

Interview of John W. Carlin by Dr. Edward H. Flentje on June 14, 2019  
Kansas Oral History Project, Inc.

Ed Flentje: This oral history interview of John Carlin, former speaker of the Kansas House of Representatives is being conducted under the sponsorship of the Kansas Oral History Project, a nonprofit corporation created for the purpose of establishing an archive of oral histories of Kansas state legislators who served prior to the year 2000. Professor Ed Flentje is conducting the interview at the Kansas State House in the House Chamber in Topeka, Kansas on June 14, 2019.

Mr. Carlin, now living in Manhattan, Kansas, has a broad-ranging career of public service. In addition to serving in the Kansas legislature, his public service career includes two terms as governor of Kansas, ten years as archivist of the United States by appointment of President Bill Clinton. Carlin graduated from Kansas State University in 1962 with a degree in dairy science. He was first elected to the Kansas House of Representatives in 1970, re-elected to three additional terms, serving from 1971 through 1979. He served as minority leader of the house in the 1976 legislative session and as speaker of the House in the 1977 and '78 legislative sessions. Does that sound reasonably accurate?

John Carlin: I think it does. I won't add anything or change or adjust.

EF: The Oral History Project has focused on folks who've served in the legislature, primarily as legislative leaders, and I know you've been interviewed numerous times about your service as governor. Part of my job is to make sure we kind of focus on the legislative service. Now some of your gubernatorial interviews have covered a bit of your legislative service, but it's my job again to try to keep us on that piece of it.

Why don't we start with what prompted you as a twenty-eight-year-old kid to decide you wanted to be in the legislature?

JC: Well, some accidents along the way—

EF: As best as you can remember. That's going back a few years.

JC: Some things I'll remember better than other things, probably. I was always interested in politics, but it was not elective office. As a family, my folks were active. We talked about politics. I was a township Democratic rep—I forget the exact terminology, but in the country, there are townships, and every township had a Democrat and a—

EF: A partisan organization.

JC: Partisan, not a lot of responsibilities, but partisan.

EF: Organized by township, I assume.

JC: That's right. And I did have an experience along that line that you may want to bring up at some point. Anyway, it was very flukeish. I never thought about it at all. It was 1968, and it was September, and suddenly the Democratic candidate in the House district that I lived in moved. Here I am on the farm, and the Sunday Salina Journal we look at on Monday noon, when we're having, in those days, the dinner. The inside front page, "Local Democrats Looking for Somebody to Fill In."

I cannot explain it. I really can't. Just like that, I decided—of course, in those days through 1976, we still had the old crank telephone. So I didn't want the neighbors to all know what I was possibly going to do. So I went over to a pay phone on the base and called the county chair. I was the only one that called him, so I was very quickly the nominee. I learned a lot, lost. I got beat by about five hundred votes, I believe, if my memory is correct, interestingly enough, to a veteran Republican legislator/farmer that was a pretty good friend of my dad's, but that was my start.

EF: I've read in other interviews that you're a Democrat.

JC: Yes.

EF: There were a lot of Republicans as neighbors, I assume.

JC: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

EF: How far back does that affiliation go, would you guess, in your family?

JC: Familywise, it goes back for as far as I know politically. That was a time not that far removed from the Dust Bowl and so forth. There were a lot of conversions that FDR brought along. They kind of thinned out and changed, but I think that had still some impact.

EF: But you didn't have a thought of "I could win this easier if I were a Republican."

JC: No, that was not a consideration. I was a true believer. I remember, as a grade school student, I think—this would have been '48. I would have been in the second or third grade. The grade school voted, and to really answer your question, it was a landslide for Dewey.

EF: Truman didn't win that.

JC: No, no, no. I kind of looked around and wondered, "Who were the other two?"

EF: That didn't shake your confidence at all.

JC: No. No, it didn't. But I lost, and for quite a while, it was going to be "I won't do that again."

EF: Were you the first to run for office in your family?

JC: Yes. Well, my dad was a school board member, a very different ballgame, grade school and high school, on a zoning board.

EF: So he did put his name on a ballot, I assume.

JC: Yes. I don't think they campaigned. To the best of my knowledge, you just put your name out there.

EF: Somebody says, "Please do that," I'm sure. You had some early experiences I'd read about that would have been formative, actually exposure in the White House at some point? What was that all about?

JC: It was probably one of my many examples of sometimes you're just lucky. 4-H in those days, maybe still does, has a competitive, a promotional talk for sixteen, seventeen years olds. My mother was my speech coach. We entered, and we were very proud of what we had put together, and I felt like I did a decent job. I got a white ribbon. If you know anything about 4-H, you know that's not good. Purple, blue, red, white. My mother and I were very frustrated.

We were going to do it one more time, came back. We'd done some research. I kind of talked in the wrong direction. I didn't quite know the assignment, you might say. I came back and won at the county level, won at the regional level, and was invited to come to Manhattan for 4-H Roundup, which was from all over the state, and was one of the programs for that. I gave my promotional talk.

Then leadership decided they'd send me to Chicago to compete with other 4-Hers from across the country as to who would be the final six 4-Hers that would present the annual 4-H report to then president Eisenhower.

EF: And that would have been '50—

JC: It was more like '58, '59. My memory was it was my last year in 4-H, and I was a freshman at K State, I think. I mention luck. If I had got a blue ribbon or a purple that first time, I'm quite sure I would have said, "I've done that, been successful," but having lost and came back, and then I know, let's be honest, being from Kansas and Eisenhower being president, and you're picking the top six 4-Hers, I'm sure it was an advantage. I got to be the one who actually presented a tree to be planted at Gettysburg to him.

EF: So you were a speaker before you got in the legislature.

JC: Oh, well, yes. Between judging and 4-H in general, I'd done a lot of speaking.

EF: 4-H was formative for you.

JC: Very formative. One of the things, and I pass it along to my students, don't get in depth but learn the Roberts Rules of Order. I said, "Learn a little." I know from my own experience, it was one of the things that elevated me a little bit because I could run a meeting that would look like it was organized and functional. But other lessons, of course, and merely numbers of opportunities to practice public speaking, and that's where I got started in judging, judging the dairy primarily, but then livestock. I lost my eligibility in dairy because my team, we'd win the first time, and you couldn't come back. Consequently, both at the local and the college level, I switched to livestock.

EF: But most of the 4-H work would have been, you'd have been in school.

JC: Oh, yes. Oh, gosh, yes.

EF: High school, even elementary.

JC: Grade school or high school. I joined 4-H in 1948.

EF: That's quite a tribute to the folks that keep that going and organized.

JC: Oh, yes. There was some wonderful people, judging team coaches along through the years. I always remember that it made a huge difference. You think of the teachers you've had. Well, those judging team coaches were very valuable to me, for sure.

EF: When you get elected in a Republican district, I think I read you campaigned with the identity as a dairy farmer.

JC: Yes, as I think back, how did I win? A very Republican district, a very urban district. I had the experience the time before. So maybe a little bit of name recognition. But I'm convinced going door to door when I said I was a dairy farmer out of Smolan. Back in 1970—

EF: Branding.

JC: People at the door—

EF: At that time.

JC: Were like --their parents milked cows or their grandparents did, and they associated that with somebody who would work hard. I ran against Gary Sherrer, the debate coach at Salina Central, a great human being, bright, articulate. He had all the advantages. How did I—and it was back in the good old days, Ed, when there were no negative campaigns. We didn't charge each other with anything. We had joint appearances.

EF: You didn't have to debate him either.

JC: No, I really didn't have to debate him. There was nothing like that. But I think it was the fact that I milked cows.

EF: Well, you get elected. Do you remember the first time you walked into this chamber?

JC: Not really. Walking in today, I glanced back up because that side far to the back, the back row, and the benefit was, it was easy to get to the men's room, and, secondly, Dr. Steichen from Lenora was my seatmate, and he had a bag of medicine with him at all times. If I'd cough or sneeze, he'd say, "John, here's something you ought to"—that was my big memory from my very first few days of experience here.

And that was also my office. We didn't have offices. You had to be in leadership —the speaker and the president of the Senate obviously had offices, maybe one or two others.

EF: You get here, and Pete Loux of Wichita is the minority leader.

JC: Yes.

EF: How do you and Pete connect?

JC: Well, in many ways, we had very different backgrounds, for sure. But there's no question, as you talk about what evolved for me in my future, Pete Loux probably paid the most significant role of anybody. He was a great mentor in terms of leadership in the legislature. He somehow for whatever reason recognized I might have some potential.

I remember in my first term, of course, you know, milking cows, you don't get out of getting up early. So I would be here early. I would be on that back row at my desk. At 8:00, I would go down to the caucus, and I would do volunteer things for him.

EF: Such as?

JC: Pick the calendars up and so forth initially, then gradually worked into helping him get others there. I honestly believe his willingness to give me opportunities allowed me to get elected as assistant minority leader and then minority leader and ultimately speaker of the House. Like I say, he was a great mentor.

In my first term, that carried over into my second term, he appointed me to represent the House Democratic Caucus on the commission that was put together chaired by Ed Arn, former governor, to study the court system. The unified court system came out of that study.

EF: And this was in your first term in the legislature.

JC: In '72 is when that started. So I would have still been maybe finishing up. I don't know exactly when it got started. So again it was an opportunity. I apparently took some advantage of it, and it allowed me to be more actively involved in the actual implementation of it.

What was most interesting about that was Pete McGill, who also was a great legislator from Winfield, opposed it. The speaker of the House opposed what we wanted to pass.

EF: A unified judiciary basically.

JC: Yes, created the Court of Appeals and changed things a lot locally. Back in those days, we had a lot of judges out there that had no qualifications whatsoever, but they were designated as the judge, and having maybe more authority than they should have had.

That was a great experience. It was a substantive experience that also gave me some confidence and made a difference.

EF: How would you characterize Pete Loux's leadership style, if you stand back and remember him?

JC: Very bright, very experienced, very committed to good public policy. I don't remember very much in his tenure that there was much talk about recruiting, electing more Democrats. I'm not saying he wasn't opposed and doing anything, but it wasn't a big deal. It wasn't until they transferred to me, and I had young legislators like Jim Parrish and Pat Hurley and Fred Weaver and so forth that there was some real interest in—you know, if we had a few more, we'd have a better position, and we'd be more effective.

That was not his strength. He was knowledgeable, experienced, in the operation of the legislature, the rules of the legislature, and like I said, he was committed to good public policy. He reflected very well, Ed, how different it was then, how little partisanship there was. I can't say there wasn't any. That wouldn't be accurate, but in contrast to today, it's night and day, just totally different. He and Pete McGill, Pete and Pete, they ran things, and they worked together. I know one of the times we talked about earlier, one of the things I differed with him on, related to the Jayhawk Hotel. The context was going through Watergate, coming up out of the reform that was in the big headlines, and when I was a first year in the legislature, the Jayhawk Hotel, just across the street and down—

EF: I remember it well.

JC: It was rented out to lobbyists. They had rooms at night available, card playing, and certainly some alcohol. It never got my attraction or interest, but the dairy industry, there was ice cream there every night and cheese and whatever. But McGill and Loux, they shut it all down.

Initially I could understand. They felt like it was not good for the legislative image to have lobbyists have that connection every night. But what I think they missed was it was my opportunity as a freshman legislator to go down to the Jayhawk and visit with legislators, House, Senate, Republican, and Democrat, and get better acquainted because it didn't stop legislators and lobbyists going to dinner. They just now were off at a private club or a restaurant, and it probably also then focused only on the leaders of the legislature. They didn't tend to invite freshmen.

So it was a very different experience. Looking back, and I'm talking about after my whole experience in the legislature and thinking about Washington, DC and their problem now where they don't ever get to know each other, and consequently some of our problem back there. That was what I was thinking, looking back, but Pete Loux, you know better than anybody, he didn't just appoint me to that commission or help me rise to the leadership, he retired. He took an appointment from Governor Bennett to be on the Corporation Commission.

EF: He and Bennett were allies in the legislative reform arena.

JC: Yes, they connected there, but they also connected on substantive, a substantive approach to what was going on. It didn't bother them, one was a Republican, one was a Democrat.

EF: The strange idea of solving problems.

JC: A very strange one today, for sure.

EF: Well, your first term, you're a back bencher. You're on Agriculture. Now I've got Water and Education. I'm not sure Water is right.

JC: I don't have a memory of a water committee.

EF: Did you ask to be on education?

JC: I can't remember for sure on that. If I was given the opportunity, yes. I was picking up that Education was big, big budget wise, big issue wise, schools all across the state—it was something that brought together the interests of the entire state. I would imagine that's why I would have shown interest, but it might have been just handed to me.

EF: The second term, you go on Ways and Means.

JC: Yes.

EF: Was that at your request, do you recall?

JC: I don't recall specifically, but obviously it didn't take me too long in the legislature to know that Ways and Means made a lot of decisions that were incredibly important.

EF: And you were, and I don't know if this is elected or appointed, an assistant minority leader.

JC: Right.

EF: Was that elected in caucus?

JC: Yes.

EF: Do you recall anything about that?

JC: What I can recall is I always competed against Jim Holderman, a legislator from Wichita. A lot of times people ask, "Well, coming from Smolan, how did you rise through?" I think it was two things. One, I had a lot of opportunities to develop my skills in speaking and making decisions and organizing things through 4-H and various opportunities at K State. I think that helped me. And the other thing was the urban areas couldn't get along. It was difficult for somebody from Wichita, if they'd gotten together, there was no way I could win. But I was able to pick off a number because I'd had a little bit of time. My involvement in the caucus gave me some exposure. I was always upfront with Pete Loux, not really actively participating, but it allowed me to become singled out. I think it allowed me to have that great opportunity to obviously give me a chance to be governor of the state. I would have never done it from—

EF: When I think of a Democratic caucus at that time, I think of urban. You obviously bring a rural background, a dairy farmer and all that. Did you ever have to tangle with Pete Loux?

JC: We tangled one time for sure. I think it was in my second term. Out in western Kansas, Cesar Chavez was starting to rumble about coming in and organizing the immigrants that were brought up just for harvest time. The farm groups got together. There was no law. There was no way to regulate at all at the time. They put together a bill, but they did it with a lot of thought in my opinion, allowed them to be organized, showed them how to do it, and be somewhat regulated.

But we had put in that legislation that they could not strike during harvest. As a farmer, that was easy for me to go along with because if you couldn't harvest, it wasn't like you were—you couldn't sell a car. That car would sit there, and it would still be okay two months later if the disagreement got handled. So we got the votes to pass it.

EF: Wait for the hail.

JC: Right. It goes to the second floor, and Governor Docking vetoes it. I can't remember exactly who it was from the Republican leadership, but they came to me and asked me to make the



motion to override the veto. They knew I'd been supportive of the bill, but to ask a Democrat with a Democrat governor to go down here and make that motion.

EF: Stand up.

JC: And defend the bill and defend the motion to override Governor Docking.

EF: And you had worked on it, I take it.

JC: Yes. I wouldn't say I was a key person. I wouldn't say that. But I had worked enough. They knew I was involved. They knew I understood it. But that was a tough situation for me. I gave it a lot of thought, but I can assure you, Pete Loux thought that I was, even thinking about it, was making a terrible mistake. I remember very clearly, right outside the chamber here one day when I had told him I was going to do it. He said, "John, you will never go anywhere in Democratic politics. You just will not go anywhere. You're dead. Labor will never forgive you." I said, "I'm going to do what I think is right."

EF: Did you suffer some consequences of that from Pete Loux?

JC: Not really. I think he in the end respected—obviously I was successful along with a lot of support to do the override. It didn't enhance my relationship with the second floor, I can assure you of that. But I think again there, I survived, and Governor Docking was very supportive of me later.

EF: So summer of '75, Bennett appoints Pete Loux to the Corporation Commission. Was it automatic that the assistant step up to become minority leader—

JC: No, I have another election.

EF: So a Democrat Caucus.

JC: And Jim Holderman was my opponent.

EF: So that would have occurred that summer? Would it have been December?

JC: I don't remember. It might have waited until December because there was—I don't know. Let's leave it that way.

EF: But all of a sudden, you're elected.

JC: Right. And one thing, Ed, that I—by then, and there was a talent when I came on board. But I look at the talent that came on board after I came on, and talk about Pat Hurley and Jim Parrish and Jim Slattery, and Fred Weaver, and others. Don't get me wrong, but right there, right away.

And then women, we had Ruth Wilkin from here in Topeka, and Ruth Luzzati from Wichita. Kind of connecting back to when you were talking about from a rural area, we elected Democrats from across the state in those days.

EF: In rural areas.

JC: In very, very rural western Kansas. There were a scattering of Democrats—it was the only reason. You can't get enough Democrats in just the urban areas. It's also why today the caucus is much smaller on the Democratic side.

EF: You may have made some comment on this in your gubernatorial interview with Bob Beatty at Washburn, but it struck me. It kind of stood out, and I can't remember which election it was, but there was active recruitment of rural candidates.

JC: Yes.

EF: I think about that in terms of today. You can count them on one hand almost, if that.

JC: We have nobody aside from Wichita west of 81 today. We had Eber Phelps from Hays. And in fairness on that, Tim Hodge—I don't know which side of 81 he lives on in Newton. We just don't.

EF: How do you remember that, recruiting Democrats in rural Kansas?

JC: Well, here's the difference. Bob Docking campaigned the entire state. I think back to growing up in his days. He had powerful leadership, in Russell and Hays and Salina. That's where I was kind of most acquainted, but all across. He went out there and found Democrats that would work for him. So we had people we could go to and say, "Give us some ideas." It made a huge difference, and also the Republican party just took elections there for granted.

EF: "Those are our folks."

JC: 1912 was the last time the Democrats had a speaker. So why would they spend any time worrying about it? That gave us an opportunity as well.

EF: Most of the time in the legislature, you were part of the loyal opposition.

JC: Oh, yes.

EF: How did you see that particular role?

JC: Again, it was a different time, Ed. We actually had input every day. Now obviously any time the Republicans wanted to pass something—I'm talking about the first, second, third time, not

my speakership—but frequently, I remember in particular Bob Keenan, a lawyer from Great Bend, a Democrat, very bright. He could come down here to the well and make a case that occasionally prevailed, and it was because it was a time where we weren't automatically lined up to vote Republican and Democrat. We actually listened.

Now if you look back at the votes, sure, Republicans followed a Republican bill in many, many cases. But when there got to be a conflict, when there was some real differences brought out—in those days, we had experienced lawyers. I mean, they were partners in law firms all across the state. Thirty, forty, I can't remember the exact number, lawyers in this House. Only a small percent got on the Judiciary Committee, and we've had years now when it was difficult to find somebody to chair it that was a lawyer.

But that experience people respected. If there was an insurance bill coming up, there was somebody on both sides that could go down and not just chair it but raise questions and know and have a different position. If Bob Keenan didn't get the right answer, he pushed back and not in a partisan way, not in an attacking way, always showing respect. It was just—my degree in dairy husbandry, there wasn't a lot of dairy legislation on the floor of the House that I could be the expert on. So it was really fantastic to have this talent around to assist.

Then like I say, Pat Hurley comes long, the Jims and so forth. Fred Weaver was an incredible legislator—southeast Kansas, sort of a Democratic version of a good old boy, but he was smart, and he made a great chairman of Ways and Means when I was speaker.

EF: You mentioned Pat Hurley. We did an oral history interview of Pat. Of course, he's been involved with the legislature inside and out.

JC: For decades.

EF: When I just put everything down and looked at the detail, I see one term, and he's the majority leader of the House. Now obviously a big part of that is flipping the majority, but how does somebody, one term and then the majority leader of the House?

JC: An exceptional talent. Someone that fit in with the rest of us in terms of he wasn't here to play politics. He was here to represent his people and to provide leadership where he could for doing what was best for the state. But because of his talent, those of us ahead of him a term and two terms in my case saw something special and thought, "We've now suddenly got the majority. Let's not mess around." I worked very hard to pick the best chairs for every committee. I was very proud to pick the two Ruths [Luzzati and Wilkens] to chair committees. Never had there been a woman in the history of Kansas chair a committee in either house before that time.

But Pat just stood out. He came into my administration just like that in terms of secretary of administration.

EF: How did you make those judgments about committee assignments and committee chairs particularly? Was it obvious?

JC: In some cases, it would have been obvious. I certainly don't recall, did I sit down when I suddenly realized I had to, and, okay, I want to use this standard and this standard? No. But I had been in the legislature enough. I knew, there were exceptions, but I knew who had been around. I wanted people who would work, who understood the area of responsibility they would have, who had the capacity to work with Republicans. We couldn't afford to make everything a vicious partisan issue. There would be those.

EF: A one-vote margin.

JC: Yes. But, anyway, and we should talk about that maybe a little bit. We wanted to get things done. The core leadership that helped me and did the recruiting and so forth, we were very serious about having an impact on the state, of taking the state in a little different direction.

EF: Your six legislative terms as loyal opposition, all of a sudden, you're speaker. What changes?

JC: Well, we went—there was forty or forty-one when I got elected in that first caucus. Then we went to forty-five or forty-six. I think I'm close. Then we jumped, we added ten. We were fifty-six when I was minority leader and beginning to get a sense. But it takes sixty-three votes, one to be speaker and two to pass anything. I think I had two extra votes. I could have two people sick or two people defect for a moment, but basically the caucus stood together, and we had to on certain things.

There were things that the Republicans weren't, I don't think philosophically opposed, but maybe a little bit of politics saying, "This seems to be a priority. You pass it." There were a lot of bills that came through. I had worked with people on the Republican side. One thing about the speaker, I think it's still true today, the speaker controls the agenda. I mean, there's no committee. The speaker puts out—I consulted and knew what my committee chairs wanted, but I controlled the agenda for every day, where we were going to stop. I'd bury a bill that I wanted buried. Every once in a while, I'd pop one out of there, sometimes just to entertain the gallery. We'd have a lot of kids in the gallery. I didn't want to just gavel in and gavel out. So I'd bring something up.

EF: We sat down with Mike Hayden yesterday. I was asking him about some of those House seat gains when he arrived. Democrats gained three House seats in '70, four in '72, eight in '74, and then twelve in '76. I was pressing Mike on what was going on. That obviously was going in a clear direction. He said the backdrop was Watergate, that that really was something Republicans didn't effectively handle. How would you interpret those numbers?

JC: I think it goes back to what I said earlier to some degree. I think we outworked the Republicans. We really made an effort.

EF: Now when you say “outworked,” are you talking about candidate recruitment?

JC: Yes, candidate recruitment and helping them, being supportive, pushing the party to get a little more interested. The party had never had—one of the things I always shared about running as a legislator, like that first term when I lost and I came back, I was never contacted by anybody. Nobody ever called up and said, “Now, John, give it another try. We’ll help you.” The state parties, I’m pretty sure on both sides, in those days kind of stayed out of it.

Now Mike might push back and say I’m wrong on the Republican side, but I really think a lot of it—

EF: No, I don't think so.

JC: A lot of it is just, like I mentioned, 1912 was a long time ago, the last time a Democrat was speaker of the House. How could it possibly happen again? But then there was also—I don't have a lot of detailed memory on this, but we had a highway bill on the floor with some funding for the state highway system. Walt Graber, who was another great legislator from Pretty Prairie, Kansas, a farmer. He came down and offered an amendment to share a little bit of it locally, making the case that for rural areas, it wasn't just the state highway system that was important for commerce. There were other roads out there that made a huge difference. It may not have made a difference to a corporation moving things across the state to go to the west part of the country, but to move the wheat crop to the local elevator, to get across that little creek bridge that, if you couldn't get across, you may be totally handicapped or have to go way, way around to find a way to get to the elevator.

They kind of pooh-poohed it, but we got enough rural legislators to support it. We passed it, and then we used it in rural areas, obviously not in Wichita or wherever. I think Republicans, at least some after the election, admitted that that probably was one of their mistakes. They didn't take that seriously enough. They didn't have an answer. But again it reflects an earlier time in politics when you—we didn't spend all this time researching and so forth. We weren't using opposition research to win seats out there. We were finding good candidates who would work and really campaign. That was what was working.

EF: One thing that happened, of course, I was working for Bennett at the time, you had an amazing alliance with a couple senators. The Senate, not only the House, shifting majority control, but the State Senate becoming in 1977, I think, 21-19 or something like that.

JC: Well, there were nineteen Democrats. We never took control. Never have. That only leaves you two votes short, one to stop something, two to pass something or defeat something.

Norman Garr, the senator from Johnson County, we were in sync on a very high percentage of the major proposals.

EF: Does that mean that you were in sync against the governor?

JC: I'm sure there would be Republicans on the inside, including yourself, that would believe that. I wanted to believe it was driven primarily by the fact he liked our ideas. But he wasn't alone. Obviously we needed somebody else, not routinely. None of this was like every time we sent a bill, they were no discussions. On the major things, we really worked together, maybe in a conference committee and worked out some things or whatever.

Ed Reilly from Leavenworth was one who could be persuaded, but based on the substance and the difference it would make for the people he represented, Paul Hess, maybe a little bit once in a while, but that was about it. Jack Steineger was the minority leader. On anything really important, he could line up the nineteen Democrats.

EF: One thing that I was researching, I think you'd chuckle at this, when I was putting together the Kansas book ten years ago, I was looking at taxing, taxing policy, income taxes. I saw in, it would have been the '78 session, the income tax rate went up to 9 percent. I didn't remember that. I was here.

JC: I was here, too, but I don't—when you shared that with me the other day.

EF: This was one of the Garr alliance things. I'm calling Jim Maag and asking, "How did that happen?"—he's like, "That didn't happen." It was kind of like this bump in the income, high bracket of the income tax.

JC: I don't remember 9.

EF: It was 9.

JC: I trust you.

EF: I think Bennett let it become law without his signature. Of course, it put him in a real pickle. I never knew Garr that well. Those were his people, too.

JC: Of course. One thing, I'm not trying to distract from this at all, but Bennett and Garr were exceptionally talented. I mean, exceptionally. They had differences. When those differences came out, they really clashed.

I don't remember Garr just trying to embarrass the governor or disagreeing just because he was down there, and we don't get along. They didn't get along very well. I think we can agree on

that, but I think it was just they saw things a little bit from two different perspectives. They didn't mind going at each other, and they frequently did.

EF: And neither one was going to back down.

JC: Oh, for sure. Absolutely for sure. I also remember, and you can confirm or tell me I'm wrong on this, Governor Bennett would threaten a veto fairly frequently, quite a bit, and back down on a lot of it. It got a little to the point where we didn't take his threat that seriously. We were energized and felt like we could get the votes to override. I think he eventually started to know that we probably could with the alliance with the Senate.

EF: Let's move on to some other policy areas. Prisons. Bennett was promoting a new medium-security prison. You really tangled on that, as I recall. How do you remember that?

JC: I don't have a lot of memories. Help me out. Was that the Ellsworth facility that got built in—

EF: Oh, no, no, no.

JC: I didn't think so, but that was the only facility I could pull up. Let me ask you this, did we stop it?

EF: Oh, yeah. It got complicated. I'm sure Reilly was involved, the issue of—

JC: Well, he was going to put it someplace else, if my memory is right, somewhere besides Leavenworth.

EF: They had twenty-one votes in the Senate for a prison, but not a prison at a particular location.

JC: No surprise.

EF: As I recall, and I think Pat Hurley was involved, community corrections developed as an issue, and an alternative at that time, and so I just wondered if you had any memory of being engaged in that.

JC: Not really. On the topic in general, following out some of that discussion and what you mentioned about Pat Hurley and community corrections, I brought Pat McManus in from Minnesota, I believe, who had a lot of modern ideas on how to make some changes.

EF: Of course, that's in gubernatorial territory.

JC: Right. It was a follow-up to really what was started when I was in the legislature. When I brought him in, it was an extension of what I was learning and experiencing as a legislator.

EF: I know the death penalty later became more of an issue. How do you remember the death penalty during your legislative service?

JC: I remember it quite well, and not because I was a major participant. I always voted against it. Obviously I paid a lot of attention to the debate. It was heavily debated, for sure. And, again, it was the death penalty prior to the death penalty becoming political. You had people expressing where they were really coming from. Consequently, even though for an example, we talked about the numbers earlier, the Democrats certainly couldn't stop the death penalty. We had advocates on our side. There had to be a lot of Republicans vote against the death penalty to defeat it. But it was a different time. It wasn't partisanship. It hadn't been politicized, and it was on the merits. But it came up almost—I can't say every session. It certainly came up every two years when I was governor. It was certainly every time one of the most intense debates with very strong, well thought out beliefs on both sides.

EF: Let me shift again. You came into the legislature when some fundamental modernization of the legislative institution and the governorship were underway. There had been a variety of things developed, but you would have voted on a series of Constitutional amendments, essentially updating the Constitution, but also—

JC: Shortened the ballot, for one thing.

EF: Shortening the ballot, giving the governor the ERO, the Executive Reorganization Authority, and running governor and lieutenant governor as a team.

JC: One thing to make this timely, Ed, and you can probably point out in better language than I can, but on the Executive Reorganization, as you were stating, given what's going on in Washington today on the executive having so much power, we didn't give that much power to the governor in that change. The focus was reorganizing government. There was a lot of work that needed to be done. The state had grown. The issues had changed, at least to a considerable extent. Obviously some things, there had always been agricultural sector, highways, etc., but more and more, the environment was becoming an issue, more and more, in terms of senior citizen issues and so forth. I don't remember exactly when some of those changes were made, but they were certainly made before I was governor.

EF: You had no personal, or your folks had no opposition.

JC: I don't have any memory of us stopping it. You're right. It was a time—again, it reflects, Governor Bennett was—I was about to say “a student of,” he was a professor of government. I'm sure in his experience in the legislature by the time he got to the governorship, he had a lot of ideas about “We should make major changes.”



EF: Pete and Pete were also supportive.

JC: He had the right leadership in the House, for sure.

EF: You talked about, your desk was back here, but offices, staffing, financial—

JC: Evolved. The two Petes pushed that very hard.

EF: And you supported that.

JC: Oh, yes.

EF: You've talked about court unification.

JC: I need to ask. I'm showing my age here, but when it came up before, did we talk about McGill fighting it the whole way?

EF: Yes, a bit.

JC: I didn't want to miss that. It was one of the really rare opportunities when the two Petes went after each other, and Pete Loux won.

EF: One thing I forgot to ask you early on, and I'd asked Mike Hayden, he talked about some of his local folks, his county officials were in opposition to the state takeover of the welfare. In one of his trips to the podium, one of his first trips was on that subject. I don't know if you'd remember any of that.

JC: No, I don't, but very understandable.

EF: It apparently became quite a legend. Do you remember your first trip down to the podium?

JC: I definitely do. It was in my first term, and I think my first year. I can't guarantee that. Senator Strahan from Salina, prior to my time in the legislature, although he was still there when I got here, the air base in Salina had gotten shut down after the Korean War had wound down. Suddenly we got a lot of facilities there. The community was very interested in something happening. Whether it was Senator Strahan's idea or somebody else, it certainly in some ways became the Strahan Institute.

EF: And you're not on Ways and Means yet.

JC: I'm not on Ways and Means at all. I think it was my first year, my very first year. Anyway, that institution got established, but it was shaky, to say the least, in terms of enrollment and so forth.

I had gone on home on Friday. It was later in the session. It wasn't in the end/end, but it was getting close. I was not on anything that would have kept me around. We probably adjourned at noon, and I was on the way back to Smolan to check to see how the cows were doing and that sort of thing.

I'm milking on Saturday morning with KSAL Radio on, and they come on with a news story about "The House Ways and Means Committee has voted to shut down our Kansas Technical Institute." I thought, "Oh, my gosh. What are we going to do?"

EF: "That's in my district."

JC: Literally, located in my district. The lead on it was Representative Harper from Wichita, really a sharp—

EF: Oh, Jerry Harper.

JC: Jerry Harper, a very sharp man, but young and making a move to establish himself, "I understand these issues, and I can take charge, and I can lead."

So it's coming to the floor. It's one of the last appropriations bill for the session, and my colleagues, the Saline County overlapping and Ellsworth county set of legislators, Bob Stark, and I'm blanking on Ellsworth. I apologize, no disrespect, and a Democrat, Jelinek. They didn't go down and talk. They made it very clear to me that they wanted this to override, but I was going to have to do it.

EF: A professional presenter, a skilled presenter.

JC: But I'd never been down before. I had no intentions of being down. I'd been told by a lot of people, when you're a beginner, you stay on that back row and mind your own business. Learn, but don't go down there and try to tell somebody that's been there a long time that you know something better.

I came up with it myself, but I don't know what it was that triggered it, but I got the idea—I had to come up with something unique. I couldn't go down and argue, I mean, they had the votes, and you weren't going to turn the Appropriations Committee down on something that would save a little money that could be planted somewhere else.

I came up with the idea that I would use the two football coaches at KU and K State and the chancellor and the president. What I said was, "Let's just stop and think for a moment. You've

been harping about the enrollment out there for a number of years. We're going to close the place down." This wasn't anything totally new. This was further than ever had been done before, but "Just stop and think if the chancellor and the president got together and talked about football, and neither one was having that much success at the time. Maybe we should just close it down. Maybe the university would be better off without football." I said, "What do you think would happen to recruiting football players to come and play football for KU and K State?"

I did it seriously. I wasn't trying to make a joke. I was trying to make a joke, "You've never given this school a chance." Again, a reflection of the time, people actually listened. I wasn't penalized because I was a Democrat and a newcomer. They actually listened, and I got the votes to override the Ways and Means chairman and the Ways and Means Committee and save the school. Of course, it exists now as K State Polytechnic.

EF: That's a great story.

JC: It was a great experience, and probably connecting with our earlier discussion, it was probably an opportunity to start getting a little bit of attention from the Democratic Caucus. The mere fact I could go down and have that success as a first-year legislator.

EF: When you would prepare to do that, get ready to do that, would you test that with the Caucus first?

JC: No, I just did it.

EF: Press the button, "I want to speak."

JC: I can't remember—I didn't have a lot of time. It was the middle-latter part of the next week, my memory is, and it was back when there wasn't a lot of staff. It wasn't like there was a brainstorm thinking team back there that caught me as I came off that Monday morning or whenever when I got here from milking the cows in the morning and said, "You've got a problem. You're going to have trouble getting re-elected if we don't work out a strategy." That didn't exist. I was by myself on that little desk back there on the corner. But again, it only happened, I feel in reflection I came up with a good argument. It wouldn't have worked today with a Republican-led Ways and Means Committee with the chairman, unless for some reason, it wasn't that important, no big deal. Things have changed so much, Ed. It's a whole different world.

EF: Again, you had an active governorship. Looking at that earlier time, are there other issues that stand out that you think ought to be mentioned? You touched on a few.

JC: My memory, and you tell me if I'm wrong, but I think due process [for public school teachers] was an issue. The due process bill was passed when I was a legislator, I believe. The

reason I believe that is that Peg Britton, her husband I appointed to be a bank commissioner. She had been on the school board and was a very school-board-oriented person. They fought due process for school teachers. Because I had been involved, and that's why I think of it, I don't think I would have been intensely involved as governor, I would have signed it, but shortly after we passed it, she had an incident. It was Hoisington, I believe, Hoisington or Ellinwood, a teacher had been fired. The law was in effect, appealed. The law, the teachers got to appoint somebody. The school board got to appoint somebody, and the two of them had to get together on the third member.

Peg Britton was very candid with me. Hopefully, she'll hear this. She's still out there writing her blog in Salina. She said, "John, this is because you pushed so hard to get this. I'm going to make you suffer going through this," basically, now in a respectful way. She was a good friend. She didn't like the fact that it was the law.

That was a great experience. I actually learned a lot. It made sense to me to sell it, but what I learned in that hearing that went on about three different nights, one 2:00 in the morning, I mean, just on and on, it seemed like, was the administration had done a poor job. They had not communicated with the school teacher at all that they had concerns. They just fired her. It was after the two-, three-year period when they couldn't do that. They could have done it if she had been new and just her first two or three years. But there was no counseling, no training, no opportunity to help her make corrections that they felt should be made. They just fired her.

Any opportunity I have, and literally since then, one of the things I share with school boards in parallel situations is you have a responsibility to do an appropriate set of steps as administrators, as being on the other side than just "We don't want that person. Out the door he/she goes." I mean, you're going to win most of those if you've been responsible. The fact that teachers win quite a few, I think it's either the superintendent's fault or the school—I don't know. You never know in those situations. It could have been a school board member whose kid was not treated well in a class. That's not routine, but it does happen.

The thing that bothered me at the time, and unfortunately it hasn't gone away, Governor Brownback introduced and got the Republican legislature to repeal it on the basis that it was tenure. Well, it was not tenure. You could fire the person for whatever cause in that first two, three-year period. I apologize, I can't remember exactly whether it was a two-year break or a three year, and then it wasn't tenure after. It just meant you should be able to defend yourself from the decision you've made. The teacher has a right to be heard. We'd set that structure up where the board member and the teacher rep had to pick that chair. How could you get more balance? I don't have any statistics to point out that that individual is the one that made the most decisions in practice because probably the school board appointee and the teachers kind of stuck with their side, unless it was just blatantly obvious.

It was one of those rare experiences where I was there involved in its passage, and then I was a part of it being implemented and, fortunately, at least I feel good that I could look back and

think what we did was right. I hope at some point it's put back in place. When you look at school teachers today and the fact they don't get paid as well as they should, when you look at—we compete with other states. There is not a surplus of good teachers. There's just not. We start developing a reputation, and I'm not suggesting we have, because 1) it hasn't been that long since we had it repealed, and a lot of school boards put it in their contract, but it's kind of one of those issues where it could have a real negative pushback if we keep it, and we have too many districts that stick with it, and we get a reputation. I mean, it's like some of the other things that have passed, some of the gun legislation that's hurt us in terms of people from other states, whether it's people coming in to work or people coming to school or whatever. Some of our “going too far” has very negative ramifications.

EF: Anything else stand out that you—I mean, I'm not searching for anything in particular. Just as you reflect, let me ask a specific that you would have had to deal with later as governor, but you would have voted on. Governor Bennett was adamant about his appointing the right people and talked about it a lot.

JC: And basically he did a good job.

EF: Good appointments. Not everyone panned out. He philosophically was committed to the idea of appointing the best person, and I'm sure party ID played in it in cases. He was very meticulous on judicial appointments, too. He spent a lot of time on those things. One of the issues you would have dealt with, I think, well it may have been when you're minority leader, I can't remember if it's '75, '76, was the Department of Transportation, going from the old Highway Commission to the Department headed by the secretary appointed by the governor. That, even historically, it had some political fall-out.

JC: Some would argue that it was run more by politics than by good policy.

EF: That would have been one of the items you at least would have had to vote on, and there was some resistance among Republicans.

JC: Particularly rural areas, again. The rural areas, the mix between urban and rural has changed dramatically in this time frame we're talking about, bringing it up to today. I don't remember a vote. I would be very shocked and upset with myself if I hadn't been supportive.

One thing we need to connect between his four years on the second floor and my four years on this floor, the third floor, is it was caught up in Watergate, forcing a lot of changes. One that I will never forget, it lapsed over slightly in my governorship, but it started with Governor Bennett when I was a legislator, where we passed a lot of reforms, as you made reference to earlier. The leadership of the legislature for the most part have been very supportive.

So the world we created when I was in the legislature with Governor Bennett was awkward after I was elected, and to be honest, it wasn't even anything that I thought of. We're going

from Republicans in control to me, a Democrat, with Democrats all across the state, and I just assumed what we did when I was a legislator and Governor Bennett was governor, people understood. We had reform.

EF: This is good stuff.

JC: County chairs could no longer call up and tell the transportation folks, “My grandson is going to get a job this summer.” I never even thought about it. It took me a long time to understand why I was in so much trouble with county chairs and the Democratic party.

EF: As governor.

JC: As governor. But it was a carryover to my legislative time and all the changes I was supportive of. I had been supportive of Governor Bennett in leading the way.

EF: I think, some could probably research this, I haven't researched it, but I think the Docking political network had a highway dimension to it.

JC: Oh, yes.

EF: Appointments as well as roads.

JC: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Well, I'll give you an example.

EF: When did you first become familiar? Did you have to become governor before that—

JC: No, no, no. I knew that. All you had to do was look up and down the major roads, and who was going to be a powerful Democrat in that particular county. The best example is Junction City, when the interstate was being built, and John Grey Montgomery—well, that's his son. It was John Montgomery. Anyway, he was powerful.

EF: I think he chaired the Highway Council.

JC: He might have. It wouldn't surprise me. Anyway, you drive down I-70, you just start counting the number of exits that one way or another lead you into Junction City and wonder, “How did that possibly happen?” Well, it was back in a time when politics had much more impact.

And it was legal. That was the system. It wasn't like this was some corrupted operation or whatever. It was not good in terms of wise use of the taxpayers' money, of doing what was best for the people of the state. It would be supporting small entities on some special deal, which is understandable. You always see things from your own perspective. In Docking's time, those powerful chairs up and down major highways, everybody assumed they were in a position—

you knew if you had somebody that needed a job, you knew who you were going to talk to, if you had a governor of your party. Of course, in my lifetime, starting with Bob Docking's father, we've had as many Democrats as governor as Republicans. So at least a 50/50 chance.

EF: Did you become aware of the Docking political network when you were speaker or before? Does it become real when you're governor?

JC: No, before. It's one of the disagreements I have with some of the strategists in the Democratic party today. I maintain Bob Docking won four times because he worked the entire state. He had people helping him in rural counties because he spent enough time out there to get acquainted, and he kept those acquaintances going, and they were powerful in his organization. When he was governor, it was not just helping him politically. They played significant roles.

My belief it's one of those reasons that we don't elect Democrats out there anymore is we don't have statewide candidates going out there. Joan Finney was the last Democrat to actually campaign in rural areas, actually campaign, actually organize, and we used to have a—there wasn't an area of the state we didn't have Democrats elected.

I politically think back, I learned a lot from Bob Docking. We had our differences, as we talked about earlier, but—

EF: He vetoed a number of bills and was overridden quite a few times.

JC: I vetoed more than he did, but all of mine were sustained. So I actually have more sustained vetoes than I believe anybody else, unless that has changed very recently.

EF: Mike wasn't overridden.

JC: But I don't know he was vetoing that many.

EF: No, he wasn't. It's easier to avoid being overridden if you are not vetoing too much.

JC: That's right. Of course.

EF: Do you recall any other occasion where you may have overridden Docking? You mentioned the Farm Bill.

JC: No, I don't, but there were quite a few.

EF: In most cases, you probably would have been sustaining—

JC: Well, that first two years in the House, we needed Republican help to protect—

EF: There wasn't much in the sustaining numbers.

JC: That's right. We were a little weak, as they are now. No, I don't remember, the one bill we talked about earlier, that's the one I remember clearly. He had Norb Dreiling advising him, who was as smart a politician as I've ever dealt with, for sure.

EF: Did you get to know him while you were in the legislature?

JC: Yes, to some degree, and primarily because he was so close to Governor Docking. Anything that you were, you would be seen. The staff of Governor Docking, we got very well acquainted with, and I say "we," not just myself because they were really engaged in the process, and they were very talented. They, as well as the governor himself, understood communication. He had his one spiel, and he never forgot it. Austere but adequate. When people came time to vote, they remembered that he was going to make sure people got enough to do the job, but it was going to be done efficiently. It was not going to be too much.

Then again that network he had across the whole state. Then the Republicans, as I always say, are the biggest help because they tend to nominate a weak candidate. It helps Democrats. So we're very thankful and appreciative. I don't mean that in any real negative way, but not strong in terms of statewide opportunity to generate support. Governor Bennett ran against Vern Miller. My friend Vern jumped out of too many trunks and made two or three real critical communications mistakes.

One thing interesting that triggers, it kind of ties back, I would have been in my second term, and I'm going to have trouble remembering his name. A lawyer, an oil company, kind of Augusta, Gaines, Frank Gaines. Vern was obviously going to be the nominee, and to pick a running mate. Anyway, at Washington Days, and this would have been in February of Election Year, Frank Gaines tried to sell Vern Miller on asking me to be the lieutenant governor candidate.

EF: We're talking about '74?

JC: It would have to be.

EF: So you're assistant minority leader.

JC: Yes. I had gotten well acquainted with Frank. Until I had my severance tax, we got along very well. Vern Miller didn't pick me. It might have been a negative for me. You never know. I'm a strong believer. I've had a lot of breaks that were just breaks, just luck, being at the right place at the right time. So that was probably one that—

EF: I'm trying to think who ran with Miller. I can't even remember, somebody.



JC: Jack Steineger. It was Wichita, Wyandotte County, but it obviously didn't work. One would have thought it might because Vern was a very popular attorney general, not on campuses, but he was well liked and re-elected. He had been sheriff in Sedgwick County, very popular in Wichita.

EF: He was. That is interesting. One issue that emerged, you used this when you ran for governor, but it really emerged, as I recall before, and that's the utility issue, the nuclear power plant.

JC: It had started during the Bennett administration. It didn't come up new for me.

EF: Did you get engaged in that as a legislator or more as a candidate for governor?

JC: I do not remember being fully engaged as a legislator. The point person that we had was Fred Weaver on that issue because of where he lived and the potential impact, some of the water, streams headed to southeast Kansas. He was very, very active. He understood environment, water issues. Interestingly enough, I'm again lapping, but sometimes you've got to bring the two experiences together. I as governor said I would work out a settlement to not finish. When I got elected, the more it went, the more I was concerned about it being a problem from a variety of points of view. I went to Terry Scanlon, who was state chair of the party at the time and he was on the board of—I'm blanking now.

EF: K G & E?

JC: Probably. I said very privately I would help orchestrate a settlement.

EF: Resolution.

JC: Of course, the big issue I won on was how to—it was the same issue, allowing the corporation more flexibility in terms of who was going to pay for that construction.

EF: I've got to ask you to talk about, I mentioned over lunch, you're coming to Wichita State. You were being asked how you learned to set priorities. Your response, which was quite vivid with me, that it hearkened back to 4-H and actually judging cattle and maybe dairy cattle. Of course, this does overlap, too, in your governor—

JC: 4-H made a huge difference for me. I learned how to run a meeting, understand Robert's Rules of Order. I developed some speaking skills. People may have different opinions on how much I developed, but certainly my comfort level talking publicly. But it was the judging, which started in 4-H, continued in vocational agriculture, FFA, and then at K State, both on livestock and dairy, where I had to make decisions. You had eight minutes to decide how you were going

to place a class of four animals. Over the years, it could have been heifers, calves, cows, or swine. I did the whole works.

But you had a short period of time to evaluate, and I think that's where the word "priority" led me to the response and get a sense of "What am I going to say?" when I go into—most of the time it was a smoke-filled room in those days.

EF: It really was.

JC: It really was. And know that the person I'm giving my reasons to was the official judge. A lot of things had to happen in that eight minutes. Then you would have class after class after class, and when it got to livestock, there would be beef and swine and horses and sheep. You had all of these different animals that you had to kind of keep sorted.

But a lot of it was that capacity to make a decision because you couldn't wait until the last second to turn your card in and write down you decided 3, 1, 2, 4, and then while you're walking to the next class, try to—"What am I going to say?" You needed to look at those animals and make a decision and start formatting the case you were going to make.

One of the other things I always shared was the other thing I learned there that had application across the board, and it was standard teaching to me, it wasn't my idea, but you always granted, if you went in and said, "I place 1 over 3," you granted that 3 was better in some respect. You'd offer that up first. You were kind of protecting yourself. So if the official judge put 3 first, you were showing respect for that person. Then you come back and say "But here's why I put 1 over 3."

I've carried that lesson forward in terms of when I'm teaching in particular, although I hope I practice that as an individual, the importance of showing respect for people, respect for your teacher, for the administration, for a public official. Even if you totally disagree, show them respect because you've got a much better chance to be effective.

So the tone and everything, when you went in to give that set of reasons, it couldn't come across as, "Now, if you disagree with me, you just don't know what the hell you're doing." It had to be—you had to be accurate with the observations you're making. My #1 cow had a leveler rump or whatever it might had been, teat placement, you name it. The official judge had to be agreeing with you, or you weren't going to get a very good score.

One of my strengths was always oral reasons. I won a lot of trophies on oral reasons but was never the top high individual because I was always making my points and getting the official judge to, "That's a good point" and giving me credit primarily for being able to explain and defend what I was doing, which also carries over into public policy because you have these disagreements. A lot of times to have results, you've got to accept the fact that the other party or the whatever, they've got some good points.

Now you still come back to thinking that you've got it right, but you've got to be willing to admit, and I think that judging—and I had some great coaches, great coaches. I mean, at K State, Jerry Marrion and dairy and Don Good and the livestock judging. I mean, these were great human beings, and they knew how to coach.

I will never forget—and this is off the topic, I apologize. They can cut it out if they want to, but I remember I went out for the junior livestock judging team because I lost all my eligibility for dairy when I was a fresh—they used me as a junior when I was a freshman. They used me in the senior competition when I was a sophomore.

I went out for the junior livestocking judging because I didn't have any dairy eligibility left. Don Good always took a class of twenty-five to Missouri between Christmas and New Year's, a full week over there. I'll never forget the weather, terrible. We'd have classes outside, and then we'd do oral reasons at night. The motels in those days were not like today. The door opened to the outside. So we had to line up outside, and we were there when it was one below during the day.

I had a terrible week. I was 25th out of 25. Don Good still picked me to go to Denver. It was obviously on my earlier experience, where I had judged nationally. He gave me a chance. I was high in oral reasons, I was third high—it was the only really good day I ever had on livestock, the only one in 4-H, FFA collegiate. I had great coaches, great coaches. 4-H, I mean, really good.

EF: You're making a case for livestock judging as a preparation for political leadership.

JC: I don't laugh at that. Now it's not realistic, but I've said on frequent occasions, we need some activity that parallels it. But most of the parallels are written reasons, for an example, which doesn't encompass all of the pluses of having the livestock dairy judging. I agree. I can guarantee you every one of those coaches had experience, and they were effective leaders in all of their areas. They could articulate their message. They could focus. They could prioritize. They could set an agenda and communicate it well.

The skills of communication are not emphasized enough. A lot of great ideas never make it because it's never communicated well. Then there's some not so good ideas that get communicated real well, and we would just as soon they hadn't have been.

No, a lot of great experiences growing up, and then the opportunity to apply them in the legislature, and learn from other legislators. I think of Clyde Hill, a lawyer. You're going to have to help me, south of Topeka. What little community? [Yates Center, Kansas] It wasn't little-little like Smolan, but it makes no difference. He was chair of Ways and Means, when I was in my second term, a true gentleman, a lawyer, very dignified, dressed to the T every day, but he was fair. I learned a lot from him without a doubt.

I learned a lot from Don Crumbaker.

EF: Would he have been the chair of Ways and Means when you were on Ways and Means?

JC: Yes. Second term. That's when I got acquainted with him, really. I was on Ways and Means. Don Crumbaker on Education, far western Kansas, Brewster, if I remember, a great human being, dedicated to education, obviously understood the rural areas, but I don't recall ever where he let it be a rural/urban fight. It was always what's best for the state of Kansas, and we're all in the state of Kansas. So we need to think from different perspectives. He was fantastic. He wasn't the best at the mic [microphone], but in committee—I mean, he was good at the mic, but he wasn't quite as articulate as particularly some of the lawyers who were really schooled in presenting those kind of messages.

There were just some great people. There was a—once in a while, I would go listen in the Senate, particularly the first term. Bell was his last name, a senator from northeast Kansas. I don't know if it was Atchison or Leavenworth.

EF: I don't think I know him.

JC: He was a senior. He was probably in his sixties. It was just fun to listen to the debate, particularly in the Senate. You could just sit there watching the debate and not in the House, having to keep your mind on a variety of things. We had very articulate lawyers in the House as well.

It was a time when you got acquainted with a lot of real talent, real talent, and dedicated to the best interests of the state. Republicans were more conservative than Democrats. That has not changed. The extremes have changed, but it was left of center and right of center.

EF: Did you ever, and of course, your governorship ran into the mid-eighties, and we asked Mike this yesterday, did you ever recall the Kochs being engaged at the state level when you—

JC: No. The first involvement, and I just share this, we don't have to get into it, Joan Finney, when she ran for governor, it was pretty obvious they were behind her. She had some very conservative positions they really liked. But, no, I don't remember—

EF: The abortion issue during your legislative service?

JC: Not even as governor. One of the legislators I got acquainted with was David Miller. I want to say Eudora, south of Lawrence.

EF: East of Lawrence.

JC: In explaining what has happened with the legislature and the politics. I don't say this—I mean he did what he believed in. He started, in my observation now, a good Republican that was heavily involved – [others] might see it very differently, but I think he was the first one to decide that his far-right positions were never going to make it without a different strategy, and that's when he started organizing the Far Right at the local level. He and those who helped him were patient. They slowly started to take over county after county, and pretty soon with enough patience, I can't give you an exact—they took over the state committee.

EF: Mike made the point that that organization as well as Americans for Prosperity—

JC: All of that has come.

EF: Being involved in candidate recruitment today.

JC: Not then. Like I referred to, even the state parties weren't that engaged. There was never in my eight years a Democratic effort from the state committee. Somebody may push back and say I'm not fair, but we energized within here, with that talent I made reference to earlier to make things happen.

EF: I've pretty much run the course. I haven't even kept track of time.

JC: I started looking at my watch one time. In fact, I sort of did, and then I thought of George H. W. Bush, thinking, “No, I don't want that.”

EF: I now realize I've kept you quite a while.

JC: It's been a joy. You know, one thing that the listeners need to understand is that not only did you work for Governor Bennett, but when I left the governor's office, I went to Wichita State University, and you ran the Hugo Wall Center.

EF: That's true.

JC: At that time. So we got really very well acquainted. I didn't get really to get to know you when you were in the governor's office, but certainly since I got to know you. Of course, I'm a great admirer of your wife. That doesn't do you any harm. Marla was very active at the university when I was there three semesters. So it's been a joy to work with you.

EF: Well, same here. Thank you for taking the time.

JC: You're welcome.

[End of File]