

INTERVIEWS WITH GOVERNOR MIKE HAYDEN

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GOVERNOR OF KANSAS: JANUARY 12, 1987- JANUARY 14, 1991

**INTERVIEWED BY DR. BOB BEATTY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
WASHBURN UNIVERSITY
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66611
BOB.BEATTY@WASHBURN.EDU
785-670-1736**

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Dr. Bob Beatty, Producer, Kansas Governors Recorded History and Documentary Project



Governor Mike Hayden, 1987

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Q. Governor, could you tell me about your background, where you grew up and what your life was like as a boy and any childhood memories you may have?

A. Well, I was very fortunate to grow up in a small town in far western Kansas. Atwood is our home town. And I come from a family of farmers. My dad farmed for 40 years and my brother farms and is still farming today, the same land. It's the same land that my grandparents had when they were married in 1915. So it gave me a great sense of the soil, great sense of the land itself and particularly, a sense of what it was like to grow up in a small town and to be in a rural community. And that was very, very helpful to me throughout my years in the legislature and my years in the governorship because I always felt a closeness to Kansas, a closeness to the communities.

I also came from a family of public servants. My grandfather was mayor, my mother and grandmother were school board members, and my father was a county commissioner and city councilman. So around our dinner table there was always a conversation about politics and public policy and public service. It was with that background that I ran at the age of 28 for the state legislature and was elected the first time, and that was my foray into state government and all the things that ensued throughout the years.

Q. A lot of children of farmers end up being farmers themselves. What prompted you to go to college and decide to take that step?

A. I did grow up farming. I realized very early on that I really wasn't cut out to be a farmer. In fact, I remember very poignantly a story. When we were in school we had to read an essay by Dwight Eisenhower, by President Eisenhower, and it was called, "An Open Letter to the American Student." And in that Eisenhower - who was a Kansan of course, and who grew up in a very small town in those days, Abilene, Kansas - had a line in there that I'll never forget. He said, "There is more to life than plowing a straight furrow." That had a big impact on me and I think probably gave me a vision to look beyond the farm and to look beyond my own community where I grew up and really kind of set in motion my whole idea of furthering my education, first at Kansas State University and then after Vietnam at Fort Hays State University. And I've never forgotten that. I think I probably wasn't cut out to be a farmer, but I think the words of Eisenhower rang in my ears for a long time that there was really a calling for me beyond the farm.

Q. And how did your service in Vietnam shape your life after Vietnam? Did it shape how you approached life and what you wanted to do when you returned from Vietnam?

A. There isn't any doubt about that. My Vietnam experience, unlike perhaps many others, shaped my concern for the country, my concern for public policy, my concern for my fellow man. I was very fortunate in Vietnam in that I lived in the jungle for the better part of a year. We were in many difficult firefights. I was on the Cambodian invasions when President Nixon ordered us into Cambodia in May of 1970. Only had a few days to remain in the Army at that time and I was fortunate in that I never got wounded. But I saw the horrible affects of war firsthand and I never forgot that. I also saw firsthand the value of leadership, the importance of leadership.

I remember in fact, one time Alf Landon called me out of the blue really and he said, "I want to endorse you for governor." Of course I was deeply honored that he would do that so I said to him one time, "Governor Landon, what prompted you to do that?" and he said, "Well, you've been there under fire," and I never forgot that. Vietnam did shape my life, but it shaped it in a very positive way and I'm thankful for that experience and it really did kind of give me the basis of leadership I needed to ultimately become the Governor of our state.

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Q. You ran for the state legislature at a relatively young age and you defeated an incumbent in the primary. What prompted you to throw your hat into politics to take on an incumbent?

A. My concern about the environment and my concern for conservation and natural resources got me into politics in the first place. We did have an incumbent representing our area at the time and I kept noticing votes on natural resource issues, water related issues and public lands issues, and those votes concerned me. So I made the determination that I would run. I remember calling the county chairman in my home county (who ultimately ended up being the chairman of my campaign for Governor many years later). I said to him, "I'm going to run for the legislature and I would like your help." I think I was 28 at the time. He said, "Well I'll help you, but you know we've never elected anybody under 50 before."

And it was a hard fought primary, I think we won by 250 votes. And then I ultimately won the general election. And both the people that I defeated in that election, the incumbent Republican and the Democrat, became good friends years later and I still am good friends with their families and everything yet today. So, what it does show you is that while the power of incumbency is important, there is always room for new ideas, there is room for new people constantly in public service. I hope maybe that we set a small example for folks in the years to come that are thinking about public service.

Q. So you ran for office and won when you were 28. When did you get that first thought that you not only could be Governor but you wanted to be Governor?

A. Actually, I had been in politics or in the legislature a long, long time before I ever thought about entering the Governor's race at all. I'm reminded kind of Jerry Ford when he was vice-president and he had been minority leader in the House for many, many years. And then, of course, when President Nixon resigned, he became President of the United States. They said to him, "Mr. President, how does it feel?" He said "Well, you know, all I really ever wanted to be was Speaker of the House." And that was kind of my goal, to be Speaker of the House. And as I sat in the back row I remember, the back row of the legislature, one day the Speaker did something and I turned to my seat mate and I said, "Well how can he do that?" and he said, "Well remember, the power of the Speaker is awesome." I never forgot that. So, my whole career really was pointed toward me becoming Speaker of the House, which I did become, and I had a wonderful time serving four years as Speaker.

It really wasn't until my second term as Speaker that people began to approach me and I began to think about the possibility of running for Governor. And so it wasn't something I dreamed of as a boy. It was something that I just worked up into. I was in the right place at the right time. A lot of politics is timing. If you'll visit with Governors, you will find that, I know they were prepared, but almost every one of them had an innate ability to take advantage of certain political circumstances that occurred at the time. I remember in March of 1986, which was the year I won the Governorship, the Wichita Eagle did a poll and I think I had three percent of the vote or something like that. At that time I had already decided, of course, that I was going to run and had actually already announced. But it wasn't but six months before that that I really decided to run for Governor. But I did it, I did it very methodically. I did it with a well thought-out plan. And I did take advantage of the circumstances as they arose. So all of that ultimately led up to the successful campaign.

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Q. So talk about that successful run for Governor. You said you had a plan?

A. It was a very crowded Republican primary. My campaign manager, who was from Atwood, and one of my major campaign advisors, who was from Wichita State University, they devised a plan that said what we should do in that campaign is we should try to carry all of the counties with less than 10,000 people in them, of which in Kansas, there were around 90 such counties at that time. And I think we actually carried 89 of them.

We appealed to people with a grass roots approach - a small town, agricultural base, a concern about and a closeness to the land; grass roots politics, if you will, really. We also combined that with somewhat of a populist refrain. And in a crowded primary, the other candidates were essentially competing for the urban vote. There was a candidate from Wichita, even two. They were running other candidates from almost all of the urban centers or the eastern third of the state. So our goal was to run strong in the small counties and not get beat too bad in the urban counties. It was a very successful strategy because as the other candidates competed for urban votes we did everything we could to solidify the rural votes. And ultimately we won that primary against some very good candidates, very quality candidates. And we did win it actually with a pretty darn good margin because the rural people really heard our message and really turned out.

Q. And what was the key to you winning the general election?

A. In the general election, I ran against Tom Docking. And the truth is that Tom Docking is a good friend. I knew his father well, he had served as governor for four terms. I knew his grandfather to some extent, who had served for two terms as governor, and I actually knew his grandmother very well. So Tom and I were not adversaries in the traditional sense. We actually admired each other personally. Our whole campaign was really about not a dog fight but a horse race; two people who really cared a lot about our state and had a rich heritage in our state.

One of the reasons, of course, I was able to beat Tom is that we are a Republican state and what I did successfully was to solidify the republican base. I also brought the rural appeal which helped me carry a great number of the small counties. But in the urban areas, I was able to use my legislative experience. Because I was Speaker of the House they knew me in Topeka, and even though we didn't carry Shawnee County we came very close and ran very respectable here. We even carried Johnson County which is exactly the opposite end of the state where I'm from. We won that for two reasons. One, it is heavily Republican and they knew my name as Speaker of the House. I also had a running mate from Johnson County. And so our whole idea was to offset the margin that Tom would get in Wichita and in southeastern Kansas, and to some extent in the very northeast in Leavenworth and Wyandotte Counties. And that was a very successful strategy. It was a very good race and it was a very positive race. It was a hard fought race. But we had the right strategy for it. I perhaps had more maturity and experience. And that probably made the difference in that race.

Q. You've been elected to Governor of Kansas. What runs through your head at that moment or what ran through your head at that moment?

A. A very humbling experience. I mean, to think about the fact that you're from a small town, you grew up in a farm family, you're from 320 miles west of Topeka, and all of sudden you've been elected to take the leadership for our state. It's an overwhelming feeling, a very humbling feeling to think that enough people have trusted you to make you the chief executive and that you've got four years at least, perhaps longer, to govern this state. It's an awesome responsibility.

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I felt very good about it because having been Speaker of the House with many years in the legislature and having known many Governors and worked with several, I felt I was prepared for job. In that sense I felt confident that I was ready to assume the job. But at the same time, the responsibility of it, it is awesome if you think about all of the responsibilities of state government and the fact that, you know, the buck does stop at your desk. Ultimately, with all the issues that can't be solved somewhere else, they are going to bring those to your desk and you have to make a judgment. It's exciting, but it's a very awesome responsibility.

Q. How would, you looking back on it, characterize your style as a Governor?

A. Every Governor does have a different style and I've been fortunate to know many Governors over the years and actually many Presidents. Everyone does approach it in a different way and the real truth is there is no one way. Everybody brings their personality to the office. So I brought a personality, a strong personality in that I had been a company commander in Vietnam, I had been Speaker of the House, a Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee - the kind of positions where you have to have a very strong personality. So I brought that kind of no nonsense approach to it, an all business type.

Pat Roberts used to say about Mike Hayden, he used to say, "Two forward and one back, feed them hot chow." That's kind of my style; no nonsense, straightforward, "Here's what we've got to do, let's get the job done." And that has its pluses and its minuses, of course. You know, I don't have any regrets about that style at all, I mean, it was my personality. Ultimately we got the highway plan passed and some of those things, so it was ultimately the style that sometimes was needed.

But I recognize very much Governor Graves' entirely different style, which was very successful for him, and Governor Sebelius' style, which I think has been greatly successful for her. Their styles match their personalities, match what it's really all about. The key is to govern you've got to be yourself. Whatever you brought to the table, those tools, that's what you want to use, that's what's going to be most successful for you.

Q. Take us through an idea in Mike Hayden's head which ends up having Governor Hayden sign a bill into law and what you had to do to accomplish that.

A. One of the most illustrative examples of how a bill becomes law is our attempt and ultimate success at getting a comprehensive highway plan passed. When I came into office I had the Speaker of the House head up a commission on the public agenda and one of the issues that was identified as sorely needed was improvement in the infrastructure of Kansas, particularly our highways. We have the third largest highway system in America. Only Texas and California have more road miles than we do that belong to the state. Yet our highways at that time were in substantial disrepair. I came to the office with the idea of a major comprehensive highway plan but in the first session I didn't introduce that idea because we were having financial problems as a state, we were in the recession of the 1980's and we were also in the drought.

So what I did was I studied and had a lot of background work done on a need for a comprehensive highway plan and in September of 1987 called a special session of the legislature. It was in my first year in office too. I put a bill before them to initiate a comprehensive highway plan. Well, the legislature refused to adopt it. They went home without having done anything essentially during the special session. And I never gave up on the idea, never quit on it. Ultimately, after the 1988 session and then in the 1989 session the plan really started to catch fire and people could see the economic advantages of it, people could see the public safety aspects of it.

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People needed jobs desperately across the state. And in the spring of 1989, we did pass an 8 billion dollar comprehensive highway plan. And that plan, I'm proud to say, came in on time and under budget when it was all said and done, even though by then I had left office many years before. It embodies the notion that you can have an idea and even though the road ahead was difficult, you stay with it and you ultimately can sign that notion into law. I did that in Fredonia, Kansas, signed the comprehensive highway plan into law in Fredonia, because it was in Fredonia, many years before, where I had traveled to talk about the need for a new highway in southeastern Kansas. Today that highway exists and it is US 400. And it has changed people's lives forever in southeastern Kansas.

Q. That's a good example because you have a bill that was not passed in special session and was later passed. What does a Kansan reading the newspaper not see that the Governor is doing? Are you calling individual legislators, are you giving media interviews, traveling to towns to sell your idea, are you doing all of those things? What does the Governor have to do to see that plan finally passes?

A. You have to employ every technique that is available. You have to have town meetings. I remember the first town meeting we had in Salina which would build a four-lane highway and did build one from Salina north on the old Highway 81 corridor, the I-35 corridor now. At that first public meeting in Salina, which was held at the airport, I think there were nine people at that meeting. And one of them was my Aunt Mary. So you see we had to start with the idea and then we had to spread that idea through the media, through town meetings, through public appearances, through individual dialogue with legislators, through significant work at the Department of Transportation with the secretary, with the employees, with their public relations people. So you have to employ all those techniques to be successful at a comprehensive piece of legislation like that.

Q. Do you pick up the phone and call individual legislators and literally sell the idea?

A. Absolutely. There were a number of legislators that ultimately were key to the passage of that legislation. I worked closely with the Speaker of the House, closely with the President of the Senate, closely with the Minority Leader of the Senate, who at that time happened to be from southeastern Kansas, so highways to him were a very, very important thing.

One of the things about the comprehensive highway plan is that it ultimately became a bipartisan proposal. That was one of the secrets, it wasn't a partisan issue. It was more a geographic issue. Some areas of the state felt like they had already had the roads they needed, but other areas were sorely neglected. So you do work very closely with individual legislators. Key committee chairs were important and even individual legislators who care deeply about highways at that time, they were very important to its passage.

Q. And what would you say was the most frustrating part of the job?

A. Well, one thing you have to understand is that the wheels of government turn slowly. Many times when you're Governor you see things that need to be done but sometimes it takes years to actually get that accomplished. The highway plan is a good example, but there are many others. Sometimes you never get that accomplished. I think probably the most frustrating thing to me is the unfinished agenda, that when you're through with public service in a capacity as Governor, the biggest regrets are those things we never got to accomplish that we should have, or if we had the political wherewithal we might have gotten them accomplished.

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I came up through the legislature so I was adjusted to the rough and tumble of politics. Many people get frustrated by that. I was never really frustrated with that or the bipartisan aspects of it either. But the frustration was with the unfinished agenda. The day you leave office you say to yourself, "What might we have accomplished or what should we have accomplished that we didn't?" I think those are the frustrations that I remember the most.

Q. Is there something you wish you had had time to do as you look back now in particular?

A. Maybe in a sense I'm getting a second chance now because my interest was in natural resources, but I felt like that we had left a significant unfinished agenda as it relates to water. We did get funding for the state water plan in 1989 and that was one of our major accomplishments, and several other Governors, several of my predecessors, had tried. So I was pleased with that. But we didn't get accomplished near what we needed to to ensure the future of Kansas as it relates to water. So maybe it's a little poetic justice that both Governor Graves and now Governor Sebelius have given me an opportunity to reengage on that issue. Today we're struggling and dealing with some of the same water questions that we dealt with a decade or more ago and some are no closer to a solution unfortunately, but some are. And that's a rewarding thing.

Q. Tell us about the program you had which I believe was called "Telling It to the Governor." Where did that idea come from and what were some of the interesting things that people ended up telling you?

A. Well, it was kind of a unique experience. We felt like it was important to break down the barriers. You know, most Kansans really never get to see the Governor or if they do, just to shake their hand or see them on television, or maybe see him in passing. They never really get the chance to go one-on-one with the Governor, particularly people away from Topeka, people away from the Capitol. So we had a program called "Tell the Governor." We took it to Garden City, we took it to western Kansas, we took it to southeastern Kansas, and we simply opened the door and said, "You've got 15 minutes with the Governor." And people would line up and they would wait their turn. They would be very, very courteous and thankful. What most people brought you were their personal problems. They were people who couldn't get their child support payment or they were people who had handicaps or disabilities and didn't feel that they were being treated right or they were being discriminated against. There were people that would bring sometimes ideas, inventors, different people like that. Some of those ideas, as you might imagine, are as strange as you could imagine. But other people had very articulate policy concerns. They would bring them and say, "As Governor you ought to think about this, you ought to see if there is a solution to this."

But what I remember most about it was first, it keeps you in touch. It keeps you in touch with reality. When you're Governor you have security forces around you, you have a lot of secretaries, and you have other people so that the general public just doesn't walk in the door unannounced or without an appointment. "Tell the Governor" gave people a chance to just show up and tell their two cents worth to the Governor. So it was a lot of value to me because it kept me in check with reality, with what people are really thinking and saying in many cases. But it also let people know that we had an open door policy and it was their government and they should have access to it.

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Q. Was it your idea or did someone come up to you and say this might be a good thing?

A. I think it was a combination of my western Kansas roots, small town roots, you know. I always felt kind of an isolation in Topeka. It is 321 miles from Atwood to Topeka. I drove it hundreds and hundreds of times in the years when I was in the legislature and I always felt like western Kansas was often overlooked, often forgotten. And of course, as time has passed with reapportionment every ten years, western Kansas loses more and more and more representation all the time. So people feel an isolation and I probably grew up with that isolationism. So I felt like that on my own initiative I should show people that we can break that down and that we could give them access, even in the smallest towns, in the most remote places, that was really my initiative. I think probably my staff fine tuned it a little bit so that it could be practical and work. But it was really my concern that I had about making sure that people were not really isolated from their government.

Q. Tell me about the election of 1990, what happened, for those that don't know what happened.

A. Well it was a very difficult election. I have had the privilege to run in ten elections and the election of 1990 was the only election I ever lost in those ten elections. Let me say it was not at all a surprise to me as it was one of the most unusual and unique times in Kansas politics. We had just undergone reappraisal and I was sensitive to the power of the reappraisal issue because my father had been a county commissioner out in western Kansas when we reappraised in the 1960s. As a result of that he got defeated when the new tax system was put in place. You know, when you talk about taxes, the only fair taxes, of course, are the ones the other guy pays. And in reappraisal one of two things can happen: Your taxes either go up or they go down. If they went down, well, you had it coming, and if they went up, you were mad about that. And of course the easiest person to be mad at is the Governor.

So, I knew that reappraisal would be a very, very difficult issue, and so it happened. The way it worked is that the people of Kansas in 1986 - in the same election I was elected in - passed and approved a reclassification amendment to the constitution. That reclassification amendment essentially through reappraisal protected farmers and homeowners, and they still enjoy that protection today. But if you're going to take and protect one class of taxpayer then that means somebody else is going to pay more. So in protecting homeowners and the farmers taxes went up on businesses, and on small businesses in particular it was very, very difficult.

So every real estate agent was upset about it. Every small business person was upset about it. Some people whose homes hadn't been reappraised for 20 years, when they finally got a bill that reflected their current values, they thought it was grossly unfair. I would say the good thing about reappraisal is that no Governor will have to go through it again, because when we changed the system. Now there is a reappraisal annually of one third of property, so every three years people's taxes are adjusted based on current valuation. That is a very fair system and is not going to cause Governors in the future to have to go through what we had to go through in 1990. But I was not at all surprised by it.

In fact, there were riots on the Statehouse grounds. There were thousands of protesting taxpayers demanding that the legislature and/or the Governor do something about reappraisal. Well, reappraisal, one, is governed by the constitution. Two, legislators who had studied it for years knew that we did the right thing even though it was difficult politically. We knew that we were instituting a system that was far fairer when it came to property taxes. All the studies since have, in fact, verified that fact. Kansas State has studied the impact of reappraisal since 1990 and every time it comes out to show that, in fact, reappraisals are by far fairer than the old system we were under.

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It's one of those things that you do what you know is right, and sometimes you suffer the political consequences of that. We were very fortunate to win a primary in that year against several worthy opponents who campaigned on the property tax question. But they had inflicted so much damage in that primary that the Republican Party was deeply split. Governor Finney, who I had known for years as State Treasurer, she used to be a Republican and then she changed to become a Democrat years before. She was not involved in the reappraisal question as State Treasurer as I was, or as Governor Carlin had been, who was my predecessor who ran in that primary against her. He probably was defeated in that primary principally because of the reappraisal issue.

So we were in a situation where Governor Finney could say, "It's not my fault, I didn't have anything to do with it." And I was in a position where it occurred on my watch. I knew it was the right thing to do but I also knew that politically it was probably the kiss of death, and ultimately proved to be so as far as that election goes. But you know, I wouldn't have done it any differently. We did do the right thing from a policy standpoint. The truth is, it was such an overwhelming issue we probably couldn't have turned it around no matter what we had done.

Q. So you could have done something that you thought would have been wrong to win reelection but you did not do that?

A. I certainly could have attempted to do that, but I thought that would be a terrible tragedy. That was not the right thing to do. I discussed it with the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate, both of whom had been former chairmen of the tax committee. They were experts on reappraisal and they knew we did the right thing. I did too. We just simply stood our ground and we tried to get people to understand that in the long run, they would be far better off if we had a fairer tax system. And we do have one today.

So, you know, you have to make the choice and we made the choice, and I don't regret it at all. I don't regret we did the right thing. It is just one of the consequences of politics. I've always said this about politics: If you're afraid to lose, you should never run. So I was lucky to win and fortunate to win the first nine elections I ran in. But I was never afraid to lose and I wasn't afraid to lose in 1990. In fact, I thought there was a very high probability all along we would not be successful in that campaign. But I don't regret it at all and I am actually proud of the policy that came out of it.

Q. Are there some skills that you think every Kansas Governor should have to be successful on the job?

A. We are a small state. We only have one percent of the nation's population. But we're a state large in land mass. So we're very diverse in that respect. We're spread out. You have to have a good lesson in geography. You have to know and understand this state. What did Mark Twain say, "You tell me where a man gets his corn-pone and I will tell you what his opinion is." People are what they're from. You have to have that sense of geography to govern our state successfully, a melting pot of the rural and urban, western and the eastern.

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And there are great divisions, political divisions, that if you don't understand those and know those, then they can really wreak havoc with you in the way of successful governance. So, one of the real secrets is being close to the people. In fact, if you look, since the modern day Governorship in 1974, every one of our Governors has come from the Statehouse family, every single one. The last person to be elected outside of the Statehouse and Statehouse family was Bob Docking, first elected in 1966. And one of the reasons that is is because if you're in the Statehouse family, if you're a Speaker of the House, or Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, Secretary of State, State Treasurer, or Lieutenant Governor, you already have that Sense. You've already been through the school of hard knocks in the sense of what it takes to make this state work and what it takes to be a successful Governor. That's why the Statehouse family is such a tremendous training ground and it will be the training ground for a vast majority of our Governors in the future.

Q. Is there something that after you became Governor you were a bit surprised at and you said to yourself, "I had no idea this was part of the job?"

A. There were no real big surprises. I had been 14 years in the Statehouse, I had been Speaker of the House. Probably the thing that kind of makes you the humblest and in a sense is both frustrating and rewarding is that, unlike the other positions of state government, there is a significant amount of ceremony associated with the Governor's office. People want you to be in their page pictures, they want you to ride in their hometown parade, they want you to be at their centennial or their celebration or their 4th of July. And, of course, you can only be in one or two, even on the 4th of July; if you try hard you might be in three or four, that's out of 25 invitations.

One of the hardest parts for me was trying to hit that fine line between spending time on public policy, on real questions, and the ceremonies, because the demand for the Governor's appearances are just absolutely overwhelming. I would tell you that Governor Graves was very skillful at dealing with that part. I think Governor Sebelius is very skillful at that, far better than I was in the sense that I was not the best manager of time. I would let the schedule overwhelm me. In fact, I remember one time one of my assistants asked me something and I pulled out a 3 by 5 card and I said, "What does the schedule say?" And she said, "You mean you're going to let your life be ruled by 3 by 5 cards?" And there is something to that! So one of the great skills of being a successful Governor is to determine the priorities and stick with them and not let the overwhelming demands for your time and appearances, particularly related to ceremony, get in the way of a successful Governorship.

Q. What would you like Kansans to remember about yourself and your time as Governor, a few things that you would want to make sure they knew about you and your Governorship?

A. I would hope that when it was all said and done that people would feel that you cared, you cared about them, that you cared about the state and that you were in it for the right reasons, that you were in it because of your real, real deep concern about Kansas and about the world in which we live. If after it's all said and done people just say, "Yeah, I remember him and he did a good job," or "I remember him and he was an honest guy," those are the kind of things ultimately I'd like. It's not the individual programs that are important. It's when it is said and done, you want people to feel good that you really tried to do the right things while you were in Cedar Crest and in the Governor's Office. That's really I think all you can ask.

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Q. So part of the job, in your opinion, is to maintain a trust and faith in government and in the state?

A. That's absolutely true. There is so much corrosive attitude about government. I've been blessed in my life to have a lot of experiences, meet a lot of people, be in a lot of places, but I have met some of the very best people in government. And they are people that truly want to serve. They truly are there for the right reasons. That, I think, is the best you can hope for, that when your time is done, people will feel that way about you. That they say, "Hey, he gave it his best shot and he really did care about the right things on behalf of folks." That's really what it's ultimately about.



Kansas Governors: William Avery, Kathleen Sebelius, John Anderson, Mike Hayden. May 18, 2005, Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas.

Governor Mike Hayden second interview, Sept. 29, 2008
Bob Beatty & Mark Peterson, interviewers

Peterson: *I've gotten up through his discussion while Atwood and Tipton and Palco and most of his little towns up in the north and then I just finished his section of Curtis's top down redevelopment of Sudan . . . It's an interesting, it's an interesting text, in fact as I've been reading it, I was thinking about I uh, your presentation last year at uh, Kansas Day and uh, the work you've been doing on , think you know the depletion of the Ogallala and the loss of the agricultural life style in Kansas and now we've got on top of it, you know, the news coverage of polar bears swimming for their life and not an ice flow in site the economic catastrophes and that's the reason I was wondering as I was sitting there this afternoon and thinking about this, you've got, I guess now over thirty years now of public service*

Actually thirty-six years ago, well in December. It'll be thirty-six years since it began. I took eight years in the private sector. So twenty-eight years of public service, not counting military, but twenty-eight years of public service.

Did you spend a short tour of duty as director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife?

I did not. I was actually assistant secretary of interior, so I uh, the director actually worked for me. I had two directors. I had the director of the National Park Service and the director of U.S. Fish and Wildlife service.

And then you went out and did a executive director job of sports ...

That's right, the American Sports Fishing Association.

And you did all of that in Washington?

I did. They were actually located in Chicago.

And when they hired me and part of that was they wanted someone to move them to Washington. They were in a Chicago suburb, and they wanted a uh,uh a bigger view and they wanted someone to take it to Washington, which is what we did, and they're still there in Alexandria, Virginia, right across the river.

My brother's done something different with rural cell phone companies and uh their headquarters were in Houston and they hired him to move them to Washington. The board was divided and

Right. Well, our board was somewhat divided. We had a lot of small companies.

Well as I thought about all that I just wondered to myself, It's sort of a giant size question more than anything else. Do you ever feel that your faith in the system and this thing that we call American democracy really works for us anymore?

It's true that it tests your faith. It is true, uh, and at times, you know, it might not seem like it works, or works very well. But, one thing about it, both in state government and federal government, it is pretty

resilient. And it has survived some real tough times, both politically and economically, and rebounded. So, uh, I think that the system's obviously has got it's flaws, but it is pretty resilient and it has survived. Really, at the state level, I think it has survived remarkably well, but even at the federal level, it's rebounded when you think about we've had, well in the last thirty-five years, we've had one president impeached and another president who was going to be impeached if he didn't resign yet the country carried on. And we've had people who were elected and reelected and others who only served one term and we've had a turnover, and yet the system continued to function. So sometimes, it tests your faith, but I think that it, uh—are still the underpinnings that are still there and are still working.

Well the true believers say that testing one's faith is essential, it's a never ending struggle until you achieve paradise.

(Bob) Are you recording.

(Mark) Yeah, oh yeah.

(Bob) You're recording. You ready.

Yes sir.

(Bob) One thing on these follow-up interviews, if you can uh, remember names of anybody, cause Virgil [Dean] is the editor at the history journal and he really loves getting the name of legislator or something and then he'll often go and find pictures or background and include it; so it's a way that we've incorporated a lot of Kansas history in there. So, I'll probably ask you about some names but there was one thing I wanted to start with. In the first interview you talked about growing up but you said, I think I probably wasn't cut out to be a farmer. I wondered if you could expand on that a little bit. You didn't like farming or what was it that made you say that?

Well my father was a farmer for forty years on his stead, my brother is carrying on even though my father's still alive, and the truth is our family's been on that same land for almost a hundred years now.

And where is that?

That's in Rawlins County, near Atwood. But I was always interested in the natural world. So when I was riding the tractor, you know, I'd be watching the hawks, and the jack rabbits and the pheasants, and the songbirds, and making note of them instead of plowing a straight furrow. In fact my furrows looked like snakes, and I loved being out of doors and being on the land but my interest was not cultivation, it was not producing, it was understanding the natural world associated with the land. Which is ultimately, I think why I got a degree in wild life and later a degree in biology. So I was never interested in agriculture production but I was always interested in the natural resource values of the farm

After high school you went to what university?

Kansas State [University]

And what was your major?

Wildlife Conservation. And I knew that's what I wanted and that's why I went there. My whole family went to KU and that's why I didn't go to KU, because the only place you could get Wildlife Conservation was at Kansas State, in Kansas. And I couldn't afford the out of state tuition to go to Colorado State, or some other land grant where it was taught.

(Mark) So the Poppers had not yet written their book about the Buffalo commons, when you went off to study wildlife management?

In fact they wouldn't write it for another twenty years.

Was it twenty?

So no they had not.

Did you have anything like that in mind when you decided to go off and study wildlife management? Were you thinking about how could you return the farm to uh_?

Well I uh, uh, I remember ironically, I remember when I was in the service, and I took a test, I was drafted, and I just graduated, you know, and I took a test to be an officer and I scored real well on that test. And so the next thing you do is you go to the interviews after they get the scores then they interview, and Lyndon Johnson was president at the time, I remember, and the guy interviewing me said, "well I see you got a degree in wildlife conservation, and I see you're also from a family farm." He said, uh "What would you think the idea of your farm becoming a national park named after Lyndon Johnson?" And I said well I think the idea of our farm becoming a national park is a fabulous idea, but I'm a Republican, so I have a little reluctance about the name.

Can you imagine that? (Laughs) The Lyndon Johnson National Wildlife Park in Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. That would be a riot.

(Bob) You were in K State for four years

That's right.

And uh were you involved in any sports or clubs or what did you do?

Actually I was a little involved in politics, not much. I ran for the student senate, I didn't win that race. I was vice president of our fraternity. We did have, it was very interesting, in 1964, at K State, we had a huge mock political convention. And it was kind of an ironic thing because of course normally you think of a mock political convention as the Democrats and the Republicans each having a separate convention. Well, this was designed so that it encompassed all the candidates, and it so happened that our fraternity was assigned, along with another sorority, we were assigned Texas. And I was the chief, I was our head delegate, chief delegate from Texas. And of course it was Johnson running against Goldwater. And so, it was my job at this mock political convention to give the nominating speech for Lyndon Johnson, being the head delegate from Texas, his home state. But ironically Goldwater won the convention. He got the nomination, and Margaret Chase Smith was nominated. It was a great, each, each fraternity was assigned a different state, and of course there were all kind of favorite sons that had to be nominated, and you know it filled the field house for two or three days. So, I was involved in student politics to some extent, and it was a time of unrest, the Vietnam War. I was there when they burned down the auditorium, I was still in school and that was partially a protest to the

Vietnam War, which they later burnt down Nickels gym. But I was already gone from campus when Nichols burned down. So, it was a time of uh, uh, well of a lot of political activity on campus.

And when we talked to Governor Carlin, he said he'd been a Democrat for as long as he could remember, at what point did you associate yourself as becoming a Republican or was it something you assumed?

In a sense it was just something that I assumed. I've always been a Republican. Now, my dad, I come from a family of public servants. My dad was county commissioner, and in fact he served on the city council until he was seventy-nine years old. Now he's eighty-seven. Now my mother actually came from a Democrat family. But, when she married my dad, she became a Republican. So, I came from a family of Republicans, and the very first time I ever registered, and of course back in those days you couldn't register until you were twenty-one. You see, I didn't get to vote, the first time I got to vote was in '68. Because, I was only twenty in the '64 election. So even though we were having a mock political convention on campus, I wasn't really old enough to vote in the real election because you had to be 21 then. So I registered as a Republican. Actually, ironically, when I ran for the first time for the legislature, some people remembered that mock political convention and they thought I was a Democrat because, of course, I gave the nominating speech for Johnson. And so, one of the things I had to overcome in that first campaign was kind of a whisper campaign that I was really a Democrat.

What years are you in college?

I went in '62 and I graduated in '66.

So as you're in college the buildup in Vietnam is happening

Absolutely!

And your understanding that you very well could be drafted. What are your thoughts at a time when a lot of students across the country are saying I don't really want to do this, we're against this. What's Mike Hayden thinking?

Well I come from a family of veterans. My grandfather fought at Verdun in World War I, my dad fought on the Burma Road in World War II. So, I come from a family of veterans, you know I had a student deferment, back in those days you could get a student deferment until you graduated but I knew that as soon as my degree was completed, I did go to one semester of graduate school before I was finally drafted, but I knew my deferment would end, and I was fully prepared to go to the army, I was fully prepared to be drafted. I had really no qualms about that. I just hoped that I was able to get my degree first, which I was, so I had no misgivings about the military at all. I probably wasn't smart enough; in those days too, in a land grant college, they had mandatory ROTC. So the first two years every male student had to go to ROTC. But then it became voluntary after that; you could go on and decide if you were going to go on and become an officer and most kids dropped out of ROTC after the two years mandatory service, which I did too. And then I ultimately got my commission in OCS, once I was drafted.

How did you view the actual war uh, considering in a sense it was a bipartisan war? Were you upset with those who were protesting it or how did you view the actual war?

Well I was uh

Before you went....

Right, well like I said, I was from a family of veterans. I didn't pay much mind to those people who protested it. I mean, like I said there were some people on campus. It was a time of student unrest. It was actually a time of pretty high student involvement in politics. Hell, I can remember, which today would be unheard of, I can remember a debate for the second district, congressional district of Kansas, [Chester] Chet Mize [Atchison, Republican] debated John Montgomery. Chet Mize ultimately became the congressman. This is John Montgomery, senior; and they debated on campus at K State in the old auditorium to probably close to 2000. There wasn't a seat in the house.

Oh my goodness

There was not a seat in the house. It was packed. And that, for the second district of Kansas, see. That shows you how much different is today than it was then. So there was a high level of student interest in politics. It wasn't just the war, the war was part of it, but there was a much greater... And you know K State at that time, when you think about it, was only a school of 9000. And you had 2000 of them there to hear two congressman debate. So you're talking about one out of every four students being present. So it was a different climate then, there was a much greater level of political interest than there is today.

And what years did you actually serve in country, Vietnam. From what years

Yes, I went in April of '69 and I came home in May of '70. So I was there for 13 months.

So you were there after TET.

I was there after TET.

Oh you went to Cambodia, didn't you?

I did, I was on the Cambodian invasion. And the TET, actually, when I went into the service I was drafted, then I was sent to medic school, and, and I was actually in medic training, trained to become a medic, in Fort Sam Houston, during the TET offensive. And then the day I got out of medics, I went to OCS, and so then I trained to become an officer, and then I got a commission in August of 1968 and then I went to Vietnam in the spring of '69.

So when you arrived in Vietnam, what was your rank and what'd you do?

I was a second lieutenant in the infantry, in the straight leg infantry, which means I was not a paratrooper even though I wanted to be one desperately. I never got to jump. So I went, I was assigned to the straight leg infantry rifle company in the jungle. And they flew us out. We were there about two days, they gave you a little bit of orientation to get climatized. Of course I'd been to jungle school so I was already somewhat climateized to weather and everything. Jungle schools in Panama, and so they ship you down there for a couple weeks to learn to live in the jungle, the heat, humidity and the rain, and all kind of stuff, terrain and everything. And then they shipped us over. And actually I went straight, my company that I was assigned to was in the field, so I went straight out to the jungle by helicopter.

And where was this?

Well it was in Tucor? Which is in the central highlands, of Vietnam. It's in the mountains right on the Cambodian border. I spent my whole time, oh no further than fifty miles from Cambodia but in most cases a mile and a half or two from Cambodia. Right along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Ho Chi Minh trail, there was this spine of mountains between Vietnam and Cambodia. We would hardly regard them as mountains they're more like the Appalachians, not the Rockies. But it's a spine of mountains that kind of separate the two countries and the Ho Chi Minh trail came right down that high ground because that was the easiest route to traverse, and so that's where I spent 13 months.

And did you have a highly grizzled sergeant that kept you out of trouble when you arrived.

Well, I did have. In fact, one great story about that is I uh trying to think now, we got shot up pretty bad right after I got there. Had a lot of guys killed and wounded and sent out some people to help us reinforce us. They sent me this kid Reed Farley, and he was from Lexington, Kentucky. He didn't have a, well he had a high school education, but he had been in the jungle, I don't know by that time he'd been there six months or something like that. And so, we became very good friends and he was my platoon sergeant, about three months until he rotated back to the United States. And this last spring as a matter of fact he came to the governor's one-shot Turkey hunt, and I guided him, and he got a big turkey and so we had a great time. He came home and he went to college then and actually made a fortune in copy machines. Trying to think of the name of the company. He went to work for IBM and then they spun off Lexmark, he went with Lexmark, and he was an executive there, and he's retired now and is very wealthy.

So were you given your own platoon?

Yes.

So you arrived.

That was the first thing I got was the platoon.

And then you went on LRRP?

We did go on LRRPs. Well at that point, we were straight leg infantry, so we did not go on LRRP. We just went on search and destroy, as either a platoon or as a company, mostly as a company, because you needed size. Then I became a recon platoon leader, after a couple of months I was promoted to a recon platoon, reconnaissance platoon and that's where you do the LRRP work. That's where you go on long-range patrols and uh, stealth patrols. Where you don't try to engage the enemy, you try to spy on them, you try to call in artillery or air strikes or call in reinforcements or whatever, but you try to remain unseen to the enemy. And I had the recon platoon for two months and then I was promoted to company commander, and then I became an infantry company commander. By that time, I had made first lieutenant. So right after I made first lieutenant, I became company commander, Charlie Company, 2nd battalion, 35th infantry.

Were you engaged in actions, were the actions of the quick firefight and then call in infantry or more intense two or three day battles that you were involved in?

Most firefights don't last very long. They're very quick engagements, in fact some only last just a matter of minutes. Usually those are surprise encounters, where your pointman, or your point has somehow engaged the enemy unknowingly, usually to either side, maybe they try to ambush you, maybe they know you're coming and try to ambush you. Those kind of firefights, a long one would be thirty minutes. Now if you really get into some deep trouble, the first firefight I was ever into probably lasted about three hours, because they had us ambushed and pinned down, and they really laid a lot of fire on us. And we could not—the arterial observer got hit right away—we couldn't call in artillery. There was no where to land reinforcements, the jungle was so heavy, that you couldn't get reinforcements in close, uh in spite of heavy fire, there was no place to sit down the bird we had to cut LZ's in order to get the birds in. Uh, but most firefights are very short lived. Now once and a while, we would uh, I remember we went in on time to reinforce Brava company, they were right on the Ho Chi Minh trail, and unfortunately they were on the low ground and they hit a battalion NVA, and they had 'em pinned down and they called us on a radio to go in and reinforce 'em. They had 'em pinned down and that fight lasted all afternoon, it lasted all night, uh probably was 10:00 the next morning before we could start to retrieve the bodies. And it was mid afternoon before we could get choppers to take out the dead and wounded. So that, but that was a very extended thing. Now actually in Cambodia, there was very little fighting, the Viet Cong were on the run the whole time. And so we just overran their base camps and their supply posts and their training depots and everything like that and they were trying to stay ahead of us. So really, we only lost one guy in Cambodia. He was killed by a guy in a spider hole, came up behind him and shot him in the back. And that was the only guy we lost on the whole invasion because, well they knew we were coming, but second off they did everything they could to avoid contact. And so while we were chasing them for 5 or 6 days into Cambodia, there was very little fighting actually. We just simply overran their base camps, destroyed their supplies, captured their weapons, that kind of thing.

Was your year, thirteen months in Vietnam, dramatically different than what you would have thought? Or was war something you couldn't imagine until you actually saw what it was like.

Well, I would say this, that the training was good. Uh, I'd gone through OCS at Fort Benning, infantry OCS, and you know that weeds a lot of people out. You got to be in good physical condition but you got to be, it's a real mental test too. So you got to really be up for it mentally to make the grade. So the training, I thought was good. Then the jungle school, that helps you prepare a lot, finally get prepared, you see all these movies and you go through training in Georgia but it's not like being in the Tropics, you know. But I thought the jungle school, it was good too, so I didn't feel terribly unprepared when I got there. I would say that as far as the officers at least, I think the training was adequate. I think we were prepared, you know, for the job at hand.

What about seeing your men, losing men, that sort of thing is there a way to prepare for that?

There is no way to prepare for it. There is no way to prepare for it. You know it is a part of war, and so you always have a concern, but you also know you're in a very dangerous situation and that people do get killed all the time, and that might be from friendly fire, that might be from accidents, that might be from enemy fire. It's a highly dangerous situation, so what you try to do, as an officer is you try to minimize the danger, you try to reduce the chances of people getting killed. You can't ever eliminate it entirely cause the enemy is always trying to outthink you, but you try to minimize casualties, because it's easy to get killed in war, you don't have to be very smart, to get killed. You've got to be a hell of a lot smarter to stay alive. And so, you've got to constantly, it's a, it's a real mental game, particularly in a guerilla warfare, you know, where there's not clear lines, where the people you see actually see in

the daytime in civilian clothes might be the very ones who are mining the road at night in hopes that you'll hit it with your jeep tomorrow.

What were conditions like when you'd go out on reconnaissance? ... you'd have to prepare for what two or three nights. You'd have to prepare, what would you wear?

Yeah, usually you, usually you took three days supplies, and you carry em on your back. And uh, it's hot, so you don't need a sleeping bag or anything like that, you take a poncho and two guys slept together and they made hooch's. They tie their ponchos together you make a hooch like this in the branches. It's like a tent and then you have the poncho liner and then you sleep on your poncho liner, and you usually take off your shoes and socks but you never took off your clothes, cause you might have to fight during the night, not only that that's what you might have to use for warmth. And your, one thing about it is you leave your clothes on and their wet, which of course they often are, your body temperature dries your clothes out at night so when you get up in the morning, you're dry. So you sleep with your socks, you take your socks off, put them underneath you, when you wake up in the morning they're dry and you put em back on. And so we would take three days supplies, we'd usually go in by chopper, and they'd leave you off and most of the time you'd have radio contact. Of course every thing was shacked which means it's all in code and everything like that. Of course you have a codebook, you know, so that it tells you what you know how to transmit over the radio. Of course Charlie he was listening all the time. And everyday you have to change the code. And so you know you'd go out, and the idea of those patrols was observation. And I remember we went in one area, we set up and I sent about four guys out, and they weren't gone very long, hell they weren't gone out even 30 minutes and the guy came on the radio and he said, "I can see, I can see, a bunch of people chopping wood." Now we were in a very, very remote area, there were no towns, there were no, and I said "Well what the hell do they look like", and he's says "well I don't know they're not in uniform." I said, "Well follow 'em." So he follows 'em, he and these other guys and they'd disappear in the jungle and then he follows em close enough that he sees a hooch, he sees a bamboo house essentially. And he calls back and says that. And I said, "well you know come on back cause we're not sure what's there and there's only four of you guys, I don't want you walking into anything. You come on back." So he did. So the next morning then we took a the whole recon platoon and advanced very slowly and we went through this area where obviously they'd been cutting trees, fire wood and stuff like that and we approached the first hootch and people began to run, ahead of us you know, well we didn't shoot, nobody appeared to be armed, most of em were women and children. But anyway, they kept running and we kept pursuing em. Well you came to more hooch's and more hooch's, and more hooch's and pretty soon we came to this big huge gully which we call a wash or something in Kansas, and it was completely full of tunnels. There were tunnel entrances every damn place. And this was in so thick a jungle, I called the battalion commander and said we found a hidden village and they had weapons caches and such in there and he said "well I want to come out and see it from the air," so he got in his chopper and he came out and I was standing and he was directly above me. I could hear the chopper, I couldn't see it, but I could hear it and he was directly above me and he could not see that village at all. He couldn't see that there was any sign that there were any people down there. That's how stealthy they were, and they had their tunnels dug in these deep ravines so that if we fired artillery, in order for it to be effective at all, they'd have to fall right in that ravine. That ravine wouldn't be any wider than your house, you know and then they'd have tunnels going off to the side if our artillery started falling to get in those tunnels. And so it was virtually impossible, you know, to hit em. In fact, what we ended up doing was burning the whole thing down. But we sent dogs and everything in those tunnels, and there was a lot of weapon caches, and mostly Russian made, and there was never a shot fired in that whole deal. They all ran. We never fired a shot, but we burned down the whole village and we recovered, I don't know hundreds of thousands of rounds of AK ammunition. They had a big round

like sardine cans. They had these big cans, looked just like a sardine can, and you'd open it up and it'd be, uh, AK 47 ammunition. Still be in the Cosmoline, still be in the grease, you know.

Oh my goodness, did you ever personally come in close encounter with the North Vietnamese?

Oh yeah. It was on the day that the Chiefs won the Super bowl. The day the chiefs won the Super bowl. Of course, I was from Kansas, and everybody wanted to bet on the Vikings. And they said, "Oh God, we'll give you 20 points, you know the Kansas City Chiefs, they don't have a damn prayer, you know." I only had a couple hundred bucks on me, so I bet it all, you know, on the Chiefs. And it was on armed services radio and of course in time, you're in a different day, you know, so the ballgame came on over there about 2 o'clock in the morning. So I stayed up all night and listened to the chiefs and of course the further they got ahead, the thinner the crowd got, so by the time the ballgame was over, I was about the only one left listening to the radio, you know. The rest of em had all gone to bed. Well anyway the next morning, we get up and we're on this fire base right next to a highway, and one of our jobs is to secure that highway so there could be safe passage of mostly of US military personnel but also civilian personnel and everything like that. Well, the day before some people had seen some suspicious activity just south of the road and in fact there may have even been a random shot or two, nothing big. But a random shot or two was fired. So they sent in a LOach, a light observation helicopter, right after sun up when it was light enough to see, sent this old boy in to see what he could see from the air. And in those LOachs, lot of time, there'd be just a single pilot. You know, no doors on it, glass bubble, get down real low, you could dodge it among the trees and everything. Well, I'll be damn, he got shot down. So, they sent us in to get him out, and to see if we could save the bird or anything like that, it wasn't very far from the highway, hell it wasn't half a mile over there, and you could see smoke rising from where the chopper had gone in, you know. Well as it happens, he got out alive. He wasn't hurt. He set the chopper down enough that he could get out and he ran then back toward us, back toward the base camp, unbeknownst to us, but he wasn't hurt. But what we didn't know there was an NVA battalion dug in there. And then the rumor was, which I never did really know for sure, but the rumor was that their battalion commander was a woman. Anyway this NVA battalion was dug in and he got so close to them that they thought he had observe them or whatever so they shot him down. Well that kind of gave away their position in a sense. We didn't know it was battalion dug in, we didn't know what, maybe a sniper shot him down, we didn't know. So anyway we go in and we walk right into this NVA battalion that's dug in, you know. Well hell, so it got hot as hell so then we call for reinforcement and they brought in, tanks armored tanks, to help us. Cause we were straight leg infantry. And of course they were blasting away at what we anticipated to be enemy positions, it's so thick you can't see very much, and uh one of the things that happened was one of these tanks got hit with an anti-tank weapon and it was disabled. The guys in weren't killed but they were wounded but we couldn't get the tank moved, you know. So were going to have to figure out how the hell to get that tank out of there. Cause it was in kind of an open area and the NVA were on that side and we were on this side. And uh, so we thought well here's what we'll do. We'll take another tank out there. We'll hook onto it with a chain and we'll drag it back to the cover of where we are. It wasn't very far. It wasn't much farther than here to the edge of those trees or whatever. Well anyway we go out there and we hook on to it with a chain, and I've got my shotgun, I carried a model 97 Winchester, and uh I hook up the chain and I signal to the old boy to start pulling, you know, well by God just as I do, here comes a guy up out of a spider hole right there. And what he was going to do was he was going to shoot us in the back, you see we were kind of walking away as we brought this disabled tank and he come up outa this spider and started spraying us, uh he didn't hit anybody but we took care of him and about as close to me as you, you know, it was uh...

Two or three feet away.

My sawed off, my shotgun was sawed off and he wasn't much more than a length of it away. He came right up on us you know. They wore bamboo hats and then one of their techniques was they'd put little bamboo mat over their spider holes so you couldn't see. There was a lot of bamboo in the jungle and everything, so you didn't think much about it. So that's how they disguised it you see and I just happened to catch him out of the corner of my eye.

So you turned and shot him with a shotgun.

Uh, huh.

I was in Vietnam last year. We went to tunnels of SuChee. We went to kept some them obviously so I did get a sense of some of that tunnel system.

We had some tunnel men and we had a lot of good dogs that we sent in the tunnels. They were great. And you know we'd try to send them in first and they'd alert. But one thing about the Vietnamese is you could almost smell em every time before you saw em. They didn't get to take a shower often or anything and they almost all smoked, and they almost always used *nuoc mam* or some fish oil. And so you knew when you were getting close to em lotta times because you could smell, you could either smell the cooking, you could smell the scent of the food they'd been cookin' or you could smell their camp, or you could even smell them, many times before you saw em, so you knew you were getting close, you know.

Did you get a sense that this was a quote "winnable war," or that the enemy would ever give up?

Well the enemy was very determined. I was there when Ho Chi Minh died, and clearly the North Vietnamese, it was a civil war really, and the North Vietnamese were motivated. They saw, you know, they saw it as the salvation of their country. The South Vietnamese, they were not near as motivated. They relied essentially on United States and U.S. financial and troop support. They didn't want us to come home. They didn't really believe in Vietnamization, you know, because they wanted us to protect them. That's really what it boiled down too. They weren't great fighters. The North Vietnamese were just the opposite. They were very determined. They were gonna fight to the death. Because in their mind it was their country, and they were fighting to save it. The South Vietnamese, they did not have that same passion at all.

Have you ever been back?

No I haven't. I've never been back since 1970. I've often wanted to go back.

I took Washburn students last summer. We were in the south and nobody in the south, they all say it's Saigon, they won't call it HoChi Minh City, and then we went up to the north, we went up to Danang. We went to Ho Yang, uh and then we went up to Hanoi.

Yes, Yes

Big difference in mood of the North and the South. The southerners basically it's just a matter of just a few years and their back to what it was. Nike is their company in the South, and the North realizing that there are going to have to be more like the South. So it's strange you can feel it as you go up North but everybody very nice

It's a fascinating country. They're very unique people, they're beautiful people, tremendous natural resources, just an incredible, mahogany trees as big as houses, some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, hydro-electrical potential, just incredible, because of the monsoon and the rain that falls there. You know the rivers, it's an incredible place. I mean I saw a tiger in the wild, saw elephants in the wild, I mean it's an incredible place. So I've always wanted to go back. I was intrigued by the country.

Did you come out of the service when you came out of Vietnam.

The same day.

The same day (laughs)

The same day. Uh, in less than twenty-four hours I went from the field in Vietnam to Cameron Bay to Fort Louis, Washington, and by 5:00 o'clock that evening, I was a civilian.

And how old were you at that point.

Well, I'd been twenty-five. No, I would've been twenty-six.

Okay, one day you're out and do you say to yourself, okay now what do I do. Are you thinking?

Well of course I was married then. So the first thing I wanted to do was see my wife. I had seen her on R&R in Hawaii, half way through my tour. So I hadn't seen her for six months, seven months. I wanted to go home to my hometown, you know, to see my family and to see everybody in Atwood, my friends, things like that.

Is your wife a Kansas girl?

Yes, she is; yes she is. She's from MacDonald, actually. The high school's not there anymore, but it's in Rawlins County.

So had you known her when you were growing up?

No I didn't, I never knew her really till I graduated from college.

And so what, after you take care of those things. What other did you do at that point?

Okay, well the first thing we did, we spent a couple months like, helping on the farm, harvest, you know, those kind of things, seeing everybody, visiting the relatives, all that kind of thing. Then we went on a trip, sixty day trip to the West Coast. Cause I'd saved my money in the army. Of course, there is no place to spend it in Vietnam. They paid you 10 percent if you put your money in a savings account in the army, they'd pay you 10 percent interest. And there's nowhere to spend it. You didn't make very much and I saved everything I made because beer was 8 cents you know. All they had was Pabst Blue Ribbon. So we went on a sixty day tour of the West Coast, Washington, California, we went to Mexico, visited relatives, friends, people we knew before the war, even some I saw, people I'd been in the army with, that kind of thing and uh and then when we got back from there, that's when I started thinking serious about going to graduate school. I had gone one semester at K State, after I got

my degree, up there, I went back one semester cause my number hadn't come up, it was going to be a few months, you know it was during the days of the lottery for the draft. So it was going to be a few months before my number came up, so I went to one semester, started to get a few graduate hours, actually took a few hours in education thinking that I might want to get a teaching certificate, which I never did, never did do that but I did take some graduate hours in biology, which is ultimately got my. So then what I did, I started kinda looking around, and I heard about a program at Fort Hays State in Biology so I went and interviewed with them and they said hey, we are, fortunately the guy who was head of the program was a World War II veteran, he'd gone to school on the GI Bill, which is what I intended to do. He said yeah, we're looking for a few guys, a little older, with a little more experience, maybe ex GI's, stuff like that, so he said we'll take you on a provisional, and you can try it one semester and see how you do and if it works out, we'll get you on the program, which he did.

Coming out. You know one of the things, it seems to me, you know we're more or less in the same time period although I used student deferments and ultimately got a medical deferment. It seems to me that the attitude, first of all society was not very kind to veterans what you described Cameron Bay, and back in the state s in 24 hours and out of the army today with the Iraq and Aphgani conflicts, it seems to me we're a little more humane in terms of treatment of service personnel as they come out of those theaters. Of course we got a different army obviously but uh was the transition fully prepared for it or did you find it a bit of a shock.

Well I was lucky in many senses. First off, that my dad and my granddad were both veterans. And in fact one of the first things that happened to me when I got back from Vietnam and got back to my hometown, and hell I hadn't been there for a few days. And a letter came in the mail, and it was a lifetime membership in the American Legion, which somebody had anonymously paid for, and I didn't know, I still don't know to this day who it was. Still to this day don't know who it was, and of course in those days it was about \$200.00, which to me was a hell of a lot of money. So I came from a family of veterans and I came from a small town, and I was welcomed very, very warmly, uh, you know into that environment. I mean my family had been there for generations, so I didn't have any problem in that respect. My biggest problem was kind of the transition; you live in the jungle for a long time, and you don't eat regular food, you don't have contact in regular society, you know, and I did have a few nightmares and things like that, I mean, when you're in an intense environment when people are shooting at you or you're shooting at them, and then to make that transition in twenty-four hours or little more, to be a civilian on the street, you know, that is the culture shock. You know, that was probably the biggest transition I had, probably took me several months to get over the fact that I wasn't in the army anymore, that I truly was a civilian and nobody was shooting at me. But I didn't have a lot of societal problems because my family were veterans, we came from a small town and when I went to Fort Hays, like I said, the guy was the head of the department, he'd gone on the GI Bill, he was looking to help veterans. So it was a very easy transition. I was very fortunate .in that respect.

So you go to graduate school, get a masters degree in biology, aiming to do?

Well, actually that's a good question, uh, because my last semester in graduate school, while I was teaching a biology lab, is when I ran for legislature. So I was still in graduate school and actually, I was in school at Hays and my district was in northwest Kansas, my home. So you had to figure how your going to run up there in four counties and when you're down at Hays, which is 120 miles away in school see. In fact that's one of the things my opponent used against me in my first race, I beat the incumbent. Well look this kids never had a job, he's never paid taxes, he's still in school. So I had to overcome all that, you know.

So this is the primary?

Yes

Do you remember the name of your opponent?...

Oh sure, Milton Nitsch, Milton Nitsch. He was a Republican legislator. Milton was a real good guy, he was a car dealer and a big cattleman. He was from Oberlin. Uh, some of his family is still living, his daughter, I still see her once in awhile. Milton died in a car accident, actually probably twenty years ago now.

And you know it's not something that happens everyday to challenging incumbent in the primary, uh. Why did you decide to do it, and then to follow up is how did you win?

I decided to do it because really, because of my concern for the environment and conservation. Milton was a very pro businessperson. He was a good person, but he was very, very pro business, and as a consequence he voted against almost every bill on environmental improvement or conservation. And being a hunter and fisherman and majoring in wildlife and now getting a degree in biology, natural resource issues were very important to me. And after I saw his no votes on a couple key issues, I said, "I think I'll run," and told Patty that, and went down and filed.

What did Patty say?

She said, "You're crazy." You know. I think I was well, what, twenty-sever when I announced, and twenty-eight when I won, still in graduate school, see.

And she sort of shook her head and...

That's foolish. But the good thing was that, well, several things line up when you ask how I won. One is, my family has very deep roots here. My grandfather died as mayor in 1924, and my other grandfather, who was deceased by then, but knew everybody in northwest Kansas. And uh my grandmothers both lived to their mid nineties and they knew everyone. And my dad, like I said, my mother was a school board member and my dad was a county commissioner. Huge deep roots in the community, and that extended even beyond county lines. Another thing this fella, even though he was the incumbent, his first term, what happened was, he was appointed. There was a death, uh Ernie Woodard died and Milton was appointed to take his place. They were from the same town. And then Milton ran for reelection in 1970, but he just barely won the Republican primary. It was very close. And up there geography's a big deal. See your talking about a multi-county district, so a hell of a lot of it has to do with where you live, because that's what's on the ballot next to your name. It says Atwood, or Oberlin, or St. Francis, or you know, where you're from. So geography was an element. And, I knew that he was weak, well I knew he couldn't be very strong cause he just barely won reelection. Then another thing that happened was that I applied for a National Science Foundation grant, while I was in graduate school, to take fourteen students up to Atwood to study, and low and behold we got that grant. So we spent all summer up there with these fourteen kids studying, actually studying the water shed, studying Lake Atwood, studying all the biological elements of it, and of course there was all kind of publicity, newspapers, radio, different people covering all these college students in town, you know, studying the lake, and the environment and this kind of stuff. So all that was beneficial. Another thing was that my opponent underestimated me. He thought, well, this young kid, he's twenty-eight years old he can't possibly win, so he, he didn't work near as hard as he should of.

But two is, I, I worked hard, and I had good organization. I had good people helping me design the campaign, figuring how many votes were going to be cast, figuring out how many you needed out of each precinct, you know, doing some polling, that kind of thing to get a feel for it. It wasn't really much of an issue-oriented campaign in that sense. It was more geography and personality, really is what it boiled down to, in that first race.

And then who did you beat in the general election?

His name was Vernon Mickey. And he was a former mayor, I actually beat Vernon twice. He was the former mayor of Hoxie.

How do you spell that?

Mickey, so Vernon won the primary. There was actually a primary contest on both sides and I beat Milton in the primary election on the Republican side, and Vernon beat a fellow named John Lamb on the Democrat side. And John, I think, actually might live in Topeka now. But he beat John on the Democrat side. So Vernon and I were matched up. One thing is that Vernon lived clear down, geographically; he was from Hoxie. So he was clear down at the end of the district. So I was closer in Atwood, I was closer to three-fourths of the population than he was, plus I was a Republican in a heavy, heavy Republican district. And of course party, in the general election, party is what people vote for, particularly in those days, there were very few unaffiliated voters out there and very few crossover voters. You're either Democrat or Republican. And that seat as a matter of fact, there's only been three of us hold that seat in 36 years. And there's been no Democrat. In fact the actual seat probably never held by Democrat. It used to be back in the old days, before '66, every county had their own representative. There was once a Democrat from Sheridan County, an old boy named, Ad Smith, and Ad was the last Democrat up there to hold a seat in the house, and that was forty-two years ago.

What's the district number?

120.

So you, that was the '72 election?

That was the 1972 election.

So you arrived in Topeka in 1973

That's right.

And Robert Docking in

We had an organizational meeting in December '72 to organize the house and it snowed fourteen inches in Topeka. We were staying with some friends over by Washburn. Drove down here, it was a beautiful day, drove down here, got up to go to the meeting and it snowed fourteen inches. Every street was closed. The town was virtually in gridlock. Couldn't park anywhere near the capitol or anything cause everything was drifted. So we go in there. It's the first time I'd ever been in the house chamber. Never been in the house chamber in my life. I'd been in the state house of course as a youngster, but I'd never been in the house chamber. And as I was driving down here, I still remember, driving down

here, they came on the radio, and they said Pete McGill is going to be the next speaker of the house, and I said to myself well how in the hell can he do that we haven't even voted yet.

(Laughs) and then you found out

And then I found out. [Laughs] That's exactly right. So Bob Docking was in his last term. And as it turns out, I actually knew Bob Docking, uh he was in our home actually in 1966, when he first ran, because one of my dad's best friends and roommates from KU was one of Bob Docking's biggest supporters, and I don't know if, he was his campaign manager or maybe he was campaign manager, he was from Lawrence, maybe his campaign manager was up northeast Kansas, whatever, but I actually had met Bob Docking many years before and even though we were Republicans, he had come to our home and tried to get my dad to support him. My dad was county commissioner but he also knew the politics and knew everybody in Northwest Kansas. So I knew Bob Docking before I came but it was Bob Docking's last term too. He'd just been re-elected for the last time, and Pete McGill was elected speaker and Bob Bennett was elected president of the senate at that organizational meeting. And I sat on the back row, and I was so far back there was no body to my right but the sergeant of arms, that's how far back I was, well I got the last seat. Way over on the Democrat's side because in those days there were so many Republicans of course, they spilled over. So I was clear on the end of the last row.

And what were your impressions of Docking in the one year or two you saw him as governor?

Uh uh, well you see by the time I got here, Bob Docking, well he was on the wane, in that he was on his last term and the architectural kickback scandals were raging that involved his brother and those kind of things and so, you know Jim Bibb [budget director] was getting older, and I wasn't here during the zenith, you know, of his political influence. And not only that don't know whether you'd say that Bob had emphysema but was beginning to show the signs of chronic smoking you know and that kind of thing by then. And most of the big tax issues and everything like that had already been settled. There was still the homestead property tax and the circuit breaker and those things kicking around, but they were on the end of their political, it was really the rise of Pete McGill, for damn sure, he was just starting on the way up, and of course, Bob Bennett ultimately became governor and he wouldn't have become governor if he hadn't been president of the senate. So I came in kind of the time Bob Docking was fading a little bit and the time that McGill and Bennett were just starting to rise.

Why was Docking so successful in Kansas? I mean he was a Democrat.

Well first off, it is, he was very smart politically. And the real truth is issues were not very sophisticated in those days. State government was very small. It was very, very small. You didn't have, he never had to face abortion, he never had to face gay rights, he never even had to face the funding of Washburn University. I mean the real truth is, it was a small time deal. There wasn't even a Department of Health and Environment or even a Department of Commerce, you know, so you could get up and say "Hey, I'm against taxes," and you could get away with it, because there wasn't much to state government. Hell, I was here in the last sixty-day session in 1974. We were done on my birthday, the sixteenth of March, we went home, it was over. I was here when we had the first, the first billion-dollar budget. It was in Docking's last year, that we first ever went over a billion dollars. You know, it was a very small. There was no Internet, there was no computers, there was, you know, was three channels on TV. So it was actually, most people in those days got their news from the newspaper. That's where you got, the *Capital-Journal*, there were two newspapers. There was the *Capital* and the *Journal*, and people would hang around waiting for the evening paper to come. So state house

reporters, in those days, they had a lot of sway because that's how people got the news. I can remember the first time, actually, we broadcast, it was KTWU, we broadcast live from the floor of the House of Representatives, first time ever, I mean that was a huge deal. My God, you'd a thought--. They gave us lessons on what to say and what not to say, how to stay in your seat and not be playing checkers or reading the newspaper. You know, look straight ahead, and that was actually during McGill's term as speaker.

And what year did you become a speaker?

Eighty-three was my first session, I was elected in December of '82, at the organizational meeting and I became speaker in January of 1983.

I think people are always wondering how that happens. I mean once you identified that you wanted to be speaker, do you go around lobbying and get the votes set up or is it more, how did you get?

Well I was very lucky. And I had some real good breaks and I had some great people that helped me. And in reality, I never thought much about being speaker before I was speaker. What happened was that, uh, in December of 1974, I remember I was ice fishing. And I got home and Patty said the speaker called, and he wants you to call him back. It was colder than hell. Wind chill must have been thirty below. Still remember. And it was Pete McGill. I was a freshman. I'd just completed my freshman year, just been re-elected, beat Vernon Mickey for the second time. And he said, "We're organizing the committees, and I'm wanting some guys from western Kansas and some young guys, and I'd like to put you on the ways and means committee. In fact what I actually said to him was, "Well, you know Mr. Speaker, what I really want to do is be on the natural resources committee." And he said, "Why don't you give the ways and means a try?" And I said, "Okay, Okay, I will." So that's the first big break because then all of a sudden you're learning the budget. All of a sudden you're really up close to the workings of state government, because everybody's gotta come through that committee, every dollar. So you're all of a sudden starting to see how everything flows together. Instead of just being somebody down at the well of the house rambling on, your starting to see how you put this thing together a piece at a time. And every agency head comes in there, you know, so you're starting to get a feel for it. Well, then, I served two years on ways and means, and Pete McGill's coming to the end of his, he's, nobody's ever served as speaker for more than four consecutive years.

Is it tradition?

It is tradition. It's not the rule. But nobody's ever served more than for consecutive years, contiguous. Well Pete tried to make a play to serve longer than that.

Really

He did. And, and there was a rebellion.

Unofficially?

Well yeah, he started lining up the votes for a third term as speaker, see. And that met -- even though he was very popular and very, very powerful—that met with huge opposition. A group of us got together, a group of young guys, and said, "Hey, Pete's been a good speaker, but the rule of four years is a good rule, and we ought to have new leadership.

This was in '76

This was '76. Well ultimately then what Pete did was he announced that he was not running for reelection, he was not running for re-election, and in fact he ended up running for Congress. But anyway, after he announced that he was not running for reelection, a bunch of us proposed that Wendell Lady, Johnson County, should be the next speaker. And of course, I was from far out in western Kansas, pretty conservative, Republican, Wendell very, very moderate, middle of the road Johnson County, and of course that's when the Democrats, that was the Watergate fallout, the Jimmy Carter era, that's when the Democrats gained control of the house. So I go back on the ways and means committee but now, and actually I am the ranking minority member. So, I'm on the committee again, and I'm on the conference committee and everything, but I'm on the minority side. Well, that was a great lesson too, because I was able then to learn about the minority side. You're there, you get to speak up, but the real truth is you don't get to control many votes or anything, you certainly don't control the majority. And you have to work with the majority party, see. So, and Carlin is speaker, and so I get to know him a lot better. Well then in '78 when Carlin beats Bennett, of course, we won the house back. It was only a two-year deal and then we win the house back. Well, Wendell actually got elected as minority leader, we were hoping he was going to be speaker and we were pushing for him to be speaker, but then when we didn't win the majority, he became the minority leader, so he served his two years as minority leader. He's actually the only person in state history to lead the house Republicans for six continuous years, cause he served two as minority leader and four as speaker.

So then when he became speaker, he made me the chairman of the ways and means committee, cause I'd been on the committee, then I'd been the ranking minority member, and my good friend Bill Bunten was actually entitled to it. He should have had it. But he was gracious enough that when the speaker went to him, he said, "No, I'll be vice chairman." He actually served eight years as vice chairman and eight years as chairman of the ways and means committee. So, my first break was Pete McGill appointing me to the committee, my second break was alignment with Wendell Lady, who became speaker, and then my third break was my friendship with Bill Bunten, because Bill was the one that kind of acquiesced said no, let Mike have it and I'll take the second seat, which he did. And then ultimately when I became speaker, I made him chairman, and as did [James D.] Jim Braden my successor. So it was kind of that way and to be honest with you I never really thought much about being speaker, it just kind of fell to me. You know after you've been chairman of the ways and means for four years, you're obviously one of the top leaders of the house, and some of the other leaders weren't ready to be speaker, some later became speaker, Jim Braden, followed me, uh R. [Robert] H. Miller, became speaker later on, so some of 'em became speaker but the truth is none of them were really ready then, back in '83. And some of the others were contentious. We had Joe Hoagland, he was majority leader for a couple years, well that was kind of contentious, so he bowed out, so I was kind of the one person left standing really, and was elected speaker twice unanimously, but it wasn't something I set out to become, and a lot of that actually can be said about the governorship.

I never thought about the governorship until June of '85, which would be less than eighteen months before I was elected governor. First off, most of us assumed that Bob Stephen was going to become the Republican nominee. He was the attorney general, he was highly popular, at that time but he hadn't been encumbered by scandals to that point where he couldn't overcome it. So I really, particularly in my first term as speaker, I never thought anything about being governor. John Carlin was governor, uh, I never even thought about it. But then we got into the second term and particularly when Bob Stephen started running into problems, you know, it became more and more logical to think about it. And the fact to that Carlin's term was coming to an end and that Tom Docking was the presumptive

nominee, and he was so young at that time, you know, that kind of more and more conversation developed.

I remember my first fundraiser—it's ironic in a sense—it was in August of '85, we first started thinking about it and organizing. I had a brother, terrible thing, who committed suicide. And he committed suicide the day before we were to have the very first fundraiser, for governor, which was actually here at the Topeka Country Club. Well, of course, I immediately called and said you know I can't come to the fundraiser, I mean, we either gotta cancel it or gotta do something cause I gotta be with my family and everything. Well Bill Bunten and Jim Braden and others who had helped organize it—Sue Peterson—said, “Well we're gonna go on with it, even though your not here. We're just going to tell people. We already got most of the money raised, we already got the plans made, we're just going to go ahead with it and we're going to tell people that you couldn't be here because of this terrible incident, you know, and they'll understand that.” Which they did, and the fundraiser was very successful. That was in August, so you can see that that was just one year before the primary, essentially, and that was really the first organized, we took that money, then, from that fundraiser, and we hired some consultants, Dresner and Sikes, out of New York. I think we raised around 20,000 or something like that. So we took that money, and they said, “Well let's do a survey,” okay, “and we'll find out, we'll call this survey a road map, we'll find out whether you really ought to run for governor or not, we'll find out whether you really have any kind of chance, we'll test all these different attributes, things like that, and we'll find out if it makes any sense.” And so they spent 20,000 dollars essentially on a survey, which at that time was a hell of a lot of money, and they came to me and they said, “You know, this thing's winnable.” They said, “Nobody knows ya, but when they get to know ya, they're gonna like you, because all the things we tested about ya, they come out real high, so all we gotta do is introduce people to you.” So that's kind of what, and then what happened was, as it wore on... You know at that time Bob Stephen hadn't bowed out. His troubles were mounting but he, he was still a presumptive nominee, and I was getting ready for my last year as speaker, you see. And then all of a sudden Bob's campaign collapsed, and that then provided an opening for which we could take this road map and design a campaign that could win, even though nobody knew us.

This was one of the most crowded, even though Stephen didn't run, one of the most crowded primaries in recent history.

Well in both primaries we ran in, there were seven republicans. That actually, of course, is an advantage to a guy from rural area in a small town.

You had Larry Jones from Wichita, Brier, the secretary of state, Gene Bicknell, who spent one million dollars in a primary in 1986, and uh, Dick Peckham

Yes, Richard Peckham

So, looking at that from a distance, I would think . . . I would think Bier would have an advantage, cause he's already secretary of state and it's a statewide office so people would know him. Then, you'd think well Bicknell would have an advantage cause in a primary, people don't always know the candidate but he's got a million dollars. So, who did you most fear or was it really a case of divide and conquer?

Well, I tell you it was really a very simple strategy. Bob Creighton designed it and Ed Flentje reinforced it. Unfortunately Bob passed away, a year and a half ago. Very simple, Bob said look, you're from a small town, a rural area, Vietnam veteran. He said there's ninety counties in Kansas with

less than 10,000 people; 105 counties but ninety of 'em have less than 10,000. He said we carry every one of those, you're going to win. In the primary we carried eighty-nine of 'em. Jack Breir carried Doniphan. So we went after, see, when you think about it, small town, rural area, farm family. None of these guys represented any of those values.

How do you get there when, even in 1986, TV ads, they must have been running TV ads, how did you get your message into those small towns?

Well the newspapers. First off, in those days, by far the most politically powerful advertising media was the newspaper; and I'm talking about, I'm not talking about the *Wichita Eagle*, I'm talking about small town weeklies. And one of the things that both, Bicknell did wrong and Larry Jones did wrong, is Bicknell bought every billboard in the state. He had hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of Gene Bicknell billboards. Well, I asked my guys about that and they said, "Wait a minute. You're not selling cigarettes." Said if you were selling Marlboros, it'd be the best place to put your money, but billboards are the poorest damn buy in politics. Said, you don't give a damn, first off you see some guy's name, you don't know what he's running for, you don't know what party he belongs too, and what do you care what his face looks like. So he said forget that. And then Larry Jones went out, and he spent an enormous amount of money by buying full page ads in the *Wichita Eagle*, the *Kansas City Star*, Johnson County [*Overland Park*] *Sun*, mostly with his picture, mostly with his picture, but with a little bit; well, one of the secrets to political advertising is repetition. You can't buy a one-time ad and expect to have that. What do they say, Coke ad seventeen times before somebody buys a Coke. So, Bob Creighton said, "What we gotta do is we gotta to buy a \$25 ad in every weekly paper in the state and we got to do that for fifteen weeks. And after the twelfth week, people will say, you know I know this Mike Hayden, he must be a pretty good guy." I remember what Dick Dresner said to me, he said, "Every time you open your mouth, tell em you're a Republican, tell em you're from a farm family, tell em you're from a small town, and tell em you're a Vietnam veteran." He said, "Don't tell em anything else." Just say that, that's all you need to say. And it was true. And in those ninety counties, that was the message, that worked. I mean, first off, you're already speaker of the house, so people aren't arguing you aren't qualified. And you've already got fourteen years experience state government. So it's going to be hard to argue on a qualification basis, so he said you gotta tell em how you're different from these other guys, they're all Republican, all right, but none of em are from a rural area, none of em are from a farm family, none of em are Vietnam veterans. So every time you speak you tell em that.

Now Larry Jones was not an office holder right?

No, no he was not. He was the president, CEO of the Coleman Company. Great guy,

From Wichita?

Yes and a great Kansas company; my God, how could you have a better company than Coleman?

And Dick Peckham, who was he?

Well he was, Dick was a real good guy.

He's from Andover?

Yes, yes he is. And he was, I don't know if you want to call him a lay preacher. Dick was one of the very first evangelicals to ever emerge in modern Kansas politics. His whole campaign was really prolife. He's a very articulate guy and a real nice guy. And he was really the prolife candidate. And at that time of course, *Roe v. Wade* passed in '73, this is 13 years later, prolife is just starting to get the momentum as a movement. It wasn't mature to the point where it influenced the elections say like it did in the nineties. It was ahead, he was kind of the van guard in a sense. He wasn't an extremist; he was a real likable guy. He made a real nice presentation in a debate. He was always well dressed, he was articulate, never raised his voice, but his whole agenda was really the prolife agenda.

He took over 5000 votes from Jones.

Sure

In Sedgwick County. You won by only 4 percent so Peckham really helped you.

Yes, yes he does. See that's the whole thing if you divide this up, that's why Creighton said let's go after the ninety counties, because Jones is going to get his votes, Peckham's going to get some, Brier's going to get some, even though he only carried two counties. Everybody thought Brier would do—and Bicknell actually, Bicknell was really on the rise about forty days before the election, Bicknell was, because he spent millions on advertising.

Spends over a million and he ends up with only 10 percent, so a million dollars in a Republican primary and he only gets 10 percent?

You see at one time

Well what happened?

At one time in the polls, he was never ahead, but at one time in the polls, I'd say he was up in the mid twenties. What happened was this, you know Gene Bicknell, he's a nice guy, I still like him to this day, but he's not only wealthy but he's very eccentric. He had, what he had done, he had financed an X-rated movie. And Larry Jones' campaign—see he and Jones were going head to head as pro business candidates, so they were fighting for the same votes, so they kind of ignored us. And they were firing over our head at each other, because they thought they—our polls showed us ahead. I mean we knew what we were doing, where we were. But they were fighting for the same vote, Johnson County votes, Sedgwick County votes, and so [Paul] Bud Burke found out that Gene Bicknell had made this X-rated movie.

Well who was Bud Burke?

Well, he was Larry—He became president of the senate, but he became Larry Jones' running mate.

All right.

He [Burke] was a state senator at that time. At that time I think he was probably the majority leader. ...He's a good friend of mine. He found out that Gene Bicknell had made this X-rated movie, and not only had made it, but had a cameo, not only had paid for it but had a cameo appearance in it. And so, he leaked that to the press. Then of course press corps started clamoring, "Well where's the movie, we want to see it, what's the name of it, who's got a copy." And of course, then the headlines were,

“Bicknell makes X-rated movie.” And, and in the polls he went from twenty-three to ten in a matter of two weeks.

Do you remember the name of the movie?

Let me see. I might be able to remember it. I’ll have to think about it. He was the gardener, I remember that. I do remember that. Let’s see. God,—What was the name of that movie?

I’ve got it here.

I gotta think on that movie for a minute.

Did you ever watch it?

Never saw it. Hell, you didn’t need to. The damage had already been done. I didn’t need to watch it.

They probably ...

Never did, and of course there was no YouTube or Internet or anything in those days, you know. Hell, there were probably only ten copies ever made.

And Bob owned six of em.

I give up. What was the name of it?

“They’re Playing with Fire”

Okay.

Why did he finance this thing? You never did find out?

Well, one thing, he made millions. He is an entrepreneur. He’s worth hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars. You know how many theaters he owns in Branson right now?

Oh my goodness

Oh hell, he must own—he owns the Andy Williams Theater, he own four or five of the biggest theaters in Branson, Missouri, right at this moment as we speak. And he still has cameo appearances in musicals or other deals.

And Briers campaign just never went anywhere.

Jack just didn’t have the passion for it. Again a good guy, statewide, you know he’d been elected twice as secretary of state, well known, well liked, but he have the fire in the belly.

1986, two and a half million dollars spent by the Republican candidates. Do you know how much you spent? I don’t have that with me.

Well let me see. I don’t know, 600,000? I’m saying 600,000.

That long ago?

Well listen to this? The first election I won, in the primary and general for the house of representatives, I won em both, against the incumbent in the primary I spent \$250. \$250 bucks, to beat an incumbent in the primary and then win the general.

(Mark) So if we average out all the elections you ran in, you spent the least, you come out the low cost leader.

(Bob) And when you run, you had a running mate?

I sure did.

And who was that and why did you pick him?.

Uh, Jack Walker. He was a state senator, and I was in the house, so there's a balance. He was from Johnson County and I was from the far west, so you got the geographic balance. He was an MD, he was a former mayor of Overland Park. I was much more conservative and he was much more moderate. So you got this geographic balance, you got this house and senate balance, and you got this philosophical balance. And actually, uh, uh, Jack did not prove to be that strong a campaigner, but the press loved him. I mean the *Wichita Eagle* just thought it was the greatest choice you could have made. And of course in Johnson County, how could he not be well received? Former mayor of Overland Park, former chairman of the department of family practice at KU Med Center, and a state senator. So, who could say anything bad about Jack? Uh, so, as far as the media was concerned, they thought it was a very good choice.

Did you have to convince him or was he happy to come on board?

No, no. Actually, actually the way it worked was that several people had approached me about running as lieutenant governor.

Privately, they'd come in your office and say...

Or they'd say, I'd like to meet with you. I remember a state senator from Pittsburg. He, was a Republican. He, he wanted to run as lieutenant governor. Several other people, uh kinda sent messages or said, hey, I'm interested if Mike'd like to meet with me or something like that. I remember, I was in the speakers office, and actually see Jack was only a freshman senator. He had been elected in '74 [1984]. So he was in his first term. He'd been there two years. But I had known from the med center. You know ways and means chairman, he was the head of the department at the Med Center so I'd known him several years before he came to the legislature. And I remember sitting in my office one day and him asking for an appointment, and he came in and said, you know, uh, "If you are going to run, I'd be, you know, I'd be interested in talking to you about lieutenant governor." One thing is you got to remember about senators is they don't have anything to lose. It's in mid term and they're still going to be in the senate. Uh, even if they're not successful in a statewide office. Jim Barnett, he's still in the senate see. But Jack came in and said, "We've known each other, I like ya, you know, I, I, I'd be interested if you wanted to talk about it. I'd be interested." He said "You need somebody to help, you need help in Johnson County, need help in the urban areas cause you're from a small town uh, and I'd be interested in talking to you decide, if you're really interested, if you haven't got somebody already." Or whatever. And that was like, maybe at the end of the legislative session.

That was before really, honestly even before I had really even decided to run for governor. But then a couple months later talking to Jack more and you know visited with his wife, that kind of thing, and then selected Jack.

Obviously a lot's changed since then, back then did you actually do things like interview? Is there anything that would embarrass the ticket back then how much background would you get into with a running mate?

Well, it's not like Joe Biden or Sarah Palin, you know. You don't interview the kids or anything in those days. I mean, I knew Jack, he had two sons, I knew his wife, so you know, you don't do a KBI background check on him. In those days, out of courtesy you didn't. Now today, it might be a different story. But in those days, it wasn't and I knew enough about Jack to be comfortable whether or not I should ask him to run or not.

Now jumping ahead to 1988, he says that he'd like to be on the ticket again, on December 16. December 29th, you won't say whether he'll be on the ticket and then September 8, of '89, he's not going to be on the ticket. What can you share about that?

Sure, well uh, Jack, he, you know, he, one thing is, Jack was getting up there in age. He was still a good lieutenant governor, and he still made good public appearances, that kind of thing, but he didn't have any longer the real passion for politics and government, a good guy but let me say probably the best way to describe it he was awful low keyed. People liked him, very well respected, he did never embarrass ya or anything like that, but very low-keyed. And uh I thought it was time to do two things. One was to think about potentially grooming future governors, grooming someone with at least the potential to run in the future; and two, that was at a time when the concept of lieutenant governor was becoming more proactive. You know, if you go back to John Carlin's lieutenant governors, even Tom Docking, it wasn't a full time job, and maybe they'd only be in Topeka two or three days a week, maybe less.

You ran an ad.

Exactly

That pointed that out regarding Tom Docking ...

So I wanted somebody who was going to be more active. And that was in the days too, remember this, that more state agencies were merging, and the concept of the lieutenant governor serving as a cabinet secretary, those kind of things were starting to emerge, and you saw Sheila Frahm serve, you saw Gary Scherrer serve, you see Mark Parkinson, you saw John Moore serve as secretary of commerce; well those concepts were just kind of emerging in those days. Because we came from the old days, if you look at Docking's lieutenant governors, you look at Jim DeCoursey and ask him what he did as lieutenant governor; he'd be hard pressed to remember. Of course, in those days too we had lieutenant governors of one party and governors of another. Dave Owen was lieutenant governor as a Republican while Bob Docking was governor as a Democrat. So of course, they didn't do anything together. And so you're making this transition from kind of a passive placeholder to an activist, you know, governmental official. And so my thought was we need to get somebody whose ready to really assume more of an active role and really become a participant in government. That was not Jack's forte. Jack was a damn good guy. He was a good state senator, he was a physician, he made a very nice public

appearance, but he didn't have the fire in the belly when it came to say government and particularly to govern.

But it sounds like here he wanted to go again so did you personally have to tell him or how does that work behind the scenes.

Well he came and visited with me, and he said, "I want to do it again." But he said, "If you won't commit to taking me next time then I'm going to announce that I'm not going to do it, that I don't want to be on the ticket the second time around." And I said well, Jack, that's your choice. You're a good guy, I'm not at all dissatisfied with the job you've done, but there are other people I'd like to consider in the second term; particularly some guys that maybe ought to be groomed for the future or some cabinet secretaries who are active and who could be both a cabinet secretary and a lieutenant governor at the same time. So I said, "Jack I'm not ready to commit to ya that you're going to be on the ticket the second time around, I haven't made a decision who's going to be on it and I haven't eliminated you, but if you're saying if I'm not going to commit, you're going to announce you're not going to be on the ticket, you'll have to make that choice yourself. Because I'm not prepared to say that you ought to have it a second go at it, when there's a number of other people that we ought to consider for a variety of reasons." And not saying anything bad about Jack and that's what I told him. And he was very upset about it. He had been a loyal lieutenant governor, absolutely, but, but, I felt it was time for someone who might be more of an activist, who would engage to a greater extent.

And you end up picking whom?

Harlan Priddle. And he was secretary of commerce, hell of a guy. He'd been secretary of agriculture. He'd been director of the state fair. He'd been director of the White House communication in the Nixon White House. Imagine that?

Harlan ?

Harlan Priddle.... [spells name out] And he was my secretary of commerce. I named him. And actually listen to this, he ran with Jack, he ran twice as lieutenant governor and didn't win either time. He ran with Jack Brier. He was Jack Brier's running mate. He lost that race and then I made him the secretary of commerce. Cause I'd great respect for him and when he was secretary of agriculture, I knew him very well, great guy. He resigned as secretary of agriculture, which is what let Sam Brownback be secretary of agriculture. And then I chose Harlan to be secretary of commerce and he did a damn good job, and then I chose him as my running mate in the second term. But there were several people that, you know I considered, for that position, but Harlan, I thought he was the best one. And he was real solid, real, real solid guy.

I want to ask you a couple more questions about elections and then I think Mark has a couple questions about once you get into the office. Uh in the original [2003] interview you do talk about the general election with Tom Docketing, and did you have a sense with that—because it's Kansas and after eight years of a democrat--did you have a sense that it's going to be easier or not as tough as the primary? What did you want to stress in the general election?

No. No. I felt all along that Tom Docketing could be the toughest race. Because his grandfather had been governor twice, his dad had been governor four times, he was the lieutenant governor. And so he had a name that Republicans were used to voting for. So, you know, I always viewed that as the toughest challenge. Now one of the things that happens is that if you win the primary, especially if it's

contested, or highly contested, you would be amazed at the credibility you gain, particularly among independents, unaffiliated voters, all of a sudden, you know you're really a credible candidate. In fact, in all honesty, once we won the primary, we never trailed Tom Docking in the polls. We never did, because, first off he had no opposition. So he didn't have to spend money advertising, he didn't have to make a lot of appearances; he could save his resources but hell that meant nobody was hearing about him. So we're out there everyday, generating news, getting our name out there in front of people, going to this debate, going to this town hall meeting, working the small towns, bus tours all across western Kansas, see. Well you're gaining all this voter ID, which Tom didn't do because he didn't have any opposition. He thought well, I'll save all my smoke for the general election, you know, saved his money and everything. Well by that time we had enough momentum and after you beat the likes of Larry Jones and Gene Bicknell and Jack Brier, all of a sudden you become damn credible. You know, people started saying "this guy can win." And so I always regarded that Tom Docking would be the toughest race, but what happened was that primary was such a launching pad that after we won it and about two weeks after we won it we ran a poll and it showed us, you know, with a six or seven point lead and it showed us that Tom Docking hadn't moved in the polls at all since spring.

And so what we had to do then, essentially, was to protect the lead. And so then what we did was we consolidated the base. We went to Gene Bicknell and we got his support and his supporters. We went to Larry Jones. We got his supporters. We went to Bud Burke, who was Larry Jones running mate, got his supporters. Went to Harlan Priddle, Jack Brier's running mate, got his supporters. Even went down the list to the Richard Peckams. You know, I went and met with Richard Peckam, said Richard, you know you ran a hell of a race, you're a good candidate, damn good guy, I'd really appreciate your help and supporting us, and so on. So we consolidated the base. That was the first thing cause hell, it's a Republican base. Republicans gotta cross over if the Democrats gonna win, so if you consolidate the Republican base then you've done a lot. Then the other thing that we focused on, that we had for the advantage is, here I was speaker of the house and Tom Docking was thirty-two years old. So you could just continue to hammer away on this experience question. You know, I still remember the ad that Huck Boyd had with the watermelon and it said Docking on it and the old farmers thumping it, you know, and he's saying [laughs] "You know, Mom, I don't think it's ripe yet." And that was almost the essence of the campaign.

Do you remember the other ad that had a black string and now lets list Tom Docking's accomplishments... then it went blank.

I do remember it.

For about five seconds and then basically said well you get the idea. That was when we saw...

Dick Drescher designed that ad, because he said that's what we're running against. We're running against inexperience. If we can just get you as speaker of house against his inexperience, we're going to win this election.

You actually had, we studied a lot of ads and this one was, very good ads. That was a good one. And the other one was the one said Tom Docking was the chairman of the economic development committee or something. Then you had a guy knocking on the door. They didn't meet very often. And you had em knocking on the door, hello, hello.

Anybody in there, Tom, are you in there? [Laughs] That's exactly right. So actually as it turned out, you know, all we really had to do in the general election was protect the lead. And the one time when

Tom Docking started to make inroads on us was when he alleged that I was in favor of an embargo. It was actually the most effective ad he ever had. And of course I wasn't smart enough in those days to react immediately. We let the ad run for two or three weeks, which wasn't uncommon in those days cause hell, the time you made an ad, and the lead time to buy the ad, it's not like today. You might have an idea for an ad and it might not actually be on the air for another three weeks, in those days. Now, of course,

Overnight.

Yes, that's exactly right.

That's the ad where he merges from the corn

Yes, that's exactly right. That was a very effective ad and see what precipitated that was we had a debate up in Manhattan on agriculture, and a guy asked me, 'Do you think we ought to embargo South Africa,' because...

South Africa or Soviet Union?

No, No, South Africa. Absolutely, because you see that's when they still had apartheid. And he said, he didn't even use the word embargo, he just said, "Do you think we out to sell our wheat to South Africa as long as they maintain apartheid?" And I said, well you know, I think apartheid is deplorable, and we got a lot of customers for our wheat all the way around the world and you know, I think we ought to consider refusing to sell to them until they change their policy. And then that's when Tom made the ad, "Hayden favors embargo," which was a very smooth move on his part. Who ever thought it up, uh, Jim, uh Jim Parrish, I think, actually thought it up maybe. But who ever thought it up it was a hell of a good idea and a damn effective ad. The problem with Tom was, I don't think his pollsters were that great, he had the thing running and he ran it for two or three weeks and then he pulled it. Well, it takes a while to catch fire, and he should have just kept it up, even though it was the same ad and everybody'd already seen it. Cause every time somebody saw it they got mad and so the best thing that ever happened to us was, he, he pulled it. But then that gave us time to come out and counter, well what does Tom Docking know about agriculture, you know, your talking to a farmers son, from a farm family, ran these pictures of my family at the farm and all that kind of stuff, to counter this image, cause that's what he was trying to do was anti farming and agriculture by this embargo thing. But he was on a hell of a good track and he should have stayed with it. And I don't think he realized how effective it was, and I don't think he probably had the skilled consultants, you know

From your perspective, it was working?

Yes it was working and what it showed us was that people weren't switching their votes, but they were going from Mike Hayden to undecided.

If he had followed that up with something equally effective, it might have swayed

It might have switched em over, see. We saw a definite decline in our votes, we didn't see any real raise in his but we saw a huge increase in the undecided. And it was all based on that ad. But then after he ran it for about three weeks he quit. And by that time it allowed us to get geared up with some other ads that we could counter punch, you know. And I don't think, he ever realized, even to this day, what he had in that ad. How it, cause one thing it hit right at the base of what we were about. You

know, we were running as a you know from a farm family, running from a small town, rural area, all that kind of thing and then here, that was back in the days when Jimmy Carter's embargo was still on farmers minds, so he had a damn effective ad. And he didn't realize how good it was, or he should have just kept running it all the way to election day. Should have put all his money on it.

That's what Carlin did. Carlin rode the utilities all the way to the first day in November.

Yes, yes that's exactly right. He said we got a hot ticket here, we're going to stay with it, put everything behind it. And at first every body pooh pawed it. Said aw hell it's a joke no body'll believe it. But he stayed with it, and the numbers started moving, he read the numbers, so he stayed with it, put more money behind it, and it was enough to push him over. And uh Tom Docking had a similar theme, but he didn't realize it. He let us then... and in the end, those undecided voters came back.

And in 1986 we're these debates you had televised or they were just locally covered by... Did you actually have a TV debate?

We had one, and that's when I knew we'd won the election. It was in Salina, it was at the Bicentennial Center and it was about a week before the election. I think it might have been exactly a week. It seemed like it was on a Tuesday night a week ahead of the election. And I believe that that was the only televised debate. The rest of em were either before a group, you know we say we debated before the Hallmark employees in Kansas City, you know, three or four hundred, we debated here and there. But the one televised debate was at the Bicentennial Center in Salina. And I knew we'd won. I mean we were ahead in the polls anyway, but I knew after that was over, that we'd won. Because it came across as Tom was just really too young and immature, too inexperienced, in answering the questions about the details of government, it's operation and stuff like that. His answers were shallow, and I could follow up it and say now here's how much money we really did put behind that, or here's why we didn't pass that particular bill or law, you know, or here's why we're doing this, and Tom just had a cursory knowledge of that. And after an hour of that and so when it was over, I knew we'd won.

Before we get started on this let me find a restroom and I better call home and tell em I'll be late.

(Conversation between Bob and Mark about the recorder)

*(Mark) well you said early on, state government was small potatoes when you got started, there was the billion dollar budget occurred after you'd been in the legislature, and I noticed looking back at the earlier conversation that we had a couple years ago and Carlin article, uh highways seems to be, it seems to me that maybe highways were really the bread and butter issue for state appropriation back in the day and you put a highway plan together in 89, Graves did it again in 99 and now I see the current secretary of transportation is talking about, we've gotten into a cycle of 10 year plans for highway and highway improvement. And I was sort of wondering, just as I had asked you at the outset, now that you've had some time to reflect upon it, is **highway capital improvement** really as good a deal for Kansas as you thought at the time that you were governor or that you were in the legislature or do you see it as having contributed to some of the emptying out problems of the rural areas*

Actually, it's even a better deal than I thought

Really

Now that I've had, twenty years ago, we got our first planned, or so. I saw it come in, you know, on time, on budget, saw Governor Graves emulated it uh, but most importantly I've seen what it's done to change people's lives. I think of the Oakland Expressway, I think of the Wanamaker interchange, I think of highway 75 south here in Topeka, and 10's of thousands of people that benefit from that every single day of their lives. And I think what US 400 has virtually transformed southeastern Kansas. I mean southeastern Kansas, you couldn't get from here to there. If you look at the road construction in Johnson county, I mean without it, they wouldn't have a community. They have to have all that network of transportation to hold the whole thing together.

I now I see there building a huge billion dollar inter-modal hub.

That's right and if we didn't have these highways of course, it wouldn't even be considered for it. So actually if you look at government infrastructure, you look at government investment, investment in infrastructure particularly in roads and highways in my experience is one of the best dollars you can ever spend. Now you could argue, you could say well doesn't that just help get people out of town-roads go both ways. But I'll tell you, my good friend Bob Creighton, who was chairman of the Board of Regents, said, he said, "You know a scholarship is simply a bus ticket out of town." I mean that's really what facilitated the depopulation of rural Kansas. When I was in high school, the valedictorian maybe got a scholarship, maybe, and he went on to get a PhD and now he's in Cutter, the University of Cutter. He was probably the only one in our whole class to have a scholarship. Today if you go to a high school graduation in a small town, you don't only find some kids with five or six scholarships, but you'll find 80 percent of the class with some kind of scholarship awarded, which virtually means everyone of those kids are gonna leave and very few of 'em are ever coming back. It wasn't the new highway that got 'em out of town. It was that they had the educational opportunity to advance and none of us can blame them for taking advantage of that opportunity. We all believe in education and we want people to get educated. But if you live in a small town, if you want to get more education, you're going to have to go somewhere else to do it. And when you do that, then you really reduce the chances you're ever going to come back. So it isn't the roads, uh, in fact, I would argue that if you look at the few towns that could be said to be somewhat prosperous in northwest Kansas, they're all along the interstate. I mean it's Hays, it's Colby. You know in eighteen counties up there, they're the two most prosperous communities. Now one of them has a university, one of them has a community college, which is where all those kids gravitate to, but it has the interstate highway system.
[interruption]

(talk about cars, meets Bob's son, Alec, talks with Alec.)

(Mark) (talks about growing up in Nebraska and traveling with his father to Kearny before I80 was built.) Can't even remember the names of all the little towns along US 30 there that just disappeared when I 80 was completed. And even some of the larger communities when they put the bypass through and went around town, main street died. Yeah I remember, the story is that Eisenhower, as a young officer serving under Mac Arthur was charged with the responsibility of seeing if a division of troops could be moved from coast to coast on the US highway systems like 1919 or 1920 or something like that. And it took them 6 and ½ weeks and in some places they actually are charged with blazing a road across territories like New Mexico to get to the west coast and then he was smitten, the apocryphal story is he was smitten by the autobahn in sufficiency and design and made that a primary motivating policy issue in his presidency. Which gave us the first structured completed interstate highway in the US. But I clearly see the advantages for the community that are close to those highways but I do sometimes wonder if we had not been so devoted to the automobile and not been so devoted to the construction design to serve the individual, which is really what it comes down to, what might have

happened to Kansas? We talk now about the east coast of Kansas. And we've got, you made mention of the fact that every 10 years we reapportion and those 90 counties lose seats. And we've got now, I don't know what it is, we must have 750,000 or 800,000 people in Johnson County, Wyandotte, on our side of the Kansas city metroplex, and I just wonder if it isn't in some respects contributing, along with other things like industrial agriculture to the (?) of rural Kansas, rural Nebraska, eastern Wyoming, where I grew up,

Well again if you go along the communities that are prosperous in Nebraska, they're on I 80. And the same way with eastern Wyoming, really. In a sense, Cheyenne,

and if you go up 25 it's the same story. Wheatland is surviving and Casper is a fairly prosperous community.

The place that's it's had the greatest impact is southeast Kansas. I mentioned US 400. The truth is that US 69 is about to be completed to Fort Scott from Johnson County, and someday it'll go clear to Pittsburg. But it has changed the whole landscape of, you know, once you drop out of the metroplex and you get into Miami County and then Linn County and then Bourbon, then Crawford, Cherokee. It's changed that whole corridor. And U.S. 400 changed it from Wichita to Pittsburg, so it actually has brought great prosperity to those counties, and in fact one of the things that's really holding back southwest Kansas and the southern counties is the lack of an adequate highway system west of Wichita. It gets to Kingman and then 54 goes back to two lane. And the biggest thing we could do for Liberal and Pratt and even Greensburg is build 'em a modern highway.

I notice Nebraska did not catch on on 81. It did not continue the four lane north of the Kansas border.

They have it done now. They have completed now. And it goes all the way up to Grant, no not to Grant, but to uh, I don't, know, [but] it goes clear to I-80 now. They just completed it. And what's that town right there, it isn't Grant, What the hell is it? I can't think of it.

Well, let's see 81 is the way I always go up. I go out 36 to Smith Center and then cut up to Minden and that's west of 81, I believe, so it's got to be what, Gretna maybe?

It's not Gretna, it's not Grand Island either, it's east of those. It's right north of Bellville. What is the name of that town where 81 hits I-80. It's now four-laned all the way. Nebraska just finished it.

Well I ought to give it a try sometime and go see my dad before he passes on.

In terms of justifying that spending then with the legislature and what, that was probably never really an issue then; I would assume that most folks who live out in those areas view those highway improvements being extraordinarily useful and important to them.

Well actually, it was a very, very difficult issue. And it took three sessions to get it passed. We called a special session in '87 for highways, and we got no action at all out of the special session. We then took a highway plan to the 88 regular session and they didn't pass it. But then finally in '89 we had enough of a comprehensive plan that we were able to push it over.

And by comprehensive enough projects spread and enough constituencies to get enough votes to make it happen?

That, that's a good portion of it, but comprehensive enough too that it was well thought out. Horace Edwards was the secretary of transportation. And, and it was well thought out to the point of not only could it get the votes from the different areas of the state, but it made sense, made a lot of sense. It tied in, you know, it tied in communities. Uh, it just made a tremendous amount of sense, and there was something in it for the rural areas and something in it for the urban areas.

In terms of maintaining those things, now one of the things that plaques urban areas are folks are very often very excited about doing something for major capital improvements but they don't want to pay for the roof repairs and the cleaning and the upkeep. Highways seem to have a somewhat different politics associated with them.

Well one thing is, you know, if you have a leaky roof at Washburn, nobody knows it except for people sitting in the classroom. If you've got a pothole everybody in town knows it. So, it's easier to get more attention on an infrastructure that people are using all the time, because it interacts their daily lives. And that's kind a one of the ways we pushed it over too; is that some of the road conditions were so deplorable. I think of 81, for example, see. When I went, there was so little interest in it to be honest when I held my first meeting in Salina about making 81 a four lane to Nebraska, there was Bill Graves' mom and dad, and my aunt Mary, and that was about 50 percent of the audience. That's a fact, but two and a half years later we got it. And ultimately, we got it opened.

When you're looking at tight budgets, and as I recall, you made a bit of a point in your campaigning about being conservative, holding the line on budgets, how did you find the balance in selling to the public or did they just not make that connection between cutting an extensive state budget and in spending on infrastructure.

Yeah, well the first thing I did to set the tone, but also out of necessity, and no governor's ever had to do this before or since. It was so tough when I came in, the reserves were so low, that I ordered a mid year rescission. And on Monday, when you think about this it's remarkable, especially today, but I introduced a bill on Monday, the first day of the legislature to cut the budget in the current year 3.2 percent, essentially across the board. So the year's half gone, so that's really a 6 percent cut. And by Friday evening the house and senate had both passed it. Introduced it on Monday morning, house and senate had passed it by Friday.

(Bob introduces family to governor and they chat.)

So, by setting that tone, by a mid year rescission--I mean we had to do it in order to balance the budget. So that set the tone as far as conservatism, you know, it's pretty hard to argue against conservative credentials when you come in, the first thing you do is you cut the budget in mid year. Now of course, I didn't want to do it, but the real truth is we had to keep the government operating, we had to keep the balance and, and that was the best way to achieve it. And we did achieve it. So, I didn't have to fight a lot for conservative credentials when it came to fiscal matters, after you do something like that. Which nobody's ever had to do again. Even though the reserves got real low, when Bill left and as Kathleen came in, they were very, very low but she didn't have to order a mid-year rescission.

It's sounding like it may have to happen this time around.

Well I don't think a mid year rescission is probably very likely. In other words, it seems, right now, unless the bottom totally falls out, uh, '09, in other words you're probably going to make it until next July. The real crunch or the question really comes after that. Cause the reserves are really getting lower

and lower all the time; now the last couple of months revenues have actually exceeded projections and of course none of us know the impact of the national economy on this total situation. So, I don't think there's going to have to be a mid year rescission in 09 even though it's possible, it doesn't look like it's headed for one right now. But when you get to 2010, I don't know where there's going to be any money for say salary increases or anything like that. It's going to be very much a status quo budget or maybe even some reduction. But at least in a situation like that you've got time to plan for it. And if the legislature enacts a reduction, you're going to know that in April and you don't have to start reducing until July, so you got time. In our case, we had to order a mid year rescission, Johnny on the spot. Which really put administrators in a bind, you know. That was one of the very toughest things I had to do.

Did the budgetary constraints give additional impetus and prompt you then to push forward on property tax revaluation and going to a better system of revising?

Right. Well actually, actually, no. Actually what happened on the property tax system was that of course, it all was precipitated on a lawsuit that the railroads filed. Railroads filed a lawsuit.

I did not know that.

And they claimed that their property taxes were unfair and that the system was a violation of the constitution. Because it valued railroad property differently and at a higher rate. And they had damn good lawyers. Well they won that suit. They won that suit, eventually. It took a number of years to work through the court, long before I, they may have even filed it before I was speaker. Well anyway, they win, so, the court said this is unconstitutional. What you're doing now, you're going to have to do something else. And, if you just kept the same, just gave the railroads a break, and kept everything else the same, all that property tax burden was going to shift to homeowners. So we had to have some way to protect homeowners from that huge shift. So the only way to do that is what we call, it used to be under the constitution, it said, all property tax shall be assessed uniform and equally, that was the key phrase. And that's what the court ruled was not the case in the case of the railroads. So, but if you're going to go with uniform and equal and you're going to reduce the tax on the railroads, you're going to raise it on everybody else. So, other states had a system called classification. In which they classified different classes of property and taxed them at different rates. So, that's one way out of this huge shift. The court didn't say you couldn't classify and couldn't tax at different rates if you changed the constitution. So the question was submitted to the people, then: "Do you want to change the constitution to move away from uniform and equal to a system of classification?" And the people said yes. And they approved it. In addition to that the court essentially ordered that all the property in the state be reappraised, because many reappraisals were twenty years old. So, so you've got these two things working in tandem. You're going to change the system of taxation from one of uniform and equal to one of class, classifications and you're going to tax; you're going to put in the constitution the rates, but you're going to tax different classes differently. And so at the same time you're going to take these twenty year old reappraisals and you're to force every county in the state, it's not the state that does appraisals, it's the counties, you're going to force every county to hire professional appraisers and go out and appraise every single piece of property.

Now does the state of Kansas do any central evaluation of industrial properties like that.

Not any more. The state used to appraise the railroads. It was called state assessed property. But not anymore, the county appraisers appraise each county according to the standards. So what happened was the people approved it, as a constitutional amendment in '86. So then we started about the task,

first off of reappraising all the property in the state. Well that took three years; it took all of '87, all of '88 and people didn't get their new tax statements, their new value statements, until December of '89, that's when the new system came out.

And the election was in November of '90?

That's right, it was eleven months later.

It was a year before the next election.

And they were so upset, and see what happened was it truly did protect farmers and homeowners. It truly did. But even so, many people's house hadn't been appraised for twenty years so when the appraiser came out and reappraised it, the value of it went up 40 or 50 percent, because the old value wasn't a true value, of course. It was twenty years out of date. But where it really fell, where the tax, where people were terribly under appraised was commercial property. I mean it was, it was scandalous how low most commercial property in the state was appraised.

And the main street merchants and the small businessmen . . .

Exactly, well, hell, we had a riot on the statehouse steps.

And they blamed you.

Oh, yeah, sure of course. I was governor, see. And, uh, I mean, oh yeah, we had a riot on the south steps of the state house; and they were all either real estate agents or small businesses. Because they, they, one of the things we did to help small business, but it also raised taxes on some of these other groups, is we eliminated the inventory tax, that was part of this question to the people. Because in the old days, you paid property taxes on your inventory. If you were a drugstore, you had to, every December you had to take inventory. And you had to pay property taxes based on that inventory

And the annual end of year reduction sales was a . . .

Exactly, exactly; was a real thing in those days. Well we eliminated the inventory tax but what that did of course was that just shifted the tax burden on everybody else. So, so you had this huge, farmers and home owners were protected. The farmers weren't complaining at all. They knew how damn good they had it. They still have it to this day. And the truth is that most homeowners weren't very upset, because their, their values, even though their assessed values went up, the mill levies went down correspondingly so in the end their taxes, there was very little difference. The only people that really got caught were people that had twenty-year-old appraisals; and, and, you know, and values--places like Johnson County where values had increased 4 or 5 percent over twenty years, well then that's a hell of a difference. But the big deal was, was the real estate and commercial property people. They just absolutely went berserk when they got these statements. And like I said, they rioted on the state house steps, uh they demanded all kind of things from the legislature and from me, and the real truth is that there was very little or nothing we could do because it was a constitutional amendment and it was approved by the people. They themselves had approved it, and it's in the constitution, it's not like a statute you can just run out and change. So we voted to do two or three, there was a special session, and we voted to do two or three things to help taxpayers. Things like, oh, instead of owing all your taxes on December 15, we'll delay that until April 15, so you got four more months to figure out how you're going to pay or save your money to pay, you know those kinds of things, so we did pass four or

five minor pieces of legislation to help the transition. But that's what, that's what the whole thing was about, was a constitutional amendment that was on the ballot in '86, approved, but by the time the new values came out, it was a year before the '90 election.

And did you feel at that stage did you feel pessimistic about r election prospects or did you think that you could overcome and get people past it?

Well I knew that reelection prospects were going to be difficult. I knew that, like in March of '90, you know, I knew it was going to be difficult. Now, we won the primary, and we won it again in a seven-way race, another seven-way race.

Who was your main opponent in the primary?

Mr. Weigand. He was of course the realtors' candidate. He was a realtor and it was the anti-tax movement, and he had the money to buy the ads. And he was a good-looking guy.

Don't get caught in Nestor's noose.

Exactly, exactly. And I do take pride in the fact that I designed that ad myself. I said, there's gotta be a way. This guy is shifty, and, and there's something that makes you wonder about him. And I got to come up with a phrase that set that into people's minds. And that's what I did. And that's where we came up with the ad and the truth is the ad might have been enough, the election was very close and it might have been enough to win it. We used it kind of right at the end, but there was enough people upset, and one of the things that I said we did in '86, is we consolidated the base. In 90, these people were so mad, you know Nestor never got over losing and so even though we met with him and even though we tried to work with him, you know, we never could. And, and there was so much anger out there over this property tax thing that you couldn't bring people together after the election. So I, I knew from the start it was going to be tough. Now since John Carlin had actually been governor when we passed the constitutional amendment, and he actually was one of the architects of it, and the truth is, it's a damn good amendment, and it's doing exactly just what it was supposed to do, and it has actually been a very, very fair tax system for these twenty years. It's working, and it's working well and study after study shows that. See John was not, he was inoculated with the same thing I was, the property tax crisis because he was governor when it was put on the ballot. And Joan Finney, of course, wasn't. She had been state treasurer so she didn't have to answer those questions. She could just say, "Hey it wasn't my doing. I wasn't in the legislature, I wasn't governor. I didn't have anything to do with this." And so I knew that if she beat John Carlin, you know, which wasn't a forgone conclusion, I mean that was a very close race,

And you had Fred Phelps in that race.

Had Fred in there. Who might have made the difference, you know. Uh, I knew that against Carlin, we had a real good chance, because they couldn't beat us up on the property tax question any more than they could John. I mean we both were in it. I was a Republican, he was a Democrat. I knew that we had a shot at that. But I also knew that if Joan Finney won then it'd really be tough, because how would we ever overcome this property tax issue that everybody was so upset about? But I knew, I knew, you know, way back, March, February, I knew it was going to be hard to be reelected, because the undercurrent of anti-property tax fever was everywhere you went. And I knew that so I didn't have any unrealistic expectations or anything you know. I just figure we'd grind it out and uh, if we won the primary, which I thought we could if we had a good strategy and we did. And then we'd kind of see

what hand we were dealt in the general election, and when Joan Finney won that, I knew that it was really, really, almost an impossible mountain to climb.

I saw a couple of Finney's ads. Did she then, did she use the property tax as one of her main...

Not really, not really. What she mostly just said was, "Hay, it's not my fault. I didn't have anything to do with it, I wasn't in the legislature, I wasn't governor, uh, it's a mess, and it's not my fault. And Mike Hayden was in the legislature when it was passed. He's been the governor the last three years, four years and you ought to ask him about it." And she was very, very astute in that regard about it, but no she didn't uh, she didn't uh—One of the things too, is I told you about the great launch you get from winning the primary, all of a sudden you get this real credibility. See Joan Finney was state treasurer. And early on in that campaign was not that credible a candidate. But when she beat John Carlin, a former governor, two-time governor, all of a sudden you really become credible. It's one thing to be state treasurer, which gives you some credibility, but when you beat a two time former governor in your own party's primary, people say hell, she must really be legitimate. And it just shot her up in the polls see, and, and there was no way we could catch her. So, you know, we got closer and closer as, as time wore on, but I didn't think we could catch her—just given the tremendous lead that she had after the primary. You know, I'd a been surprised if we caught her. We got fairly close, and then the abortion issue, the right to life issue, you know, it became a factor at the end. And it was really a confusing thing to the voters because here you have a pro-life Democrat woman, and a pro choice Republican man and so the voters were really, really confused. They weren't sure who was for what, because none of it fit the political stereotype. And so it turned out really just exactly like I thought it would and exactly like what the polls showed .

Were there any pro-life groups actually saying go vote for Joan Finney

Oh yes, oh yes. And one of the things that actually may have hurt us, which we didn't ask for or anything, was I can't even think of the name of it but it wasn't NOW, but one of the pro-choice national women's organizations came to Kansas, not at our request and not even involving us but had staged big rallies in our support. It probably ended up hurtin' us. And uh, I can't think of the name of the organization now it escapes me, but I was glad when they left. And we certainly didn't encourage 'em or ask them to come. But they were very concerned about Joan Finney, as far as her position on choice. So they found it very offensive that a woman, particularly a Democrat woman, would have that position. So, they came and staged rallies and everything else, in Pittsburg, I remember Johnson County, Wichita, actually it probably ended up hurtin' us.

Bob gave me one question here . . . Did you ask him about the death penalty? I was just going, How much of a role did the death penalty play against Tom Docking and do you have a sense of why the legislature didn't send you a bill to reinstate?

It's hard to say. Uh, about, clearly that was an issue upon which Tom and I disagreed. So that any time you can make a clear difference with your opponent no matter what the issue, if you can say here's where I stand and here's where they stand and the voters can make a choice. I mean we knew in the case of the death penalty, at that time, you're talking about 70 percent of the people of Kansas saying they favor it versus 30 percent saying they don't. So you're talking about a 40 percent margin, there. So anytime you can say I'm here and Tom's here and speak to an audience of any size, there's going to be more of the audience that's on your side of the issue. I don't know, you know, if you rank all the issues about why people voted then—let me say this, I don't think the death penalty made the difference. I don't think if Tom had been pro death penalty, he still wouldn't have won that election. If

I had been anti death penalty, we'd both been on the same side so it wouldn't have been an issue. So it was a prominent issue because everywhere you went the press asked about it. We knew it was a prominent enough issue that we made some ads concerning it. Uh, but the real truth is, it probably didn't, I don't think it influenced the outcome of the election. I mean people voted Republican, Republicans voted Republican, the Democrats voted Democrat in the state. And there were more Republicans in the state. We had a better organization. We worked harder at it. You know we had some consistent issues that resonated, so it, the death penalty was not the deciding factor in that election.

Now, uh, why the legislature didn't approve it then, and then ironically did approve it when Governor Finney was in office, who opposed it, of course, or who was reluctant about it, let's say it that way. Uh, the guy that probably, uh, perhaps was the most single-handed person to prevent its passage was Dick Bond. And he actually took Jack Walker's place. When Jack Walker became lieutenant governor, Dick Bond was appointed to take his place, and he ultimately became president of the senate. But he was a freshman senator, but Dick was very anti-death penalty. And he kind of made it his crusade in the senate to keep it from getting twenty-one votes, cause it was going to pass the house overwhelmingly. So, see it all came down to the senate. In the senate, uh, both Bud Burke and Bob Talkington—I had two senate presidents. They both actually favored the death penalty, but they, they weren't passionate about it. But they were going to vote yes, but they weren't, you know, they weren't going to knock down the door to make sure it passed. And, and the Democrats, you know, there weren't too many of 'em but they could say well we're voting against the governor, whatever, so we'll vote no. So the senate was able to put together coalitions that kept it from getting twenty votes, twenty-one votes. And then ironically, of course, passed it, uh, after Governor Finney came in, who was opposed to it. And she let it become law without her signature. So, yeah it was a much touted issue but realistically in neither one of our campaigns for governor did it have, did it really influence the outcome.

A trivia question. Some of your commercials. Dad's in a row boat with two girls fishing

Yes

You have two daughters?

I do.

Any other children?

No.

And what do the girls do now?

Well, still in a rowboat. One's a lawyer, the oldest is an attorney and she is a clerk in the federal court in Kansas City, she works for Judge *Margea*; and the youngest one just completed her masters in Library Science. She got her bachelors at K-State and her masters at Emporia, and she just got offered a job at the Watson Library at the University of Kansas. So, and, that ad is quite a story, it's quite a story. We filmed that out here at Maple Hill at the Adams Ranch and the whole idea was, one, of course, to show family values, but it was also to show a concern about the environment, you know. And, uh, this sounds crazy, but it's true, uh, often times in those days people mistook Jim Slaterry and I. In fact, I remember being at the Jackson County fair one time and Al *Ladue* said to a guy, "Do you

know who this is?" and the guy said, "Sure, it's Jim Slattery." So we make this ad and we start running it here in Topeka, and people start calling Slattery's office. And they start saying what the hell is Jim doing in a boat with two girls with no life jacket on? That's the truth, and they're calling Slattery's office and he's calling over to us, saying what the hell they talking about, you know. So the ad actually, which I designed that ad, which I thought the themes were right and everything else, but because I didn't have a life jacket on, that's the one thing they could focus on and two is, they thought it was Jim Slattery. So, after awhile we pulled the ad because it wasn't effective, it was misinterpreted.

Which is what Governor Sebelius had to do with her bus ad? Because there was the complaint there were no minorities, they were all white kids and she doesn't have a license to drive a bus. So it took away from the effectiveness by all the complaints.

Exactly. So, so, we had the ads that we made that you know, that you had to recant or you had to, I'll tell you one, sad in a sense, and I don't know if you ever saw, I don't know if you have this in the inventory; but anyway there's a terrible automobile accident here in Topeka, and it was out in the southeast part of town, and it was caused by a drunk driver, and he hit a family and killed several people including some of the kids. So I made this ad about drunk driving; they were going to crack down on it, and the thing is I went right out there, see, to the corner where the accident occurred. And in the ad, you can see the intersection sign behind me. And I'm talking about we need to toughen up on drunk driving. That was back in the day when we hadn't even passed point .10 yet, let alone point .08. We hadn't even passed point .10 and I was crusading to get the standards lowered so we could, you know, apprehend these drunk drivers. Well, we make this ad and here's this street sign and everything. It's a very effective ad. And we're running it statewide, and I was actually in the speakers office and the phone rang, said some bodies on the phone. Well, it was this fella whose family had been in the accident. And he said, he said this is just crushing our family every time we see that ad. They get all these nightmares, and they, you know, they go down to the cemetery and everything else, he said, it's just killing us. And so, I said okay, I'll tell you what I'll do. It'll take me a day or two. In those days, it wasn't like it is now, but we'll pull the ad in Topeka. I won't pull it statewide but I will pull it in Topeka so that your family doesn't have to watch it anymore. Because I certainly emphasize with what your saying and I certainly apologize, we meant no offence. We didn't, you know, we didn't realize the power of it and if I hadn't been standing in front of that street sign and had just said something about drunk driving in the generic sense, but then what made it so powerful was that was the actual scene of the accident. And so, it was a powerful ad and it was effective. It was damn effective. But that's what happens, you have these unintended consequences.

Now most candidates, obviously approve their ads, it sounds like from our conversation here that you actually designed your many of your ads.

I wouldn't go so far as to say many, but I designed, I certainly designed "Nesters noose," and in fact, I'll tell you a great story about that. You haven't even seen the cuts. But any way I got these consultants, and I said now here's the ad, were going to have, I want you to, don't get caught in nesters noose. Well by God, they dressed up a dummy and they put white face on it. And they put it in a noose. And I saw it and I just went ballistic, you know and I said Goddamn it you can't run that. You're going to have to redesign this, this thing. I mean you got the theme right, but you got the graphics terribly, terribly wrong and terribly offensive. And so that's when they came up with the stick man that's in the ad now. But in the one you never saw, they had a dummy with white face on it and I said that's insane, you're going to kill us on this deal. So we got that changed. So I designed the one on drugs, the one where they're playing basketball?

Where you come out with the whistle?

Yes exactly, those are Mike German's kids, and he's still here in town. No, I guess he's in Wichita now. So I designed that one because we had a big push at that time, big anti drug push. So I did design like three or four. I couldn't take credit for a lot of em. I did that drunk driving one.

I liked the one where all the lights are out in the capitol and you're still working and Sebelius used a little version of that for her reelection when it's dark in the capitol and they go to her office and she's got a light on and she's still working.

Exactly, exactly right. No those are, those are effective, effective ads. Of course in her case, you know, all she had to do was prove she was on the job. For the second term, she's going to win unless something dramatic happens, so all you have to be is a steady hand on the job that's all that's necessary.

Quickly, in this article here Dick Bond is sort of complaining about you and then Bennett in this article says, Governor Hayden has the opposite problem I had in that in Johnson County doesn't seem to like him but the rest of the state does. But it looks like the time you're there is that crucial moment where Johnson county and the heavy population there, if they're not behind you, you can be in big trouble and they're almost saying well we don't care if he's popular in the rest of the state, if he doesn't want to do what we want him to do, you know, then he's not popular.

Actually, as it turned out, Johnson County was not pivotal in any race. Uh, it was not pivotal in any race. We lost the primary in Johnson County both times by a fairly big margin. We lost it to Larry Jones because, well he had Bud Burke as his running mate. This is the primary now. We lost it both times by a fairly big margin. But, in both general elections, even the general election we lost, we carried Johnson County. Johnson County is so Republican, that in the general election they're gonna come home, they may not like ya, but they're gonna vote Republican. We didn't carry it big now, we only carried it by about a thousand, ironically we carried it by almost the same margin against Tom Docking as we did against Joan Finney, about a thousand votes. But the big thing for us was not to get beat up in Johnson County. We didn't have to win it. We just had to keep from taking a huge loss, because there's so many votes there. And that's exactly what we did. We won it each time, and so it proved not to be critical in either primary. We won both primaries and we lost Johnson County, and then in the general election we win one and we lose one but in both cases we carry Johnson County by about a 1000 votes. So, Bob Bennett is right in one respect. I mean he is right in his perspective. He was well known and well liked in Johnson County and hardly any body knew him in the rest of the state. I was the opposite, in that we ran strong in Topeka, we ran strong in the west, and nobody in Johnson County knew us or liked us, one or the other. But in the end, it isn't Johnson County that decides the election. Even though they had this huge population. It's not, you know, Joan Finney didn't beat us there. She beat us in, and you look at where Carlin won when he upset Bennett, where was it? It was in Wichita. And that's where Joan Finney, I mean if we carried Wichita we might not have beat her but that's where she really piled up the big margin, it wasn't in Johnson County, and of course in Wyandotte, Democrats always pile up a big margin. It's so Democrat that we know we're going to lose it and we know we're going to lose it big every time. You don't worry about it.

Do you think the media, I mean I'm reading these articles and the state house writers they seem to dwell on your image you know this person likes you and then you, and Dick Bond too says you're spending too much time worrying about that sort of thing and right on when the media gets hold of something like that?

Well one thing is, you know, bless state house reporters, and we had some good ones. I'd say ever bit as good or better than what we have today. But they're not deep on policy. They are not deep on policy. And so what they do is they focus on the image. They focus on my voice for example, or they focus on your cowboy boots or they focus on your image that's exactly what it is. And seldom, really, get into the depth of the issues. And so that, that really what it was and in some sense politics is about image. You know, it is.

But we always bemoan the fact like were sitting right now the decision in November is going to come down to the 8 or 9 percent who haven't made up their minds ,and decide on how they like the tone of voice, or the hair style or the sense that I can sit down and have a beer with that fellow.

Is it something that you looked back on, you could have worked on

No, No. I don't think so, I mean you gotta be yourself, you gotta be yourself. People suggested that to me, well why don't you go to voice school. Or, why don't you do this or why don't you? I said hey, I am what I am and we're gonna deal with what we got. And, and voters are either going to accept that or they're going to reject it. Let's don't try to be something we aren't. Because that's one of the things that got me to be speaker of the house and actually elected governor was being genuine. I mean there was no airs about, you know. In fact, one of the great quotes, Irving Niles, he was old Democrat from Osage County. He was in the house, and one of his great quotes was, he said uh, "Speaker Hayden's voice has been known to sterilize cocklebur seeds to a depth of three inches in dry soil."

Who was this now?

Irving Niles, he's deceased now. But he was in the house of representatives. Great, great old—he was a Democrat; a great old guy. He was one of those guys who get elected and then lose, get reelected then lose, get reelected. And one time they said to him, Well Irvine, what's the secret to longevity. How in the hell have you, you're from a Republican county, you're a Democrat, how have you been able to hang around? All this, lose an election, come back." He said, "Well, there's three simple rules." He said, "When they vote on liquor by the drink I vote no," and he said, "When they vote on legislative pay raises, I always vote against em, but I'm never sore headed when they give em to me." And he said, "When they vote on the right to work, I'm always absent." He had a hellava sense of humor.
