

Interview of Christine Downey-Schmidt by Dale Goter, August 2, 2019  
Kansas Oral History Project, Inc.

Dale Goter: Today is August 2, 2019, and we're in the Senate chamber of the Kansas State House. I'm Dale Goter, a retired journalist from Wichita, Kansas. I've covered the State House in one fashion or another for about thirty years before my retirement. Today we're going to be interviewing Senator Christine Downey. She's a former Kansas state senator, and she served from 1993 to 2004. I'll be conducting this interview on the behalf of the Kansas Oral History Project. That's a not-for-profit corporation created for the purpose of interviewing former legislators, particularly those who served in the 1960s to 2000. The interviews will be made accessible to researchers and educators, and these are funded in part by a grant from the Kansas Humanities Council. The audio and video equipment is being operated by Dave Heinemann .

Senator Downey represented the Senate District 31, which covered Harvey County and parts of Sedgwick County. She served from 1993 to 2004. She and her husband live in Harvey County, and she was a public-school teacher and also an adjunct professor at Bethel College in North Newton. Senator Downey, it's a pleasure to see you again.

Christine Downey: It's good to be here.

DG: It's been quite a while.

CDS: It has been.

DG: Since we've talked. We've got a lot of ground to cover. There's a huge issue, agenda from the time that you served in the legislature, but let's start with your entry into this scene. What got you in politics? What led you to this beautiful building?

CDS: A lot of good luck. That's for sure. As a public schoolteacher, I was just aware that a lot of decisions were being made about education by people who didn't know what was going on in education. I remember early when I was in school, there was a representative. I think her name was Elaine Hassler.

DG: From Abilene.

CDS: From Abilene. She was serving, and I thought, "Oh, that's interesting. I wonder about that sometime." But I was actually approached (Norman Daniels was the senator who retired from my seat) by Charles Benjamin, who was a county commissioner and a Bethel College professor, and he said, "Why don't you run for that seat?"

It was one of those summers when I didn't have to pick up an extra teaching job, and I didn't have to go back to school. I had finished my master's. I thought, "Well, it might give me some good experience to run when I want to win."

We went to a lot of workshops. I talked to Jerry Karr. I talked to family and to some city leaders. At that time, I was on the Chamber of Commerce board. I decided, "Well, I might go ahead and try it, just for experience." My mom and dad gave me my first \$100 bill. A Republican businessman came to my door and gave me another \$100 bill and said, "I think we need people like you in Topeka."

I ran off some letters to announce, and I got a post office box and waited. Then we went to more workshops. We tore apart a calendar and put those months all together, and my sister, who joked about being my campaign manager sometime, ended up being my campaign manager, and we started putting parades and forum and things on the calendar.

I was still teaching actively. Every day after school, we'd have a map of precincts, and I'd have a group of teachers, and we'd go to those neighborhoods and knock on doors and hand out my little black-and-white flyer, but I didn't spend a lot of time thinking, "Oh, if I get elected" because I think at that time there was 24, 26 percent registered Democrat, and—

DG: Was that an open seat at the time?

CDS: That was an open seat, but there was already a candidate in the Republican position. Interestingly enough, I think I had been registered as an Independent, and most of my experience was helping people like Garry Boston and other Republicans get elected because there never was a Democrat candidate out there.

I ran on the Democrat ticket, and that fit fine. I did have a primary that first election and came through that well.

DG: Who did you run against, do you remember?

CDS: You mean, in the general election?

DG: In the primary.

CDS: I don't. He didn't campaign very hard.

DG: One of those candidates.

CDS: Yes. But Larry Williams was the candidate that ran against Gary Yost in that first campaign. It was interesting because Gary Yost was kind of a newcomer to the district, but Eric Yost was running in Wichita for his seat. So Gary's signs were designed almost identical except for the first name. I think because I had a wide range of constituency, because I was teaching in higher ed; I was teaching in elementary ed; I was on the Chamber of Commerce board of directors; I was working hard in the community; and I was a mom. I was raised on a farm. So it felt like there were a number of constituencies there that were supporting, and it worked, not by very much, but—

DG: When you got here, what was the breakdown of Democrat/Republican in the Senate?

CDS: Well, it was very discouraging for Democrats because they had gone from eighteen to thirteen. It was just doom and gloom over there, and here I was so excited. It made quite a difference in that respect, in terms of balance.

DG: That district is interesting in that it's always seemed to have its own little description. It's moderate. Carolyn McGinn is the current senator there, survived the Brownback purge. Other folks, I remember House members, you never, they weren't extremist in any fashion.

CDS: Exactly.

DG: The fact that you were a Democrat was probably less of a factor because of that. You personified that kind of district.

CDS: I think so. I'm a pretty practical sort of person. Hopefully, that genuineness came through about what my background was and what my purpose was in doing this.

DG: How many other women were in the Senate at that time?

CDS: I don't remember the number, but I remember that we were one of the higher ones in the nation. I was thinking maybe 30 percent.

DG: I'm trying to think if that was Alicia Salisbury's period.

CDS: Yes, and Audrey.

DG: Audrey Langworthy.

CDS: Yes, and Lana Oleen and Marge Petty, Janis Lee.

DG: One of the things we want to learn from you is as a woman coming into politics at that time, women weren't as prominent as they are today. It was more of an uphill battle perhaps. How did you see yourself as a woman and as a legislator in making that all work?

CDS: First of all, I don't think I changed anything in how I ran the campaign. When I got here, I mean, I'm very aware that those judgments, those first judgments can be really critical. I remember Senator Bond told us, gave us advice during our orientation. He said to freshman senators, he said, "Keep your mouth shut and dress nice." Most of us did that.

DG: Senator Bond was from Johnson County.

CDS: Correct.

DG: Was he the majority leader at the time or president?

CDS: He was Senate president. I was aware of behaviors at that time. I don't remember anything particular in terms of patronizing, which may have occurred, and I just didn't catch it, or discrimination in that way, but I saw it occur with other situations where I felt like the woman that was the head of that committee was perhaps diminished in her ability to bring things forward or directed by male leadership to do this or that, but it wasn't overt. It's not like some of the things I see today.

DG: Wow. So you get here, and you've got to define an agenda. Did you have one in mind when you got here? You mentioned education was a big priority, and you were present for some significant legislation. What role did you play and how did you make that work?

CDS: I was concerned about people making decisions about education, particularly the business side of things, because I remember going to a luncheon with businessmen in the Chamber of Commerce. I said, "I need to go ahead and order. I have twenty-two minutes for lunch" It was like a shock to them. That's a minor thing, but as far as how you deal with what you—the raw material you get is different than a manufacturing company because you take whatever shows up at the door, and you're supposed to move them ahead. I was really interested in making that argument.

The K-12 issues, there were a number of things that we added to that—the Augenblick and Meyers study to try to figure out what it actually costs to educate a child to a certain level of quality. Then I was on the summer LEPC that dealt with higher education issues. Every year we fought adding to the base, and we fought adding LOB, and we fought special education things that needed to be addressed.

What I found is that there were a number of other issues that came out as part of my role to represent this district, and one of the first ones was having to do with water quality and CAFO's, if you can remember Confined Animal Feeding Operations. They wanted to put in a big operation close to Hutchinson. Well, I live over the Equus beds, and remembering that's part of the Ogallala Aquifer, it is a rechargeable portion of the aquifer—Harvey County, McPherson County, Reno County, and part of Sedgwick County. I began to do a lot of research about the pollution, not the least of which was from sand pits being dug with no protection and the hog farm issue and the gasoline spills down in Wichita, the salt plume in Burrton. I was like, "My goodness. This is a very big issue that we need to start dealing with."

One of the first bills that I sponsored was to regulate sand pits because when you dig a hole, a sand pit interacts with your drinking water in the Equus beds. My opponent on that was Senator Vidrickson from Salina, who I had heard was connected with a friend who owns sand pits in Salina, but I knew what to do. I went around and got votes secured, and it came up on the floor, and it went down because some of the people that said they would vote for it did not

vote for it. It took my breath away. I remember standing over there and thinking, "I have to leave this room."

I went down to my office. Senator Dick Bond came down. He said, "You will live to fight again." I said, "What did I do wrong?" and he said, "Well, after Senator Vidrickson spoke, you probably needed to secure your votes again." So that was my first very difficult lesson.

DG: Politics is a messy business sometimes.

CDS: The pollution thing my first term was one thing that was quite different that I wasn't expecting. Of course, we did work comp reform. That was one of those sessions, we were here until 4:00 in the morning, working with Governor Finney at that time to try to get that figured out. The second term, the comprehensive transportation plan, which was a big deal to do that kind of long-term planning.

The second thing that happened that was very big was, in my first term, there was a group put together to study post-secondary. It was so confusing. We had community colleges and the State Board of Education, and we had technical colleges out there, and we had Washburn, and we had six regent universities. There had been like twenty or twenty-five years of studies that said, "You need to consolidate this in some way."

During my first term, we did that study group. In my second term, we actually got the legislation put together, and it was really a long shot. Tim Emert and I were selected as co-sponsors of that bill, and I think that was strategic, that I was seen as more moderate on the D side and he on the R side, plus we had backgrounds in education. [Representatives] Cindy Empson and Dick Reinhart were working hard on the House side, and that came together in spite of all the objections. Johnson County wasn't sure they wanted it because [of the] community colleges—Sheila Frahm was just a champion for bringing community colleges along and holding hands. The big universities weren't sure they wanted it because they were the lobbying strongarms in the [old] process.

But that bill did so much to make a unified voice for higher education. We did find out that our original plan was unconstitutional. We were going to get rid of the Board of Regents and reconstitute it. I remember right before that session, before the '99 session, we were in the governor's office, and that was pointed out to us. So we came up with a division under the current Board of Regents, with three regents focusing on community colleges, three on the Regent universities, and three would be working on coordination issues. That's the way we left it for several years until everybody started to feel comfortable with that.

DG: So when you look back on things that survived the test of time and had a lasting impact, that's probably one you can look to today.

CDS: Absolutely.

DG: You'll look ten years from now and see there was an impact. Had you not done that, things would have been different.

CDS: And I was fortunate enough then to be appointed to the Board of Regents for eight years.

DG: As was Tim Emert, too.

CDS: Yes. Now that first reconstituted board, they worked like crazy. Jack Wempe and Bill Docking and Dick Reinhart, those folks made it work. But that was a big deal to get that done.

DG: You mentioned the moderate conservative. That means something today. What did it mean back then? What defined, and how difficult was that to merge and to have a coordinated approach that got everybody to the table? It was different then, I assume.

CDS: It was different, and I don't remember that being R and D divisions in Senate Bill 345 on the reorganization. It was more regional. Johnson County was very concerned about what would happen to their community college, and the rural community colleges were very concerned about what would happen to their voice on all of this. So it was more a regional division than an R and D.

DG: I remember one event in particular as a journalist at the time. It was kind of a roundtable, and there were journalists there, and you and Senator Dave Kerr from Hutchinson. That seemed to me at that point to really define the difference. He was a very strong-willed guy, and you brought a perspective that was obviously different with regard particularly with education, teachers, and I suspect with KPERS as well.

CDS: Right.

DG: At that point, I still remember you—you were very stressed out at the time, a lot of pressure facing up to Dave Kerr who's a brilliant orator.

CDS: He's very smart.

DG: Strong willed. But that was kind of the battle that had to be fought at the time.

CDS: Right. Again, it's my perspective. I was a practitioner then. I know how this works. He was a practitioner of business and successful at it. The ability to come together and figure out the different perspectives. The thing is, Dave Kerr was never anti-education. There were people in this chamber that were anti-public education. That was one thing that brought us together. Plus I was involved in a farming business, a big farming business. I understand those concepts, too. I never was a Democrat that thought that everything should be given. I knew something had to be paid for in some respect. I don't think there was the distance at first glance as it appears.

DG: Currently, we're going through some Supreme Court challenges of educational funding. That's been going on for literally decades and probably will continue. Do you see a continuum that started when you were there? What kind of principles did you put in place? The idea that you have to have a certain amount of money to make education successful, which is hard for some folks to accept.

CDS: Right, and you have that element that says, "You can't just throw money at it. Money's not the answer." Well, it's better than a lot of the other answers. I think part of the thing that happened is that we realized that this is the #1 thing that was left to us by the US Constitution, and that is to fund the education. That is our Kansas Constitutional directive, and in order to do that, if you want a higher caliber, you have to pay teachers better. You have to recruit the best teachers. You have to continue to train them. You have to provide the things in the classroom, but #1, it's the teacher.

DG: You mentioned, it's not R and D so much. One of the divisions I remember being described is the cowboys and the rest of the state. Western Kansas had a very strong influence, disproportionate to population probably, and that's changed over time. Is that kind of what you're up against, that there was a mentality—I don't know who the cowboys really were, but they were against perhaps the level of funding that you were interested in.

CDS: Right. I'm the perfect example of a moderate because I represented large school districts, small school districts, and medium-sized school districts. I was on a farm. I knew farming situations. When I began to work with this confined feeding operations, the last thing I'm going to do is tell those farmers that are raising hogs, they've got to put this expensive liner in when you've got sand pits in the city that don't have to do the same. I found myself in a position that was easier to look at both sides, and maybe that had something to do with being trusted.

DG: I want this to be your agenda, not mine. We talked about there were sin issues that evolved in that period of time that got a lot of press at the time. It's always fun to write about gambling and whatever else.

CDS: Right.

DG: What stands out in that era that got you excited?

CDS: Again, part of it's my just practical, rural nature maybe but the death penalty was a good example. I voted against it because the research never showed that it was a deterrent. It also distracted us from what we should have been doing, that's dealing with issues early on that young people were having. It was cheaper to incarcerate somebody for life than to kill them. I thought, "This is not a practical solution."

The abortion thing was a difficult one because I was a practicing Catholic at that time. Even though I know a lot of practicing Catholics that don't practice everything, it was a difficult thing. I voted for things like parental notification and the twenty-four-hour waiting period, some of

them that I thought were kind of a reasonable requirement for a medical procedure kind of thing. But then it got to the practical side of things. This is the law of the land. All you're doing by bringing this bill forward is putting us into a court case, and I won't be involved in that.

DG: Agriculture is dear to your heart obviously, and there are a number of issues—I looked at that agenda for those years of some pretty important things for agriculture. I would guess maybe that started the period of time when agriculture felt threatened by the urbanization of Kansas?

CDS: Oh, sure, and water being one of the biggest issues still. Trying to find ways when you have somebody that has a water right, it's a permanent property right, but if it was given in an area that now is depleting its water, what do you do about that dilemma? We looked at water savings accounts, and we look at buying back water rights, which, of course, takes money. Of course, we had the lawsuits, and those were big issues.

DG: The energy area is always a big deal. I'm trying to think if the coal-fired plant, that came later.

CDS: That was later.

DG: That was not used at the time, but there was Wolf Creek. Was that in the picture at the time?

CDS: Yes. I remember Rob Bremby, when he was secretary. That was a big deal. Of course, the argument there, on the practical side of things, is we know that this is a bad pollutant. We need to shut it down. However, for every one we take down, China is putting up forty. This is a global issue. Again it's not—I think a lot of people came up here thinking, “Black, white, I know where I'm voting.” It's all grey.

DG: It's never that way.

CDS: It's all grey.

DG: Back to the education thing and a related area, the KPERS. I've noticed in that list of achievements that the 85 point rule was established then. How did that change the way that teachers were going to look at their retirement and how the state was committed to helping them?

CDS: Right. And again you see what's business doing? Well, what's education doing? We're trying to put in some of those places that are givens for business. I remember helping with the work on that. But Senator Hensley was really the one that was knowledgeable.

DG: Anthony Hensley from Topeka.



CDS: Anthony Hensley from Topeka. He led a lot of that. I followed his lead on a great deal of that.

DG: When you look back, what are your misgivings about things you wish you had done, hadn't done, or that you couldn't get done that you really thought were important?

CDS: I was really discouraged when the concealed carry bill came through. My response to that was, "You know, I spent my whole lifetime in a classroom trying to teach kids how to solve problems without violence, and here we're saying, 'Put your gun on, and if you need to, you can solve this problem that way.'" That was a difficult time.

The same-sex marriage was a difficult issue, too. As you know, it is so different now, that it's the law of the land. It was a totally new issue for us. I remember Marge Petty, the senator from Topeka, brought up some early rights for LGBTQ people. I think maybe she got three votes, and I regret not helping her with that now.

DG: But three votes at that point, everything is incremental. You don't get anything done in one fell swoop. So when you look back, what are the issues that you saw starting to evolve that are playing out today that couldn't be where they were today without that first step? That's probably one of them.

CDS: That's one of them. And clearly we still don't have a handle on the gun thing.

DG: Right.

CDS: What's your right, and what's my right to feel safe about that? The in-state tuition for immigrants, that was a very big issue, and a lot of people—Lana Oleen, the senator from Manhattan, was another big advocate. I was on the Ways and Means conference committee at the time with Steve Morris and David Adkins. When that came up for conference, the House said, "Nope, we're not signing that, no matter what." So we drug on days and days and days.

David Adkins and I were pulled into Dave Kerr's office. He said, "You know, I believe in this. We'll do it next year. I'm right with you, but you guys have got to go back and sign this committee report. We've got to end this session and get out of here."

In Senator Kerr's office, there's that huge railroad clock. [makes tick-tocky sounds] Finally after about three minutes, Dave said, "Man, I didn't know that clock was so loud." We went back to the committee, and we refused to sign. The House finally caved on it, and we got that provision. But we put in all kinds of safeguards. These kids that have been in this country and have gone through our Kansas high schools deserve to go to our Kansas colleges with in-state tuition. That was a big accomplishment. But you can see, they're still attacking that. That still comes up, and some states have rolled that back.

DG: There were interesting social movement things. When you banned smoking in the State House, that was a—you think back that there was actually—you'd sit at these desks, and people would smoke, and reporters smoked.

CDS: We'd take a break all the time. We'd take a break so people could go smoke.

DG: At that time, I was involved in a protest in the press room to ban smoking. I got in trouble for that. But that was the kind of issue, that's a big deal when you change the behavior of Kansans, I'm sure you got pushback on that.

CDS: Oh, sure. A lot of those issues that now it's like, "Well, duh. What were we thinking?" But another thing that I learned, and this was in the third term. I talked about working so hard to find out how to protect the Equus beds. It's a natural resource that needs special regulations. I had a bill drawn up. There was one in the House. It looked like it was going to be a reasonable thing. Remember, this is adding regulation.

I got word that this is not going to pass. I took that information about the pollutants in my district to Clyde Graber, who was Secretary of Health and Environment then. He took it to Governor Graves, and they shook their heads and said, "We've got to do something here." They basically took the essence of my bill, and he made an executive order.

DG: That's good.

CDS: There's another way to skin a cat.

DG: One of the things people always wonder about is how politics changes, how governance changes, what it takes to be effective. It's different era to era, but maybe it's not. You've got the privilege of having seen this evolve. When you look at government today and what it might be tomorrow, how does that change? What does it take to get something done?

CDS: Well, there's a lot of theories about how it got to this divisive point. I think the ability to listen—and it's not just sympathy for the other point of view, it's empathy. It's understanding where that person is coming from. Two examples that I experienced is this whole issue of physical therapists. Being allowed to go to a physical therapist without a doctor's direction. The person that helped me on that was Susan Wagle. I don't know that we were together on anything else, but that was—so you don't make enemies.

DG: She was in the Senate at the time or the House?

CDS: She was in the Senate at the time. She helped with that. Another one was, it used to be that epi-pens, when you had an anaphylactic reaction, can only be administered by yourself or a paramedic. These small rural school districts, they don't have paramedics that respond to calls. These kids that are going through these episodes are supposed to self-medicate? They

can't do that. Jay Emler, who is a Republican from McPherson, helped me get that authorization for EMTs to administer epi-pens.

I think you just don't burn bridges. You argue as much and as strongly as you can on this floor, and then when you leave this, you're back to "How are your kids?" That socialization, that's important, and I think there's much less of that, certainly interparty socialization.

I just found a note from Pete McGill, a prominent Republican lobbyist. He talked about feeding squirrels one time when we were out with him. I brought him a bag of corn. I got a note from him, and it said, "My squirrels love you, and so do I." Well, that was a big connection for me because when the gambling came up. They did a lot of interviews of who should be voting for gambling and shouldn't, and he contacted me and said, "You shouldn't vote for this, given your district." That's because I had a personal connection with him.

DG: Interacting with your constituency is always a requirement of the job, and it's different today as social media evolved, but back then, I know there were movers and shakers that played the lobbyists. Some were more effective than others. What was the game plan for getting your constituents on board with you?

CDS: I don't know. I just was really frank with them. I told them why I wasn't voting for the death penalty, and I told them why I wasn't voting for the concealed carry. It was related to my background and my experience. I spent a lot of time at home with coffees with four people in Burrton or Hesston or whatever, and I went to the openings of the new library. I did a lot of that so that they knew that I really was interested in what was going on in that community.

Email was just beginning. I found an email the other day that said, "What were you thinking, voting for that same-sex marriage? Are you a lesbian?" A lot of it came with emails like that. I didn't have a computer. My secretary would download an email, print it off. Then I would take it to committee, and during downtimes, I would write a response, give it to her, and then she would email it back.

DG: Well, you were required to use old-school communication. You didn't have the electronic media at the time.

CDS: That's right. We did not.

DG: Do you think people are better informed now because of that? Sometimes it's almost to a fault, there's so much—

CDS: I think it is to a fault because people don't check sources. If you're getting all your stuff off of a right-wing or a left-wing website, then you don't have the right information. That's really hard for people to go out and seek an opinion different than what they already believe. I think it's maybe ended up being a detriment in some respects although being able to communicate with constituents is going to be a lot more thorough now.

DG: Now that's my agenda. You said you've got your own crib sheet. I don't want to miss out. This is about your recollection of what happened and what was important. What other things come to mind that are worth noting?

CDS: We've talked about a lot of them. When I first thought about this interview, I thought, "Well, Senate Bill 345 and the reorganization of higher education is significant. And then being able to get the Equus beds designated as a special resource. Those were significant."

But as I wrote down these things, whether it was a comprehensive transportation plan, where everybody worked together for a ten-year program because here you're thinking about four years or two years. So to get everybody focused on that I think as a very big deal. We did Qualified Admissions, which was a new thing. I think Kansas was the last one in the nation to add Qualified Admissions. The Rails to Trails, that was a big urban/rural issue. Of course, I had an abandoned railroad line through my district. How do you do that, protect farmers and land owners? Making the KU Hospital a private/public partnership. So significant. Look at where they are today with the cancer center and all. The tobacco settlement. That was huge. We established the Kansas Children's Cabinet, focusing on issues for children, like Parents-as-Teachers and preschool programs.

One of the first issues that came up was the whole gaming thing. There was this Wonderful World of Oz, or whatever that big concept was going to be in Kansas City, and the riverboat gambling, which if we were ever going to do gambling is probably what we should have done. But at that time Native Americans were the ones that had the rights first. I remember Lana Oleen was a big proponent. I remember standing up, giving a speech about the importance of honoring this. Then I appeared in Hawver's Report as the new "Indian princess". The name calling wasn't as prominent then as it is now.

Charter schools. We put into effect charter schools and some definitions and requirements, etc. Telecommunications is a huge thing. I remember Carl Krehbiel was a representative later, but he was a telecommunications guy. I don't know that I would have understood anything if he hadn't been there to explain all of that. There were some significant things that happened, like you said, that are still very effective with what's going on today.

DG: At the end of the day, it is about you leave a mark on your time that's there, and you like to think it was worthwhile.

CDS: That's right.

DG: If you picked out of all of those, the education foundation is maybe the thing that lasts the most?

CDS: I think it's the most consistent, but then you kind of have these peaks, the post-secondary reorganization, the environmental stuff that came in, a lot of these personal issues and the

changes in rights for individuals. So it's a little bit like an EKG where you have this stuff going on, but then there's a spike there.

DG: As long as you still have a pulse. When it flatlines, that's when it's over.

CDS: We didn't mention the redistricting. That was a big upset.

DG: The reapportionment?

CDS: The reapportionment, the redistricting that occurred after the census, the census in 2000. It would have been 2002 or something like that. The thought was that we would work together with moderate Republicans and Democrats, and [then] their proposals continued to eliminate one of our senators. So we ended up working with conservatives, which we had always voted against their issues, but we got a map through that retained the people they wanted to retain and the people we wanted, and the districts were not gerrymandered to the extent they were before. That was a big political upset.

DG: Isn't reapportionment one of the biggest challenges for any kind of bipartisan—

CDS: Sure it is.

DG: It's such a cobbled thing. You've got to give and take.

CDS: Senator Derek Schmidt, the current attorney general, and I introduced a bill for an independent organization to do that redistricting because we have computer programs that can do it fairly and easily, but it's still quite a political process.

DG: Do you have anything else in mind? Have we covered the waterfront pretty much? I'd maybe close it with going back to that identity thing. You did serve. You were a woman that had a role in all of this. Do you think that perhaps you helped define what it takes to be successful in this venue as a woman?

CDS: Well, I would hope so. I think that that kind of practical nature, nonhysteria, nonemotional, and yet you cannot argue for the rights of children and families without being emotional about the issue, feeling strongly about the issue. I think that the number of people that I served with, Greta Goodwin being another one, Janis Lee, and Marge Petty, those were just quality women. They were smart, and they were able to get their points across without a negative reaction. So I think that feels good.

DG: Thank you. That's been an interesting walk through memory lane. I'm sure anybody who watches this will appreciate the time that you dedicated to the welfare of our state.

CDS: It was one of those things where you're not sure why you're going to do this, and you're so glad you did.

Interview of Christine Downey-Schmidt by Dale Goter, August 2, 2019

DG: We appreciate your service.

CDS: Thank you.

DG: Thank you. On the behalf of the Kansas Oral History Project, I'm Dale Goter.

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