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INTERVIEW: AUDREY LANGWORTHY (REVISED)

Q: When did you serve? How long have you served in the Senate?

A: I have served now six years. This is my seventh year. I began in 1984.

Q: You started out in the Senate. Can you tell us a little something about your first election? I know you were elected, not appointed, the first time.

A: Correct. Yes, I ran for election in 1984. I had, prior to then, been on the Prairie Village City Council for about three years. I had had people come to me and urge me to seek a higher office, so I began by looking into it and checking out the House race. The incumbent was Rex Hoy who had been there quite some time and people kept saying, I think he might retire. The people who had really come to me were urging me to run for the Senate and they were urging me to run against Norman Garr who had over the years fallen from favor because of his personality and his manner of being hard-driving, ruthless, and difficult to get along with. So that's the reason people came to me. They knew I was interested in politics and even then my husband had expressed to people that he would not mind me becoming more involved in politics and especially at the state level, so I did. I looked into both Houses mainly because I thought it would be kind of dumb to run against an incumbent if there was going to be an open seat for the House, but I called Rex Hoy and he didn't get around to returning my phone calls in six weeks and by that time I had moved ahead and had decided that I would run against the incumbent Norman Garr who had been in office twenty years and had been unopposed for sixteen.

Q: What month was this and what year when you made your decision to run?

A: I actually made my decision early which was very helpful. I was talking to people in December of '83, maybe as early as November, and that was an important part of the process as far as you don't go into something without talking with the other players around and people whose opinion you respect and people who know the opponent and so on and so forth. In fact, I had several legal-size tablet pages. People kept saying, oh, you need to talk to so and so. So, I was on the phone a lot, calling and trying to ascertain whether this was a smart move or not. Most people that I called said, oh, it would be great if you would do it, but it won't be easy. They always had that kind of disclaimer. Oh, you ought to do it or it would be great if you would do it, but it won't be easy. It will be a hard race, an unpleasant race. Then I would say, well, can I count on you to help me? And got yes from some people and others would say, oh, I'd sure like you to win, but I can't help you. I know Norman Garr, or he's my lawyer,

or I do bond work with him or he has helped me in the legislature or helped our firm or corporation, and he's done good work for us and, therefore, we won't be able to help you but in the end I did decide and I did announce that I was running right about Kansas Day in January and I kind of went around at the Kansas State festivities and introduced myself and said that I was going to run for the Senate.

Q: Over twenty years he would meet a lot of people and he would probably be asked to do a lot of things. He knew a lot of people. Who were the people who supported you and encouraged you to run? Were they from a group that you had worked with before, an organization?

A: Yes. The people that I initially called were people like the mayor of Prairie Village and the past mayor. People who were active in the Republican Party at that time, or had been involved and active and kind of knew the key players in the county. Some of these people I did not even know very well, but I would go ahead and call them and talk with them. It was very helpful in terms of making those contacts, I think. The important people who got me elected were people I had worked with over the years. Of course, it didn't hurt that I had been raised right there and gone to grade school, high school, and the fact that I had been at KU and then came back to my same community essentially, so I had all those contacts plus then I had spent my early years...first I taught school for 2 1/2 years, but after that I just spent my time in the volunteer sector while I raised our children. So I was very involved with my daughter's school PTAs, Highland Grade School and Indian Hills Junior High, and Shawnee Mission East, and the other part of my time was spent in other volunteer activities, most specifically the Junior League of Kansas City, Missouri. I think I have worked in the League twelve or fourteen years, something like that, and my first big chairmanship was at the Thrift Shop which is where you meet everyone in the whole League because everybody has to be down there to help. So I was chairman of that and did some chairmanships and then became president of the League and, so, all those people are very committed, very involved, and I can remember saying, never underestimate--after I won--never underestimate the power of the Junior League and the PTA, because those are the people, most of whom had never worked for a candidate before.

Q: Totally non-political.

A: Right, they were willing to do anything. Walk door-to-door with me in the neighborhood, send post cards, whatever, so that was my nucleus.

Q: Were they mainly women?

- A: No, not necessarily. Maybe they were the husbands. And, of course, Asher was born and raised here and he is four years older than I am, so he had some different contacts, slightly different age group, and his parents and my parents had lived there all their adult lives.
- Q: You said you were a Republican and why are you a Republican? How long have you been affiliated with the Republican party?
- A: The natural answer for that is my parents were Republicans and I'd never considered being anything else. Asher is a Republican, although he comes from a split family. His father was a Republican and he was born and raised in Atchison. His brother who was two years older is a Republican, but his mother was a very staunch Democrat. Her background, her father and uncle, were very active in the early days in the development of Olathe and they were Democrats. Olathe at that time was a very Republican town and they had a bank. They started a bank because the bank in Olathe was a Republican bank and didn't want to do business with them. It was very interesting. I wish I had it more in depth, but they founded a newspaper because the Olathe newspaper wouldn't take their ads for their lumber yards that they had and, so, they founded their own newspaper, own bank, to take care of their needs and others because they were Democrats. I'm digressing ...maybe you don't want all this. Asher's grandfather later ran for the Senate and at one point was the only Democrat in the Senate. He was able to get legislation through, so he was well liked, and then he ran for governor in 1913 and was elected governor in 1913. Only served one term, but he was, I believe, the second Democrat governor in the history of the state.
- Q: Well, we'll talk about the family a little later. You have talked about how you decided to run and everything, but you really have not located a reason.
- A: Well, we will have to go back a little bit, I guess. I had been doing volunteer work most of the time my daughters were in Senior High--one was getting close to graduating. I took a career development course within the Junior League where you can analyze what you want to do with your life and it asked a lot of questions and there's things to fill out and you kind of ponder this and that and I was at a point where I began to think what am I going to do with my life now that the children are about raised and how was I going to spend the rest of my time. Am I going to get a paying job? Get involved in something? I knew I didn't want...I was not interested in going back to teaching school. I was more interested in....My MS is in Ed Psych and Guidance and I did think about doing something with counseling, especially college-bound students. At any rate, I got to thinking about that. Politics kind of came out in some of these questions, but I don't know whether that was because Asher and I had

both kind of decided that we really didn't know who we were voting for, so we had made the decision that we really needed to do a little volunteer work for the Republican Party and kind of get involved and meet some of the people, which we did. Asher had worked for Larry Wisdom because he had been a home builder, but my first big race to get involved in was to work for Jan Meyers when she ran for the U.S. Senate. And, thinking back, could that be like 1978? So I spent a lot of time working for her and helping out. She did not win that primary but...in fact, Norman Garr was in that race and Jan and Nancy Kassebaum. Well, Nancy won and the next morning we had a call from some of the Kassebaum people saying, we'd like for you and Asher to be co-chairmen of Prairie Village for Nancy Kassebaum, and I sat there thinking, gosh, I'm still feeling badly because Jan Meyers had lost. Although we had gone to several events for Nancy and had been very impressed with her. So, after talking it over, we did decide to continue with this and then we got even more involved and I think that is important in that the fact...when you're making up your mind to run. I cannot imagine somebody cold going up and filing and running for office without ever being involved. Subsequent to that then, I got more involved in other people's races and then I went on to the Prairie Village City Council about '81, but that was partly because I had been involved and gotten to know people and so it was kind of the natural thing. I got asked to submit a resume' because there was a vacancy and then....

Q: Were you appointed, then, to the City Council first term? Were you elected?

A: Then I had to run for election. I have to backtrack. I did apply for a vacancy and didn't get it the first time. There was a death and the mayor appointed the widow of the fellow that had died. But I had applied at that time and then the next couple of years I kind of forgot about it and then I got a call about it and they said they had another vacancy. Why don't you turn in your resume', and by that time I was thinking, I'm not really sure I want to do this now because I am involved in other things. But I went ahead and did it and they appointed me. Then I had to run the next year because... I had to run in the next immediate election even to fill an unexpired term. Prairie Village at that time did have a partisan government, so I did have to declare as a Republican. Since then, about a year ago, they went to non-partisan. So I did run as a Republican, but I was never opposed so I didn't really campaign. I did some door-to-door and I sent out some postcards, but I didn't send out postcards to everybody.

Q: How did you run for your first election? How did you campaign? What were some of the things you did? Well, I suppose you did some of the same kinds of things in your second one, too. I know you had a very vigorous campaign.

A: They have both been vigorous, although the first one was really kind of scary at times because, though he was certainly a knowledgeable, articulate, able person, he did have what I would call a personality flaw in that he held grudges and was very vindictive. Made himself very unpopular, but the press loved him because he gave all kinds of caustic comments to the press and so he was in the press a lot. During the time he was majority leader, he caused a lot of enemies by working very closely with the Democrats and saw that, because of his powerful position, he could maneuver things and the Democrats got a lot of their agenda passed with the help of Norman and that offended the Republicans and this was the 19 to 21 close Senate House. so with himself and another person they were able to do some things that did not set well with the Republicans and so he lost his base of support. That's actually where other Republican Senators from the Johnson County area came to me and said, would you please try to unseat?

Q: Well, now, you did a lot of person-to-person, door-to-door type campaigns?

A: The key thing, at least for me, was finding a really able person to chair the campaign and I was very fortunate to... her name is Carol Pendleton. And actually she was not a close friend of mine. In fact, I didn't know her well and I never would have thought to ask her, but my friend Sue Weltner, who was on the city council and who had run for mayor against a man and had won in the primary race, Carol had been her campaign manager. So she had experience, plus Carol had worked in other campaigns and she and her husband always had been kind of involved themselves but she was not someone I knew well. But we're best friends now. She has helped with both my campaigns and I genuinely feel that she has spent almost as much time on both of them as I have. She helped organize it. I did have a kitchen cabinet of knowledgeable individuals who could advise me strategically: you ought to put out this kind of mailing now; you ought to do that now.

Q: How many people in that group?

A: About five.

Q: Not huge numbers.

A: No.

Q: You had a lot of workers, though?

A: Lot of workers. My goal has been in both elections--it was never possible but I still work toward it--to get someone designated as a block chairman on every block and it works in some areas where I know a lot of people. It breaks down in

areas where the voting is not very strong and in areas that tend to be more Democratic and more transient.

Q: Did you use the media very much?

A: Not really. Do you mean by TV?

Q: TV. Radio.

A: I did do some radio ads both times, but the KSC market is so expensive because you have to pay for the entire metropolitan area and we were only one slice of it.

Q: There weren't single stations targeted...?

A: No, the only thing it did do is, I think it's in '84, I think we put on the weather channel...what do they call it, a ribbon-tab line that just kept running across every so often. It's a vote for underlying where 7th district or something like that. That has been the extent of my television advertising.

Q: Newspapers?

A: I do newspaper ads and direct mail. Direct mail and lots of door-to-door. I try to get out as much as I can.

Q: You had signs up everywhere.

A: And then signs. Actually, in '84, there weren't as many signs because at that point in time both Mission Hills and Prairie Village had ordinances against signs. The legal counsel for Prairie Village convinced the city that that was probably unconstitutional, so they did pass a law right after the '84 election allowing each yard to have one yard sign.

Q: One.

A: You could only pick out one candidate. Mission Hills still does not allow yard signs. So, yes, yard signs have become more important, but I relied most heavily on mailings, especially in the '84 election.

Q: It was Asher's grandfather that was in the Senate?

A: Yes, George Hodges.

Q: Do you think that influenced you in any way?

A: No, but it influenced Asher. I never did meet him. He had died before I met Asher and so...but he was brought up frequently in family discussions as Asher was a Political Science major in college and had a natural interest in politics and he has always been wonderful at encouraging me

or pushing me ahead or giving me an opportunity to get involved with whatever and giving me full support for it. I think he actually would like to run for office, although he says he doesn't have the right personality for it. Probably he puts the seed in the back of my mind that maybe I should do it.

Q: There wasn't any other family member?

A: No one on my side of the family.

Q: Then your district hasn't changed yet over the elections?

A: It will change a little bit. I will gain a little bit more of Overland Park.

Q: What is your district? Can you describe it?

A: It's State Line [road] on the east from 47th street which is the Wyandotte-Johnson County line. It's also the line for Kansas City, Kansas. And south, I do not have any of Leawood which is on the border, too. So the district swings around at approximately 83rd Street, around Leawood, but goes to 95th Street which is the ending border for Prairie Village and then it goes back up Nall and then jogs over to Lamar for a space because that's what Prairie Village does. And then back to Nall and then out 63rd Street. I have one precinct of Merriam, which is where Antioch Park is, and goes over to Antioch and back up to 47th Street, so it includes the area where Shawnee Mission North is. So I have two high schools in the district--Shawnee Mission North and Shawnee Mission East.

Q: Who were the representatives in the districts?

A: There are three totally within Sod[?], but there have been six that have had parts of them. I think I've lost one due to redistricting, so I think there are only five that have parts of my district.

Q: When you were elected, what issues were important to people in your district and what have remained the issues that are important in the district?

A: Well, the main issue in my '84 election when I was campaigning was its time for a change, which isn't necessarily creative but, because he had been unopposed for 16 years, one of his downfalls was he kind of relied upon his caustic comments in the newspaper to keep his visibility up and he hadn't had to campaign very hard in elections. And there had been a lot of turnover and, so, when I was going door-to-door, a lot of people would say, gosh I really don't know who my senator is, which was always encouraging to march on to the next house, made you feel good that you were getting some visibility. So that was the major issue of the

time. It's always difficult when you're ousting an incumbent to try not to get personal, and I was trying to campaign for myself and be a positive candidate and trying not to put my opponent down all the time, but occasionally you could hardly help it because people would wonder why I would be better than the incumbent.

Q: Did they ask you then?

A: They would ask me then, and I would have to try in a nice way to say that he'd been ineffective because he was no longer working for the good, with his colleagues, for the betterment of the state, that he had his own agenda and he had offended people and, therefore, he could not get anything done.

Q: In '84 the issues were different that were before the legislature. There wasn't the big tax movement problems, etc.

A: I don't really remember any huge issue like taxes or highways. No, I campaigned on doing more for education.

Q: His attendance record, was that an issue?

A: His attendance record was a bit of an issue. Yes, he missed quite a bit. I had kind of forgotten that, but I did research on that and he would tend to take long weekends for either business or pleasure.

Q: And you probably tried to have a good voting attendance to offset that. Have there been any issues now since you've been in the Senate that you championed or worked hard for or maybe even sponsored bills for?

A: I tried to work hard for issues that were important to my district, but I did have the opportunity to have a fun experience my very first year due to a good friend, Barbara Burgess, who suggested to me that I attend a meeting with her on the Oregon Trail. I got interested in what they were doing and they were feeling like there was a need to have the Oregon Trail get more recognition in the state of Kansas and the trail be designated as an official trail in Kansas, which it was not, although there were others like Santa Fe and Cimmaron and so on that were official. So that was my first piece of legislation and it was a fun experience. It was not too controversial. We did get a little controversy in the House. The Senate was pretty good about it and didn't give me a hard time on it which was good because I, being a freshman, a lot of controversy might have made it difficult, but I managed to get it through the Senate and finally through the House and there was a nice ceremony after the bill signing and we, as a result of that, got the first signage for the National Park Service who had just designed the sign. We got to put up the first sign in the state of Kansas.

Q: That was kind of a surprise, too, to get something passed like that so quickly and to get the signs up so quickly. Getting back to the issues. While you have been in the Senate, are there any issues that seem to sort of be identified as women's issues and where the women are expectors on or carry the bill or something like that? I'm thinking of children's issues, abortion, etc.

A: I think that happens more in the House than it does in the Senate. Most of us on the Senate side have not...well, none of us wave a feminist flag. We all show an interest in, say, education or some of the social-funding issues on the maternal and infant kinds of funding for young mothers and that sort of thing, but we have men who are equally as interested in that. So I really cannot say that there have been any issues that have been labeled women's issues. I can't speak for before I came here. I know Jan Meyers was considered....She chaired Public Health and kind of got labeled as being a liberal on some of those issues but right now, no.

Q: It may be a change.

A: I will say I probably am the most outspoken for abortion rights. It's not something I really wanted to do but none of the other women would come forth. Well, we have women on both sides of the aisle who were pro-choice, but on parental consent, one woman has--her children are adopted--it's a difficult issue for her. We had a Catholic who was pro-choice but it was difficult for her to be vocal on the issue. So I finally looked around the room and decided that we could not let a couple of men who were very good at fighting off abortion legislation do it all the time, so I decided I had to speak up some. But it's not my favorite issue.

Q: It's not been recognised as necessarily a women's issue by the Senate?

A: No.

Q: Just over all, not talking about those issues or any issues in particular, how would you describe your stand if someone were to label you liberal or conservative or whatever, how would you choose to describe yourself?

A: I consider myself to be reasonably, fiscally conservative. I am probably on the liberal side as a Republican on social issues, but I believe that also represents my urban/suburban district.

Q: You feel you're representing them in being that way.

A: Yes, but sometimes I think some of the other Republicans would label me a liberal, if they dared to tell me that.

Q: But you get to label yourself this time.

A: So I consider myself a moderate.

Q: As a freshman legislator, did you have a mentor or anyone who sort of gave you advice or helped you get the committees you wanted?

A: Well, I had a couple of mentors, fortunately. Bud Burke was elected Majority Leader and he's from my area and I have known him a long time and he has actually known my husband longer because they went to kindergarten together. Bud's mother taught my husband Asher how to play the piano and they were in the same class, so Asher has known Bud many years. So Bud took, of course, an interest in me and had actually advised me on the campaign for election, so he was somewhat of a mentor. Because of his new position as Majority Leader, I would sometimes go to Senator Gus Bogina who's the new chairman of Ways and Means, but none the less on some things it was good to go to talk with him and he was accessible when But would not be. I really did not have a woman mentor because when I came to the Senate, it was when Jan Meyers left, otherwise she might have been. I came with two other Republican women, Jeannie Hoferer and Alicia Salisbury, and our offices were all three together. It was by accident, but it was wonderful because we were our own support group and we would do a lot of talking after hours and getting together.

Q: What committees did you serve on, and are you still serving or them?

A: I began by serving on Energy and Natural Resources. I was made vice chairman of Local Government. I was on the Judiciary Committee and the Education Committee and Confirmations my first four years. Do you want to know what I am doing now?

Q: Yes.

A: Now, I am still on Energy and Natural Resources and I am on Local Government. I am no longer vice chairman. I am vice-chairman of Public Health and Welfare and I am vice-chairman of the Assessment and Taxation Committee. Then I am on the Education Committee and I chair the joint committee on Legislative Educational Planning which is an interim committee that's a long-range planning committee for higher education, and I now chair the Confirmations Committee.

Q: Now, that interim committee, are you responsible for some of the legislation I just read about being introduced? No, I guess it wasn't introduced, it was just the Board of Regents suggested a new formation of a new group?

- A: I think maybe you're considering moving the community colleges from State Board of Education over to the Board of Regents. That was a new proposal since our committee met or otherwise he may have brought it to us because he brought several proposals. I will be carrying them in the Senate, assuming it passes--the merger of the Kansas College of Technology in Salina with Kansas State University. That's one of the bills that they came to us about and asked us to support.
- Q: That's a busy committee, then, isn't it?
- A: It is a busy committee. We tried to get qualified admissions brought out of the LAPCs--an acronym for it--but I was short one vote to get the qualified admissions out. I think there are a group of us in the Senate that are putting together an educational package and I think we will put qualified admissions back in that package.
- Q: That will be interesting to see how that happens and develops. Can you describe the statehouse power structure during the years that you have been in office and who are the leaders? You said Bud Burke.
- A: Well, when I first came we did have a change in leadership. Ross Doyen had been Senate President for nine years. I don't know how everyone voted, but there was a change then and Bob Tarkington became Senate President and I really respected his leadership my first four years here. He was kind of a laid-back individual that never really hammered on us too much, except when it was absolutely necessary, but you did not feel pressured at any time. And Senator Burke has carried that out on this side. So we try to be united when we have to and we try to let people go their own way when it's in their best self-interest. In terms of other power in the capitol, my first two years I was under John Carlin as Governor and, maybe because of the issues we were dealing with, I did not disagree with his position on many of the issues that stand out, and then when we got Mike Hayden....It was kind of interesting and I had really looked forward to, now we can really get some things done and it didn't work that way. Here you would think someone of your own party, it would be easy but it wasn't easy and it was difficult actually at times, although I like Mike very much and enjoyed him personally and so on. But it was not an easy time to have a Republican governor, Republican House, Republican Senate. The leadership aspect of it relates to the House. I will say that there always has been a certain tension between the House and the Senate. I imagine there always has been and always will be. I was sort of surprised when I first got here, but oftentimes the biggest frustration would come not with how the governor feels about an issue but all the stupid goings on in the House. And the kind of package that they would want to put together or unusual twist they'd want to do on a bill, amend

one of our bills or send us over a bill that was off-the-wall, but I think that's probably part of the political process.

Q: What bills have you introduced and sponsored that are kind of memorable or...? You don't need to list all of them. I'm sure there are a lot.

A: Oftentimes many of the bills, it's easier to get passage out of them if they are considered committee bills. So I don't always feel that I need to be the lead sponsor. I am thinking about that in terms of the future, that I may get more gutsy, but anytime you are the lead sponsor in a bill it takes you hours. It's a very big responsibility. I have been the lead sponsor on a bill that is important to my area called the bi-state cultural and recreational bill which was to form a compact between three counties in Missouri and two in Kansas to form a cultural recreational district with taxing powers of up to a quarter cent sales tax for cultural projects, whether it would be the Nelson gallery or botanical gardens in Lenexa which they want, or the zoo or whatever. It would be money that would be helpful in strengthening the cultural aspects of metropolitan Kansas City area. I have been working on that bill for four years and I got it through the Senate last year and the House didn't let it out of committee, and so it has been completely rewritten again this year and some people on the House side have put their own stamp and mark on the bill by substantially changing it. And I think they are probably going to want to take the credit for it, but nonetheless, it is starting in the House and if they get it back, I'm sure I am sure I can get it through the Senate again and I'm really hopeful--even though it's not the bill I wanted--I am hopeful that we can get that done. I have also been the chief sponsor of a bill called the community assistance bill which would allow tax credits for businesses who contribute an extraordinary proportion to a not-for-profit agency and it is passed in Missouri, as did the bi-state cultural bill, and this community assistance plan of tax credits has been in effect in Missouri for almost ten years and has been very helpful to many agencies in the not-for-profit sector, and, in fact, it hurts agencies on the Kansas side because when they do a big benefit--like the Kansas City Chiefs or the Royals will do a benefit for an agency--they will ask if they are in the NAP--Neighborhood Assistance Program--and they are much more willing to do it where they can get the tax credits. So agencies on the Kansas side suffer because of it. So I have worked on that for two years and have been the lead sponsor for that and spent a lot of time on it. I can't even get it out of the Senate, so that's...and I am not sure I am even going to introduce it this year. It's an idea whose time will come but with all the other tax problems, giving away credits right now is not a popular theme. So I would say those are two that I have spent

many, many hours trying to educate people on. I have been co-sponsor in terms of bills that make a little splash. The first one, since I am an anti-death penalty voter, I was a co-sponsor, the Hard 40 bill, which is 40 years without parole, and that's the one that did pass both houses and was signed by Governor Hayden although he had been a strong death penalty proponent. But I didn't spend a lot of time working on that. Another bill that was important, I thought, last year to funding the margin of excellence was the cigarette tax--5 cent-per-pack cigarette tax and, unfortunately, that made it through the Senate just fine and just died a miserable death in the House. I know there are a bunch of other bills, but right now they are not totally coming to mind.

Q: Have you participated in any formal or informal coalitions or groups? I know that there's sort of a group that the press called the women's caucus last year. Have you been part of anything like that?

A: We were invited. That was really organized by the House and they were feeling that it was important to get together on an informal basis and talk about issues and see if there could be some networking to get legislation that might be of interest to that group moving faster. From the Senate side, we attended more for just the social aspect of maybe getting to know the House members better because we are all so busy up here, there's not time often to get to know legislators on the House side, period, unless you work with them on an interim committee or a conference committee, which isn't always the best place to get to know someone. Maybe because of our situation...now that there are four Republican women in the Senate and we are all here again in the same office: Sheila Frahm, Lana Oleen, Alicia Salisbury, and myself. So we have our little networking here together that's more informal, but we haven't really gotten together with the Democrat women just as a group of nine.

Q: Can you remember anything particularly....What vivid memories do you have of disaster, victory, whatever? Anything that has happened to you either at the beginning or anytime during your terms.

A: Well, I generally try to avoid any disasters.

Q: If there is anything...?

A: It could have been a big disaster if I'd have lost my first campaign, which I didn't.

Q: Most people try to avoid both.

A: I would have considered that a great blow although I had gone into it knowing there was a chance I could lose, but I also got in it to win.

Q: Any humorous situations?

A: There's always a lot of subtle humor. One thing that is still humorous, even though Alicia Salisbury and I have both been here six years, is some of the men still can't remember who's Alicia and who's Audrey. So we often say, oh, it doesn't matter. We all look alike.

Q: That's good. Let's back up. How many women were in the Senate when you first were here?

A: There were five of us. Nine now, after the '88 election.

Q: Do they have any particular special names for the women?

Q: Well, they did when we first arrived. In '84 we were referred to as the 'skirts', and I really think it was a shock to the Senators to have that many women. They were used to one or two, but to suddenly have five....

Q: OK, let's get back to the skirts now.

A: We were referred to as the skirts, although never to our face, but we know that as a group we were referred to as... what do you think the skirts will think about this? As I think I said before, I don't really think they knew what to do with us at first. The men had suddenly recognized that we were a growing force in the Senate and in the legislature, I'm sure. But when I arrived there was a room off the back of the Senate where you could go and men go in and smoke cigarettes or you can eat or something because you're not supposed to eat on the Senate floor and there was also a men's restroom, but there was no women's restroom. And, see, the restroom and the lounge both had speakers in them so you could hear what was going on and you would know whether it was getting time for a vote or something important was happening, but for us women we had to leave the chamber entirely and we'd have to walk in the front area where all the lobbyists sit around and are kind of listening to what's going on and chatting with one another, and then walk around the corner to use the restroom. So one of the first things that we did do was agitate to get a women's restroom right next to the men's restroom and I will say it has been an important asset. It took about a year to get it done and there was a little complaining about how expensive it was, but we did remind them that we were here to stay. Also we had to put our imprint on it a little bit by asking to be a part of choosing the colors. There was no automatic 'we would like to have your help with all this.' We had to exert our influence to get it accomplished.

Q: I think it was 1980 before there was more than one woman in the Senate. I want to ask you some questions....

A: There is one more thing. It wasn't just said once, but oftentimes we would get ready to go to committees first thing in the morning or at 1:30 in the afternoon or whatever or to go to the Senate floor, that Alicia and Jeannie Hoferer and myself would walk out of her office and walk to the elevator, walk up the stairs together as a threesome and I will bet if it was said once it was said 25 times by one of our male colleagues: 'certainly makes me feel nervous when I see the three of you conspiring.' So anytime that there would be three of us together, some little comment would be made. Of course, if you see three men together, it meant nothing, but to have three women together...they were always worried we were plotting.

Q: Talking about you privately and personally, are you a native of Kansas?

A: I call myself a near native. I was born in Grand Forks, North Dakota, and my parents moved to the Kansas City area when I was two and to Johnson County when I was 2 1/2.

Q: Not one of the native sons or daughters except by adoption. Can you describe your childhood and your education?

A: Since I was born in 1938 and moved to my first home in Johnson County in 1940, I do have fairly strong memories because of those being war years and growing up in kind of a small neighborhood environment. All the houses had been built brand new before the war, but during those war years, there wasn't much mobility. People were there most of the time. You might take a vacation or something but, because of the war years, everybody was out working in their victory gardens, so you had a nice sense of small community. Got to know the neighbors really very well, which is not so much true anymore because there's so many more options for people. I attended Hickory Grove grade school from kindergarten through 8th grade and I feel like I got a basically good education with a few holes here and there and went to Shawnee Mission High School which was the only real high school in the northeast part of the county. Shawnee Mission and then probably Olathe and on the Missouri side was Southwest High School, but the closest school and then there was Wyandotte High School, but be that as it may, it was considered an outstanding high school. Had national recognition and I have very good memories of my four years in high school.

Q: Then you went on to college?

A: I went to Colorado College with two of my friends from high school and found that to be a good experience, although I will say I only spent my freshman year there and for other

reasons decided I would transfer back to the University of Kansas where I ended up going for five years, even though I missed my freshman year there. I stayed on after I got my undergraduate degree in Secondary Education. I stayed on to get a Masters in Ed Psych and Guidance and was the Assistant Resident Director of Corbin Hall which was a half-time position, so I worked essentially for the Dean of Women's Office half-time.

Q: Can you describe your parents and your childhood home which I think you have already done?

A: Well, my parents were both born and raised in Iowa. My mother was born and raised on a farm and my father was born in Sioux City, Iowa in town, so he was a town boy. His parents had both come from Norway. They had come separately and met in Sioux City in the early '20s, and he had two half-sisters because his father's first wife had died but he was the only child of the second marriage and the only Hanson and I am an only child and, therefore, that strain of that family has ended with me. The name has ended. Growing up I sometimes was self-conscious about being an only child but I look back on it and I have to say that probably that was not a bad experience for me. I hope I'm not too spoiled, but I know I am some. The only time I think that it would really have been nice to have a brother or sister is when we came to the legislature. I'm not really good at fighting verbal battles and I attribute it to the fact that I didn't have a sibling to argue with. But my parents were very hard working. My mother did not work when I was growing up. She had taught school but my father came to Kansas City because he was moved here as the first JC Penney Store manager--opened the first store in Kansas City--which is kind of amazing now when there are huge JC Penney stores in all the malls everywhere. He worked in that store most of his years till retirement. We did have a brief move to Leavenworth. The store was in an area that was kind of turning socially and so the profits in the store were not as good, so he was given a choice of where he would like to move to and he picked Leavenworth because it was close and it was a store that was doing very well. So when I was a freshman in college, actually, my parents moved to Leavenworth which was unsettling for me because all my friends were back home and Leavenworth was only 40 miles away, but it meant me driving the car a lot to visit my friends and keep up my contacts. So those are not my fondest years. I wasn't home much, but Leavenworth was never really home for me.

Q: Did you belong to any organizations or have any experiences at school that you think influenced you or helped prepare you for holding public office?

A: I think it's not so much clubs or organizations necessarily, but it's ways in which you can develop your own personal

strengths and self-esteem and confidence. Probably one of my early experiences that I have always considered significant for me was when I was chosen to be an AFS student and went for the summer of 1955 to Berlin. There were four of us from my high school that were chosen to go that year which was the most ever. This was a reasonably new program, but it was very exciting in that particular time because, as I mentioned earlier, the world seemed bigger back in those days and you didn't do as many things. So, for me, this was an outstanding experience. It wasn't necessarily an easy experience. I had some hard times being on my own and being in a foreign city and having trouble communicating with the language and so on, but I survived it. Came back and...when you were trying to relate it to the legislature, because this was kind of a new program we were asked to speak to many different groups, some small some really very large groups, and it was probably exceedingly helpful to me to be able to share those experiences and stand before people and develop my communicating skills. I did not take debate, therefore, which I probably should have. When you relate back to the arguing, I could have honed my arguments better having done that. Certainly, I know I gave over 20 speeches during my senior year about my experiences in Berlin and I never had trouble with speech after that.

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

A: Let's see, I must have been about 46.

Q: And your husband? What does he do?

A: Asher is in the building business and real estate. He and his father used to build custom homes. His father's deceased. He got out of the home building and is into property management now, so he is his own boss and has some flexibility which has been very helpful in our lives. Especially for me to be doing something like this. He can allow me to do some things and when I first ran for the legislature in '84, our younger daughter Julia was a sophomore in high school and couldn't drive yet and I always had to kind of car pool, so Asher had to assume the car pool role in addition to doing the cooking and just generally taking care of the family duties. Then, the following year, we had an AFS student live with us from Australia for the year, so he was taking care of two daughters. So he is a great support to me. Not only has he encouraged me, but he's willing to take on additional responsibility which I don't think every man, even in this day and age, would allow a woman to do because I am away from home five days during the session and he's on his own.

Q: And your daughters were 15 and how old when you were first elected?

A: Fifteen and eighteen. Our older daughter went off to college the fall that I was elected.

Q: Who cared for the children? You told me that you lived in Topeka and commuted back and forth?

A: Home on weekends.

Q: What do you think helped shape or form your desire to be in the legislature? If you could name two or three things. Do you have anything specific? It could be negative or positive things that you had to consider.

A: Well, I guess I would say at the point in time when I got to think of running for the legislature, there was a point in my life where I was kind of seeking a focus and looking for something to do that I could really be involved with, whether it was going to be a full-time job or some other major commitment, but I had always kind of gone through life thinking that all of us are put on this earth to make some kind of difference and I was looking for something where maybe I could make that difference. And that was kind of the underlying criteria for whatever it was I was going to do. How it ended up in politics and, necessarily, it has to be a number of things, but I do feel like I make a difference.

Q: What kind of things do you feel like you made a difference in?

A: First of all, a lot of the issues we are dealing with very directly impact everybody in the state, our children, and so on. Whether it is education matters or social matters, whatever, and I do feel like in the body of forty that my voice can be heard. I also feel that I am willing and have the time--I say that with a bit of a chuckle--that I do have time to help individuals, time for some constituent kinds of services, and I am close enough to the people...it's not like being on the local school board but, nonetheless, I am there to help facilitate when oftentimes people have trouble with agencies or with the state on matters and I enjoy being able to see those through to a solution.

Q: Do you think there has been a cost to you and your family and, if so, what?

A: Well, the cost has been for my husband and I personally. The fact that we are apart for 1/4 of the year except for weekends. Usually talk to him on the telephone a couple of times a day but, beyond that, I don't think there has been anything that I would say is negative. It's been helpful, actually. I think it has been a very good experience for both our daughters and I think it shows up in their personalities and their own self-confidence because, even before I ran for office, when I was helping other people, I would take them

door-to-door with me because people feel more comfortable. There's less of a barrier when you have got a little person with you but because I have taken them door-to-door and then they started going door-to-door by themselves for me and being at a lot of social occasions, political receptions, so on and so forth, they have developed a fairly sophisticated social rapport with people and I oftentimes have people say oh, they just seem so mature and so pleasant and they make good conversation. I think that has come partly from having to be involved and, you know, I think even when they went off to college there's a certain pride in--whether it is deserved or not--my mother is a Senator. I think that has been helpful for them. It may be more of a perception than real.

Q: Do you think that being in the Senate has changed how other people see you or treated or acted toward you?

A: Somewhat. Not with my friends, necessarily. Coming from where I come from, there are a lot of people with important titles and important jobs and so on. I have noticed that maybe someone who comes from a rural area is considered much more on a pedestal as a person, as being one of the big leaders in the community, by the fact of their office than myself. There's so many...being in a metro area and the uniqueness of the KC area, I'm just another person that may be in political office, but we are not set up on a pedestal as much in an urban area.

Q: Do you think in the past six years you have seen any change in the political role of women or expectations of women in politics?

A: Well, I think probably still women have to prove themselves more than men do to prove that they can handle the job, but I think that it is lessening. I really do. The more numbers and just society as a whole. I think there's more acceptance of women being in all occupations, so it's not so unusual. I also think that the fact that girls now are able to be involved in sports and more competitive is bringing on more and more women, and I assume that by the time I retire and sit back awhile and watch, there will be a totally new breed of woman in the legislature from what most of us are today who mostly came out of being school teachers or housewives into this. There will probably be more women lawyers come to the legislature.

Q: Along that line, would you give an educated guess what caused the change in 1975? Prior to that time never being more than four women and ever since 1975, the number of women has increased almost as sort of a ratio in the House and Senate. Do you have any ideas?

A: I was trying to think back to the times.

- Q: Do you think women ran for office? We haven't had time to really look since we just found this out. Did they run for office prior to this time and were they defeated, did they not run and all of a sudden just sort of a snowball effect?
- A: Again, I guess it has to go back to society and the changes in society and the fact that women became more participatory in all aspects and it became more okay to get a job.
- Q: You campaigned for Jan in '78. Can you think back to that time? How were people accepting her? She'd been around a long time, even then.
- A: I think they accepted her well. Women who have been in politics have always been considered hard-working and honest.
- Q: Maybe are examples. The first women maybe changed things by the type of people they were and how hard they worked.
- A: I also think it's the times. Even on Prairie Village City Council there hadn't been very many women and then all of a sudden...but that was due to a couple of mayors in succession who, when there were vacancies, were comfortable urging women to run and I do think that is important that there are a group of men who have urged women to participate .
- Q: We are through with this interview officially, but I know you have a special area and you have a lot of women in political office. Can you kind of run through that for us?
- A: Yes, it's kind of interesting. Of course, we have Nancy Kassebaum as our U.S. Senator, and Jan Meyers, who is our Congresswoman from this particular area, and then the press picked up on the fact that--it has been this way for a little while but they just picked up on it--that there was now a woman governor in Kansas and that is new, but then also in this one area of Prairie Village and Overland Park, I am the Senator and then the representative is a woman, Barbara Allen. And it's the only place in the country where you can have that full line of succession. First of all, there aren't that many states that have a U.S. Senator, so that cuts out a whole lot. Then to have it match up with a woman governor and woman congressman, of which there aren't many in the U.S. Congress either, it tapers off and funnels down very quickly to an area that is totally governed by women. And actually, it goes further than that. The County Commissioner that represents that area is also a woman. I do want to mention someone who has had some effect on that and that is Bill Franklin who is the former County Commissioner, former Mayor of Prairie Village, and the first one I interviewed with to go onto the city council. He, however, chose the widow, but then he was the one that called me. He was no longer mayor but he said you need to go talk to the current mayor now and get appointed to the council, which I did. He also has been a

great supporter of Jan Meyers all along, and he has supported Sue Weltner. I think he was her campaign manager when she ran for mayor. He has been very supportive of Barbara Allen and has been either co-chair or something of her campaign. This is a man who looks for women that could do the job and encourages them to do it.

Q: Maybe he's a very important key there. That may be an all time first, too. You say you are the only place right now, but I doubt if you can look back very far. It may be the only situation in the United States.

A: Actually, that's what they are saying.

Q: Anything I haven't asked that you'd like to have included?

A: I'll think of it after you leave.