

Interviews of Don Hill by Jan Huston, March 9 and March 16, 2017
Kansas Oral History Project, Inc.

[These two interviews are the first in a series of interviews with Don Hill, conducted by Jan Huston for the Lyon County Historical Society.]

JH: Don, would you give us some information about your background and your developing interest in politics?

DH: I was born and raised in Smith Center, Kansas. Both my mother and father grew up there as did their parents, so multi-generations from Smith Center. Smith Center is in north central Kansas. Smith County is the geographical center of the historical continental United States – the original 48 states. I studied that in sixth grade geography.

My parents were both from farm families, and I was an only child. My dad was a World War II veteran. He left the farm and got involved in the auto industry and worked for a car dealership there in Smith Center in the parts department.

He was 27 years old when World War II was declared and went into the Army; my parents were married at the time. I was a post-war baby, the first of the baby boom generation. While he was gone, my mother did some teaching and also worked for a local doctor. My dad served in the Philippines in the Pacific and ended up getting malaria and had to return on a hospital ship. He was pretty sick for a while, but got back safe and sound, thankfully.

It wasn't long before I came along. I was born in December of 1946. My dad ended up back at work in the car business. He was given an opportunity in the mid-50's to buy a portion of the dealership. The owners were two brothers that were a generation older than he. That was his career. He ended up later having sole ownership. They sold GM and Chevy products. He also got involved in the farm implement business.

My mom was for the most part a stay-at-home mom, but she was active in the community. Later, after I left for college, she was involved in helping with the business as well.

My parents were what I would describe as civically engaged, which had a big influence on me in our small community. I had 55 or so in my class when I was going through school. I had the opportunity to do everything: sports, music, drama, and student organizations.

My dad was a volunteer fireman. This was his first civic duty activity, and then he became a city councilman. Maybe, subconsciously, that had an effect on me. There were two or three agenda items that he became really involved in. One was the development of the airport in Smith Center. During that time the advocacy he provided in the leadership in city hall was important to be sure that the safety of the airport and the lighted runways were an attribute to the community in recruiting doctors and professionals. He also was involved in procuring an adequate water supply for Smith Center. The most impact to me was that Smith Center didn't

have a swimming pool. When I was learning to swim, we got on an old school bus and drove to Downs, which was 25 miles away. It took me four years to pass beginners swimming because I didn't have any other opportunity to swim. During Dad's time on city council, they approved building the swimming pool which is the pool that still serves Smith Center today.

Our community and our family were close-knit. We were involved in the church as a family. My mom and dad and I all sang in the church choir together. I was involved in Boy Scouts and became an Eagle Scout. That was no doubt an important part of my formative years. I have a fairly large extended family. Most of them lived in Smith Center. My mother had four siblings living there. My grandparents moved off the farm and lived in town. My dad had one brother. Dad's parents continued to live on the farm. In this close-knit community there were opportunities to be engaged and even have some leadership roles, probably a blessing to me, helping lead me on the path that I followed.

After I graduated from high school, I went to K-State, and my intention was to become a pharmacist. I had had a chance to work for a local pharmacist, Bill Hawes, starting in about the seventh grade. I was a soda jerk, did housekeeping, clerical work, and odds and ends.

I wanted to get a business degree before I went to pharmacy school. That was the plan that I pursued. I was in ROTC at K-State. At that time it was mandatory to do two years of ROTC. I like that and ended up going into advanced ROTC with the expectation that I would end up getting my commission after I graduated and go into the Army for my military commitment. Our country still had the draft at that point in time.

I was in business school, and it was my third year at K-State when I started making plans ahead. At that point in time Pharmacy was a Bachelor's Degree, and I found out that the Army would not allow me to graduate with my business degree and get my commission from K-State and give me a deferment for Pharmacy School because it wasn't an advanced degree. So, in the next scenario I would have done my military commitment, but as a business graduate, and then after that come back to do pharmacy school. Finally I made a decision to transfer to pharmacy school after my third year at K-State, which I did. I finished ROTC at KU and that worked out well. I graduated from KU with my pharmacy degree in May of 1971 and was commissioned. I worked at Blaylock Drugs in Topeka until I got my orders to go on active duty in the Army in January of 1972.

When I was at K-State and KU as well, I was involved in some extracurricular activities and student government. At K-State I was active in an associated student government committee and worked on projects. I was also in Delta Upsilon fraternity, serving as rush chairman and eventually president of the chapter. In hindsight, those were positive influences and opportunities to learn new skills, to meet and interact with people and sort of push the

envelope and get me out of my comfort zone a little bit. At KU I was a student senator, so all of those things cumulatively were reinforcing and building one on another as a positive experience.

I went on active duty, as I mentioned, in January of 1972. I was at Fort Sam Houston and was a Medical Services Corps officer in basic training. And the last day of our class, they came in and told us that if any of us were hoping to go on active duty, we better plan on finishing in the top 10 percent of our class.

Vietnam was winding down at that point in time, and they were downsizing the military. They had more medical service officers than they needed. While I was planning on being on active duty, it would have been a good experience professionally because I would have been a pharmacy officer. I would have been practicing pharmacy almost certainly at a hospital someplace. That was something that would have been a building block or an opportunity to get a more wide experience base, but I was also married at the time. Robbie and I met at K-State in 1968 when we were both juniors. She's from Parsons, and we married in the summer of '69 after she graduated from K-State. We were in Lawrence my last two years of pharmacy school. She is an elementary teacher and taught in Tonganoxie for those two years. After I graduated, I worked in Topeka part-time, waiting to go on active duty while Robbie subbed. Soon we found ourselves in San Antonio, and while I would have been happy to stay on active duty, I was happy not to do that as well. So I ended up being on active duty for only 90 days training. I got out in April of '72.

We knew we wanted to be in the Midwest, and we had an opportunity to be in Kansas. There were a lot of opportunities, and we were going to take our time looking around. We looked from Independence, Parsons, Olathe, and Leavenworth and out west to Sterling and Lyons. We probably had no less than 15 pharmacies and communities that we visited contemplating where I would go to work or land.

There was a store for sale in Emporia. It was my goal to be in business for myself – to own my own business. But I had not contemplated that it would come immediately. But the store that was for sale in Emporia was Harris Drug. Haynes Hardware was still in business then and might have been about the same vintage. A Welsh immigrant family, the Morris family, started the business I bought in February of 1885. It was Morris Drug, then it was D.W. Morris & Sons. Mr. Harris bought it in 1965. Now that store was for sale. It was a quiet little pharmacy. Truthfully, it was on the decline at that point in time.

We liked Emporia. It was between Parsons and Smith Center. We really like the community. We like the university, a college town. We didn't know more than a handful of people in Emporia. No particular draw in terms of family or friends. In June of 1972 we ended up buying

Harris Drug, and that's how we made it through the first quarter of a century from Smith Center to Emporia, and we've been in Emporia ever since.

JH: Okay. So you're here in Emporia, and you have begun your new business. I guess we could go on to the next quarter of a century.

DH: I'm ready. That business was at 423 Commercial, right across the street from the old court house. At that point of time the Chamber of Commerce was located on the corner of 5th and Commercial. I can remember one of my first days in Emporia I went over to the Chamber of Commerce. That's what business owners do: they join the Chamber and get involved. Evora Wheeler, who is still active in the community today and is a former city commissioner, worked at the Chamber for a long time, and she was there. Dale Stinson was the chief executive officer of the Chamber. The Chamber ended up being something that I continue to be involved in and had leadership opportunities. It was definitely a building block for our lives for the next quarter of a century.

Robbie and I joined the Congregational Church. Robbie was raised in the Baptist church, but the pastor of the Congregational Church at the time was Steve Williams whom I'd had a chance to meet. We really liked him. Also what is important, or perhaps a main factor was that the pharmacy was still open on Sundays. The Congregational Church at that time was the only church in town that had two services. We were able to go to the early service, and the pharmacy was open from 10-1 or 11-1. So the opportunities to meet people and have some involvement in the church were also something in addition to the Chamber of Commerce that provided outlets or avenues for building a sphere of acquaintance.

The third leg of that stool was a service club. I ended up joining the Rotary, which I continued to be a member throughout that entire time. I think I was the president of the Rotary Club six years after I came to Emporia. Those opportunities I did for business reasons, and I did it for personal reasons. You know things you enjoy. I enjoy being involved and being in the know. The Rotary Club, the Chamber, and certainly to some extent the church all gave us opportunities to interact with people and to serve. Ultimately, that is important, I would submit, for a successful life. One of the things I always want to do and still do is be in the growth mode. There are so many different spheres, whether it is spiritual, personal, business, financial, intellectual, or physical having varying degrees of success in those realms.

Continuing to be involved, I was the chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in 1986. That was another opportunity that I enjoyed. You have a feeling that somehow you might be contributing to the greater good in some of those different endeavors. The business did fine. It grew slowly. I was pretty much a one-pharmacist operation for the first six or eight years. Then in the early '80s I was able to start hiring some part-time relief pharmacists. I, of course,

needed to do that, and it allowed me to be involved in some of the activities and organizations that took me away from being at the business the whole time.

In 1978 we moved the business from 423 Commercial to 10 W. 5th, and then in 1980 we built the office building at 12th and Lincoln, closer to the center of town and near the hospital. Obviously, that was my main focus, and at the same time I continued to be involved in community things.

Maybe a pretty significant opportunity came in 1986 when I was nominated and applied to be in the Leadership Kansas program, which was at that time run solely by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce. It hadn't been in existence that long. It was started in the late '70s by a group of young business leaders. Actually, Gary Sherrer, who has significant Emporia and Emporia State ties and was later Secretary of the Department of Commerce and Lt. Governor, was one of the founders of Leadership Kansas. Prospective members go through a pretty rigorous application selection process. At that time we had 35 in each class.

I was selected, and one of my favorite sayings is "The only world you have is the world you know." The framework of Leadership Kansas program, the intensity of it, and the time we spent, which was basically two and two-and-a-half days monthly for six months, starting in May and ending in October. Some of my classmates were folks who had already been successful, some were young, full of potential, rising star folks. And then we had some other folks who had been there, done that; proven leaders like Audrey Langworthy, who was a state senator at the time. Janice Lee, who later became a state senator, was on the State Board of Education. Sandy Praeger, who was a state senator at the time, and ended up being State Insurance Commissioner. Marty Crow was another classmate that became a state legislator. There were mayors, county commissioners, and police chiefs. It was a pretty diverse group. It was diverse in every way that you could think of it being diverse. And diversity is one of the objectives of the selection committee.

JH: From all across Kansas?

DH: All across Kansas. We had two classmates from Liberal, and two classmates from Garden City. And that's definitely an objective. During the program we moved throughout the state. We had a program at Colby, Kansas. I will never forget that. It was instructive to me. Audrey Langworthy, a state senator from Johnson County, had never been to Colby. We were sitting on a flat-bed in the middle of a corn field, and there was a tractor, a combine, and a drill. Lon Frahm was the presenter. The only world he has is the world he knows. It might have been Senator Langworthy who asked the question. "Well, you're out here and where do you get your news?" He said, "Well, from several sources. My daily routine is to read three newspapers." The contrast was that Audrey Langworthy reads one paper. That was a moment

for sure. It wasn't a transformative experience, but it was definitely very affirming and a reinforcing experience.

At the end of the class in October, a couple of things happened. One of which was that each class selects two of their classmates to continue as part of the governing board of trustees of Leadership Kansas. They serve a three year term. So at any given time back then, but it is still fairly similar, the board of trustees has six graduates from the program and then it has designees from the Kansas Chamber. I was selected by my classmates to continue in the Leadership Kansas Board of Trustees. The other member of our class that was selected was Sandy Praeger. And obviously, that was an honor. I'm still so grateful for that opportunity. And it also opened more doors in terms of contacts. The other thing that we did during our last meeting of our class was an evaluation of the experience and how it impacted you with what you do or what you had the opportunity to be a participant in. I wrote it down on paper for the first time. I could see myself at some point, if the circumstances were right, seeking to serve through public office. That was 1986.

The time I spent on the Leadership Kansas board was a great opportunity. Over the years I served, I was there for three years as a regular board member, I served a year as chairman-elect, and served a year as chairman, and finally a year as past chairman. So I ended up being on the board for six years. Some of the people who were on that board with me (basically a 12 or 13 member board) included Gary Sherrer, John Carlin, Bill Graves, and John Moore. It all led to just being more comfortable with other Kansas leaders, and you might have something to offer on occasion and more opportunities to learn and get a greater depth of understanding. At that point in time there was certainly not even a hint of partisanship in that whole experience.

JH: Is there now?

DH: I would hope not. I'm afraid there is more of that, although I'm a little bit sad that we have not had more Emporians a part of that. It has been several years. Allison Garrett, ESU President, has been selected for this class. She starts in May (2017).

JH: Is she encouraged?

DH: Yeah. Somebody who is functioning at her level with her responsibilities, well, you would hope. You can make a case what's she going to get out of it? But I can guarantee she will get a lot out of it. But even as importantly if not more importantly, she will contribute to her 35 classmates.

Leadership Kansas has gone from a Chamber function to now an allied organization with the main sponsor the Chamber. I think the Kansas Chamber has gotten very very political these days. Bottomline, it is about smaller government, it is about lower taxes, and it's about 'don't

distract us with the quality of life and education, that's not our deal.' And of course we can disagree. In another context, that's a different story.

Leadership Kansas is a good thing, and it was very impactful for me as it turns out. I don't know if I would have ended up doing what I have done without that experience, but it certainly made it more likely and gave me more tools and more contacts by participating in it.

Robbie and I have two kids. Holly was born in '75, and Spencer was born in '77. In those years, that, of course, was a new focus and the most important focus, so we were juggling those things.

As I continued down the path, I was first encouraged to run for office in 1996 when Jim Lowther retired. The chairman of the Republican Party at that point in time was Mark Parkinson. I can remember getting a call from Mark and then being visited by the state representative named Bob Tomlinson. I appreciated the interest that they had, but the time was not right. I wasn't at a place in my business or profession that I could make such a commitment. We weren't in a position with our family. Spencer was still at home, and Holly had started college at that point. So part of our discussions, Lloyd Stone's name came up. Lloyd was a good friend and was in the process of getting ready to retire from Emporia State, so he ended up running and was successful with his election.

A couple of years later, after Jerry Karr had retired, Harry Stephens was selected by the party to fill his unexpired term. Harry was running for the first time for re-election. Some of those same "suspects" came back to me and encouraged me to think about running for Senate. My answer and circumstances were pretty much the same. And also, I wasn't really too interested in running against an incumbent, especially an incumbent I pretty much agreed with about 90 percent of the time.

So a couple more years went by, and Lloyd decided to retire after serving three terms. Selfishly, I would have really liked for him to serve another term or two. But Lloyd was just really in his sweet spot. It takes a term or two terms to get the hang of it, and get the experience you need to be influential. When Lloyd retired he was the authority of KPERS and retirement issues. Obviously, he was qualified and respected as a voice on public education and higher education matters, but he wanted to slow down a bit; he wanted the opportunity to be able to golf in February and be in a warm place. By that point in time, Lloyd's middle son John and our daughter Holly were married (2000). Lloyd had been Robbie's mentor and counselor when she went back to school at Emporia State to get her Masters' degree in counseling. So a lot of connections, personal, professional, and family connections with the Stone family, and at this point I had a heads up that he was thinking about retiring. The timing was still not perfect, but

it was much better, and my interest had grown. Slowly, but surely. That's when I made my decision to seek the position in the House of Representatives.

And that was the year that, well, we can't forget the role I played in the Graves administration on the Highway Advisory Commission. And that was very impactful. It was something else to learn about transportation policy. So I had done that, and had a fair amount of contact with the Graves administration, and Bill Graves had become a friend over the previous eight years or so, and that whole relationship had started with Leadership Kansas. So Graves' eight years were ending, and there would be an open seat in the Governor's race. That ended up being a race between Kathleen Sebelius, who had been serving as insurance commissioner, and Tim Shallenberger, who had been a former House Speaker and had been elected and served as State Treasurer. A pretty clear choice. Tim Shallenberger was the first Republican – maybe in forever- that was not a moderate Republican.

Sandy Praeger was running that year, too, for the first time for a statewide office. She had been in the Legislature, and of course, was running to succeed Kathleen Sebelius. Lynn Jenkins had been in the state senate. She was running to become the state treasurer. It was interesting, the little disconnect between the top of the ticket and some of the other folks locally. Dale Bell was running against me as a Democratic candidate for the 60th District. Dale was a good friend and someone who had been involved in public service and had been the city attorney for the city of Emporia and had been in the community and was a solid, solid candidate.

JH: What happened to him?

DH: He still works for TFI. They still live in Emporia. He just works out of town and you just don't see him. It's been months. He and Linda still live over on Coronado.

So that was my first foray into campaign politics. It was something I actually enjoyed. I had tested the waters. I wasn't the United Way Campaign chair because I was trying out politically. But it was something I saw as a by-product; I had been United Way Campaign Chairman, I think in 2000. I had also been Bill Graves' county chairman each of the two times he ran for governor. So I sort of picked up a little bit on some of the how-to's. It was a different game than it is today for sure.

It ended up being a pretty close election. There wasn't very much Dale and I disagreed on. I managed to keep some distance from Tim Shallenberger. Tim was not a radical, you drain the swamp from Gov. Graves and Gov. Finney. My platform was in support for education, support for economic development and jobs, and support for health care. I just took my experience; I had been a business owner involved in the business community, been a healthcare professional

and a product of the education system. Our two kids and Robbie were involved. It ended up being a popularity contest. I may have been a little better known.

JH: To me you were.

DH: Where I might draw a line of distinction in that campaign, one of the things that we didn't hammer on was family. We had two kids that were involved. That might have been the difference. Dale and Linda didn't have kids. It was hard to differentiate. It wasn't as though either of us were latching onto the top of the ticket. Of course, Kathleen ended up winning rather handily here. The 60th District is a very purple district, and it fit me throughout the time I served, and it is still that way.

So that gets us through much of the next 25 years, a little past 25 years. I'm elected.

March 16, 2017 Don Hill, former representative for the 60th District of the Kansas legislature. Interview conducted by Jan Huston

JH: Good morning, Don. We were thinking last week and you had mentioned that a lot of new things were beginning in 2002.

DH: Well, 2002 was the year I ran for a vacant seat in the Kansas House. The vacancy was by virtue of Lloyd Stone's decision to retire after he served six years (3 terms) in the Kansas House; it was also the end of Gov. Bill Graves' tenure as governor. He'd served two four-year terms, and of course, our governor is term limited so he wasn't going to be seeking reelection. It was a bit of an upset of the apple cart because Kathleen Sebelius was running for governor as a Democrat, opening the insurance commissioner seat. That was a state-wide elected office so that was going to be an open seat. A candidate for that seat was Sandy Praeger, who ended up winning that seat. The Republican candidate for governor was Tim Shallenberger. Tim had been the state treasurer, a state-wide elected office, so there were a number of open spots on the state-wide ballot by virtue of shuffling around and by virtue of Gov. Graves' term limit. That was part of the backdrop.

There were also some significant changes in the House of Representatives. Kent Glascock had been the House Speaker, and he had to retire from the Kansas House as he was also a candidate for governor in the Republican primary that he ended up losing. That was actually a pretty crowded Republican primary, and I can't recall all the people who ran. Bob Knight, the former mayor of Wichita, is one that comes to mind. There was just a lot going on. An exciting time.

I had made my decision to run. I came in quickly to meeting a number of the other candidates that were running for the Legislature. That particular year, 2002, there weren't all that many incumbents being challenged. The point is, I had the opportunity pretty early on to start meeting colleagues who were also candidates as we went to different functions.

The class of 2002 was, of course I am biased, a pretty extraordinary group. And to illustrate that, Bill Kassebaum was in that class. Representative Kassebaum ended up being a short-timer, and we can talk about that a little bit later. Bill was one of those that actually did run against and defeat an incumbent, Sherry Weber, who had been the majority leader in the Kansas House. She ran against him again two years later defeating him. Ed O'Malley was a member of that class, and Ed O'Malley is actually now one of those who have announced he is running for governor (2017) Retiring after his third term, he has been the CEO of the Kansas Leadership Center in Wichita. Scott Schwab was a member of that class, and Scott is now the Speaker Pro-Tem in the House. Scott took terms away from the Legislature to run for Congress in the third district against Dennis Moore, the incumbent. Scott was not successful, but he's now back in the Legislature and has been a solid legislator. Josh Svaty was also in that class. He has served in several capacities, among them the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture. That is why he left the legislature when he was appointed to that position and served in the federal Department of Agriculture. Svaty was young when we were elected, still young, but we'll likely be seeing his name in the future as a possible candidate for Governor. Tom Holland was in that class. He's also a Democrat, and he ran for the governor in 2010 when Gov. Brownback ran for his first term. Paul Davis was in that class. Jeff Jack was a classmate. Jeff is not in the legislature any longer; he's now a district court judge in the Parsons area. Kevin Yoder was in that class. Of course, Kevin was elected Kansas Congressman from the third district. Terry Huntington was in that class. Terry served in the Senate after several terms in the house. Cindy Neighbor is actually now serving her third stint in the House. She was elected, then defeated, changed parties, was elected again and then defeated and now she has been elected for the third time. Right now the freshman class that Mark Schreiber was elected to is sort of following the path of that 2002 class that I was a part of.

That class was known for its bi-partisanship, and for forming a freshman caucus which was bi-partisan. The freshman caucus became a little more notorious; the press labeled the group that ended up sort of evolving as the "Sweet Sixteen." It was the time when the Montoy school finance case was in the process of being adjudicated. It was also a time when the state was experiencing some budget difficulties, in a period of recovery. The House had voted for a tax increase to support school funding, but the move had failed in the Senate. All in all, the class of 2002 was a good group of successful people, 27 in all, and 7 of them in their 20's. They continue to be engaged.

My initial impressions of serving in the Kansas House were that it was very exciting. I was experiencing a very steep learning curve. That first year, not only was there a new engaged freshman caucus, but there was also new leadership in the House, due to Kent Glasscock's retirement. It was indeed a honeymoon time. I was appointed to good committees. Of course, the Speaker makes the final decision, but my appointments were to committees I was most interested in: the health care committee, business and labor, economic development and tourism, and the higher education committee.

As members of the higher education committee, we had several important policy pieces that we dealt with. The children of undocumented immigrants were granted in-state tuition. There were several requirements: they had to have been here 3 years, they must speak English, and they must be on a path pursuing citizenship. At that time (January 21, 2003) Monica Hashmi, a representative of Emporia public schools, (her husband Sajad Hashmi was the dean of the business school at ESU) testified as to the benefits of this legislation. This law that we passed in 2003 has withstood no less than half a dozen attempts to repeal.

Another positive experience that we dealt with that first year was when Citizens for Higher Education collaborated with the legislative higher education caucus. This citizen group was composed predominantly of Republican business leaders who recognized the importance of education and saw that working with the Higher Education Committee in the House made up of primarily moderate Republicans and Democrats could lead to positive outcomes. This group continued throughout the Sebelius/Parkinson terms, but has gone into dormancy as a pragmatic decision based on Governor Brownback's choices for the Board of Regents. The caucus's thinking was, "Let's all get along."

The atmosphere in 2002 was very comfortable. Mentors helped smooth the committee-driven process which helped form small groups. Politics that year included voting on school funding for public schools in Kansas, the Montoy case. The lower court had ruled that funding was inadequate and unfair. When it came time to vote, I voted yes. The phone rang. It was Governor Sebelius calling saying, "What are you doing?" In an uncomfortable moment, I knew that our vote had been for a paltry sum, compared to what was needed. From 2003-2005 there was lots of push-back partly because the court was so prescriptive as to its directions regarding public school funding. Eventually in a special session in 2005, the legislature passed an amount that satisfied the court decision. Friendship with Governor Sebelius was a plus. "We only have one Governor at a time, and we better get along" is and always has been my philosophy.

Another piece of legislation we worked on during these years was the Kansas Economic Growth Act which was designed for growing the Kansas economy. Gov. Sebelius was on board in this endeavor, providing leadership throughout. Several elements of this act included the creation

of the Kansas Bio-Science Authority, the creation of centers for excellence, the creation of “rising stars” academic centers for the cancer center at KU, and the NBAF (National Bio and Agro Defense Facility). Unfortunately, most of these programs have been done away with because of scarce resources in the state budget since the 2008 recession and the 2012 tax cuts.

During my early years in the legislature, we passed a pay raise for state employees. The economy was good, and there were balanced budgets after 2004-2005. We did away with the inheritance tax and the tax on new machinery, leading to business expansion; in Emporia, an example was the Hill Pet Nutrition Facility. The franchise tax was eliminated. State government began making investments in public education as a response to the “crumbling classroom” concern of the Board of Regents. Investments were also made to the Kansas Arts Commission, giving the film commission more adequate resources.

Governor Kathleen Sebelius had a great run. She was lucky; perhaps Governor Brownback was just as unlucky. During her terms, recovery from an economic downturn in 2002 was robust. She was a great leader and a good bipartisan partner. It was a good time for business investments. KU Pharmacy School attracted two preeminent scholars, each bringing tens of millions of dollars with them to the school. I was appointed to the health care cost containment task force made up of administrators and policy leader. Doug Mays also selected me to be part of the standing health committee for NCSL (National Conference of State Legislators) peers for health policy. I attended a rural economic development group in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, during this growth period.

In 2006 Governor Sebelius selected Mark Parkinson, a life-long Republican, as her Lt. Governor. She recognized that in this Republican state, her elections needed bi-partisan support. Governor Sebelius had appointed prominent Republicans to her cabinet. Duane Goossen of Goessel was selected as state budget director, and Mike Hayden was made Secretary of Wildlife and Parks/Tourism.

The effects of the world-wide recession of 2008 were beginning to be felt economically in Kansas by early 2009. In-coming President Obama tapped Governor Sebelius to be his Secretary of Health and Human Services, so Lt. Gov. Mark Parkinson succeeded her to the governorship. Troy Findley, the governor’s chief of staff, was appointed Lt. Governor and continued as chief of staff. Gov. Parkinson walked in to put out fires and put his thumb on the dike economically. A dip in revenues followed hard, and the legislature had to defer payment on school finance in the Montoy case. 2009 was OK, but by 2010, it was clear spending would have to be cut or funding increased.

Gov. Parkinson’s State of the State speech may have been the best speech I heard during my tenure in public service. He proposed a 1% increase in sales tax to balance the budget.

Ultimately, this sales tax was passed, probably because it was easily implemented. Other choices were more progressive but more difficult, practically and politically.

Much good policy work was done in this time. I was a more senior moderate Republican. I saw myself as a convenor. A 10-year Comprehensive Transportation Plan was approved. A Clean Indoor Air Act prohibited smoking in indoor places. These acts were passed by close votes, bipartisan votes. The Primary Seat Belt Law passed although the Republican House chairman opposed it. A Libertarian, he believed big government didn't have the right to dictate, and he felt it would cost too much.

Another policy item that stands out which passed in 2010 was the limited expansion of gaming when the legislature permitted state-owned casinos. We already had the lottery and parimutual betting. This law expanded gambling within four areas of the state. Governor Sebelius supported this contentious legislation. It was added as an amendment which was criticized by opponents, but it did pass by a narrow margin. The downside, of course, is problem gamblers and social ills. The upside was that it helped the state budget because money was designated for economic development, investment, and infrastructure. After money needed to mitigate problems of gaming was subtracted, then money could be used by the state.

Finally, an energy grand compromise was arrived at. A coal plant proposed for Holcomb, KS, had been approved by the legislature. Gov. Sebelius had vetoed it, but the Senate overruled her veto. I supported the proposal with reservations. I was impressed with the cleanliness of the proposed plant. It might be "leading edge" in sequestration of carbon dioxide. I saw that we might export energy across Kansas, but the Governor had vetoes because of clean energy concerns. Governor Parkinson then worked on this issue to consider a smaller capacity facility in Holcomb tied to renewable portfolio standards – wind/solar. Parkinson negotiated this well, arriving at a creative, pragmatic compromise – best leadership ever! Unfortunately, here we are 9 years later (2017) with a lawsuit over this plant unresolved. It could have been built by now, but would it be economically viable?

The 2010 election cycle saw Governor Parkinson deciding not to seek reelection. He could have run two times more, but he chose not to. It was well-known that Senator Sam Brownback was going to return to Kansas and run for Governor. There was no doubt about his strength as a candidate. Democrats didn't have much of a "bench". Tom Holland became their nominee. Taxes had been raised during Parkinson's governorship. These things factored into Parkinson's decision.

"Dark Money" – American for Prosperity and Campaign for Growth – came out with their big guns. I was targeted. Postcards came out accusing me of wanting an 18% tax increase. Most moderate Republicans came out OK with the exception of one Johnson County representative

who was vulnerable because she was pro-choice. Her vote for the power plant attacked her as an anti-jobs candidate. By November, Democrat candidates were attacked in the same way the dark money attacked moderate Republicans. Mainly the tax increase was the issue.

Brownback's coattails brought in many conservatives: less government, personal responsibilities, individual freedom.

Sixteen Kansas Democrats were defeated in the House in 2010, going from 46 to 30 out of 125. This was a game changer. Bipartisan coalitions had been possible during Parkinson's term. With the loss of 16 Democrats, this became less possible. By 2012, the conservative right really came after moderates. Eight senators were defeated: Tim Owens, Senate President Steve Morris, Pete Brungart, Bob Marshall, Roger Reitz, Jean Schodorf, Ruth Teichman, Dwayne Umbarger. John Vratil retired. The landscape really changed in 2010 and 2012. The pendulum, swung for the House in 2010 and for the Senate in 2012. Certainly the philosophy changed to smaller government. Any budget surplus for 2008 was spent down along with budgets being cut in 2009.

It is really important for legislators to have mentors. I was fortunate to have several mentors. Kenny Wilk of the Lansing/Leavenworth area, and Ward Lloyd, a Garden City attorney who was the unofficial leader of the moderate Republicans, were two of my mentors. Lloyd was appointed to the Kansas Corporation Commission by Parkinson, but Brownback did not reappoint him. Bob Bethel was another mentor. Bob was a Baptist minister who was killed in a car wreck in 2013. Tim Owens was defeated in 2012, and Steve Morris, the long-time Senate president, was also defeated that year. These men meant a great deal in my professional growth as a legislator.

Remodeling of the capitol began in 2002 and finished in 2014. The Capitol building is built in four quadrants: east, west, north, south, and rotunda. The Docking Office Building was used when offices were being worked on. A 2-story structure is under each quadrant. Remodeling the building was a huge investment, \$350 million, but it will last for decades as a modern, functional, technologically modern building. In the 14 years I served in the legislature, I had 9 different offices!

The importance of a full-time professional staff cannot be overstated. They make materials available to Kansans and to legislators. The Legislative Services Office manages the building, maintenance, security, personnel management, and scheduling of the building. The clerical staff work only during the legislative season. Each legislator shares a secretary with other legislators. Senators each have their own secretary. The Legislative Research Department is composed of subject specialists: attorneys, economists, interns, etc. The Revisors of Statutes

Interviews of Don Hill by Jan Huston, March 9 and March 16, 2017

Office is manned by lawyers to do legal work, reconciling laws with national and state statutes. The Computer Department keeps everything running, coordinated, and secure.