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INTERVIEW: DARLENE CORNFIELD (REVISED)

Q: I think I have explained this to you what we are doing, but we are asking everyone the same body of questions and then we have these transcribed and we make a collection of these for the Kansas State Historical Society. It's part of a body of material that scholars and other people might want to look at and I'm going to ask you the same questions. If you feel like you don't want to answer the question, feel free. This is totally at your discretion, but any kind of questions I don't ask I'll write and fill in, too, so you might think about it as we go along. Your first year in the legislature was last year, so you are serving your first term and you are in the House and you are a Republican. Why did you become a Republican and when did you first affiliate with the party?

A: Okay. I became a Republican in 1986. In Kansas that was a big gubernatorial year and there were seven running for the Republican nomination and, up until that time, I was an unaffiliated voter--always participating, but not affiliated with the party. So in 1986, there were seven running in the Republican nomination and I decided I should affiliate because I knew there were a couple of guys I didn't want and I didn't know much about the others. So I decided, also about that time, I was becoming more aware of my tax burden and just things in general as a taxpayer and a small business owner and I decided to go ahead and get involved and you get more information if you're affiliated with the party. You get more mail, you get more things about more candidates, and so I decided to start. Instead of just voting name recognition and party, I decided that I would be an educated voter and I would find out who these people are and why they were running.

Q: Kind of unusual reason, too. You were first elected in 1990. Can you describe your election and how you ran your election campaign?

A: Yes, the 1986, when I first got involved with politics actively really, I decided that I would... the more I got involved, the more I got involved. By the time 1990 came, I had found out a lot about the legislators in my area, my personal representative, and knew he did not reflect the views that I had about business, industry, pro-life, family values. Anything that I espoused, this man did not. At the Republican party I asked, do you have someone running against this, and he was a 14-year Democrat incumbent that had been serving in my district. I had been living in that district for four years and they hadn't found anybody and the more I got involved...I got involved and my husband and I discussed it and I said, 'Dear, I think I'm going to run for this House seat because they don't have anybody and I'm not sending that guy back.' So, at that time, I had one son who was about 8- or 9-months-old when we made the decision to run in June. He was 14 months when I won and we came up in January. So we decided



that we were Christians and we prayed about it and we felt that the Lord did want me to run because I feel that mothering is my priority and my job....Not my job, but once you have children that is your responsibility and not having planned him, I had him though. So we decided that I would make the sacrifice for the three months up here because I felt that things were getting so bad that if I didn't sacrifice the 90 days he may not have a future. So we decided that that was the decision we would make. As far as my campaign, I had become a member of the Republican...Nominee Republican Women in Sedgwick County to get more information and so I aired with them that this was what I was going to do and several of them said, oh, you'd be great, yes, go for it and stuff. So I just got with my mom and some friends and we pretty much ran an out-of-home. I didn't have a big campaign manager or treasurer or I didn't talk to anybody else about their campaign. I ran on who I was, what I believed, what I believed the normal, average family believed, and if the people agreed with that, they would vote me in because my philosophy is why vote one scoundrel in to get another scoundrel out. I mean, what have you accomplished if you don't vote somebody in with integrity and honesty and moral values that you espouse? It doesn't do any good to throw the bum out and put another bum in. The slogan going around the past few years, 'throw the bums out' and that's fine and I'd agree with that, but let's put somebody in that's worth putting in.

Q: Interesting. Very quotable quotes. You mentioned, I believe, your mother and your husband in this process. Did they encourage you to run then or help you in your campaign? Who else helped you?

A: Yes, my mother thinks I'm the greatest thing since sliced bread. I'm one of six children, but my mother and I are very close and she lives in Wichita and for several years I didn't live....After I graduated from high school there, I travelled for ten years and went around. I lived in New Orleans for awhile. I lived in Denver for awhile. I visited on the east coast for three months and then I moved to Hawaii and was there for three years. So I've spent ten years just kind of after high school, just running around and seeing life and experiencing it. Went to Court Reporting School and have a background in legal and court reporting. And so my mother and my husband--my husband of all things is Canadian, so he doesn't even vote. He's a Canadian citizen which he chooses to keep because we do have plans sometime in the future to go to Australia and maybe live and we can get in with him being Canadian as part of the British Commonwealth. We could not if we were both American citizens without bureaucracy to the max, so that's why he chooses that. But he was very supportive and that's why I say we worked all that out before I ran. There's no way I would do that and say, 'by the way, dear.' So we had discussed that. I had several friends that were real involved



in my running that felt like they wanted me. A couple of them don't live in my district.

Q: Are they men or women?

A: Mainly man and wife. Two of my closest financial supporters and backers were couples that have children. Also, you know, some the families were families that I go to church with that espouse our same family values and thought that they're eroding rapidly in the governmental system.

Q: What church is that?

A: Well, we attend a family-based home fellowship. We don't really have a name. Right now, we have eleven families that attend. It's just a fundamental, Bible-believing Church.

Q: That's interesting. Now, these people campaigned for you. By that you mean, they went door-to-door and sent out flyers and called people?

A: No, pretty much the door-to-door was....I had people that took flyers door-to-door, friends and precinct people did that a little bit, but most of the door-to-door which I did do a lot of, my mother and I did. We took my first son Alex--because at that time I didn't know I was pregnant with my second son Carey--and we would go door-to-door every night. I would carry Alex for a block or two, and then my mom would carry him for a block or two, and it was so cute because we would go for like 2 1/2 hours every night and right about the time we'd be on the last block would be when Alex would start going Hm Hm and start getting tired. And we'd say three more houses, honey, and we're done. So it was perfect. He knew the schedule and he went with me every night and, so, door-to-door I pretty much did that with my mother and myself. I had neighbors that would come over when we would do mailings. I would just call people and say I'm going to do a mailing Friday or Thursday. Can you come over and help address envelopes? So we just pretty much did it in the house and when I needed people, I called on them and they came.

Q: Did you use the media at all?

A: I did. Because I have some rural areas because I'm from Valley Center, I ran ads in the Valley Center paper and I also used the Mt. Hope Clarion which covers Maize.

Q: They support you?

A: The papers? Well, I don't think Maize endorsed candidates. The Mount Hope Clarion, because the Mount Hope covers so many, there's probably three or four representatives that would use that paper. But the Valley Center paper does endorse and did endorse Ken Francisco.



Q: Okay, do you think your door-to-door was a major part of your campaign? Do you think that was the thing that helped you?

A: I think so and my direct mailings. I did four direct mailings and I thought that was very important. I think also my flyers are not the normal....I don't do anything that's normal or regular. That's just not Darlene Cornfield. My campaign was run a little bit differently, but also my flyers weren't done by a professional agency or anything like that. I wrote them myself. Anybody that's known me for very long, if you were to pick up my flyer and read it, you would say Darlene wrote that because it reflects me and who I am. And so they were quite a bit different than the normal flyers. My newsletters kind of have a real popularity about them from here, too, because I don't write the normal newsletter that people write and I get people all over Wichita and in the Sedgwick County area that write me and say put me on your newsletter list because we enjoy reading your newsletters because they tell us what's really going on.

Q: Makes me curious to see. Did a relative or close friend of yours precede you in the House or Senate? Was there any kind of role model or anyone around you...?

A: No, none.

Q: That's kind of interesting, too.

A: I'm a self-made person, self-directed.

Q: You described your district a little bit, but how would you characterize it? Mainly rural, mainly urban, a mixture or smalltown?

A: It's pretty much a mixture. I have two small towns. I have rural in between those two small towns and then I have a chunk of Wichita. And in that chunk of Wichita, I have probably one of the highest--not the highest, but a real wealthy suburb area in it and I also have the very poor, poor, poorest part of Wichita in my district and I have a lot of businesses in my district. The Eagle--I rarely ever agree with them--but they did say that the 90th was probably a microcosm of Sedgwick County in general or Wichita. You know, it has all the aspects of the county in that one district.

Q: Who's the senator for that district?

A: It's split. My senator in Valley Center is Norma Daniels. Ken Francisco whom I defeated in the House got appointed to the Senate seat that Jim Francisco had, and he has Maize and goes around Sedgwick County, so there's a couple of senators that represent parts of....



Q: Represent part of your district? Doesn't seem like many of them are that way. Seems like several representatives are in a senator's district but few representatives have two senators. What issues, then, if you have this microcosm in this district, what issues are they interested in? Everything it sounds like.

A: Well, I believe that it's rather unfortunate, but I think my district more so than most of the others in Sedgwick County which I'm most familiar with are the apathetic, and I really believe that partially that is due to the poor representation they've had for the last fourteen years. I believe that those people are tired of government, tired of the guy representing him. He doesn't vote the way they want him to vote and, therefore, they don't vote. The voter turnout is poor in my district; the registration is poor in my district. I have 20,000 people. I have 9,000 registered voters and, of those, only 6,000 vote. I would like to see that increase and I'm working to do that. I don't only send to people that are registered to vote. I try to get those that are not registered to vote and give them a reason to vote, not to go vote for the worst of two evils, but to give them encouragement to vote for somebody that they feel is really fighting for what they believe in.

Q: Well, if they weren't interested in issues, then what issues did you campaign on or did you?

A: Well, I did. I didn't pick out anything in particular because of the fact of not having the knowledge. You just can't go out and say I'm going to do this, not knowing that you can't accomplish anything. I wasn't going to be a politician. I'm not a politician. I'm a housewife who pays a lot of taxes who knows all their neighbors pay a lot of taxes and I wanted to represent them in an honest way. So my basic philosophy was, I'm going to go up there and try to stop the tax increases. And let's get government under control. At that time, '90, was a big deal for the pension plan, the super pension plan of the legislators, and I did make a couple of comments. It wasn't a big part of my platform but I did say that I would try to have that repealed, which I put a bill in to repeal it. They would not repeal it because they said--they were totally wrong--but I'm still going to try to do it because I'd like to get that money back that those that are getting it are getting, but anyway we did stop it. I'm not to tap my own horn here, but actually that pension plan would still be intact today if it wasn't for me in the last legislature. Although I never got any glory out of it and I never got any press, but you can ask anybody in the House of Representatives. We all got onto this bill and we did pass it out of pensions. I also serve on pensions, but the whole idea was...I don't know if you know much about the process but you know it goes from the House, it goes to the Senate, and then if you don't agree, it goes to Conference Committee. Well, if they don't pass it out of



Conference Committee, it just stays in there for umpteen.... Well, that's what was happening and that was the plan to put it in conference and not pull it up. But I was going to make the motion to concur with our report, to concur with the motion. Well, being a freshman and knowing that these legislators didn't want to do that, when it got out...I went down to leadership and said, I'm going to make a motion to concur this--big mistake--because what they then did was to call the Senate Conference Committee together again. Then they acted on the bill. They cleaned it up because they knew now I was going to bring it out and people would have to vote on it and pass it. So they held the House. We didn't go into session for two hours so that they could work this bill on the Senate side, get it through the Senate and then my motion to concur would be moot because it would have already been handled through the Senate side. And that's what they did. So I was really responsible for getting that stopped. Most people will never know that, but it was a real learning experience for me.

Q: First year always is, isn't it? You're talking about the pension issue. Were there other issues you would identify as women's issues that you've worked on?

A: Well, I think, in those areas, the main thing I myself as a woman and a mother, that I looked for and red flags go up or the tons of children's initiative issues that have gone through this interim....The Education Committee is trying to totally obliterate any family and any concerns that you would have for family. They want to take our children at three months and start institutionalizing them and, in my mind, brainwashing them to what the state thinks they should know. They tout this Parents as Teachers Program as the greatest thing since sliced bread and I think it's the most devastating thing that could happen to a family because all these things look good on the surface but when you find out what's behind them--which nobody does--then you start to see the real decay of the American family that these people's agenda is supporting. But most people don't see it and don't want to see it, and so, as a woman I don't support barely anything they do up here because they are really not in support of the family. They are out to destroy the family and the taxing subdivisions do that. The Education Committee does it. Every committee up here that does anything is really negative to the family and to women, if you want to take that as women's issues, to women in general.

Q: Probably it's not just a women's issue, though. Family issues there are sort of both men and women. I don't know whether you even agree that there should be such a thing as a name like women's issues.

A: Well, you know if they want to talk about...I mean, they're trying to revive on a national level the ERA. We've killed



that thing 9,000 times and it should remain dead. That movement is not supportive of women. There's a case in point where it's really not a supportive role for women. I mean, if you want to talk equal pay for equal work, fine, but that's not the ERA and that is not what the ERA does. Yes, I'm for equal pay for equal women. Give me a break, but as far as this sexual harassment issue and stuff, I mean that's been around since the beginning of time. You can't legislate those kinds of things.

Q: That's interesting. If you had to put a label on yourself, how would you describe yourself? Are you a liberal, a conservative, or what?

A: I am probably the most conservative legislator up here. Period. I have several Republican friends--men--that say I'm definitely the most conservative woman up here, but I would probably go so far as to say I am the most conservative legislator up here.

Q: Okay, now, as a freshman, do you have a mentor? Do you have someone or is there anyone here that kind of took you under their wing and helped you find your way around?

A: Well, they have a mentor program up here and the Republicans did appoint one to me, which he spoke to me twice and he votes almost totally opposite me, so I thought that was a pretty poor choice on the part of Republican leadership. So he hasn't been much of a mentor to me. There are a few...actually, I don't have a lot of legislator friends or close ties. I think partly because last year I took Alex with me everywhere and people just don't want to associate or be seen....I don't know, they were offended or just didn't want to...for whatever reasons, I didn't make any close friends. I don't have any. I didn't have any this year so far, and now I have two babies this year and I go home a lot more so the opportunity is not there to get close to any legislator. But there are a few legislators whose opinion I do value and watch in certain areas. We don't agree in all areas, but I would say probably on the Republican side for a legislator that's been around awhile and knows a lot and is probably pretty conservative, I'd say Bob Vancrum is somebody that I look up to or I admire. I've only called on him for his information maybe once or twice, but I watch him and listen to him in caucus and I admire him greatly. Now, Melvin Neufeld is a pretty conservative legislator. He's only served one term and then was defeated and then got re-elected, so he's not long term, but he's very informative and he knows a lot and, so, on issues that I don't know a lot about I'll ask him sometimes and he's also my seatmate. So I tend to ask him but, basically, I pretty much read the bills and study myself and vote my own conscience. I think I probably hold the record for 124 to 1 votes in the House.



Q: You're the one.

A: I'm the one.

Q: What committees are you on?

A: I serve on Pensions. I serve on Labor and Industry, Insurance, and Local Government.

Q: You're not a minority leader.

A: No, because I'm a freshman so I don't serve in any leadership.

Q: We kind of talked about some of them--maybe all of them--but what bills have you introduced and sponsored? We talked about some you worked on indirectly which didn't actually bear your name or anything.

A: I did file three pension bills last year in my own name and I'm going to continue to fight for those. I think one of the biggest problems in state government is state government. These people come back year after year after year after year asking for more money. Drives me nuts. I sit in Pensions--like today we had a meeting at noon and they are all asking for more money--and I just sit there and it's so funny when he takes the motion to introduce the bill. We took motions to introduce bills today and it was all those in favor, all those opposed, and he always looks at me for that position.

Q: You're opposed.

A: I'm telling you I just have a hard time. The biggest, most frustrating thing for me as a legislator is that I cannot in good conscience believe that these people are voting their districts. They can't be. Not all of them. Not when you have a 15-member committee. I cannot believe that fourteen of those people would vote for all that money increase in general fund which is your tax dollars. I can't believe it.

Q: Good question. Can you think, in addition to the pension issue, are there any other issues that you felt were really major defeats or major victories last year during the session and so far this year?

A: We haven't done any votes. No, it was a pretty frustrating year for me. I guess the only thing I can say--and it had nothing to do with me--was Governor Finney did veto the tax increase bill that would have been passed on to the taxpayers. A lot of people considered that a defeat that she did that. I felt that was a great victory for my people, but because I voted down all appropriations bills and all tax increases because it's government that's got to be curtailed. Not tax and spend mentality. We'll take it from here if we don't get



it from there and make up. That is not philosophy I'm up here with.

Q: Did you have any particular experience that was memorable because it was humorous or embarrassing or wonderful? Maybe not related to victories, but just experiences.

A: Oh, I suppose that experience with the pension bill where they actually held the House for two hours without coming, you know, putting us in session so that they could work this bill and work it which was new to me and I didn't understand that because I was pretty new. So that took me by surprise. Also, offered those pension bills that in committee...well, they weren't going to give me a hearing. Well, Pensions only meets once a week and he said, 'well, I don't know if we can hear those bills, Darlene,' and I said, 'Why not? We only meet one lousy day a week. You should hold a hearing on every bill you have before you and I want a hearing.' He didn't want to do it, but he did give me a hearing but then, of course, he took no action on my bills at all. So I did take those as amendments onto the floor on a pension bill that was going through and fought the good fight and argued for two hours and a half down there, and only could get 30 votes. There, again, it amazes me and I told my....I don't think anybody up here really likes me very much because I just don't play games that they play. And when I was arguing those bills, my first amendment went down in defeat, and I was pretty upset, but I said, well, I'm going to argue this on principle and the principle ought to carry it through, but it didn't. So I said, well, if we can't...and I said this to them and everybody laughed, 'well, I didn't think that was going to go over so if we can't vote by principle let's vote with some reality here. Let's get into life and stuff.' so that was a pretty frustrating experience for me and I was very upset and I was probably eight months pregnant at the time, so the defeat was pretty emotional on me. I cried for about two and one half hours after I lost those, and I probably always will. I'm pretty emotional. Doesn't mean I'm really upset. It's just I'm emotional and I cry over these things. But I wasn't real vocal on the mike last year, but this year when those bills come and people aren't going down and showing the other side, I think I'm going to be a little more vocal this year.

Q: Let me back up a minute. There are 45 women this year in the House and the Senate. That would be 36....

A: Yes, I thought we had like 38.

Q: How effective are women as legislators in your eyes, just comparing with men?

A: I think they are effective. I think that women can do every bit....They say the attorneys have the upper hand. Well, there's a lot of women attorneys up here. I think women are



just as astute and just as sharp as any man on the floor. I don't think there's any discrimination. They have a vote just like the men do, so they can be every bit as effective as a man.

Q: I'm going to ask you some questions now just about you and the relationship of your private life a little bit with your role as a legislator. Are you a native of Kansas?

A: Yes, I am.

Q: Where were you born and when?

A: I was born in Wichita in 1953.

Q: So you're native all the way.

A: Native-native.

Q: Can you describe your childhood and growing up? Were you in town, out of town, brothers and sisters, etc.?

A: I'm the second of six, and we are only ten years apart and so we are pretty close together. I was raised in the city of Wichita. We moved quite frequently. I often can remember the grade schools by the house I was living in and I went to five grade schools, two junior highs and one high school, so we moved quite frequently. Lived in all areas of town and it was six kids.

Q: What are your parents' names?

A: Mary Ann is my mother and Carroll is my Dad.

Q: What is your mother's maiden name?

A: Nardine, and she's from Colorado.

Q: What kind of things did you do as you were growing up? What did you like to do?

A: I'm trying to think. Well, probably by the time I got to Junior High and stuff, I wanted to be lots of things. I wanted to be an interior designer at one time. I wanted to be a lawyer at one time. I liked to sew in those days, and just run around. Liked to dance. By the time I got to high school, I really liked to dance and I really....Political things were the farthest thing from my mind. I was not active. I wasn't a young Republican or a young anything. I was into fun. I had a boy friend. My mother said she never worried about me marrying too young because I had a new boyfriend every two weeks, so I was pretty much just wanting to go out and have a good time.

Q: Well, did you debate in high school?



A: No, didn't debate. I just went through high school by the-- not the skin of my teeth--I made average grades. I wasn't an honor roll student and, like most, I took the path of least resistance. I didn't pick real hard topics that I had to take. I took what would get me through and that was it.

Q: What kind of work did your dad do and did your mother work?

A: Yes, my mother has always worked. She was a waitress when I was very young--food and cocktail waitress--and then she tended bar in the Plaza Club, and Petroleum Club. She worked there for years, and then she worked with my Dad. My dad used to drive a cab when I was an infant, and then he started the Best Cab truck express in Wichita and built it up to 300 trucks. And then, this is the classic case of education and community. Because he didn't have a...my dad went through 11th grade and that was all. My mother only went through the 8th grade. When he got up to 300 trucks, they figured he didn't have the capability to run it anymore because he didn't have a college degree and they fired him, which was a devastating blow to my dad, and he went out and we had six kids and we were pretty poor. I mean, I wasn't poor-poor, but I was not rich by any stretch of the imagination and he started....

Q: That's interesting. What's the name of the business he started?

A: It's Carroll's delivery. My dad's namesake.

Q: He's still doing it then ?

A: Well, he did it for thirty years. My dad got glaucoma and he's now blind and he wanted to keep the business in the family. So when he first diversified, he divided up among three of the children. My sister took part; I took part; and my brother took part. I was living in Hawaii and my husband and I moved back to Wichita to take over part of the business.

Q: Let me back up to your school days and then to now. What organizations--you said you didn't debate, but that's really not an organization--what high school and after high school organizations have you been a member of?

A: None. In high school, I wasn't even in the pep squad. I mean, those people were so immature. Everybody that I knew was much older. I dated much older men and the guy that took me to the high school prom was 27. I didn't run with anyone in high school. It just wasn't my thing.

Q: Okay. Some people had organizations they felt influenced them or maybe taught them skills that later have used in the legislature--and if you did not belong to an organization....

A: No, for the most part, no.



Q: Now, you mentioned partnership or owning part of your father's business. What other occupations have you had?

A: I've done lots of things in my time. I don't know if I should put this on my tape. I'm trying to think. Mainly, when I got out of high school, I pretty much...when I was in high school, I only had one job and I worked at a theater in the concessions, and when my grades went down I had to quit. And they do when you work at a theater 3:00 to 11:00, your grades go down. That was probably my first job and then I always drove a truck for my dad in the delivery business in the summers, once I'd turned 16. I worked with my dad.

Q: What kind of a truck did you drive?

A: Just a pick-up truck. And then after high school, I sold clothes in a boutique for awhile when I was traveling around, when I lived in New Orleans and stuff. Then I went to school quite a bit. I went to Wichita Business College for awhile and was going to Court Reporting School and I did go to Friends for a semester right after school, and then decided that's not really what I wanted to do. Then I moved to New Orleans and joked around there for a couple of years. Then I ended up in Denver and went to Court Reporting School.

Q: That's where you went to Court Reporting School.

A: Yes, and Court Reporting School is kind of funny. I mean, I didn't stay and get a diploma or anything like that. You achieve it and pass your state bar in whatever state you are going to practice and go on, but I left there and I ended up sailing to Hawaii on a private yacht. I'm an adventuress sort and I've done crazy things. I've danced in bars. So, you know, I have a well-rounded education of life. I've done a lot but I've never been in trouble. You know, I've never been involved in drugs. I never experimented. I never smoked. I had my fun and games as a youth and as an adult, but I never...and I sailed to Hawaii and stayed there and went to work for a court reporting firm and was a legal secretary there for a year or so.

Q: The Court Reporting is sort of is your educational....You're not doing it?

A: No, I gave that up after I got married.

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

A: Thirty-six.

Q: Thirty-six. That's interesting. Everybody's been either thirty-six or thirty-seven. Almost unreal in this session. We're doing a little study of that. We're not through yet.



Okay. You've mentioned your husband several times. What does he do? He stays in Wichita? What's his occupation?

A: We have part of the delivery business and he runs that. Now, last year was my first year and when I won, we hired an employee to help with the delivery business and we got an answering service to take over some of the functions that I did. But, because this is not a profitable business, it nearly put us under because we're overtaxed. We could pay the salary but we couldn't keep up with all the taxes we had to pay on this individual that we had, so we had to let him go and this year my husband's doing it all by himself. See, he used to come up a couple days. He brought my pages up every month and spent time with us, but now I only see him on the weekends and he's doing that but we also....Speaking of entrepreneurs, we have a small print shop in our garage. So my husband prints when he's not running the delivery business. He wanted to get that going fulltime but, financially, we just can't cover it.

Q: So, he'd like to be here, but he can't be. So you go back to Wichita every weekend, but you have your children here?

A: I brought both babies.

Q: And you had them last session.

A: I had Carey between the end of regular session and the start of the veto session. We generally have a couple of weeks but we had ten days last year, and he was born on the sixth day. He was four days when we came back to session.

Q: And you didn't miss a day.

A: Didn't miss a day. Oh no, he was four days old and we came right up and I brought a little basket and I nursed him. I mean, it made veto much more interesting for me than the rest of the legislators, I'll tell you. It was much more enjoyable, I should say.

Q: Well, who helps you this year? Your mother helps. Did you have someone to help you last year?

A: Well, last year, no. I brought Alex and what I did was on Mondays and Fridays we're generally only on the House floor. We don't have committee meetings, so I brought him with me to the Capitol on Mondays and Fridays. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, he was with the sitter up here but one of those three days I left early as my schedule would permit, and so he was with the sitter 2 and 1/2 days a week sometimes. A couple weeks he stayed home with his dad and some days he was more with me and then, as far as the social calendar in the evening, I took him with me every night.

Q: So he didn't miss you too much.



A: No.

Q: As a legislator, what do you think will be your major contribution? I think you've hinted at several things you are working on and it's maybe early to decide this.

A: I tell you, there are a lot of things after being up here. I mean, I wouldn't trade running, making the sacrifice to run. I'm very glad I won because that's a lot of work to lose. I'm glad I'm here. As to how much I can do as an individual, I don't know because I'm hoping in '92 elections...I am going to run next year. And I'm hoping people are awake enough and they are aware enough and they are going to get out and they are going to replace these people that are running their own agendas as opposed to what the people really want. So, therefore, I'm hoping for a more conservative legislature next year. If we get that and we can effectively really do some government changes, I'll probably stay in for awhile. If not, I'll probably retire and raise my boys as my major priority. But I suppose if I do serve only the two terms that my biggest contribution, I think, is that I can wake up and make people aware of what is really going on, because I believe a lot of these people just vote. There's not a person...I don't believe there's a person in that legislature that would vote 124 to 1. I believe when they see all those green lights going, they push green whether they agree or don't agree or want to or don't. Because of I don't know what or why they can't have any backbone, but that's their problem. But I look at the bills and I look at what they are doing and what they are not doing and that's how I vote. I don't look up at the wall first to see, and I believe many of them do and I'm here to educate the legislators or try to inform them.

Q: How do you think your being in the legislature will affect your children? Do you feel like it is a sacrifice for them, or a benefit?

A: Oh, I think it's both. I think Alex loves to come to the capitol a lot. He is only two, but this summer we took a trip back East. I went to a conference back there and he sees a dome and it's the Capitol and he knows its the Capitol. We went to Lincoln Memorial and all these things, and he comes home and picks up a penny and says Lincoln, Lincoln, and I'm going to home school that boy? He knows more than I do right now. So, I think Alex....I wish they were a little older actually, but they're not. Carey, unless I serve a long time, he won't remember. Alex will remember and he loves to come here and he loves to ride the cage elevator, but he misses Mom, so it's....But I think he's going to like it and I think he's going to participate in government and we'll have slides and names and campaigns and he'll see his picture with the governor with my pages one day.



Q: He will remember it that way, won't he? Don't you think that being in the legislature so far has changed you in any way or the way people perceive you?

A: Oh, I imagine that some of the people that voted for me before they knew me might change their perception, but then I think a lot of people that didn't vote for me will vote for me next time because of who I am and what I have done or not done.

Q: Newsletters are a big factor here.

A: I sent out a letter last week and sent it to registered voters in my district and I got six responses and I didn't ask for response. I just sent them out and that's good because, like I say, in my district you just don't get a lot of feedback.

Q: Well, other than financial and you've mentioned the financial cost to your business of your being gone and everything, you think it's really costing your family a lot of money for you to be in the...?

A: Well, I think, you know, the pay compensates for me being here. It does not compensate for the money I'm losing in the business that I run, but it's equitable as far as meeting the needs of me having to be up here. It does do that, but it doesn't compensate. But then, you know, how can you do that? Anybody can say, oh, I can make thousands more dollars if I was in private practice--you know, attorneys and judges. I mean, they might do something there but I'm not going to be the first person saying give me more money.

Q: Let me just ask you, kind of related to that, we have determined now in studying this that up to 1974 there were never more than four women in the Kansas legislature. After 1974 and since then, every year the number has grown by leaps and bounds till we get to 45 this year which is even more than last year. Can you explain...you weren't in the legislature in that time frame. Can you hazard a guess? Could it have something to do with compensation or why are there growing numbers of women?

A: I don't think it's compensation. I think it's just more women getting involved in the field would be my basic off-the-top-of-my-head answer for that. I believe that just more and more women are doing more and more things and more and more women ....You know, I'm a firm believer in the Bible and I did have some trouble in my church when I decided to run because they thought that wasn't my position to do that, but I pointed out there are several cases in the Bible where when a good man wasn't there, the Lord used a good woman and so, therefore, I think some women are taking up the slack that the men in our country have given up.



Q: Good answer. Do you think, then, that the people in your church when you said that, do you think they have changed their expectations for women then or just made an exception?

A: No, I think those that are adamant that a woman's place is not in authority over men--which is the main argument there--they still believe that. Now, whether they believe that I'm doing any good or not good, their argument is should I be there. It is not what I accomplish or don't accomplish, it's should I be there. But most do believe that I should be here. Now, I would have a problem with running for President because I would usurp all men by being President and that I would have a personal problem with. As a legislator, I don't feel like I'm usurping a man's authority role over me. I'm just a partner in making decisions but, see...my head is my husband and he supports me. Now, if I did it outside of him, then, scripturally, I might have a problem. I think for the most part, the people in my church that are adamant are Christians that know me that have espoused that view. Most of them that live in my district would vote for me and would support me. I don't think that they would not vote for me because I'm out of the will of the Lord, because I believe that all they have to do is look at my life and look at how I won and know that the Lord's hand is in it and that he wants me there and then when they see that, I don't think they will have a problem voting for me. Anybody that can look at me and see my baby came on the sixth day of the break, instead of in the session, knows that the Lord wants me here.

Q: Well, this is not one of the questions I ask most people because most of them haven't had an experience like this, but what was it like to have a baby right in the middle like this?

A: I don't know. It wasn't any problem for me. I think the biggest surprise for me was finding out three weeks after I'd won the election that I was pregnant. I couldn't believe it and I didn't know what to do because I thought I can't...these people fought hard. I didn't win by much, but these people... I can't let them down. I can't resign! And at that time I didn't know anybody or have an inkling of who would replace me if I resigned, so I felt like that was not an option. So, I just thought well, you know, I just said, Lord, You let me win and You knew I was pregnant and You didn't let me know because You knew I'd withdraw. See, I would not have run had I known, but the Lord, I believe, wanted me here and therefore I didn't find out till...I was 5 months pregnant when I found out, can you believe that? Had the baby April 20 and, like I say, I was on break for ten days but it was no problem. How much of a problem can a new baby be? All he does is eat and sleep. I guess my first one, that's all he did. Some babies scream and holler and the second one never did either, but I believe it is all in the love and care you give them. You hold them and they are not going to cry. I nursed him. I'd sit in the ladies lounge there and listen to all the debate and nurse him



and come out and I'd hold him all the time and everybody would say, gee, Darlene, don't you want to go down to do something? Do you need help eating or something? I'd say, no, I'm fine, but they looked for reasons to hold him and I had a little basket that I brought, though, that I could lay him down if I had to write or do things and I put it right by my desk and he went through the 10-day veto session, no problem. Nobody'd even know I had him.

Q: You must have felt pretty good.

A: I felt good. Oh yes, everybody was saying, what are you doing back here in four days? With both my boys, I went in, had them and was home in ten hours.

Q: So you had him in Wichita?

A: Yes, had him and went home.

Q: Did you have Plan B in case he came while you were here?

A: Well, yes. I was seeing a doctor here because for my weekly visits I couldn't get home to see my doctor. So I was going to use a midwife here if it came to that. I was not going to have a hospital. I'd use a midwife here, but it didn't come to that. But I did have...in case. But I just felt like the Lord knew and He just wasn't going to make me have my baby in Topeka without my husband and my family here. He just wouldn't do that and He didn't.

Q: Well, in our research, it seems like there are not very many women until this year and, of course, four of you this year that had babies. In fact, the only other one we've determined was pregnant while she was a legislator was Mary Ann Reynolds, and I think it was '75 or somewhere around that. So you've kind of set a record this year and it's interesting. It will be interesting to get some response from other people to this and your response is important, too. If everyone had the same experience, how you feel probably would be a factor.

A: I didn't have any problem being pregnant and keeping up with energy or anything .

Q: Do you think...I guess this is going back a little bit to this other question. Do you think the women who have young children are at a disadvantage because maybe people won't vote for them? I mean, running for office.

A: Gee, I don't know. I don't think as far as voting.

Q: You don't think people say they ought to be staying home with their kids.



A: Gee, does anybody believe that anymore? I mean, I believe fundamentally that philosophy, so I don't think that's going to be a handicap as far as voting. I think the disadvantage comes once you're here because I believe that that is where I am at a disadvantage because I don't have the close relationships because I'm spending time with my family. Nobody calls me and says, Darlene, do you want to go to this function? Nobody says, do you want to go to lunch? They just automatically...I don't think it's because they don't like me as an individual. I think they just automatically assume that I've got something else going on, and so they don't ask me and therefore actually I'm the one that's disadvantaged. My kids get me and my voters get what they need, but I'm losing the personal relationships of legislators up here. So I think I'm the loser in this game.

Q: A different situation. Do you think there's anything I haven't asked you about this that you'd like to share? Is there any observation you'd like to make?

A: I don't know. I think that all citizens of Kansas should come spend a day in the gallery. Every civics class ought to come up and teach those young people what government really is and how it works because I believe that if the citizens could come up on a day when we are voting something important and watch those lights change from red to green, red to green, they'd see how important it is to send somebody up that has morals and ethics, regardless of which way they vote. Someone who will say what they stand for and stand by what they say. These people don't do that. They look and if it looks like it's going one way or the other, they'll say, well, if it will pass I don't want to be recorded as saying no, so I'll change. Then, if they see it's going to fail, they go, well, they don't really need my vote, so they switch back. Or we could pass--it would never pass because these legislators always protect themselves--that your vote is your vote and you can't change it. Then they would think before they push that button, but that will never go up here. Ethics? Want to talk about ethics? Something they don't have up here. You can pass all the ethics reform bills, but if it's not in here before you get here, those bills aren't going to do anything for you. I think government is important and I think a lot can be done. I just think the people need to get it back, but they have to do it themselves. We don't need to legislate. My slogan when I ran was educate not legislate. That's to get the people informed, but also to be responsible. We turned the people into a welfare society. They look to the government for everything and they don't want to be responsible and that's why education's got all these things because the parents....I mean, it's just a big vicious circle and now the bureaucracy perpetuates itself. Now, you can't get rid of those programs because you'll eliminate 2000 jobs, for crying out loud. Heaven forbid that we'd eliminate a state employee. But I'm glad I'm here and I hope I win re-election and at least get



down there. At least I'll give them a different way to look at things because I don't think anybody quite looks at it the way I see it.

Q: I really appreciate it.