

INTERVIEW: ALICIA SALISBURY (REVISED)

Q: Alicia, you were in the Kansas Senate, is this your sixth year? No--you've been there four years.

A: I'm in the middle of my second term, so I've actually served for six years.

Q: You ran for office your first term? You weren't appointed?

A: That's correct. I had just served a four-year term on the Kansas State Board of Education to which I was elected in 1980 and that term was up in 1984 and at that time I ran for the Senate for the first time. There was no incumbent in my Senate district.

Q: What made you decide to run for this position besides the fact that there was no incumbent?

A: Well, you know, I don't know and you're not the first person who's asked. But I guess I had been a part of the legislative process in that I had been the legislative liaison from the state board of education. I had also been a volunteer lobbyist and so some of the people around the state house knew me and, believe it or not, some people went back as far as when my father served in the legislature in the fifties from one of the House districts in Topeka. I suppose, because of those experiences and that involvement, the Senate President and Vice-president at that time, who were Ross Doyen and Charlie Angell, called me and made an appointment with me and told me that they did not believe that the incumbent Senator Ron Heim was going to be running for another term in the Senate and asked me if I would consider running. I got home and I called my husband. I said, "John, you're never gonna believe why they want to take me to lunch." And he urged me to...I think it came at a good time. Our son was already at KU and our daughter was going to be going. So in that respect I didn't have a direct day-to-day motherly responsibility. I just guess I became interested and was encouraged.

Q: How early in the year did all this happen?

A: This happened in the spring.

Q: So you had quite a while to campaign and plan your first election campaign?

A: Well, Ron didn't announce that he wasn't going to run until about June or late May. And then at that time there was a question how many Republicans might be running in the primary. As it turned out, I was the only one, but there was a lot of activity.

Q: Well, what kind of a campaign, how did you plan it and tell me a little about....

A: Well, the first thing that I did was to call a number of my friends and acquaintances and visit with them about my interest and got a lot of good information about the things they thought

were important for me to do and the things they thought were important as far as issues were concerned. I did quite a study on the issues and got a steering committee of people I had worked with as a volunteer. Because that's been my background, really, working as a volunteer, and people that I felt were fairly diversified in terms of their interests and we just sat down and laid out a campaign and I pretty well stuck to it.

Q: That's interesting. What were some of the organizations that these volunteers came from, organizations you had worked for, and the people who helped in your campaign?

A: The Junior League in Topeka was probably my primary source of volunteer assistance, but I had also been on the Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and Red Cross, Family Service and Guidance Center, Florence Crittendon Services, Mental Health Association, to name a few. Because of some of those--particularly the social services agencies--I was able then to get some people that had interests perhaps that were not ones that I came into contact with day in and day out. That brought some diversity, men and women. My interest in running for this Senate was, or maybe I should say my concern, was the lack of economic growth in Kansas. I am very much of a pro-business lawmaker and I had some concern about how we were structuring our education system to prepare young people to enter the work force at that time. Of course, now the nation is getting quite a bit of national publicity on work force preparation. But I had those concerns at that time. So, I made that very clear and I was also interested--although I'm a woman--I was interested in issues as a person and I guess I kind of went from the people that I chose to surround myself with in terms of policy, know-how, the feel in the community, and so on. But my interest was in preparing young people, providing economic growth, and so that would assist all of us whether we were representing the workers, representing the employers, representing women with social concerns, simply to generate the revenues that would allow us to meet some of those social concerns.

Q: Well, you say you had a plan and stuck to it. What were some of the facets of this plan and what were some of the activities you engaged in during your campaign?

A: Well, of course, my number one priority was to become versed in the issues. Number two, I felt that I had fairly good name recognition, at least in the southwestern part of my district. My district covers all southern Shawnee County and so, in the southwest part of the district I felt I had a fair name recognition. I had been a lifetime Topekan and I had been on a ballot before. But I wanted to meet with as many people as I possibly could and made a concerted effort to do that. I wanted to develop my campaign literature to show me in some of the roles that I had played in my adult life and so we did some work to try to get together some old photographs that were not in my possession at all. And we were successful in doing that. Just to illustrate what my involvement and my caring had been in the community, and my ability to provide leadership and make

decisions. The door-to-door campaign was the most important part of my campaign, and I personally dedicated myself mostly to that with a great deal of help from my husband and help from volunteers also.

Q: That's quite an undertaking. I mean, you have a whole senatorial

A: That is correct.

Q: Approximately how many voters vote?

A: I'm sure that any other lawmaker, elected official, could tell you exactly how many voters she had and exactly how many votes she got, but I can't tell you that.

Q: Has your district remained pretty much the same?

A: No, my district has grown. Southern Shawnee County, and particularly in the southwest, has grown more than any other senate district in Shawnee County. The senate will be reapportioning itself before the end of my term of office. I serve on the reapportionment committee and my district, which is the Twentieth Senatorial District, will be reduced some and the other two senate districts will be expanded some. Even looking forward from 1992, the projection is that southwest part of Shawnee County will be the fastest growing.

Q: That's something. It's kind of frightening too where they might decide to draw some lines. But yours would be shrinking then instead of...?

A: Mine, yes, mine would be reduced some.

Q: What issues--you've mentioned issues--were important during your first campaign then? What did you identify?

A: I was elected right prior to the legislative vote on lottery, parimutuel, liquor by the drink, reappraisal. So, taxes and the revenue generating issues.

Q: You were right before all those?

A: That is correct. And, as you know, there were at that time many diverse views on reappraising property and--same as there are after the fact--I guess now that it has been done, I certainly have a better feeling and perspective for why it had been such a volatile issue prior to my being elected to the senate. At the time I was running, it really perplexed me why the legislature would not act and we didn't allow the courts to act for it. But, as I say, in hindsight, I can understand why the legislature had so much trouble getting an agreement and was reluctant to act.

Q: It's a big issue. Did you have one Democratic opponent or...?

A: I did.

Q: Did they have a primary?

A: No, the Democrat opponent had announced her intention to run quite early. Her name was Laura Class and she announced her intention quite early, actually had her campaign materials prepared by the time that I announced that I was going to run.

Q: Now, after you were elected, did you know some legislators, some senators, or did you have a mentor or someone who helped you get started and get on the right committees?

A: Well, as I indicated earlier, I had done some work as a volunteer lobbyist in the legislature, primarily for children's organizations. But also had been the legislative liaison for the State Board of Education and, therefore, I knew quite a number of senators at that time. I did, though, upon being elected and at the time the senate was organizing following my election, I made it known what my interests were and I also tried to get advice from former legislators. One of my mentors, and I would call him a mentor, was Dick Rogers.

Q: Now, was he still in the Senate then?

A: No, he wasn't.

Q: I can't remember exact times, but it didn't seem like he was, but he would still be helpful because he would know the people. What committees were you appointed to then?

A: Well, I was appointed as chairman of Administrative Rules and Regulations, which certainly nobody aspires to, but I must say that it was certainly a learning experience. I was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Education Committee and then appointed to six other committees in the legislature which included as I recall Assessment and Taxation, Public Health and Welfare, Local Government, Reapportionment. Oh, and, I'm not sure I have mentioned all of them, but the eighth one came after I had been elected to the Senate, as I indicated my focus, my interest, was to try to bring about some economic programs in the state and I was a bit surprised that in the state of Kansas there was no legislative committee on economic development. In other words, there was no focus at all in the legislative arena. Then, at that time, the Department of Economic Development was located in an area which could hardly be found. There was so very little visibility and no state strategy for economic development and I had many visits and wrote a formal letter to then President of the Senate, Bob Talkington, expressing my concerns and what I felt we should do to try to address some of those concerns. One of them was to create a legislative committee on economic development. That was done and it was, at that time, a joint house/senate commission. It was not technically a legislative committee and five people were appointed from the Senate and five people were appointed from the House. Of the five people in the Senate, three were members of the majority party, which is the Republican Party, and because of my interest and my efforts to get this started, I was one of the three that was appointed from the Senate, which was

quite something because the other two represented much more experience and roles and ways and means and in some leadership areas in the Senate.

Q: Well, that's exciting to be on a committee that's just forming like that and have some input. Are you still on the same committees, pretty much?

A: No, there has been some change and it did reorganize after my first term, at the beginning of my second term. At that time, I expressed an interest in being on the Ways and Means Committee. I then became the only Republican Senator from Shawnee County. At that time, Shawnee County had no member on the Senate Ways and Means Committee and I did a little work and visited with my colleagues and so on, and the first thing when the Senate reorganized, I was elected by my colleagues to the leadership committee, which is called Organization, Calendar and Rules. What that committee does is we create and submit to the legislature the rules of the Senate. We also appoint committees to Senate. It's a seven member committee and I campaigned for that committee and was elected by my colleagues, so I was in a position then to make some committee appointments. Ways and Means, of course, is the most coveted committee in the Senate and I had to balance that against what perhaps some of my appointments had been which were also highly coveted, such as my Vice-Chairmanship of Education. There are always way more people who want to be on that committee than there are slots. So, I did a little trade off, but I did achieve the membership on the Ways and Means Committee, for which I was very glad. I passed on the chairmanship of Administrative Rules and Regulations and assumed the chairmanship of Labor, Industry and Small Business. I guess the other committees I'm now serving on, besides my Labor, Industry and Small Business which I chair, I became vice-chairman of the, really, banking and insurance committee. It's called Financial Institutions, but it's all banking and insurance. The others may be essentially the same. By assuming Ways and Means, I dropped Tax because they meet at the same time. Labor and Industry meets at the same time as Education. Financial Institutions meets at the same time as Local Government, so I did make some changes.

Q: Well, what bills have you introduced or sponsored during your...?

A: That I'd have to get back in my files. I am afraid I am not prepared to do that. One of the first bills that I co-authored, and normally I try to join with other Senators, not always all Republicans--Republicans and Democrats--to co-sponsor legislation. There may have been a few bills that I have sponsored on my own, but generally I join with others. The first one I do remember and it was a bill that was introduced as a result of instances in Kansas where asbestos had been removed from buildings, either put in a trashbag and just tossed out or dumped in dumpsters. So, that, of course, there's a lot that's been done since then. Federal regulation has come in to do much of what we did in 1985, but we did set up a regulatory process and standards that must be met for the removal of asbestos and I am afraid that the bureaucracy has taken off since then.

Q: Well, somebody had to enforce those rules and regulations, too.

A: Well, we also at that same time had to allow school districts the ability to do some bonding in order to be able to pay for that asbestos removal because, as you know, a lot of that has been done in schools so that there were several pieces of legislation that were involved there. I'm afraid at this point I'm absolutely stymied, but I have introduced bills in the area of taxes. This past session I co-authored a bill that would have put a cap on the amount that local governing units could levy against property to fund local services. I have introduced a bill that provided some better definitions in reappraising property. I was concerned with some of the appraisal work that had been done here in Shawnee County, both on commercial property and on residences. Representing southern Shawnee County, an important part after reappraisal was the area 21st and Wanamaker Road, or really all the Wanamaker corridor, and it had been brought to my attention that a number of homes, particularly on 21st street had been appraised at commercial value, but on the other hand, the city council had before that passed an ordinance that said there would only be two commercial access roads, and so some of these homes did not even have commercial access and had been appraised at commercial values and I first tried to remedy this through Shawnee County Appraiser, but had no luck there. So, I introduced legislation that alleviated that problem. Then another piece of tax legislation as I remember provided more specific definition of inventories. I've co-authored a number of education bills, a number of bills of concern to social policy, such as a recently enacted Senior Care Act that allows people to remain in their homes. That's the one that comes to my mind being a recent piece of legislation.

Q: Was that passed the last session? Or was it the year before?

A: Year before that.

Q: Probably just went into effect about a year ago.

A: Needless to say, I have introduced legislation that would bring Washburn University into the state system and, oh, another piece of important legislation in which I was one of the prime sponsors was a forty-year mandatory life sentence for first degree murderers and that has recently been enacted. Another piece of legislation was reduced rates, income tax rates, following the federal tax reform. Obviously, the legislation was passed a year or two later. We would not have had the windfall, but I was a co-sponsor on that piece of legislation. I'm afraid I've done a rather fuzzy job, but that's....

Q: You've done very well, I mean just off the top of your head. Certainly, those things are a matter of record.

A: That's correct. I mean, at the time that we had no AIDS policy, HIV, I was one of the senate sponsors on what we considered was some rather important legislation on that.

Q: Probably your committees sponsored a lot of things, too.

A: Oh yes. Oh, committees sponsor....For instance, one piece of committee work was a bill that was enacted this past session on workers' compensation and that was a bill that came out of the Labor and Industry Committee, and, as chairman of that committee, then I was responsible for leading the Senate floor debate on that.

Q: Labor and Industry doesn't seem to be the place they would put a woman.

A: I don't believe they ever had.

Q: I'm thinking you're probably the first. I haven't looked it up.

A: I suspect I am probably the first and I think some of those non-traditional roles are healthy. You may be interested to know that not only am I as a woman the chairman of Labor and Industry, but my vice-chairman is a woman and the ranking minority member is a woman. I think that probably the men who have been running the Labor and Industry work in the legislature are just shaking their heads. I suppose we have put a bit of a different perspective on it. One of the things that I think is extremely important is work force training and I have tried to bring that to the Labor and Industry Committee which is a committee that has really been kind of in the middle of labor and industry disputes. I don't think that the legislature should be an arena that hears those disputes first and I tried not to let it be. But we're, in that committee, we're talking about people, we're talking about creating a good work environment for workers, but also a good business climate for employers. So, in that respect, I think the addition of my committee of small business legislation is extremely important and one of the pieces of small business legislation that did get introduced into our committee this year was a bill which provided a civil remedy for worthless checks, which has for some time been a thorn in the sides of businesses.

Q: This sounds like financial issues. Are there any issues that you think have been identified and called "women's issues" that you were, as a woman legislator, expected to take a leadership role, defending, defeating, or whatever the case?

A: Well, there may be some expectation that I would have taken a prime role in some of these pieces of legislation, but I cannot say that I have. For instance, in two or three instances, legislation that came through my Labor, Industry and Small Business Committee in these past two years have been provisions in bills that would provide or assure equity, whether they be on commissions or advisory panels. I have not had any pay equity issues, but I am not sure that I take a traditional woman's view on some of those issues in that it's always been my fear that if we start legislating equity women stand to lose.

Q: Well, do you think other women or women legislators as a group are expected to take a leadership role on some of this, what some people would consider women's issues?

A: I think that recently women legislators have been expected to assume a position and take action on issues pertaining to abortion and choice.

Q: By other legislators or by your constituents? Who has that expectation?

A: I don't believe it's by the other legislators. I think it's more from groups and so I even hesitate to state constituents. I think perhaps serving in the Senate I'm in a bit of a different situation than perhaps you'll find visiting with House members. There aren't as many women in the Senate and the men, though there are some "good ol' boys,"--I would not want to pretend that there are not--I think that the majority of the men in the Senate have worked to include women in leadership roles and prime positions of responsibility. In that respect, I think I probably would take a few steps backwards if I were only a woman's issue person.

Q: Are there any groups, informal or formal groups, that you participate in, besides party. I mean, well, you have the delegation from Topeka....

A: Yes, Shawnee County Delegation.

Q: Are there any other groups like that that you participate in? Was there a Senate Women's Coalition this time?

A: No, there was not a women's coalition and I don't really expect there to be one, at least for the next two years. I am going to go to a meeting in the middle of November in St. Louis which is bipartisan, but it is a women legislators meeting. I have never done this before, but I think that I will find it very informative and very interesting. I'm looking forward to it.

Q: That sounds interesting. Is anyone else from here going?

A: Yes, there are others going, both Senators and House members going.

Q: And it's just women?

A: Yes, just women.

Q: Do you have any particularly vivid memories of certain happenings or experiences or bills or debates or meetings?

A: Oh yes, my first amusing, and it is amusing.... You will laugh and I had to laugh. There was no other choice. My first year in the Senate, not too long after I had been there, I was going to be responsible for carrying my first bill on the Senate floor and it's hard to anticipate exactly when that bill will come up because you never know how much debate there's going to be on

bills that were scheduled previously. My bill was fairly close to the top of the calendar so I expected it to come up pretty quick. Well, we got bogged down on some issue and you know I was a bit nervous and I did have to go to the bathroom, and at that time there was no women's lounge adjacent to the Senate. We had to walk out of the Senate and walk through the lobbyists, and turn the corner to get to a two-stall women's restroom. Well, I just didn't know what to do. I didn't know what...the more I thought about it, the more urgent it seemed and yet I was afraid that my bill would come up. Well, as I said before, we kind of got bogged down and I turned to my seatmate who's a male, and I said, "I'm going to go to the ladies' room. I just hope my bill doesn't come up." He said, "Okay." So, I did this and, of course, worked through the lobbyists and got into the restroom and the speaker does go into the restroom. Well, I had no more gotten committed to this than, I'll be darned, but the debate was over on the bill right before mine and my bill came up and the chairman recognized the Senator from Shawnee, Senator Salisbury, to carry this bill. Well, it was dying, of course, and I finished up and quickly, quickly, ran through all the lobbyists which were--all of them, of course, had seen me go in the restroom and come out of the restroom, some of my male friends and my female friends also were laughing --and I ran around the corner and came into the Senate. Of course, it was just obvious and I'm sure I was as red as can be. And since then, they have built a restroom adjacent to the Senate which does help, but that was my first very amusing moment.

The second one that I guess I have to laugh at was a bill on administrative rules and regulations and the Senator who was supposed to carry that had preceded me as chairman of Administrative Rules and Regulations, Senator Wurtz, and that bill had come out of his work, not any work that I had done as chairman. The bill came up and he was not in the Senate chamber and the Senate President asked me if I would take a moment and look at the bill and see if I could carry it on the Senate floor, which I did take a real quick look at it. It was kind of a thick bill and I said, "Well, Mr. President, it appears to be just some technical changes in the laws. There doesn't appear to be, from what I can tell, anything of substance here." And one of the other Senators rose and said, "Well, what is the part in the bill about farm wineries? Are those technical changes, too?" So, I said, "Mr. President, I feel that I need to yield to somebody who has more knowledge of the issues in here than me." But we all just had to laugh, and so I learned then that it is very easy to say no to the President when you don't have knowledge of it, there's no reason that you should feel compelled to assume something you can't do.

Q: Well, how many women were in the Senate when you first were there?

A: There were five of us. Two Democrats who had served in the Senate. Three of us were new. Another woman from Shawnee County, Jeanne Hoferer, was elected at the same time as I, and a Senator from Johnson County, Audrey Langworthy, was elected the same time as I.

Q: And how many are there now?

A: I believe there are nine.

Q: So, it's multiplying rather than just adding. The numbers are getting a lot larger fast. How effective, as a group, do you think women legislators are in the Senate? Is there a difference between their effectiveness and the men counterparts?

A: I think there has been, yes. I think for one thing men have had more opportunities to get together outside the Senate work and share information, share camaraderie, and form a, let's say, a mutual respect or a mutual something. I think that women have been isolated from that. The women senators that I know, and maybe I should speak for myself, but I think this is generally true of the other women in the Senate. We're not 'good ole boys' and we have not attempted to be, and to go out and have some beers and visit with the men just hasn't been something that we have done. We have had to be more creative in building a respect with our male colleagues. Now, as women, I think we have easily been able to get together, whether it might just be in our offices, but just kind of kick our shoes off and put our feet up, skirts and all, this is something we have been able to do as women. But we've had to be a bit creative in doing this with men. I feel after six years, that I have gained some respect.

Q: Do you think having nine women has made a difference? I mean, the greater the number the more this is going to change?

A: I think perhaps it will. At first, I noticed that the presence of five women seemed to be fairly threatening to some male senators. And we certainly would not have gone out and formed our little clique or our little group because that would have just exacerbated the problem. But I do think that those same few that I'm talking about that felt threatened perhaps now have gained a greater respect of the power and authority that women are able to demand. I think perhaps the thing that has assisted me most was this piece of legislation that was enacted by last year's legislature on worker's compensation. There were some provisions in there that were controversial and they were very difficult kind of worker/employer kinds of issues, and some of the men even in the leadership in the House were willing to kind of cave in a bit early and I argued that that would be a mistake because that would just destruct the policy that was trying to be set. We were trying to achieve a cost savings and, to cave in was not going to achieve what this legislation was all about. I convinced the men both in the House and the Senate who were philosophically on my side that we would be better to say we'll drop the legislation which had something of interest for those people who wanted to make these changes. Everyone was going to lose if I allowed this piece of legislation to drop. And I called their bluff on it, and I won. And I used the word "I" fairly loosely. Obviously, I can't take total responsibility for everything, but because I was responsible for all this and for structuring how it was to be done, I think I gained some respect in that way. There have been others. This role in labor and industry has been probably the most interesting in terms of gaining some real respect from my colleagues. Another way I've been able to do it is through my

work on ways and means. I am responsible for 18 agency budgets myself and some of them are very big, complex budgets, like Winfield State Hospital, as one example. There are some real policy decisions to be made in that area and, because I've been willing to do my homework and to make a fair presentation of what I know, I've gained some respect that way too.

Q: I'm going to ask you some questions now just about yourself.

A: I feel like I've been talking about myself for some time.

Q: But these are maybe more about your private life than your public life. You mentioned your father had been in the legislature. What was your maiden name?

A: My maiden name was Lang; his name was Herbert Lang and he was elected at the same time as Dwight Eisenhower was elected to the presidency. His father before him had served in both the House and the Kansas Senate. His name was Henry Mosier Lang and he was elected from Russell.

Q: What years did he serve?

A: I can't recall offhand, but he served several years in both the House and the Senate. My father served two terms as I recall in the Kansas House. He was the father of the Kansas Turnpike. He took a lead in right-to-work legislation. He was very active in insurance legislation.

Q: Is he still alive?

A: No, he's not.

Q: Was he alive when....

A: No, he never knew I was elected.

Q: Well, I know I've seen you with your mother. Do you remember his activity in the legislature? How old were you?

A: Well, I was--now these questions are hard for me-- I think I was maybe just in junior high school at that time. I served as a page when he was there and that was when there was a central telephone operator right outside the house chamber and that was my favorite job when I paged. You paged for a week at that time and I loved taking the telephone messages into the representatives. Also, the lobbying at that time was much, much different. There were very few lobbyists and the party caucus frequently met at a location outside of the state capitol and some of the people who remember my father, served in the legislature when he did, remember going to a Republican Party caucus at my parents' home. They also had a number of dinner parties that entertained legislators. They didn't...there was not the kind of entertainment scheduled for legislators then.

Q: The legislators themselves did some of the entertaining?

A: That's correct. Certainly, the local legislators did. My father always said that he really spent more money than he made as a legislator, and I can understand why.

Q: Well, now, you were born here in Topeka?

A: I was born--no I'm not a native Kansan--I was born in New York City and moved here, my parents moved here, when I was a year old. My father's a native Kansan.

Q: You were...six years ago, how old were your children when you were elected?

A: Well, my children were born in 1963 and 1966, so in '86 my daughter would have been twenty. So, you see, she was going to college in 1984. She was a freshman at KU during my first legislative session. She did work on my campaign, and my son was two years ahead of her. So both of them were in Morris at KU.

Q: They both campaigned for you?

A: Yes.

Q: How did they feel about you running?

A: Oh, well, my daughter particularly is very pleased. She remembered four years before that when I had been called to file for the State Board of Education and she had gone down to the State House with me at the time that I filed the first time to run for public office. That memory is very vivid with her, so she has always been very enthusiastic about my holding office. Both my children have held office in school. She ran successfully for the freshman class treasurer.

Q: Do you think they'll follow you into the House?

A: I wouldn't be one bit surprised.

Q: I think there's some characteristic like that. That's why we ask that question to see if there's anything that's traceable. You were born in New York City but you moved back to Kansas. How would you describe your growing up here? What schools did you go to?

A: I went to the public schools. I went to Clay School which is now closed. I went to Roosevelt Junior High School which is now torn down. I went to Topeka High School which has been refurbished. The only time I went away to school was my first three years in college, I went to a girls' school in Virginia and came back and finished at KU. As a student and growing up, first of all, I was a very athletic person so I was always in athletics, from grade school on. In high school, though, I was very involved in high school activities and in elective positions.

Q: Political-type positions?

A: Yes, for which I campaigned and had to be elected. First by my class as sophomore representative and then by the whole school.

Q: Do you relate that back to your father?

A: It was never conscious, but I'm sure psychologically it seemed like a very natural thing for me to do. I have never felt that I was in foreign territory.

Q: Well, what did you major in in college?

A: I majored in English Literature and American History. I did a double major, neither one of which equipped me for the world of work or for the political arena, for that matter.

Q: Well, did you work after you graduated from college?

A: I helped to open Vivian's Gift Shop for my first year out of college. At that first year, I also joined the Junior League of Topeka and then I was married a year after school, and I make the point about the Junior League of Topeka because it, more than anything else, is responsible for what I'm doing today. For the first of many, many years of my life, I made volunteerism a career and I know that because at one time I was interviewed about the various volunteer positions I had held, most of which were in policy-making. Although I did some one-on-one volunteer work, a good deal of what I did was either initiating something or providing the policy and oversight for it. But when I was interviewed for some of the volunteer positions I held, I was asked to estimate how many hours a week I spent in volunteer activity. I had to do a little thinking and calculation, but I came up with 30 hours a week. So, for me, raising young children and my volunteer activity and the support role I tried to provide for my husband was definitely time and a half.

Q: How old were you when you were first elected to the Senate?

A: Well, I'm fifty-one now and, so actually, my election would have been seven years ago. The election would have been 1984, and I was born in '39, so you can put pencil and paper to that.

Q: Exactly, because I think we both probably graduated in 1956 from high school?

A: I graduated in '57, and college class of '61.

Q: How would you describe your family, with your parents? Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I have a sister, a younger sister.

Q: What type of family activity, what kind of emphasis did your parents place on...?

A: My father particularly was extremely involved in community affairs and statewide affairs. I just can't even mention a position that

he didn't hold in that regard, and so my mother took very much a support role in that. She was definitely a full mother, and we really did a lot of support role with my father, too. My father was very close to us, however. He was--he spent a lot of time in father-kind of activity.

Q: Well, he probably--you probably knew what he was doing in his public roles, too, then?

A: Oh, I can't say that I really did. We didn't really sit at the table and--I don't think any more than any other family--I can't sit here and say, oh yes, I remember we used to sit at the table and talk about affairs of state and public policy. No, we really didn't. We talked about more personal things, so I didn't really glean any insights from that.

Q: Now, you lived at home. I ask this question because if you're outside of Topeka this is important probably. While you were in the legislature, you commuted back and forth, but you stayed home in your own home?

A: Oh, yes. Living here in the capital city was, and continues to be, extremely important to me. Although my children had gone to Lawrence to school, I still put the mothering very high on my list. It means a great deal to me. Now, my children are all married and neither one of them are even in the state right now. They're both living out of state. But it means a great deal to me to come home in the evenings to my husband. I cannot overstress that. I don't know if I'm made up differently from other people or not, but I'm not positive that I would have as much interest in serving in the legislature if I were commuting.

Q: Good question.

A: Yeah, that was a real good question for me.

Q: Do you think that in your case anyway that there was a cost to your family for you to serve in the legislature?

A: Absolutely none. It has actually...I think my husband would tell you firsthand that he feels extremely proud of the work that I am doing. He feels very much a part of it because I am able to come home. I'm able to talk to my closest constituent on an ongoing basis. Now, sometimes we have little home debates on some of the issues and I've been known to come around and he's been known to come around. He really enjoys it. He has a much greater academic knowledge of political science than do I. He was very involved in political science in college, and so that has certainly enhanced my appreciation and my knowledge of what I'm doing. I would say we are really doing this, from going door-to-door, really discussing the issues and having an understanding of the impact that they're going to make outside the halls of the legislature.

Q: Now, do you feel like your experience in the legislature has changed the way your friends, if not your family, treat you, see you?

A: Yes, it has changed a great deal. Some of this is good and some of it is maybe not so good. Having grown up in Topeka, I guess, and having been involved in volunteer activity to the extent that I was, I was very fortunate. John and I have been very fortunate to have an awful lot of close friends, even more because our children went to school here locally. Friends have been a very important part of our lives. We enjoy entertaining, we enjoy being with them. My legislative activity has restricted that a great deal. Now, who is to say what happens when other people get involved, too. Some of my friends have also taken roles, whether they are elected roles or roles in the business community, that they didn't have before I ran for office, if we can use that as the benchmark. So, who's to know? But I miss seeing my friends as much as I used to. On the other hand, I feel fortunate that these same friends seem to have a high regard for what I'm doing. They are very supportive. When I do have a chance to visit with them, they make me feel like a million dollars. They call me for advice about issues that are on the ballot or things that they read about in the newspaper, and that makes me feel very good. They seem to put a lot of faith in my ability to research the issues and the decisions that I make.

Q: Well, how do you feel this experience has changed you, privately or publicly? Do you think it has made a difference?

A: It has certainly expanded my world and the appreciation for the diversity of my hometown. I felt like I had had so many experiences prior to running for public office, and that I had been so much a part of the city of Topeka, but this has expanded my knowledge beyond what I would ever have expected. It probably also, to be very honest about it, has given me the knowledge that I had greater capabilities than I would have given myself credit for, and I've never been--I hope I've been humble--but I don't feel like I've ever sold myself short. I've never been afraid to be thrust into some new positions. I know frequently when I go in, I am turning a corner and not positive what's going to be around that corner. It all seems to have worked out and I have seemed to be able to arise to the occasion. And I have not been terrified at failing because sometimes I've been more successful than others. I think now of the times that I speak being very important, not only on the Senate floor, but before groups, and on one-to-one. When I was in high school, I was on the varsity debate team and probably more than any of my colleagues at Topeka High School, I was the one that seemed to have to get the four, which is the lowest score. And I will tell you that I certainly would not have had a lot of confidence in my ability to speak. Now, I'm not trying to misrepresent my capabilities there. It's not my strongest suit, but, on the other hand, you know those experiences have built and, in fact, I don't know that I would get a four if I were to go back now.

Q: That's interesting. That probably should be a question we ask. How many of the people in the House and Senate have been in debate. Did that prepare you?

A: I tell you I don't know that debate is.... Maybe debate is only important in that it's competitive. Forensics, which could include debate, could demonstrate the skills that you may have gained in those kinds of activities, or just simply your natural talents. I think the important thing with debate and forensics and athletics and what they have in common is that they are competitive and you are put into a competitive arena. Now, in sports, frequently and still, women are in women's sports. When you are in debate, then it was not a woman's role at all. As a matter of fact, if you were on a varsity debate team as a woman, you were probably the only woman on that varsity debate team, so that throws you into a different arena.

Q: That might be the difference rather than the debate activity itself, the arena?

A: It may have.

Q: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to tell me about yourself or your experiences in the legislature, or anything remotely related to that?

A: I guess nothing occurs to me right now. I guess I would just add, because you have asked about the expectations of my role as a woman and being able to pick up the cudgel for women's issues, I would say that I'm called on more to be a player, an active participant in my party, than I am in what some people term the "women's issues." I never think of "women's issues", but I think of them as "people issues."

Q: That's a good conclusion.