they have approached the city at all, so I'm assuming that in 4 years now, there will be 100 megabit symmetrical service available to everybody.

Now if there is not, we are becoming less and less competitive with Western Europe and Asia because they are providing this service at very low cost to everybody. We'll have to; as a community sit down and come to some conclusions as to whether or not it makes sense to do a Municipal overbuild. I'm optimistic we won't, because I don't think it's an area where we are necessarily well equipped as a community to do it. It'll be a stretch for us to be able to do it. So I'm optimistic that the private sector will do it.

The third thing that the task force looked at that I think that we will have to go back and look at quickly, before the election, is the digital divide; which is something we can deal with quickly without an overbuild. We've got about 40 percent of our public school students going home without a computer at all, without any broadband access whatsoever. There are ways, without spending another penny of taxpayer money, to deal with that problem and I expect that both we should, could, and would do that if I were mayor.

**Adam Kleinheider:** The English first thing was a pretty big vote and you were on record as abstaining. I just wondered if you wanted to go over how that came to be. If you had it to do over again, would you?

**Sean Braisted:** It wasn't exactly abstaining, it was "not voting" or absent.

**David Briley:** Well, I've always opposed that ordinance. I voted against it on second reading and I obviously had nothing to gain by flip flopping on the third vote. That day, in particular, my wife was in the middle of a jury trial and my mother had picked up my son at day care around five o'clock that day. At eight, my wife emailed me and said that

she could not find them, so were in the middle of debating that issue, and the previous question had been called and voted down, which is an indication that there would be a lot more debate. I looked around me and there were a lot of lights on the desks around where people had made a request to speak. I thought I had a minute to step out and make a phone call...I didn't. Only one speaker got to speak between the two motions to call the previous question. So it was a mistake on my part to step out because I wanted to vote against the measure, and would have, if I had been in there.

This goes back to why I think I'm uniquely qualified to be Mayor. I, like most people who live in this community, have a wife who works and we are struggling everyday to make sure that our family has everything we need. We struggle to deal with child care everyday just like the average person who lives in this community and I stepped out to take care of that obligation that is the number one obligation of any person who has children; to be a good parent. So would I do it differently? Probably. Would I have voted against the measure if I had been in there? Yes. Have I voted against it before? Yes. Have I vocally opposed it every chance I had? Yes.

**John Hutchenson:** Would you have vetoed it if you were the Mayor?

**David Briley:** Yes, I would have vetoed it if I were the Mayor. I think it's a bill that is all about symbolism; because it does nothing legally...it does "zero" legally. When you do something that has no legal effect, look for the symbolism, and I came down clearly on one side of that symbolism; that we're an inclusive city that requires of all of its citizens that they conduct themselves appropriately and we already do that.

**John Hutchenson:** I work for the Tennessee Department of Health, and we're off today [*subtle dig at Stacey Campfield*] and I work closely with Metro and Davidson County on a lot of projects, a lot of data projects, and we work in the same system. Are you familiar with the Bridges to Care system?

**Brittney Gilbert:** I am very familiar with the Bridges to Care system.

**John Hutchenson:** I think it's a really important thing...I think it's a federal grant really but is there, do you think that the city should do more to aid that or does the city have a place to help the people who are underinsured; to bridge the gap between the non-TennCare folks and those who are insured. What would you offer in that area?

**David Briley:** As a little background I'm on the board of Faith Family Medical Clinic which is a provider for people who are in that gap. We were basically required...

**Brittney Gilbert:** When I was waiting tables I had no insurance for about eight years and I can't say enough good things about the Bridges to Care program and the Faith Family Medical Center; they helped me when I was going through some rough spots.

**John Hutchenson:** It's a great collaboration between private and public to me and I think that's a nice model.

**David Briley:** That's going to be part of the equation. It's not the full answer. We spend 50 million dollars a year on General Hospital which essentially is providing care to the people you are talking about. Now, General, is in my opinion is not the most efficient use of our dollars in its current configuration. I'm totally committed to keeping General in an appropriate configuration.

**John Hutchenson:** What does that mean?

**David Briley:** I don't know. But for us to spend 50 million a year and only use about 20 percent of the hospital beds we are paying for doesn't make sense. That's pretty clear, but I'm not in public health and I'm not a doctor so I couldn't tell you exactly what we need to do. But we do need to come together as a community and reach a conclusion on what the most appropriate way to spend that money is. We haven't done that yet...its been sort of a sacrosanct thing.

**Brittney Gilbert:** I was just really impressed with how much help you could get. I had no idea that you could get, if you didn't have TennCare or private insurance, that you could go in and get a prescription for just 5 dollars a month and they made it very easy for me to find health care for an affordable price and I was just really thankful at the time and I've had really good things to say about it, so I would like to see the program continue; because I would have been lost without it.

**John Hutchenson:** After the last TennCare cuts there were quite a few people who fell through the cracks and there is a program called "Cover Kids Now" which is going to try and cover the kids, but there is still a gap of the working poor who make just enough money not to get TennCare but they don't have money to get private insurance.

**David Briley:** General [Hospital] needs to play a role in that. One of the interesting things with General recently, and I said I don't have an answer for what General should be, but one of the most interesting things to talk about is metabolic diseases; diabetes primarily, we've gotten a recent grant from the Federal government through Congressman Cooper's leadership and Sen. Alexander I think helped too. Metabolic diseases are overrepresented in the African American community and General Hospital is in an African American part of town and is generally an asset, or considered an asset, in that community. So getting more focused on metabolic diseases is probably something we ought to consider, but it's not clear exactly what we'll end up with, but we do need to come together as a community and come to a final conclusion to that because 50 million a year, when you get outside of education, that is probably the single biggest discretionary expense we have. We need to use that money wisely, and I'm not convinced we are doing that yet.

**Rob Robinson:** It's been a while since we've been able to have someone go directly from the council to mayor and I was wondering, if elected, do you think that will make it harder or easier to work with the council?

**David Briley:** Well, you know, because of term limits the Council will change radically every four years. I think it's up to the mayor to help with leadership development in the council. I think that's always going to...with term limits you are going to have to back off of some issues and let some of the more proactive, intelligent council members lead on some issues. I think that's the way to have a better relationship with the council.

**John Hutchenson:** Are you for term limits?

**David Briley:** I don't think that changing term limits itself would fix the council, in terms of the problems its had recently. I think it's a big component of the current problem. I think as a community ultimately we have 40 members through a political compromise, not because there was a conscious decision made that that was the proper number. I think we probably need to go back and look at the Council overall and decide whether or not it makes sense. I don't know if you decrease it; I don't know if you increase it; I don't know, but I think that to talk about the numbers in isolation is not really the issue. What we need to do is talk about it generally and talk about how the council deals with [inaudible], talk about term limits, talk about the budgeting process, talk about it all and come to a reasoned conclusion about how to improve it.

**Sean Braisted:** I think we are running out of time, I know you've got an important [dental] appointment to go to. So I just wanted to thank you for coming out and thank everyone else for coming out today.

**David Briley:** Again, I want to thank you all. Primarily, I'm not getting paid to do this either, but I'm enjoying it immensely and having chosen to do it, I better enjoy it. But I appreciate you all taking the time to do this.