

INTERVIEW OF DAVE OWEN BY DAVE WEBB, July 22, 2022  
KANSAS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, INC.

Dave Webb: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My name's Dave Webb from Stilwell, Kansas, an auctioneer and appraiser by profession and a former member of this body. We're here today on the Kansas Oral History Project, which is interviewing legislators who served from the sixties. This is in part made possible by a grant through the Kansas Humanities Council. Dave Heinemann, a former legislator, is also doing the videography today.

Today we have the opportunity of interviewing Dave Owen of Lenexa, Kansas. Dave has a phenomenal career of public service, and we're going to get into a lot of that today. So, Dave, it's great to see you today.

Dave Owen: Thank you.

DW: And good to be here with you.

DO: No kidding.

DW: I also think it's probably fitting, if I recall, I think today would have been Bob Dole's 99th birthday.

DO: That's correct.

DW: So it's great that we're here in the State House on what would have been his 99th birthday.

DO: You bet.

DW: I know that you were great friends with Senator Dole, and we'll talk about that as the time goes on.

DO: Okay, terrific.

DW: We're going to get to your time here in the State House a little later, but tell us about your childhood, where you were raised.

DO: Sure.

DW: About that part of your life first.

DO: I grew up, born and up grew up in Arkansas, south Arkansas, on a cotton farm. We lived there for several years. The war kind of changed everything in our family. My dad went into the service. Then he got a job with the government, and we moved around several times over the course of the next few years and ended up in Kansas, and our first city that we lived in was Galena, Kansas, down in the very southeast corner. My dad worked for the Alcohol Tax unit and supervised the making of whiskey in a distillery that was called the Old Rock Distillery. I think it was probably on the Missouri side. In any event, we moved up here to Overland Park when I started fifth grade, and I've lived here ever since.

DW: Your dad probably never came home and told you stories about people hauling whiskey across state lines.

DO: No. Interestingly enough, one of the jobs he had later on was he was a revenuer that went into the hills of Missouri and shook out the guys making moonshine down there. He always drove a hot car because they would confiscate the cars of those guys. They were really pretty cool.

DW: What branch of service was your father in?

DO: He was in the Army.

DW: That's great. You moved up here when you were in fifth grade, Overland Park. Shawnee Mission would have been north at that time. That was the only school.

DO: That was the only school. As a matter of fact, it was called Shawnee Mission Rural.

DW: That's correct.

DO: The first one after that was Shawnee Mission East which was built a couple of years after I graduated in 1956.

DW: Great. Then your life took you to Ottawa University.

DO: Right.

DW: How did that come about?

DO: We were members of First Baptist Church at Overland Park. It was an American Baptist Church and very close to Ottawa University because of that affiliation. Students from there would come up to the church and do singing, presentations, and such as that. I had a good connection with them to begin with. So it was just kind of a natural process. When I got ready to go to college, my dad and mother encouraged me to go there.

DW: Great, that's awesome. I understand there was a pretty good basketball team during that era.

DO: There definitely was. We had great athletics at Ottawa University. When I was there, we won two championships, and I'm very proud to say that our team in '57-'58 still holds the record of being undefeated in the conference. That has held up for all these, what, sixty, seventy years.

DW: That's probably better than some of your accomplishments here in the Senate.

DO: That's right.

DW: An excellent honor, and we're going to circle back to Ottawa University a little later in this interview. So you're out of Ottawa University. Tell us how you got started in your business and your family.

DO: When I first graduated, my dad and some others had started a credit union in Overland Park. He asked if I would serve as a manager to that credit union, but that didn't last very long because he was also very close to Henry Bubb of Capital Federal Savings. Cap Fed used my dad's office to close their loans before they built their first office in Johnson County.

As a result of that, I got a call from Bryce Anderson in Mission, KS who ran the Cap Fed office and asked if I would come to work there. So I spent a few years over there closing loans. Johnson County was a booming—for example, Nall Hills was in the process of being built. So we were closing loans right and left.

Then after a while, I got a call from Dave Cox who was the president of Overland Park State Bank and asked if I would be interested in coming over and starting a mortgage department for the bank. One of the things that kind of piqued my interest was that bank was owned by Crosby Kemper Sr., and I knew the power that he had in the Greater Kansas City area. So I did that. I worked there for several years and really enjoyed it and learned a lot.

DW: I think, if I recall, Overland Park State Bank is where you and I first met back in the mid-sixties when I think my parents banked there at that time.

DO: That's right. I got well acquainted with your dad and mom and just developed a lifelong friendship.

DW: And we're still here today. So while you're working there, what got you interested in government and politics and campaigning?

DO: We'd have to go back to Ottawa University because my professor in economics at Ottawa was a gentleman by the name of Wayne Angell who was just very interested in politics himself. Shortly after I graduated, he even served in the Kansas legislature. And I had another instructor there, Bob Anderson. Everybody called him Big Bob Anderson, and he was my business law professor.

So both of them encouraged me to get interested in it. I became the president of the College Republicans at Ottawa. Bob Anderson introduced me to Huck Boyd. Huck was running for governor.

So it kind of started from there. The thing that really propelled it was in '68, after I had a taste of it, we picked up a Senate seat in Johnson County. That's when I ran for the Senate.

DW: I can vividly remember that campaign. My grandfather served in the legislature in Missouri. I would go along with him as a little kid campaigning. I definitely remember that campaign that first time.

DO: It was interesting because in 1965, the Kansas Supreme Court had issued a ruling that the makeup of the Kansas House of Representatives was not in compliance with the law. That's what propelled the redistricting of things.

The '68 election was the first time that new districting was in place, but they couldn't decide how to set up the Senate districts in Johnson County and Sedgwick County. So we all ran at large from the whole county. I don't think it's ever happened before or since, but that really helped me propel my career because I represented all of Johnson County.

DW: And that would have been the last elected [Senators] that represented the county as a whole.

DO: Yes.

DW: After that, they've all—

DO: They went back to districts. When I moved on to run for Lieutenant Governor, then the next election, it was by districts.

DW: And we'll get to the Lieutenant Governor race, but I think they still have problems trying to decide how to do those districts in those counties. It's been an ongoing situation. You then ran for Lieutenant Governor<sup>1</sup>.

DO: Right.

DW: I vividly remember I had a very modern '51 GMC truck with an Owen poster on the back of it.

DO: All right.

DW: It would always get dusty and dirty but tell us about that race. What made you decide to run for Lieutenant Governor?

DO: I'd gotten a lot of encouragement from people that I met once I got up here in Topeka involved in politics. So it was just one of those things. I just took a look at it, and I said, "Why not me? I can do this."

I might say that the reason I was successful in the Senate race was because of organization. I think anybody that knows anything about Johnson County history will tell you I had the most extensive campaign organization before or since because I had a campaign chairman and co-chairman in every city, every ward, every precinct, and right down to the block level. That paid off in the primary because in spite of the fact that several people ran for the state Senate, nobody even ran against me because they could see what they were up against.

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<sup>1</sup> 1972 was the last time that the Governor and Lt. Governor ran independently of each other. In 1974 they ran together as a ticket representing the same party. The gubernatorial term was lengthened to 4 years instead of two.

Then when we got to the general election, I won my race by a bigger margin than anybody else in the race, I think almost 65 percent. So that really set me up as somebody who knew what they were doing in politics that could win races.

DW: Right. If I want to jump back just a little bit to the time in the Senate, then we'll go to the Lieutenant Governor—by coincidence, we're sitting at your desk when you were in the Senate.

DO: That's right. Right here is where I served my time.

DW: I think you said Wint Winter served at this desk.

DO: Yes, my great friend from Ottawa, Wint Winter.

DW: That couldn't have been planned any better.

DO: No.

DW: Tell us, were there some challenges, some legislative items that you championed that got passed or didn't pass?

DO: There were a lot of controversial issues when I first showed up here. We had an issue in Johnson County. There were several people, Johnson County Water Association, I think was, wanted to develop three reservoirs around Tomahawk Creek, Indian Creek, and one other who I can't remember.

DW: Blue River.

DO: Blue River, okay. So that was really a hot issue.

DW: That was a very hot topic.

DO: It didn't pass, but, boy, you had to make up your mind which side you were on. I did vote for it because I thought the opportunities for a whole lot of things around those lakes would be fine, but it's probably best that it didn't pass.

DW: I drive those roads today just as you do. As I come across 119th Street, and there's that large dip near Quivera, you think, "Well, that could have all been underwater today."

DO: That's right.

DW: And the same thing on 179th Street.

DO: But even more controversial was almost from the first day I had been here was a movement to split up the Shawnee Mission School District, and they wanted to split it up into three different districts. At first, it sounded like a good idea, but I voted against it because I'd graduated from

that system, and I just felt that the economies of keeping them in one were probably better than trying to crank up two more districts. So that did not pass.

The other thing in order of controversy, we get to the issue of abortion. That's when the conversation first started, and legislation started being proposed about what are we going to do about the rules surrounding abortion. It got to be extremely controversial obviously, just like it is now. As I recall, the vote finally became that we are basically opposed to abortion, but in the case of rape, incest, the life of the mother being in danger at an accredited hospital with more than one doctor approving was the way it finally settled out. And then of course in '73, the Supreme Court decision came along, and that's the way it was for years.

A funny incident around that thing, and I'm not going to name names, but we got down to it and had to vote. We had a missing Senator. We called and called, couldn't find the guy. We finally put on a call to the Senate. We looked all over this place and finally found him upstairs in the men's bathroom standing on top of a toilet so that you couldn't see his legs underneath. But we finally corralled him. So that was a funny thing. There were funny things all the time like that.

DW: '68, wasn't that the year that consolidation took place in school districts throughout the state where we went from probably 700 districts to about 300?

DO: That's right.

DW: Were you part of that discussion?

DO: Not really other than the real issue that affected me more than anything else was Frank Hodge who was a Senate Majority leader at the time was promoting a tax lid. So our school districts were just petrified of what was going to happen to their funding. So that became a major issue and probably more so than the consolidation as far as it affected me.

DW: Right. You're exactly right. I think that tax lid, as time went on, became more of a tax sieve than a tax lid.

DO: Yes.

DW: Let's go back to the Lieutenant Governor's race. You thought you could do this as well as anybody, and again I said I remember that campaign extremely well. I even remember being at the victory party. That was a great time of my life. So tell us about putting together your statewide organization and some of the people you met.

DO: My opponent in that race was Calvin Strowig who had been Speaker of the House here. So I had a very formidable opponent. I probably didn't know how hard it was going to be, or I wouldn't have done it. But I think the secret to my success in that race was that I had been a very active member of the Jaycees. I got a guy who had been the past president of the Jaycees to work on my campaign, Bob Schneider from Manhattan, Kansas. Bob just traveled the state with me, and we put together a campaign—really I duplicated statewide what I did in Johnson County when I ran for the Senate for the first time, and that was, I'd get a county chairman and co-

chairman. It was their job to get ward chairman, city chairman, whatever it took. So we had a very extensive organization and ran that race big. I think probably 60 percent, something like that.

DW: That's awesome, and in that area, you were the last elected standalone lieutenant governor in the state of Kansas.

DO: That's right. I had to run on my own, put my own campaign together. My governor was Bob Docking<sup>2</sup>.

DW: As part of that, duties of that era, you presided over this Chamber.

DO: Yes, I did. The duties were preside over the Senate, chairman of the Economic Development Commission, and chairman of the Interstate Cooperation Commission. Honestly, I focused my time on economic development and trying to help small communities around Kansas be successful in a) maintaining their young people so that they didn't have to move to get a job, and b) doing things like setting up industrial development districts where they could attract industry into their town.

I remember one of my campaign slogans, "We've got to stop the out migration of Kansas youth." That's still an issue today.

DW: Correct.

DO: So that's what we did, but one of the things that lived on for quite a long while is when I campaigned again focusing on economic development. I thought it would be great if we could recruit Kansas businessmen to be ambassadors for the state. So, I through my campaign proposed an organization called the Kansas Cavalry.

&When we got elected, I talked with Governor Docking. We actually implemented the Kansas Cavalry, and we had businessmen from all over Kansas visiting other cities. Governor Docking and I actually took a trade mission to Japan, sold a lot of Kansas ag products over there. So that was one I was really proud of, the Kansas Cavalry.

DW: I'm glad you brought that up. That was a huge business tool for the state of Kansas. At that era, Bob Docking was elected as a Democrat. You were elected as a Republican. Tell us how you guys worked together, the friendship that probably came out of that.

DO: We got along great, honestly. He was very accommodating to me. I'll just read you something. He wrote me a letter after it was over, and he said, "It has been a great pleasure as well as an honor to be associated with you the past two years. As I have said to many people on many occasions, I was privileged to be associated with the best Lieutenant Governor in the country." Well, that was pretty high praise from Governor Docking.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Docking was a Democrat. He served as the 38th Governor of Kansas from 1967 until 1974.

DW: And you think of politics today. Democrats and Republicans just don't work together. I'm sure in that era, you would sit down with him in the evenings or during meetings and share what was going on and be very open and transparent. That doesn't happen today.

DO: No, it doesn't. We had a very high profile incident happen, too, where he was just a champion. That was in Johnson County, we had first a robbery at the Metcalf State Bank, and I can't remember that guy's name, but he had escaped from prison before he did that. And then a guy by the name of Lamb, I believe it was Thomas Lamb --Lamb is right. I can't remember for sure the first name, but he had actually kidnapped and murdered one young lady, and then he was in the Johnson County Jail and escaped. Then he kidnapped another young woman and was very violent with her, but she didn't die, thank goodness. *[corrected by D. Owen]*

&I really took on the Kansas probation parole system for that. That guy should never have been out on the streets, and Governor Docking was very, very supportive of that. As a matter of fact, that led to I believe the improvement of the Johnson County Jail facilities with more maximum security facilities. And then, of course, later on, you know that big new facility was built down South.

DW: Right. I remember that robbery. They created a diversion somewhere if I recall in another part of the county, a blast or something, where all the police officers were at another location.

DO: That's exactly right.

DW: Then they robbed the bank, if I recall.

DO: That's right.

DW: That tells us I guess we've both been around a long time if we remember those things.

DO: The one other little piece of that story, the shoot-out, when there was a shoot-out, and a patrolman was shot and killed, that shoot-out took place in my stepfather Armin Hillmer's apartment project. So his place was riddled with bullets when that was over. It took a lot of work to get it back up to speed so that he could even occupy it.

DW: Just as a side note, my wife's father than worked for the Sheriff's Department and was involved in that shoot-out.

DO: I remember him well.

DW: Again, I guess that just says we've been around a long time in this area. Well, tell us about your—Bob Dole was in the middle of a campaign at that point in time. You were Lieutenant Governor. Tell us about your friendship with Bob Dole, how that came about, how that got started.

DO: Well, it really got started in 1968. He was running for the US Senate for the first time, and I was running for the state Senate, and as luck would have it, he had gone to high school, grade



school and high school, with my mother-in-law at that time in Russell, Kansas. She had a coffee at her house for both of us, and that's the first time I met him.

To say that Bob Dole was an impressive guy when you met him was an understatement. We just hit it off. He was in the middle of a race against a very popular guy, Bill Avery, Governor, former Congressman. He thought he was in trouble. I don't know if he was or not. But because I had no opponent in the primary election in that race, I just basically became the de facto chairman for Bob Dole in his first race for the Senate, and of course, we won with a huge margin.

Then in '74, the next step when he ran for re-election, I had chosen not to run for Governor, which would have been a natural thing for me to do at that point, but I just got a new federal bank charter, and I had to figure out what I wanted to do. So I didn't run, and Bob asked me if I would be his campaign chairman because he was in a tough, tough race against [Congressman] Bill Roy and behind.

So I got involved. One of the things that really helped was I had a very extensive campaign organization for myself that we just sort of melded into the Bob Dole organization. We began to work to try to win that race, and we did finally win it by, I don't know, 13,000 votes or something statewide.

DW: A slim majority.

DO: A slim majority. That was the first time that abortion became a big issue in a Kansas campaign. That was a big part of it.

DW: Right. Wasn't that the year that the mudslinger campaign came out?

DO: I'll tell you how that happened. We were just getting our hat handed to us in that race. It was pretty grim. So I called our campaign PR guy, and I said, "Look, if you don't get something for us that's hard-hitting, I'm going to go and make my own commercials."

And I did. I went down to WDAF TV and got a guy sitting on a stool like Tom Downey used to do for the Governor, and we started making our own commercials. While we were there, this fella called me and he said, "Can you hold off twenty-four hours, and I'm going to put a new commercial on the airplane for you."

He sent that to me. I got it on TWA. We looked at it. That's when that Mudslinger, and there was another one called Graffiti. But basically the Mudslinger was they just made a bucket of mud and throw mud against Dole's picture and said, "Bill Roy says Bob Dole is against the farmer." Bill Roy says Bob Dole is against this, that, and the other thing, "But the truth is Bob Dole supports the farmer," and the mud comes off.

It was so effective that people didn't know how to take it because some people thought, "My god, you can't run this. This is the worst ad ever," and other people thought—[Huck] Boyd used

to call me and say—he'd never tell me what to do, but he'd say, "Dave, I don't know. Don't you think you ought to take this off the air?" And I would say, "No, we're going to keep running it."

So we kept running it right through the very end, and I think that was a big part of why we won.

DW: I definitely agree. You told us that you did not want to run for Governor. You just got a new bank charter. So tell us about life post-legislative arena.

DO: I really got involved in economic development in my own community. I had several projects that I built. Of course, I had gotten that bank charter, and then I bought the bank down in Stanley, Kansas. I ran those banks as Chairman and CEO for twenty-some years, then sold them.

After that, I had met through the course of all of that a very, very interesting person who was chairman of a large investment bank in Little Rock.

But Jack Stephens was a friend of Bob Dole's, and I met him. He called me after I sold my banks and asked if I would go to work with Stevens and set up an office in Johnson County.

And Stephens Inc. is an interesting company. They had taken Walmart public. They financed the New Orleans Superdome when it was built. These are things that happened when I was there. We handled the hostile takeover of Holly Farms by Tyson Foods.

But more interesting to me was Jack was a chairman of Augusta National. That made it a lot of fun. And he also had a quail-hunting plantation in Georgia.

DW: Well, to heck with business. You have great things there. One thing I was remiss, and if I could jump back to the Senate days a little bit, you had a legislative basketball team, didn't you?

DO: We did. They called it the Big Green Machine. It was members of both the House and the Senate, but the thing that kicked that off was the House challenged the Senate to a basketball game. So the Senators played the House I think across the street somewhere over here in a gym, and I'm not going to say we were the greatest looking team in the world, but the Senate won.

DW: That's all that counts.

DO: The thing that was really funny in that deal was [Senator] Ed Reilly and one other—I'll think of it in a minute—they were the water boys<sup>3</sup>. They dressed up in tuxedos. The first time out, we go over to get a drink of water, and guys were dipping in that thing and taking a big swig, and they'd put bourbon in there. It was quite a shock to your system.

But the Big Green Machine, in fact, Dave Heinemann who's filming this, played on that and a lot of other great guys. We had a wonderful time doing it. We'd go out and play small communities and helped them raise money for their local charity and things like that. So it was really a fun time.

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<sup>3</sup> Senator Robert Bennett who later became Governor in 1975 was the other waterboy.

DW: Awesome, and there used to be a school across the street with a gymnasium.

DO: That's right. That's where it was.

DW: I meant to discuss that during your time in the Senate.

DO: I might say, too, in the Senate, thinking back to kind of what was going on, several pieces of legislation that I had a hand in was almost right out of the chute, I introduced a piece of legislation that has lasted a long time. That was the ability to turn right on a red light. That was my bill.

We had an issue with our highway program, and I also introduced a bill for a 320 million dollar highway bond issue. The funding from that bill ended up funding Switzer Bypass down in Johnson County and improving Kellogg going into Wichita among other things. That was very successful. That was another time when I got to work very closely with Governor Docking.

Another one that was big was we had a commissioner in Johnson County by the name of Rex Price. Rex put me on to the fact that the gas tax distribution for the secondary road formula was relying on a 1936 formula, which meant that obviously the rural counties got the better end of it, and the urban counties where most of the gas tax had now become to be paid was getting really the short end.

So I proposed a bill to change that formula, and I will say I could never have gotten that done had it not been for my friend Paul Fleenor with the Kansas Farm Bureau who saw the logic in that and helped me get that passed. But that passed, and that changed how things were done.

DW: Paul was one of those great stewards. Professionally, he was the public affairs director for the Kanas Farm Bureau but was just one of those great stewards of the state's interest and would help people with certain situations.

DO: You bet.

DW: When you were in the legislature, if I could jump back there again, today we see more of a Democrat/Republican split, and I remember in my era and in your era, it was more of a rural/urban split.

DO: Definitely.

DW: Than a Democrat or Republican.

DO: Back when I was here, the split here was 32 to 8 in the Senate. I can't remember what it was in the House, but it was I think similar. And you're right, the issues always became all of the things we were talking about there, that became urban and rural as far as who was for them. So you really had to work to make friends with people from all over the state if you wanted to get anything done.

If I could say anything about my own success, it would be that I did that very thing. Just because I came from a farm in Arkansas, I was very comfortable with the farm guys. I developed those relationships, and that's why I was able to get things done.

DW: That's awesome. I said earlier on, we would circle back to Ottawa University. You have since established the Owen Leadership Institute there.

DO: Yes.

DW: Tell us a little bit about how that came about, what it does.

DO: That's kind of an interesting story, too. When I was running for Lieutenant Governor, I went down to Ottawa, and I recruited a young man by the name of Kevin Eichner to be one of my road warriors. He drove me all over the state during that campaign.

Kevin went on to much success and ended up being the president of Ottawa University. When he became the president, I guess he thought enough of me that he suggested that we name the leadership institute there the David Owen Leadership Institute. So we have really focused on trying to educate young people. Almost from the first meeting we ever had, someone asked me, "Well, what is it you're about?" It just came to me. Nothing is more important than instilling a solid moral compass for young leaders.

And that's kind of what we try to do, and we do it through introducing them to great leaders and having seminars and inviting important people to the campus to talk about their own leadership qualities. The very first, interestingly enough with what's going on in the world right now, the very first presentation I made for our leadership award was to Viktor Yushchenko, the president of Ukraine at the time. He came to the United States on a visit, and we gave him our leadership award. It was really a great way to get that kicked off.

DW: Awesome. That's just awesome. I'm going to go back to Lieutenant Governor days. I realize we're jumping around a little bit here. '76, Gerald Ford was running for president. He had succeeded Richard Nixon and then was running on his own, and Ronald Reagan was running. Those were the opponents in the Republican primary. I know you were very involved in that at that time. That convention happened to be in Kansas City. Tell us about those days and that time.

DO: I will say honestly I was more attuned with Ronald Reagan than Gerald Ford in retrospect, but Bob Dole was for Gerald Ford, and he asked me if I would help. So I did. The Ford organization named me as the Midwest Regional Chairman for the Ford campaign. I covered Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota.

When we got to the convention and lo and behold, Bob Dole [was] selected as the running mate, then it became even a bigger deal. Kansas that year at the convention, which was down at Municipal Auditorium, we were sitting right in the front row. So people up in the podium could look down there and see us. When Dole and President Ford got up there doing their victory

thing, somebody up there who was active in the campaign looked down at me and said, “Come here.” There was a thing under the stage. You could walk up there.

I walked up there, and it was Stu Spencer who was the chairman of Ford’s campaign. He said, “We need somebody who knows Bob Dole. We’ve got him selected, but nobody”—so he said, “Would you be willing to be the chairman of his end of the race?” Sure. What was I going to say? That sounded like fun.

So that’s what I did. I was the vice presidential Campaign Chairman for that general election race. It was—to say that I learned a lot and met a lot of interesting people would be an understatement.

DW: I remember the convention closed, and the very next day, you had a reception or a barbecue out at your farm for President Ford and Senator Dole. I remember attending that. I think you had the Lions Club come and fix all of the—

DO: And your father-in-law was one of the main guys that helped put that together. We put on a little rodeo for everybody. I had a roping pen up there and calves and horses. We had a good time at that.

I might say, too, the guys I had to deal with on an everyday basis during that vice presidential campaign, I would go over to the White House almost every day when I was in town, and I would meet with [Donald] Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney. Anyway, that was a regular stop every day to kind of get caught up. I was supposed to report on what was going on with the vice presidential campaign, and they would kind of give me the orders of what they’d like us to be doing.

DW: I remember in Dole’s later years, one of his comments about that campaign, he said, “I realized my job was to go for the jugular. I just didn’t know I was going for my own.”

DO: Right.

DW: That had to be a great time in your life and lots of great experiences. I think you’re also a youth basketball coach. Is that right?

DO: Basketball has been a love of mine for a long time. Of course, we’ve talked about the success we had at Ottawa. At the Lenexa Baptist Church, we have a great program called Upward Basketball. We’ll have 700 kids on the weekends up there playing basketball. I’ve been coaching one of those teams. I coached first and second grade girls. That was like herding cats. Then I coached the fifth grade boys team. That was a little more like basketball.

DW: They at least knew a little more than the ball was round and the floor was hard. That’s awesome.

Recently, a part of your life we haven’t talked about, recently one of the Kansas famed authors, Frank Buchman did a story about your rodeo life and your cowboy days.

DO: Yes.

DW: Tell us about that.

DO: After I kind of stepped out of politics, I'd grown up around horses, and I knew horses, but I never tried rodeo or anything. But I met a friend through a mutual friend, a fellow by the name of Junior Garrison who was a world champion in 1966 and '70, I believe it was. I became great friends. He really worked with me, taught me, got me some great horses. I qualified for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association and roped all over the country, you know, Cheyenne Frontier Days, and all the big ones, usually traveling with Junior.

This thing you're talking about I think probably, thanks to you, among other things, Frank Buchman got aware of that, and he wrote a nice [article about my rodeo career](#). Then somebody at the Kansas Horse Council saw that, and they invited me to come up and speak to their scholarship program very recently. I did that and met some outstanding young people. In fact, one of the boys in that that I met, Cash, he won the high school rodeo down in Oklahoma the other day and roped and tied down a calf in 7.3 seconds.

DW: It's been an honor to know his parents. I think we're going to see great things from him in the rodeo circles.

DO: We'll see him on a professional level, no question.

DW: That was just a couple of weeks ago that he won that. You're exactly right.

Ukraine. Your first award was to President Zelenksy. I understand you're going to Ukraine in the near future.

DO: We are.

DW: Tell us about that, how that came about, your hopes and goals.

DO: Our church, Lenexa Baptist Church has a tremendous international program, a mission program. We go all over the world with people to help build churches, take supplies, whatever it might be. So four of us are going to the Ukraine the 15th of August to kind of scope out, and in one particular city where we have some connections, make sure we've got the right people there so that when we start sending supplies we're sure it's going to go to the right needs.

So we'll be going over there for several days to get that set up. Then I think it will become a very big program.

DW: That's awesome. Will you be doing this through the church, through the Leadership Institute?

DO: It's a joint venture between the church and the David Owen Leadership Institute.

DW: Will you go into Ukraine, or will you be on the outskirts?

DO: No, we're going into Ukraine. We'll land in Warsaw and drive a car over to the border and enter the country and go visit our end destination in Ukraine. I will say it's on the western side. It's not over there where the day-to-day fighting is going on. So the only thing you have to worry about is if some Russian decides to fire a rocket at where we are.

DW: Right.

DO: I think that the risk is minimal.

DW: Well, that's very, very commendable, and I think it will—do you know if you'll get to meet the president?

DO: I don't know if we'll be able to do that or not. I would hope we could.

DW: That's a terrible travesty today in our world, what's happening there. Each time I hear about it, see about it, I just get sick as you do for the Ukrainian people.

DO: You bet.

DW: It shows you the right to fight for democracy. And that's a good way to close since we're here in the Senate Chambers where democracy is always a part of everyday work here in the Senate.

DO: You bet.

DW: Again, my name is Dave Webb. It's been an honor today to interview my great friend, Dave Owen, the former Kansas state Senator, the last [independently]elected Lt. Governor.

[End of File]