

INTERVIEW OF JAYNE AYLWARD BY ALAN CONROY, JUNE 18, 2021
KANSAS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, INC.

Alan Conroy: Good morning. The date is June 18, 2021, at roughly 10:00 AM, and we're in the Senate Chambers of the Kansas State House in Topeka, Kansas. There's some work going on in the House Chambers, so we're conducting the interview in the Senate Chamber, and I've got to ask this, and I've been asking some of the others that we've talked to. So you're here in the Senate Chamber. Was there ever a dream of yours to maybe serve in this Chamber?

Jayne Aylward: Not a real—no. Not a strong dream, I don't think. I had my six terms in the House. By the time I did that, I don't think I wanted to come across the rotunda.

AC: I'm Alan Conroy, and I'm a forty-year state employee, with the majority of that time in state service working at the Kansas Legislative Research Department, the central nonpartisan research and budget staff for the legislature. I'm currently with the Kansas Public Employees Retirement System. And today I'll be interviewing former Representative Jayne Aylward who served twelve years in the legislature. She first served in the 1979 legislature and then serving the next six terms representing either the 73rd or the 74th District, which is composed part of Saline County and then either Ellsworth, which was in the 73rd, and then I think Dickinson, which was on the 74th. I think there was a little reapportionment maybe in there.

JA: Significant.

AC: So we can talk about that, too, when we get there. So I'll be conducting the interview on behalf of the Kansas Oral History Project, a not-for-profit corporation created for the purpose of interviewing legislators. The interviews will be made accessible to researchers and to educators, and the interviews are funded in part by a grant from Humanities Kansas. The audio and video equipment is being operated by former Speaker Pro Tem David Heinemann.

So former Representative Aylward grew up on the family farm in Saline County, if I remember right. You went to Sacred Heart High School in Salina, and then you attended Kansas State and received your degree in Animals Sciences and Industry. She did some work on a master's in Business Administration at Washburn. She, of course, is a rancher and a stockwoman. She served on the Kansas Board of Tax Appeals, following her legislative service, and she's also a certified public accountant and has a successful practice in Salina in that area.

When she was in the house, she served on numerous committees—Agriculture and Livestock where you were vice chair; Fed and State Affairs where you were vice chair; Assessment and Taxation that later on just became Taxation; and then Communications, Computer, and Technology, Economic Development, vice chair; of course, Legislative, Judicial, and Congressional Apportionment, which must have been some interesting times there; and then some Joint Committees; Special Claims; Administrative Rules and Regs; the Joint Committee on Communication, Computers, and Technology; and then the Joint Committee on Economic Development.

So let's start with a little background, and we'll talk a little bit about your life before you got to the legislature. So you were born in Saline County, grew up there. I saw you were very active in the local 4-H program.

JA: Ah, yes.

AC: That was time well spent in the 4-H program?

JA: Oh, absolutely. Yes, in 4-H because most kids get out of it when they graduate from high school, I think they had to throw me out when I finished my freshman year in college because I got to show cattle there, and I loved to show cattle.

AC: Successfully?

JA: Yes, I did. I had the Grand Champion a few years, and actually I still have a cow herd, a cow calf, and the way I got it started, when I was in high school showing cattle, I had the Reserve Grand Champion and the Grand Champion one year with Charolais, which were pretty exotic at that time and kind of caught the eye of some local Kansas Charolais ranchers who then hired me to show their cattle. One year I had seventeen head of cattle that I took to Denver and Wichita and showed them for different people and learned that the way I could break that many to be ready to show was with donkeys. So I had two donkeys that I could hook them up to, and they would train my cattle. You could hook a thousand-pound yearling bull to a donkey, and that little donkey would teach it to lead.

But long story short, I got my cow herd started that way because I had a very smart farmer father who at the end of the summer would tell them, "Don't pay her. Give her heifers." I couldn't spend those. He kept saying, "Jayne, that will make a really good house down payment for you someday," which I never did because I've always kept my cows and just kept them going. Of course, I don't have any of the same ones anymore, but I have their babies that have gone on.

AC: You mentioned your father. Have any of your family been involved in politics before you decided to run for the House?

JA: Not really. I did have—my aunt's husband was an attorney in Salina who served a term or two in the Kansas House. They had before all of this moved on to California. So they were in California. I really hadn't had any close relatives. I had an uncle that was on the County Commission in Ottawa County, which was next to us, a good Democrat on the County Commission who stuffed a lot of mailers for me when we did direct mail.

AC: That whole blood being thicker—nothing's thicker than blood in terms of helping a fellow member of the family.

JA: It is an interesting quirk though because the first time I ran, Ellsworth County was in my district, and the Democratic Party chairman out there, his name was Paul Aylward, the same as mine.

AC: Oh, my.

JA: And Paul had run for Congress as a Democrat, very active, a big Democrat in the state. When I'd go door to door out there, people would say, "Oh, are you Paul's daughter?" They would tell him, "Paul, your daughter was here." He actually ran an ad in the paper saying that he wasn't related to me. I don't know whether that was good or bad. I may have gotten a little credibility from his name at that point.

AC: In fact that first time you ran in the primary, you were twenty-one years of age.

JA: Right.

AC: When you took the Oath of Office and were successful, you were twenty-two. So certainly one of the younger individuals to ever serve or I guess get elected at that age.

JA: At that point—I have not kept track—at that point, I was the youngest woman to have been elected. I think I would have been the youngest except the year I came in there was a representative elected in Wichita named John Sullivan who was maybe twenty? I know that he wasn't old enough to drink at the cocktail receptions. I do remember that. He was under twenty-one. He was quite young when he came in. Eighteen? [This "Eighteen" came from Dave telling me that – I'm not sure it makes sense here.] Very young.

AC: Wow, yes. So you were developing that interest in politics then? Was that something you always thought about doing, wanted to do?

JA: Really, it wasn't. I graduated from Kansas State University (KSU) with a degree in Animal Science and was farming. I really had just graduated in May. My intention was to farm, and mostly I was interested in the cattle end with my dad. I came from a family where we'd always been involved in the community. My dad had been chairman at a Planning and Zoning Board and things like that, had not run further. He belonged to a group called Saline County Taxpayers Association who were not real radical. They were just farmers interested in property taxes, as all farmers are.

But at that time, our state representative decided to run for governor, someone named John Carlin, whose name you probably know. So it left an open seat. I remember my dad would go to meetings and come back, and they were trying to find a candidate. It's hard because especially with farmers, they so busy working. If they have cattle, they can't get away during the winter. So they were really having a hard time finding a candidate.

I still remember, I walked out one day, and I said, "You know, Daddy, I think I've solved your problem," and he said, "What's that?" I said, "I'm going to run."

AC: What was his reaction?

JA: I don't know. After he picked himself up, you know, it's one of those cases where when you don't know what you don't know, it's a good thing. If I'd known what I didn't know, I would probably have never done it. But I ended up with a three-way primary and visited every door in the county, door to door, and then did it again for the general election.

AC: Do you think that's part of the success? Maybe some name, but I guess willing to make that commitment to go door to door. That's got to be a terribly big commitment of time and effort.

JA: It is in a rural district because you drive door to door to all those farmhouses. I do think that that was a lot of it. I met some wonderful people in Ellsworth County and Saline County. I think probably my family's history in Saline County, my dad's prior involvement, and I don't discount my involvement in 4-H. I mean, you get to know everybody in the county in 4-H. I had been pretty active in it. I think all of those factors kind of played into it and luck.

AC: You mentioned there were two primary opponents, Oliver Hagg and Jessie Magana, and you won with 56 percent of the vote in a three-way primary. And then in the general election, you beat Jeff King, and you received 62 percent of the vote. I thought it was interesting—in all of the subsequent elections, you never had a primary opponent. I think that says something about maybe—and, of course, in the general elections, in 1980, you beat a gentleman by the name of Gary Haupth by 72 percent of the vote, '82 Keith Hall, 67 percent of the vote, '84 Herb

JA: Petracek.

AC: Thank you, and you got 82 percent of the vote that time, and then in '86, you didn't have any general election which must have been nice.

JA: But I still went door to door because you have to stay in touch. I don't think probably as much, but I mean door to door, quite as much.

AC: Yes. And then your last election, '88, general election, you beat Allan White with 62 percent of the vote.

JA: Yes, and those kind of numbers, thankfully, I had a good district and good people, wonderful to work with. Those numbers land you on the Federal and State Affairs Committee where you get to deal with all of those emotional or difficult issues.

AC: That first election, do you remember the campaign effort? Was it mainly just door to door? Was it flyers or mailings? Radio ads? Whatever it may have been?

JA: It was a little of everything. I would say that the base was door to door, and God bless my mother who went door to door with me everywhere. I learned how much she loved me at one house where I went up to the door, and I was trying to put a flyer in the door, and the people—it was out in the country—and the people that lived there, the wife was down at the barn with her horses, and here came their Rottweiler.

AC: Uh oh.

JA: I was on the porch with a Rottweiler standing on the edge of the porch, barking and growling at me. They had a glass storm door, and I was thinking, “I wonder if I could crash through that door.” I thought, Well, then the dog will come through after me. So I can't do that.” My mother got out of the car and started waving at the dog saying, “Here, boy! Here, boy!” and I thought, “My mom loves me.” But the owner came up and got the dog. I mean, I'm a dog lover. I have three of them, but that was a little scary.

In that first election, I would say door to door. That was back before social media. So we did some things like little teas in little communities. We did radio, quite a bit of radio, newspaper ads, just the whole—

AC: Did you spend very much money? Do you have any idea of what you may have spent back then?

JA: I would have to look back at my reports

AC: Which you probably have!

JA: Oh, I probably do. I'm guessing in that first election I'd be surprised if we topped \$5,000. I think by the time I got to the last one, we were more around \$20,000. Again, I'd have to look at those. Those are just guessing.

AC: So you talked about kind of politics in general. Were there any mentors that maybe inspired you to think about running for office, either at the national level or maybe the state level or even the local level, somebody that I guess left an impression, somebody in public service maybe when you were growing up?

JA: I mean, there were a number of people. Karen Graves in Salina who is the cousin-in-law of [former Governor] Bill Graves probably. Karen was mayor when I was in high school or college, and I think Karen had—she showed that you could do it and was very active in the local community. I'm trying to think, [U.S. Senator] Nancy Kassebaum I always have held very highly, but she actually ran the same year I did, which I have to say, may have been part of my campaign strategy because people got us confused. They would think that I was Nancy Kassebaum. It's like, “That's good. I can go with that.” She definitely was someone who kept me inspired to continue to run.

AC: That's neat. So you got elected to the House, twenty-two, the number of women in the House?

JA: Very few. Well, prior to 1979 when I was installed, we were visiting about that a little bit before this started because I was trying to remember if there was a Republican woman in the House, and there was, Belva Ott from Wichita who was chairman of the Elections Committee. She was in charge of all things elections. And then there were I believe three or four Democrat woman, three I think, and then Norma Daniels from Wichita was in the Senate. So there were not many.

In my class that came in, I think we decided there were four women that came in. So we doubled the House women at that point. We were better off than the Senate women because we had our own bathroom. So there was something to be said for that. There were enough of us. But there were not a lot of us.

AC: I just printed out, and these were not all people that got elected in the House the same year you did but were in the House when you arrived. Just looking down some of the names—Jim Allen, Marvin Barkis, James Braden, Bill Bunten, Denny Burgess, Rochelle Chronister, Larry Erne, Ben Foster, Robert Frey, Lee Hamm, David Heinemann, Wendell Lady, Charlie Laird, Kenny King, James Lowther, Lloyd Polson, John Solbach, John Sutter, Larry Turnquist, Fred Weaver, Bill Wisdom, Eric Yost. I mean, really in terms of a group of individuals, there's some pretty interesting, certainly some people certainly dedicated to public service. You joined a good group.

JA: They were a wonderful group of people. And coming in at twenty-two years old, I'm not sure I—as an outsider looking in at politics now, I'm not sure I would have survived that. But I survived it because of the people that I was surrounded by. We had a group of states people who would argue like the devil on the floor of the House over things, but you could walk out of there and be friends. I thought that was so important. And there's still a lot of that. I look across the room right now at my friend Joan Wagnon. We don't ever sit on the same side of the aisle, but I think we could probably talk about any kind of politics. In those days, it just seemed like we could really put that aside.

AC: One question I always ask: the first time that you went to the well, the microphone, the first time you carried a bill, and you went down to the front of the House Chamber and looked out at those 124 faces. You may have had a bill to carry or a motion to make. Do you remember that?

JA: You know, I don't remember. It was something out of the Ag Committee that I carried. I do remember it was an Ag bill because I believe Bill Beezley was chairman of the Ag, big old Bill. He had the biggest hands I've seen on anybody. He was a college football player. Bill gave me some innocuous little thing to carry that nobody was going to argue about. It was pretty terrifying to walk down there and look out at all those faces the first time or the second time.

But I got through that because he gave me something easy, and we kind of worked up way up to—back in the mid-eighties when we were dealing with all of the sin issues in federal and state affairs, I still remember R. H. Miller was chairman at that point, and he walked up to me and he said, “Hey, Jayne, do you want to be famous?” I said, “For what?” He said, “We need somebody to carry the lottery,” which I wasn't even a big fan of the lottery, but it was a constitutional amendment, and I thought it need to go out there for people to vote on. That was a big growth from that little innocuous bill that did nothing to that.

AC: The constitutional amendment.

JA: We spent a lot of time on the floor that day.

AC: I bet. As I mentioned, you served on some interesting committees—Ag and Livestock, Assessment and Taxation, Economic Development, Communication, Computers, and Technology. Any of those were maybe your favorite? I don't know. Maybe that's—if you could pick a favorite one but one you enjoyed a lot?

JA: Well, I got to chair Communication, Computers, and Technology. So that was interesting. We were in the infancy of all of the technology stuff at that point. That committee was created to kind of try to deal with that. I think it's evolved now into a joint committee. It really needed to be really closely associated with Ways and Means or Appropriations because it's so money driven. But we dealt with some policy issues, and, yes, that was interesting because I got to set the agenda and run that.

Probably, of course, my heart's in Ag. So I loved the Ag Committee. The early eighties were interesting times with the Ag Committee when we had so many farmers in trouble, and the American ag movement and all of that. When it comes down to it, taxes. I'm a CPA. Taxes. And we had reappraisal and classification. I moved with it to the Board of Tax Appeals to where we dealt with the other side of it. So I really got the whole picture of that. As a CPA, tax is what I do. Don't give me anything to audit. I can't begin to do an audit anymore. So that would probably be my first love.

AC: Of course, during your time you served under several speakers—Wendell Lady and Fred Weaver was minority leader, Mike Hayden and Fred Weaver, and then Marvin Barkis and James Braden, and then Marvin Barkis as the minority leader. Your relationships with any of those people in leadership? Clearly if you were appointed to chair a committee or some of those things, there must have been some confidence there in your ability.

JA: Well, I guess so. I would hope that. Mike did appoint me to that. Probably one of my mentors that I really looked up to and will always hold in very high regard is Jim Braden. Jim was just my favorite person in leadership. I just felt like he was a statesman. He was a gentleman. He treated people fairly. He tried to work across the aisle. I just really liked Jim Braden. I thought so much of him.

Coming in, and I think I have Jim to thank for some of my success actually or what success I had, coming in when I was first elected, not only did I get through an election, but we had a hotly contested speaker race between Bob Arbuthnot and Wendell Lady. We just got lobbied to death on that. Here I was going, "I don't even know what I got elected to. Now everybody wants me to go vote for a speaker." I don't know how many people came to Salina to talk to me about who I should vote for. Somehow Jim because of who he was and how he was gained my confidence, and I ended up kind of unexpectedly—I should have been in the Arbuthnot camp because they were the more rural camp, but I ended up in the Wendell Lady camp who won, and it's always good to be on the winning side. And that kind of determined the path of people that I worked with and was associated with. So that was a very lucky vote coming in.

AC: I was trying to remember how close a vote—do you remember?

JA: It was pretty close. I don't know that we had to have more than one ballot. I would have to look at that. It was not, it was close. It took a while for everybody to kind of calm down after that. There were some hard feelings over it.

AC: I get a count through some help from the state library and Mary Galligan and Mary Torrence, on bills and resolutions that you sponsored during your time, your twelve years, there were over 175 during that time.

JA: I couldn't name two.

AC: Of course, some of them were resolutions honoring the Sacred Heart boys' basketball team.

JA: Yes. Go Knights.

AC: Congratulating the KSU marching band for being selected to perform at the Wembley Cup soccer championship in England. You, of course, memorialized Congress to rescind the ban on industrial homework. There were lots of memorializing Congress to do something or not to do something during those years. Of course, a resolution honoring the astronauts from the Shuttle Challenger.

JA: Right, yes.

AC: Then, of course, honoring representatives who either passed away or retired—Cliff Campbell, Harold Dick, Richard Harper, Elaine Hassler, Ed Rolfs, all of those. But it looks like the first bill that you had your name on was House Bill 2140. It had to do with taxation, and it was an ad valorem tax relief to persons who owned taxable, tangible property. So even that very first bill sort of out of the soup—

JA: Was a tax bill.

AC: Was a tax bill.

JA: I thought you were going to say it was one for tax exemption on railroad rolling stock. I do remember I had one of those because I had like the only business that dealt with that in Kansas, and they weren't able to compete with other states, which got us into the whole sales tax exemption thing that was—I don't think we've ever solved all of that.

AC: Just looking down through some of the years, some of the bills with your names on them, county roads supervisors appointed by the counties, of course, lots of taxation ones, a number of arrests not to affect promotions of Highway Patrol troopers. I suppose maybe the Highway Patrol Training Center in Salina—

JA: Yes, I'm sure that they probably had something to do with that. That was probably about the time that I put the bill in to try to put all of the law enforcement centers at Marymount College, which [Senator] David Kerr from Hutchinson was not my friend for a while after that because I was trying to steal his law enforcement center. It was a good idea, and you will note that the Highway Patrol is now at old Marymount College in Salina. So it just took a few decades to get there.

AC: Licensure of electricians, Professional Plumbers Licensing Act, Kansas Equal Credit Opportunity Act, grant and aids programs providing services to domestic abuse victims, death penalty, School District Income Tax Act, Kansas Rail Passenger Preservation Act, insolvent banks, state pre-emption of firearms regulation, state university preparatory curriculum admissions entitlement affected, Farm Animal Research Facilities Protection Act. Quite a range of topics, but tax, agriculture, economic development, education, I think, were all certainly themes as you look back through those 170-some bills. It's certainly an interesting list of bills that you put your name on.

JA: All kind of a mix, but you know, my district was kind of a mix because, well, it changed. I was elected in one district and then went through reapportionment the next term. But the district that I ended up with that I had most of the time was a lot of the south end of Salina. So I had quite a bit of city, and I had a whole lot of rural. I had people with all different—it's not like I had this little piece of the city where they tend to have a lot of the same concerns. You kind of had to balance different demographics.

AC: Since you mentioned, did that change in your district? Any sort of background, how you went from the whole Dickinson, Ellsworth kind of thing?

JA: There might have been a little politics involved in that.

AC: In reapportionment?

JA: It's reapportionment. So, what do you expect? And you'd mentioned Jim Allen earlier. Jim Allen who was a representative who came in the same year I did and became a senator, was my best friend during that reapportionment because again I was pretty young and didn't really

understand probably all of the impacts of reapportionment. I had come into a House seat that I think the Democrats were pretty certain they were going to retain. It's the governor's old seat.

AC: That's right. Governor Carlin.

JA: It was a little bit of an embarrassment to them because the Democrat County Chairman's son is who I beat in the election. Just a little back story. Not that I ever looked like Barbie. I never did. I never thought I did. I still remember the Salina Journal, our local paper, running a story about the two of us. He was a year or two older than me. He was in law school down here. They called it "The Barbie and Ken Election." I don't think they could get away with that anymore, but they did at the time. I think there was a push from the second floor to try to get the district back.

So I went from all of Ellsworth County, which was a nice rural Republican county, and all of rural Saline County and just this little piece of the north end of Salina to—I lost all of Ellsworth County, kept Saline County. They took away the part of Salina that I had and put me into the south end of Salina, which was a much more—actually they took away kind of a Democrat piece of Salina and gave me an Independent piece of Salina. Then they moved me over to Dickinson County and gave me this L-shaped thing which was Solomon, which was Irish—I'm Irish Catholic. It's an Irish-Catholic, Democrat hotbed. It went south from there and then clear over to Herrington which was the home of the Rock Island Railroads. I didn't have a lot of Republicans over there either.

But what they didn't realize was my dad was from Solomon. All of those Irish Catholic Democrats were my relatives. That one really didn't hurt me too bad. I remember Jim Allen kept coming to me, going, "Jayne, is this okay? Do you think you're going to"—"Yeah, I think I'm okay. I'm okay with Solomon. I can do that." I said, "I'm just going to have to go live in Herrington, really."

There were wonderful people in Herrington, when I got to know—in fact, I used to be able to go back with Gary Sherrer who became lieutenant governor. We would go judge their Junior Miss Pageant. There was no place to stay, and the school superintendent would have us stay with him and judge the pageant for several years. So Herrington was a great experience.

Yes, there were some politics involved. But then once we got that switch made, I didn't have to go through another major apportionment.

AC: Wow. As you look back over your sessions then, was there any from a policy standpoint that was perhaps the most difficult or challenging? You mentioned some of the sin, gaming issues, let's say a highway plan, the merger to the Kansas College of Technology and KSU kind of in there.

JA: Which I was definitely on the wrong side of, back in those days. I think we all opposed that.

AC: So we were just talking about international training for pilots program in Salina there. I think you were involved in helping to get that. From what I heard at the time, it was very, very successful.

JA: Oh, yes. I think you had mentioned or somebody mentioned at one point the charge back then to get K Tech in Salina combined into K State, which I mean, I have purple blood, Wildcat through and through. But at the time we didn't think it was a very good idea. I think our whole delegation dug our heels in and said, "We don't want to do that." Thank goodness, we lost because that's a wonderful facility and wonderful program. I mean, you can see the pilot training going on and the planes because we have that huge, beautiful airstrip at Schilling. They have planes up and down all the time out there training pilots. It's an amazing facility. So I'm so glad we lost. And I get to see purple in my hometown, so that makes me happy, too.

AC: Yes. Comprehensive highway plan, Highway 81, rural bridges. It must have been an interesting time to navigate that.

JA: Well, it was. The '90 session is when we did a huge, comprehensive highway plan. That was Mike—Governor Hayden was really pushing for that. In fact, that's the year that I knew that Keith Farrar was going to retire from the State Board of Tax Appeals, and that's really where I wanted to go because that was kind of the other side of the whole reappraisal and classification. I knew that opening was going to be there. So I had talked to Governor Hayden about it, and he had agreed that at the end of the session, I could exit and be appointed, but he said, "You can't tell anybody because you've got to stay here because I need that vote for the highway plan."

As it was, I think we were on a call at the House with a 63-62 vote. I recall, I believe Mike Peters from Kansas City who was always late came in late and cast the vote on that. I liked Mike. He was busy. That was a real fight to get that done, and I'm glad that we did. I mean, some of the highways, of course, Highway 81, we benefit from in my area. It's also very necessary as a north-south route. Some of the Super 2s down in southeast Kansas, there were a lot of people killed there. I actually lived in Holton for a while. The 75 Highway was kind of a death trap, too, but has been helped a lot.

AC: Was there a particular session or maybe a topic issue that was perhaps the most difficult for you during your time, whether it was—you were successful in terms of something happened or maybe you stopped something or something you wished that would have happened that didn't?

JA: I think probably from a voting standpoint and just being ripped asunder by your constituents who were all over the place, the hardest vote for me ever was multi-bank holding companies. I had so many—I had large banks. The average person didn't care. I mean, you could walk down the street, and the average person just said, "I don't know. I want to be able to go to my bank and get money if I need to." They really didn't care. But people in the banking industry, that was either all out for or just adamantly opposed. I had a lot of small-town bankers in my

district, and I had some very large banks in my district. I ended up with the small bankers who, again, that's all changed with time. We tried to keep things local. I still happen to like my little local banks. I still do that, but I think that was probably the most difficult.

The other difficult issues were, a lot of them we handled in the Federal and State Affairs Committee because they were so emotional. We really had—my hat goes off to R. H. Miller who chaired during that time. We had parimutuel wagering, lottery, liquor by the drink, and we always had of course the abortion issues, and we had Reverend Taylor who is ever-present that was very much a force. We had those issues. On that committee, the abortion issues were tough for me because I'm Catholic. I had a lot of Catholics, but I happened to be on the other side of that issue. Those were kind of difficult.

AC: Do you think in terms of your service, kind of that philosophical thing, do you represent your district or what your constituents want or do they send you and then you get to decide once you're elected and take the Oath of Office?

JA: I think it's a balance. You couldn't vote with all of your constituents because no two of them had exactly the same opinion. I'd have to have been able to cast 22,000 votes if I were going to do that. I don't think it would have been wise to come in and just say if I had 90 percent of the people wanting one thing and saying, "Oh, no. I know better than you do. I'm going the other way." But I think there's education involved where we used to do—we did a lot of mailings. We had a lot of—we'd have the meet and greets on Saturday morning, the legislative coffees and breakfasts and stuff where we could talk about things and say, "I know you think you're in favor of this, but here, here's the rest of the story, and you need to know the rest of the story."

The hardest things I think were when you get a bill that sounded like—I remember and —I can't remember what got hung on it on the floor—but we had one that was the sales tax exemption on farm equipment that hit the House floor. Somebody got an amendment on it that was just horrible. I just couldn't vote for it. So I ended up voting against the sales tax exemption for farm equipment. All of a sudden, in the next election I was anti-farmer. Then I had to go round up several of the farmers in the community and say, "Would you do a radio ad saying that I'm really not against farmers?" Those were kind of touchy things.

AC: Yes, I bet. You mentioned Governor Hayden. When you were in the legislature, it started out with Governor Carlin.

JA: Yes.

AC: Then Governor Hayden. I don't know, particularly since you took Governor Carlin's seat, any relationship? I guess you were in the legislature with Governor Hayden. Relationships with either one of the governors during that time?

JA: I can't say I had a close relationship with Governor Carlin. Of course, I was a very junior member and probably I did take his seat. But his aide was Jamie Schwartz from Salina, and

Jamie graduated from Sacred Heart High School a number of years ahead of me but actually his sister Mary was in my class. So I did kind of have an association with the Governor's Office through Jamie. I really probably early in my career, there wasn't a lot of influence that I would have commanded. You kind of have to come in and get your feet wet and sit in the back row and shut up for a while. With Governor Hayden, I thought Mike Hayden was terrific.

AC: And an effective leader?

JA: I thought a very effective Speaker of the House. I thought Mike was a very effective governor.

AC: His management style in the House?

JA: Well, you knew if you weren't doing what Mike wanted done. He would tell you about it. As I mentioned earlier, I thought Jim Braden was just—Jim would have been calm. Mike would tell you. But, you know, I always kind of like it when I know where I'm at.

AC: Absolutely.

JA: And you would hear it in no uncertain terms. I mean, I know that Mike's sayings had been—everybody knows. I still remember we had Elizabeth Baker from Wichita was in the House. She came in as a Republican. She really was kind of a Democrat. She crossed the aisle a lot, and she was always in trouble with Mike Hayden because she was always teaming up and kind of going across the aisle, and she was definitely always in trouble.

I still remember she carried a bill one time that he was happy with, and Elizabeth who was very ladylike turned to him and said, "You know, Mike," he was speaker then. "You know, Speaker, doesn't that just make you happier than a gopher in soft dirt?" Coming from her, it was—that's something he would have said, and she got to throw it back at him.

Mike was very effective at least with me. He got his highway plan passed, which was huge. I think he did get a lot of his agenda taken care of. I think his management style probably worked against him with some people, but that's who he was.

AC: And the whole property tax issue for him?

JA: A lot of the property tax we worked through, well, Jim Braden was chairman of the Tax Committee when we were doing that, and Mike was Speaker, and he supported us on that. We had to come in for special sessions to deal with that. He would call those in when we needed to do them because we were trying to stay out of the Supreme Court. We all started out with that, wanting what our constitution said at the time, which was uniform and equal. But when we started looking at what uniform and equal had turned into, we just ended up saying, "Okay, we've got to create some quasi-classification system to sort of say this is generally where we are statewide, and we're going to cement that in and not move from there."

So he moved with us on that. It wasn't something we wanted to do, but we had to do it or else it would have been homeowners and farmers. Business taxes would have probably come down, and everybody else would have really skyrocketed.

AC: If you look back over those twelve years in legislature, is there one particular success or proud accomplishment that you'd really think, "The system worked, something good has been done, and I'm proud to be associated with the topic or the issue"?

JA: It's hard to narrow it down to one.

AC: Or a couple.

JA: There were a little local one that I will review that I think was, that I'm not sure you could do today, get the legislature to do. In my district, I had a thing called the Salina Indian Burial Pit, which was this ancient Indian burial area that was comprised of I think three different tribes that a family owned the ground. They had dug out all of the skeletons and had them kind of on display. It was sort of a commercial enterprise. I was very familiar with it because growing up, that's how I'd give people directions to my house. I'd say, "Go east on 40 Highway to the Indian Burial Pit sign and then turn north."

I didn't live very far from it, but it became an issue. Haskell started to take issue with it as the tribes did, and I don't blame them. It was one of those cases where what was going on there was legal in Kansas. We could make it illegal and close it down, but then we had this family that had had this business there for years and years. We went back and forth and back and forth. I can't claim—I worked very hard on it. I cannot claim the credit for it because the Indian tribes had an attorney, and he was a Native American gentleman who was amazing. They came in and really worked with people, but I got the benefit on the other side of being able to go to some of their ceremonies when they closed it, where were just a once in a lifetime thing that I got to see.

But we had to go to the legislature. Ultimately we couldn't get it worked out to just close it. We didn't want to do that to the family because what they were doing back then—I mean, people's attitudes change. It wasn't a bad thing back then. We finally got the legislature to appropriate \$90,000 for the family so that we could pay them and get it closed. We set aside a period of time where things could be studied there, and then it was capped with a giant concrete cap so that that was the end of it.

AC: So you were talking about a success there. Any, as you look back over your twelve years, any big disappointment, something that you wish the legislature would have—

JA: Well, I wish they would have taken the Law Enforcement Center out of Hutchinson and given it to me in Salina because I thought that Marymount would have been just perfect for that, but they won't do that. So I'm happy that we got a good facility for the Highway Patrol. I

think I was on several committees where we went back and we looked at sales tax exemptions and property tax exemptions, trying to close some of those holes. I wish we could make some progress there. I think that there are areas where progress can be made. It's just one of those. Every time you get into them, there's a reason it was passed. There's so much pushback on that.

I think just as a big picture, and I honestly can't remember all the details now, but I think a success—I'm kind of going back and forth on you, but I had to think about this for a minute. A success that I think the legislature was very helpful with in the early eighties was helping our farmers because we created a number of programs to help them so that they could defer some payments and hold off for closures and things like that. That's when we had tractors going to Washington and all of that. So I think that we were successful in helping them with that.

I was pretty opposed to the severance tax, and we still have it. So that was one thing that was a disappointment that we ended up with that. But we've all survived it.

AC: I noticed one of your bills was on I think taxation. It had to do with parsonages and exemptions that are not from property tax. Should parsonage be exempt or not? Were you involved in that issue or involved in some hearings on that?

JA: We had a special Joint House Senate committee that was dealing with that issue one summer. I guess maybe—it would have been an interim committee, I guess. I remember, we had so much going on with tax at that time. We met in the old Supreme Court Chambers. It was so crowded, and we had so many people in there. But I remember at the time we were dealing with that, and one of the issues that came up because we had sort of a local celebrity, Reverend Fred Phelps, came in to testify on it, and I had found out that he had filed for an exemption on the swimming pool on his compound that he lived in as a baptismal font because that's where they were going to baptize people and took him to task for that which made him not happy at all.

So I was opposed to swimming pool baptismal fonts being exempt from property tax. I asked him about it, and he tried to justify it. I don't think either one of us were ever satisfied with the other one. I don't think his baptismal font was ever exempt from property tax and should not be. That's one of those big loopholes. I don't think I was ever on his list of favorite people again or ever was, but that's okay. We don't all come to make friends with everybody.

AC: That's right. One standard question we ask all participants that are being interviewed, and it relates to a personal identity question. So I'm going to read this little statement, and I'd like to hear any thoughts that you might have. It says "Personal identity is loosely defined as gender, age, race, class, sexual or gender orientation, marital status. Did you experience times during your tie in the legislature where you believed your personal identity influenced your ability to pass policy, work with fellow legislators, or provide constituent services? Do you think you were ever given committee assignments or tasks that you believe were functions of your personal identity? So I mean you talked about being a young person, being maybe not in the strong

conservative camp, being when you first came, maybe only eight women legislators in the Chamber. Do you think that played in?

JA: Yes, I think they all, all of them play into it. Just like I think if someone came in, and they are a Vietnam veteran or a military retiree, that plays into it because there's experiences that they have. I understand I think what you're getting at. I think to a degree it played into it. I can go back to my mentor Jim Braden and Wendell Lady before him. I didn't ever feel that I was not given a committee assignment because I was female or young. I walked in and I said, "Hey"—now I didn't end up on the Tax Committee my first session. I think maybe the second session I got there, but the Ag Committee was my first request, and I got that and ended up on Federal and State Affairs, which you know, if nothing else was exciting. So I can't complain about that.

Just a little backstory, so wheel the clock back here a number of years. I do remember when I first came in—this brings up one of your local, Billy Bunten, Bill Bunten. When I first came in, I picked out a seat on the House floor. There was a representative, I won't say where they were from or who they were, but apparently would not be a good fit for me to be sitting next to as this young, kind of innocent, twenty-two-year-old. And Wendell Lady saw that and said—you know, on the House floor, kind of the chairman will sit towards the front and seniority sort of. I don't know if it's still that way, but it's sort of dictated. If you'd been there, you could kind of bump people out and move up. This individual had been there a long time and was sitting towards the back next to me. They saw that and said, "Oh, she's not going to survive this. This will not be good."

So I came in the next day, and I had a new seatmate, Bill Bunten. They had talked to Bill. And here Bill was, I think chairman of the Ways and Means Committee at that time, and he moved and sat in the back with me because he had enough seniority to move them out, and Bill sat there with me for two years until I kind of got my feet on the ground. I just had so much respect for Bill. It says something about him. Most people would have to be in that front row and be in that chairman seat.

In general, I would say that I felt like my committee assignments, I mean, I was given a committee chairmanship. I didn't feel like I was every really treated differently as a woman. Maybe it was my expectation because I came from an ag background. In college, I was in animal science. I was a minority there. So you were just kind of used to walking in and saying, "Hey, I'm here, too." So I don't think I really felt that I had that, probably because I was young. I think some people kind of took me under their wing. Rochelle Chronister kind of definitely took me under her wing, and I'm so grateful that I had Rochelle there. And after a while, you could kind of work your way from that and get a little age and experience. But I was always very happy with my committee assignments. I think I was able to get bills run that I wanted to have run.

AC: During the twelve years, do you think the legislature changed as an institution or the process when you were first elected to that last term? Or was the legislature of the House still sort of plodding forward and the process worked? Were there changes that you noticed?

JA: There were definitely changes. When I was elected, we had a, I don't remember our numbers, but we had a pretty strong Republican majority in the House. Over the years, we began to see the emergence of the very, very conservative side of the Republicans. So rather than having—and really when I was elected, the big split was not Republican/Democrat. It was rural/urban. We had much more of a rural/urban split, which made my district kind of difficult because it was kind of both. It became much more where we could see coalitions of all kinds of different groups emerging. I think we had at one point about seventeen or eighteen of the Republicans that kind of split off that were the—they called themselves the conservative Republicans. I remember Jim Braden keeping track of their votes on spending bills. They voted to outspend us moderates about 3:1 because they were just trying to create havoc with us most of the time. They would take whoever they could get to team up with and kind of take on the moderate Republicans. So that became very, very difficult.

And I know the Senate has changed a lot because back in those days, we were dealing with the liberal Senate. So we more conservative in the House would kind of have to stop things and not get it over to the Senate because we knew those liberal senators would pass anything. But I think that's a lot different these days, too. But the Republican party changed a lot while I was there, not so much the Democratic party, I don't think.

AC: I did notice after you were out of the legislature, you were on a steering committee for Republicans for Kansas Values, a moderate Republican group opposed to tax cuts imposed by at that time Governor Brownback. In 2014, you joined some other moderate Republicans endorsing Democrat Paul Davis for governor over Brownback.

JA: Yes.

AC: Difficult decisions there? Stirred the pot quite a bit?

JA: Well, I mean, they were difficult decisions, but you have to look at Kansas. I think the things that—I am always proud of Kansas because of our investment in education at all levels. I think we have some wonderful post-secondary colleges and institutions here. I think our infrastructure and our investment—I'm always the first one when you cross the state line, it's like, "Oh, we're in Missouri now. I can tell." I've always been proud of our road and highway system here. I think we've made the investments that we need to there. I just wasn't seeing that coming.

The tax cuts that Governor Brownback instituted were great. I mean, the businesses loved them. They were wonderful. I have a business. Yes, I'll take money. That's fine. But you have to be able to pay the bills at the end of the day. I just didn't think that we were able to do that. I don't think my toe is quite as far over the line with the moderate as some of my colleagues. But it was time to draw the line for me.

AC: Would you ever see yourself returning to elected office of some type?

JA: Oh, heavens no. I heard Kevin Costner interviewed one time because somebody was asking him if he would ever run for office. He said, "Oh, lord no, I've led a colorful life. I could never do that." That's kind of where I am at this point. My life has been colorful. I don't want to read about it in the newspaper. I think maybe we'll say I did my public service, and I still get to give back to the community in a lot of ways. I'm on the foundation for the Salina Regional Hospital board where we do some really—with all of western Kansas, you know so I can be involved in that way. I've been very involved as president of the Rotary Club when we lived up by Leavenworth and still involved in my Rotary Club and those things. I think that part of my life has—but I would certainly get in and support the right candidate and tell them what to do.

AC: If a person would come to you and say, "Hey, I'm thinking about running for the legislature, would you encourage him to run, do you think?"

JA: It depends on the person. Actually there are a couple in Salina right now that I've been looking at, going, "I wish they'd take early retirement, and I could get them going towards the legislature. We could use them there, and they could get elected." I wouldn't say that I wouldn't want to be involved at all, but I sure—I've been busy in my own business. When you're in your own business like that, it's hard. I can see—anybody that can run a business and make the commitment to the legislature now, I'm glad they can do it. Otherwise it would just be a bunch of retired people.

AC: Yes.

JA: And retired people are good, but we kind of need diversity.

AC: Is there anything else maybe that I haven't touched on or any issue you'd like to share with us? Any thoughts?

JA: That's always the hardest question, and that's not anything I thought about before I came here. I am so blessed to have had the opportunities that I had. Like I say, I'm glad that I didn't know what I didn't know, or I would have never done it. The confidence of the people in my district that sent me back six times and my service on the Board of Tax Appeals, which was amazing. When I got over there after reappraisal, I think we had 17,000 cases we were trying to hear, and that's when we would take a board member and a court reporter, an attorney, and we would go like stay in Independence, Kansas for a week. We heard every appeal.

I still remember having—I remember being in Kansas City, Kansas, hearing appeals where people would come in speaking some other language. I had no idea what they were saying. When they'd get done, I'd turn to the court reporter and said, "What did you put down for the record?" She said, "I just kept typing 'speaking foreign language.'" You just couldn't hardly do those hearings.

I remember in a small town where the people were telling me that the value of their house shouldn't have been what it was because it flooded, and when it flooded, they had to bring all

the livestock in, and they couldn't get the pigs back out of the house. You'd sit there, just trying to, "Okay." Keep a straight face. And it probably wasn't worth a lot.

The Board changed then to where we would get hearing officers and not deal with all of those, but we used to have days—I think there were over 50,000 decisions by local—the county commissioners would hear appeals, and we would have to read all of those and approve them. So we would just spend hours and hours doing that. I think probably looking back, the whole getting Kansas tax system up and running and getting to see the whole round issue of it between setting the policy and implementing the policy is probably what I like to look back on, and it's tax. So I like it.

AC: Well, I think that concludes our interview today with former Representative Jayne Aylward, talking about her twelve years of public service in the legislature and other service before and after that legislative service. So we thank her for that dedicated effort of public service and wish her all the best and thank her for spending some time with us today.

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