Interview with DOUG MAYS by Alan Conroy, September 25, 2020
Kansas Oral History Project, Inc.

Alan Conroy: Good afternoon. The date is September 25, 2020, and at 3:00 p.m., here we're in the House Chambers at the Kansas State House here in Topeka, Kansas. I'm Alan Conroy, a forty-year-plus state employee with the majority of that state service working in the Kansas Legislative Research Department, the central nonpartisan research and budget staff for the legislature.

Today I'm going to be interviewing Speaker Doug Mays, who served fourteen years in the legislature. He served as Speaker Pro Tem in 1999 and 2000 and then Speaker of the House for four sessions from 2003 to 2006. Ultimately Speaker Mays decided not to run for re-election, but he has served on the KPERS Board of Trustees, including being the Chairperson of the KPERS Board of Trustees. He also had a Congressional run.

I'm going to be conducting this interview on behalf of the Kansas Oral History Project, Incorporated, a not-for-profit corporation created for the purpose of interviewing legislators. The interviews will be made accessible to researchers and educators, and the interviews are funded in part by a grant from the Humanities Kansas. The audio and video equipment is being operated by former Speaker Pro Tem David Heinemann.

Speaker Mays is from Topeka. He's a former Securities Arbitrator and Consultant. He was a Securities Commissioner of Kansas from 1987 to 1991. He currently operates a governmental consulting firm here in Topeka. He's married to Lena and has two children.

Speaker Mays was elected to the House in 1992 and served here in this chamber for the next fourteen sessions. He represented at least at that time District 54, which covered parts of Topeka, the city of Auburn, and the townships of Auburn, part of Mission Township and part of Williams Port Township. While he was in the House, he served on numerous committees—Judiciary, Local Government, Taxation, Federal and State Affairs, a Select Committee on Tobacco Securitization, State Tribal Relations, a Select Committee on Redistricting, Interstate Cooperation, Rules and Journal, Calendar and Printing, a Select Committee on Broadcasting, the Legislative Branch Budget, the Select Committee on Revenue Amortization, and the Joint Committee on Legislative Post-Audit.

So lots of different committees through those fourteen years. But maybe we can just start out, and you can tell us a little something about your life before you entered the legislature. I believed you were born in Pittsburg?

Doug Mays: Born in Pittsburg, raised there, and graduated from Pittsburg State University. That's where I met my wife.

AC: So all your time you've been within Kansas?

DM: Yes. No, actually, I spent one year when I was in seventh grade in San Diego, California.

AC: How did that happen?

DM: My sister had had rheumatic fever and had some problems. The doctor suggested we go to a warmer, dryer climate. We had relatives in San Diego. We went. She miraculously seemed to get better and was having a good time as a senior in high school. My parents decided that Kansas was a better place to raise children. We came back.

AC: Had your family ever been involved in politics before?

DM: Just a little bit. I know my grandfather, my mother's father was very much involved in politics in southeast Kansas, Cherokee County. It was not a good time to be a Republican back then. Just about everybody was a Democrat back then. Things have kind of changed since then. But my mother was a precinct committeewoman for some time. As the election would roll around, back then, everything was extremely low tech. She would grab a clipboard and some stuff and grab me, and we would go door to door throughout the precinct and find out if everyone still lived there, and were they registered to vote, and if they were unaffiliated, she would urge them to become Republicans.

&I actually hated that. It was a surprise for myself and everybody, especially my wife, when I decided to run for office. Do you want to know why I ran for office?

AC: Sure. Please. Yes.

DM: I ran in 1976. We moved here in '72. I graduated in '72. Frankly, there weren't any jobs in southeast Kansas. We came up here. I had a state representative. I don't think I'll mention his name. I think he may still be around. I know he's up in Chicago, and he is a trial lawyer, so I don't want to say anything that might get me in some trouble. But the fact is, I was with Channel 27 at the time. He had purchased some television ads for an apartment complex he just started. The ads worked. They rented out everything, and then they refused to pay the bill. The TV station took him to court. It was incredible how much he perjured himself on the stand. He just told lies. I was outraged. This was my state representative. He happened to be a Democrat. It wouldn't have mattered anyway. If he had been a Republican, I would have been just as mad.

Not too long after that, I was walking through the Ramada Inn and saw a sign that said, “Republican State Headquarters.” I went in, sat down with the Executive Director, told her why this person had to leave office. I think I used the word “crook.” She said, “Well, you're a fine-looking young man. Why don't you run?” I said, “Yeah, right.” She said, “No, I'm dead serious. Let me give you some things.” It was a Republican district. Unfortunately, that was right on the tail end of Watergate, and I didn't know anybody in this town. I had only been there for two-and-a-half years. I was twenty-five years old.

I went out there, and my wife was expecting our first child. It was pretty crazy, if you think about it. I worked my tail off. The night before the election, I prayed, and the prayer went

something like this: Dear God, if it be Your Will, I'd like to win, but if not, I'd like to lose big because I kind of like this, and I think I'm going to be hooked if I don't lose big.

Well, I lost a close one, maybe 2 percent. It was a crushing defeat. I gave up on politics. But I stuck around. [Representative] Bill Bunten, who was one of my mentors, was [Shawnee] County Chair. He urged me to get involved in the county [party]. I ended up being County Chair in '79. I did that for four years.

Then along came City Council, a brand new City Council [Topeka changed its form of government]. I wasn't exactly enamored with being a City Councilman. I just thought it would be cool to put a new government together. So I joined that. We worked on that.

Four years later, I was pretty much bored. Gary Fleenor, who was a well-known person here in town, started at the same time I did. Our joke was we not only knew the answers to the questions when people asked them, we knew the questions before they asked them. So I chose not to run again.

By that time, I'd been involved in Mike Hayden's campaign for Governor. We were successful. I left the broadcast industry sometime before and was in securities. He made me Securities Commissioner. I thought, “That’s the end of my career.”

Then Joan Finney got elected [governor, 1990]. Of course, as a gubernatorial appointment, I was out as Securities Commissioner. Once again, I was bored. I thought, “I'm going to run for the legislature again, and maybe I'll feel better about that loss back in '76.” I really felt bad about that.

So I won. I ran against [Representative] Bill Roy, Jr. Actually Bill Roy, Jr. pulled out of the race when I got in. I ran against another lady.

AC: Was it Judy Springer?

DM: Yes. She ended up being really good friends with my wife. That's the kind of opponent you want.

AC: I noticed that first campaign, for this race, you spent $9,880.

DM: How much is that in today's dollars?

AC: You mentioned Bill Bunten, Governor Hayden, just in terms of any mentors, people, either locally or maybe even at the national level that maybe might have spurred that interest in politics?

DM: I had three mentors. One was Bill Bunten. The other one was Alf Landon, the second one. Alf Landon, when I became County Chair, he called—actually Judy, his assistant called me and

said, “Governor Landon would like to have lunch with you.” They had that restaurant on Sixth Street, Tommy's, that he loved. I think he liked it because the waitress always had a cigarette for him. He bummed cigarettes off of waitresses.

I would pick him up twice a month, maybe it was every other week. I don't recall. We'd go there, and we'd talk politics. He took kind of a shine to me. He got very angry with me when I ran for City Council. He said, “You should be running for something better than that. What are you doing?” We had that relationship until his health started failing him towards the very end.

You think Bill Bunten and Alf Landon. These are two pretty big names around here. The third one was [Representative] Marvin Smith, a crusty old farmer from northern Shawnee County. Marvin had a different look at things. He didn't waste any words. He had a lot of good advice for me when I came into the legislature. The first one was one we used to hear a lot around here. I was a freshman. I said, “What do I need to know?” and he said, “Always leave yourself a back door.” He said, “Don't trust the NEA.” He hated the NEA [National Education Association]. The other one was, “For your first two sessions, sit down and shut up.” I managed to do that the first session, not so much the second. They really shaped my career.

AC: During your legislative career, those three bits of wisdom, you followed those?

DM: And I have to credit my wife. She's not a political person. If she thought that I was over the top on something or I needed to do something, she would tell me. I knew that when she was speaking to me, she was speaking for the public because she was always in tune with what was going on out there and with regular folks not involved in the political process. She never really wanted me to get into politics. She cried when I told her I was running both times. When I told her I was running for the State House, she was very supportive, and she just has to this day, a good head on her shoulders when it comes to things like that.

AC: That's great. Do you remember the first time when you came—you got elected, and you came down to the Well, maybe to carry a piece of legislation? Do you remember that by chance?

DM: Sort of. For some reason, each of the committees, it might have been my second year, I believe it was, I carried three bills. The first two just went right through. I think there's something to be said when a freshman goes to the Well [podium in House chamber]. Everyone assumes that it's a simple bill, and they don't pay much attention.

We had a Local Government Chair, Nancy Brown. Nancy just had terrible luck getting anything passed. She had a bill she wanted really bad, and she asked me to stay after. I was on the Local Government Committee, and she asked me to stay. She said, “Doug, you may have noticed, I can't seem to get anything across the floor, and I've got this bill here that has to do with townships.” She was really into township laws. “Can you carry that? That would be a big favor.” I said, “Okay, I'll do that, but I need something from you.” She said, “What’s that?” I said, “We

don't talk about reining in unilateral annexation anymore." I'd been on City Council. "Okay." That ended that. I carried the bill, and it passed. That's the one I remember.

AC: I noticed, I looked through, in terms of your career in the legislature, you had 352, with your name on it, bills, resolutions, or concurrent resolutions. Those first three years, your name was on 120 bills. I think it was like 51 bills the second year. There must have been lots of things you were willing to tackle.

DM: [Representative] Susan Wagle was my roommate, my office mate. She would toss these bills over to my desk, "You need to sign this one." I'd look at it and say, "Well, okay." There were one or two that I wish I hadn't. I got in a little trouble. I didn't read the bill clearly. I learned that the hard way.

Back then they circulated a lot of bills with names on them, not so much today. Today I would say it's got to be 5 percent, maybe 1 in every 20 bills that has any names on it, and then maybe a few. Back then, you'd request a bill from a revisor [Revisor of Statutes office], and then you shop it around. If you get enough people to sign it, it would probably go. Leadership would have to run it.

AC: Do you think that was a better process, to have those names on it?

DM: I think it's more meaningful if you have a couple of names on it, two or three. Then you can really understand, and you know who to go talk to. Of course, the main sponsors in the bills were the first names. They could still do it if they wanted to. They just don't.

AC: Some of those committees that I mentioned that you served on—Tax, Legislative Affairs, Redistricting, Post-Audit, some pretty interesting and key committees.

DM: I loved Tax because it was something different every day. When I was on Fed and State [Federal and State Affairs], it was kind of the same. I ended up chairing Fed and State. I called it the Gun, Booze, Gambling, and Abortion Committee. We got all the bills that no other committee wanted, or it didn't fit in another committee. You never knew what was coming up in there, and it was tough, tough issues. Tax though was probably my favorite.

AC: Any particular issues on Tax or maybe on Federal and State Affairs that percolates up that was a big issue, a tough issue?

DM: As Chair of Fed and State or as a member of Fed and State—I was a member when I was Pro Tem, and I wasn't expected to go to committee all that often. They needed me, and they'd come get me. I'd go down. It was customary back then that everyone but maybe the Speaker and the Majority Leader would go ahead and serve on committees.

I can't think of too much. We got into some things in the Federal and State Affairs that got to be pretty deep. It was aimed mostly at SRS [Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services].

Why it came to our committee, I can only speculate, but SRS was taking away parental rights, sometimes a little quickly it appeared, based on accusations. There were fathers who hadn't seen their kids in months and months and months because they were accused of something, and they could never get a hearing. I told them I had a one-day hearing. It turned into about six days. That one was probably the one that—some things came out of it, but it was just terrible.

I have to say that the abortion bills—there was a lot of acrimony, people from both sides. It was something I didn't enjoy, but it was a big issue so we had hearings. Guns was always fun, but we didn't do anything. We just let it go.

AC: Had a hearing, let people have their say.

DM: Yes. My thing with taxes was I came into office believing that taxes were maybe a bit high, certainly shouldn't go up. They had to really convince me that we really, really, really needed the tax. I think the only tax I really voted for was the sales tax for Washburn University that eliminated the property tax. I knew this from doing a lot of door to door. Anyone that has been in the legislature knows that the public doesn't object as much to sales tax, although it's a lot higher now than it used to be than they do to property taxes. Any way I could lower property taxes, I looked for it.

AC: Never any interest in Appropriations?

DM: Several Speakers wanted to put me on Appropriations. I think they wanted to get rid of me. Appropriations, by the time the session is over, they're all very pale, a lack of sunlight. I'm not a numbers guy. I think it takes a certain kind of a person. It always amused me that these freshmen would come in, and they always asked for Appropriations. We'd send the sheet out to the freshmen and say, “Here are the bills for this time period and this time period. Do not ask for Appropriations,” and half of them would ask for Appropriations.” And they had to have done something pretty wrong to get assigned to it.

You want your best people on Appropriations. If there's any one thing that we have to get right in the legislature, it's the budget. It's the only thing that the Constitution absolutely mandates.

AC: You've got to do it.

DM: The #1 responsibility of the legislature is oversight. The Governor comes in with a budget. They have to in a period of about roughly fifty to sixty days really, take it apart, examine it, put it back together. We used to do the budget piecemeal. It was horribly difficult. It was during Tim Shallenburger's term as Speaker that they came back with the idea of the big budget at subcommittees. That helped a lot.

AC: I noticed you did resolutions, of course, during your career, and just some of the names, of course, that are just honoring individuals—Marvin Harder, Wanda Fuller, Richard Ryan, Don Smith, Ben Forster, Lew Ferguson, Herman Dillon.

DM: I liked Herman Dillon. There's two bridges named after him in Wyandotte County. Actually those are sort of perfunctory. Someone will get a resolution together, and they would announce, “There's a resolution for Herman Dillon. Anyone that does not wish to have their name on that, let us know.” I don't think I ever let anyone know I didn't want a name on the resolution.

AC: Fred Weaver? I saw there was one for Fred Weaver that your name was on.

DM: He was a southeast Kansan. I never met Fred Weaver or his wife. His wife also served on the Tax Authority or whatever they called it, the Appeals Board [Board of Tax Appeals – BOTA].

AC: Then I saw, of course, some resolutions, giving your district, honoring the Washburn football team and the Washburn women's basketball team.

DM: Washburn's rural women's soccer team. They came in one year. We didn't bring them down front all of the time back then. When I was Speaker, I just wanted to get on with the show. I wouldn't even allow the members to acknowledge—I guess they did. It started basically—I think it was Shallenburger didn't want them pointed out, anyone in the gallery. That started up again under Jenison. I just sort of went with it.

AC: I noticed back in 1993, I guess your first bill that you sponsored, it was the crime of carjacking.

DM: Carjacking was a problem. It ended up being a federal offense. Like many of our laws on a federal basis, there were a number of states that had troubles and made carjacking a very serious offense.

AC: Just looking down through some of the lists, '93, there were abortion counseling limitations on performing abortions, Constitutional amendment on limiting levy of taxes and expenditures by the state, a spending limit ball, a Constitutional amendment on—

DM: Everyone at some point in time, every year or two, someone had an idea on how we could amend the Constitution to rein in spending. It never, ever, ever got the number of votes.

AC: One of them was limiting the years of service for House and Senate members in the legislature.

DM: Yes. I don't know how I became Speaker after that one. It was myself—I can't remember who else it was, but there were two of us. I think it was the House and Senate, federal. We had a term-limits bill for House and Senate members, legislators, and we had one for the federal. I carried the federal. Both of them failed by very close margins. The federal, that was never going to fly. That stuff isn't set—but I thought to make a point. There were a lot of people that really wanted that stuff. I will tell you, when we had a committee, what it called for was—and I was

pushing real hard for the legislative, the state legislature. There was a meeting, and the guy flies in from Washington from the Term Limits of America group or whatever. He comes in to the meeting and is going to testify. He looks at the bill. He sees that I have a twelve-year limit, and he just go up and walked out and went and got on the plane and went home. They wanted four to six years. That wouldn't work. It was an exercise in futility. I got a few people off my back.

AC: You mentioned property taxation, appeals, the burden of proof, income tax deduction for health care insurance premiums, sales tax exemptions for certain foods, sales tax exemptions for zoos is one of them.

DM: That one I don't remember.

AC: In 1998, here's one, memorializing Congress to sunset the IRS code.

DM: That one must have come out of Wichita. I don't remember that, honestly.

AC: That was 1998. But sales tax rate decrease on food, senior pharmacy assistance program.

DM: I liked that one.

AC: Grandparents as Foster Parents Act.

DM: That was an important one. SRS at one time, I think they made the assumption that if the parents were bad parents, then the grandparents—and that all changed, not because of that, but it helped get things going. I can't think of the SRS Chair that turned that around. All of those things resulted in an SRS oversight. I think that was one of the better things that SRS did, when they began looking at grandparents to take care of kids when they had irresponsible parents.

AC: Senator Stan Clark Pregnancy Maintenance Initiative Program, sales tax holiday for school supplies, clothing, and computers. If you looked back over those 300 and some plus bills, certainly tax, fiscal control, social service reform, education, pro-life, I think all kind of were themes in at least things you got your name on one way or another.

DM: I wouldn't have signed them if I didn't think it looked like a pretty good idea. I will tell you, the longer I was in and the higher I went in leadership, the more discerning I was as to what I would sign because then people begin to look at it and say, “This is what leadership wants,” and they should make their mind up themselves on that. I don't think I signed anything when I was Speaker.

AC: When you were Speaker, most of them were functional, organization, and seeding and those kinds of things.

DM: The ones I was proudest of was changing the way we fund Washburn.

There was a bill that we sort of inherited because one of the senior members of the legislature left it, and that was a bill that allowed the cities to designate certain portions of their communities as blighted, and then set a mechanism whereby if you built a house or improved a house—I don't remember if it included commercial, too, then the additional value that the appraiser would accept for that house, you would not be taxed on that. You would get that money back, the increase in the form of a rebate. That made some real difference.

We had one, too, that allowed local governments to rezone large swaths of land within a city. We had an absolute mess in Topeka. Everything north of the river was industrial. You had real live neighborhoods up there, and if someone wanted to put a factory right in the middle of it, they could. Those were two things that I was proud of.

AC: Just reflecting back over those fourteen years, driving issues in those sessions, was it usually tax? Was it education? Was it the budget? Was it gaming?

DM: Well, the budget is always a big thing, and gaming—at that time, I opposed gaming. However, if they had the votes to bring it out of committee, they probably had the votes to bring it above the line. There were some very close votes. I got in trouble with a portion of my caucus because I would not go to extraordinary measures to stop a vote on something. I remember one or two of the members in committee in a caucus really were pretty hotheaded with me and accused me of things that weren't true. It failed when the vote came. I kind of wondered what was all the hubbub about.

But the truth is, every time a bill came through, and I read every single bill. If you have seen a lot of the bills, they look voluminous, but really what you look for is kind of what the base statute is about, and then you look at the italicized parts—What are they changing? What are they putting in new?

After you read so many hundreds and thousands of bills, you get pretty fast. I read every single bill. I took them home with me at night, if I had to. Anything that had to do with taxes or spending, I looked at through the lens of "What does this do for jobs in Kansas? Does it create jobs? Is it going to cost jobs? Is it neutral?" If it was going to cost us jobs, then I would generally find a way to fix it or oppose it.

AC: And just that process, particularly when you were Speaker, allowing I guess in some ways for the issues to navigate through the process rather than—some of your predecessors sometimes—

DM: That wasn't my style. I believed in the process. I believed that as Speaker, I was the keeper, the protector of the process. I also never believed that just because someone was in a different party or had a different philosophy that there was something wrong with them, that they were bad people, or that they had motivations that were not pure.

I believed, and you can go back and look at my—I gave the same speech probably four times here, but I believe that not so much in celebrating our differences, but recognizing the differences. We're all a product of our childhood, what we were taught in school and especially at home. Then we all have our life experiences to shape our philosophies. I was never so ignorant or stupid as to believe that my philosophy was the best. I know that not to be true because through the years, I had made course corrections based on things I learned, and I was convinced I was wrong on some things.

I believed that the process for the most part had to work. The only time I would really step in and try to shut things down was when I saw a foolish bill coming out of some committee that was going to tie us in knots and furnish all kinds of postcard material for the next campaign.

After you've been here for a while, you know what's going to pass and not. I'll give you one good example. There was something that came out of Colorado. I can't remember what it was called[1]. If the revenues went up a certain amount or based on the population that controlled the amount of taxation, the amount of spending and everything, it really looked good on paper. In fact, it did fail years later, and they had to repeal it, but that was all the hot thing. I had one or two people here who just had to have it. It ran once and failed big time. I had one state rep from Wichita who became convinced—the state chamber convinced her to run again, and they pressured me and pressured me. Finally I told the chamber, I said, “All right. I'll run it, but I can tell you right now exactly what will happen.” They said, “Oh, no, it will pass. It will pass.” I got the Minority Leader, and I told him it was coming. I said, “Get your amendments ready. They've probably still got the ones you ran last time.”

The first thing out of the gate was to exempt them from any cuts for childhood inoculations. Then it went on and on and on and on. By the time it was done, all that was left was our budget for the legislature. That was the first time around.

The second time, the Democrats got smart. They figured out that the woman that was carrying this had an Achilles heel, and that was children's programs. She cared about children's programs more than anything. They had a couple of warm-up amendments that failed. On the third or fourth one, they brought up one that had to do with kids, and the woman carrying the bill voted for it.

All of a sudden, there were all of these people up here that said, “Wait a minute. If she's going to vote for it, we're going to vote for it.” They started voting for all the amendments. That's when I went to the mic that time. I said, “I think this needs to go back to committee and work on it a little bit.”

But those were the kinds of things that I didn't like, and I would stop. If something did not—if it was so much out of step with the way people in this state think, and I mean, the broad number of people. I tried not to base it on a location or anything because every part of this state thinks

[1] TABOR – Taxpayer Bill of Rights limited the growth rate of revenues to population growth and inflation.

it's victimized by the other parts of the state. Johnson County, everybody is out to get them. I grew up in southeast Kansas, and we thought everybody hated us. Of course, it was true. Western Kansas thinks that way. Wichita thinks it's because they're successful, and nobody likes them. I figure there must be one county somewhere that thinks everyone loves them.

I do want to say before we get too far down that I owe a lot of my success to bring some civility to the House, and we did. We knew we had a problem coming in. I had a Republican caucus that was divided four different ways. I had three distinct groups of conservatives. They all hated each other, and I had the moderates. I figured out—I sat around and tried to figure out, "What is it that will bring this caucus together?" I figured out it is business issues. I'd save my business issues up. We'd have a really nasty debate. Then I would come back the next day with a business issue and kind of bring people together.

Overall the civility that came about, and you talk to just about anybody that served here during that time, things calmed down a great deal. I can't say nice enough things about the Minority Leader, Dennis McKinney. Dennis and I just happened to be good friends. We came in together, the same class. We were on Tax and sat next to each other and agreed on most things. The second term, he sat directly across from me, and we had hand signals, I swear. I trusted him; he trusted me.

The day we were sworn in, the same day, he came in my office, and we both shook hands and agreed that we would never lie to each other. So many times he would come to me and say, "We have a problem with this, and I would say, "We have a problem with what you're doing here." We'd try to find some way to work it out.

We went beyond that without even planning it. The body needed to see that the two leaders of the caucuses got along. Every now and then, I'd take a piece of paper, I'd walk over there and stand in the aisle, and Dennis would look at it, and we'd talk about it and laugh a little bit. A week or two later, he'd come over here and be standing right about here. That went a message to the body, "Get along."

I also had a speech that I delivered about four times. I delivered it basically when I became Pro Tem. I did it again in greater detail when I accepted the speaker position, and then every year, I'd work parts of it in. I told people that we're not senators. We're not governors. We're not judges. We're representatives. We have to represent the people back home, all of the people back home, and that we can't judge people or work against people, shouldn't, because of what their philosophy is.

We had all kinds of people in the legislature. I used to say we had PhDs and GEDs. We had Republicans, Democrats, men and women from every nook and cranny of this state. It's a miracle we got things done, to tell you the truth, but I would preach to them and say, "Don't celebrate your differences. Just understand them. Let's try to work together." It really worked to a large extent. That's one of the things I was proudest of when I left the legislature was that we had people kind of working together.

AC: Do you think that civility is still in the Chamber today?

DM: I'm not close enough to the process today to know. I'll tell you, if you have leaders in both parties that are willing to work together, and it's a little different, too, I think when you get a governor of a different party than the legislature. It's a whole different dynamic. I had [Governor] Kathleen Sebelius. Fortunately, I knew Kathleen Sebelius pretty well. I wouldn't call her like a close friend. We never had each other over to each other's house for dinner although she did invite me up to Cedar Crest for breakfast one time.

AC: There you go.

DM: I offered to do the dishes. She said, "That's okay." Anyway, it is a different dynamic, and I felt pretty good about things when I left.

AC: When you were elected Speaker in 2003, I guess, for the 2003 session, you had forty votes, twenty-one votes for Kenny Wilk.

DM: That was exactly the number I needed.

AC: And eighteen for Mike O'Neal.

DM: And Kenny Wilk. I beat those two guys when I ran for Pro Tem. Then I won again against the same two guys.

AC: You must have felt pretty good about the votes going into that, when they voted that day for the organization.

DM: I thought I had forty. The truth is, and I tell anyone who runs for leadership, always go out there and get about 10 percent more votes than you need lined up because you're never going to get all of them. I thought I had forty-four votes, and I had forty. It's just the way it works. People are people. Some people can't say no. You got out and ask them for a vote. They say, "Sure, yes. I'll vote for you." Something maybe happens down the road or whatever, but they change their mind. That didn't bother me.

AC: A special session in 2005 over school funding.

DM: Yes, that was the worst part of my whole political career. My wife says I should write a book. I just say, "Who the hell would read it?" It was awful. I enjoyed every day I was in the legislature, but those two weeks of special session, it was just a living hell for me.

I don't blame it all on the legislature. I don't blame it on the Governor. I blame it on the Supreme Court. The votes were there to do what was done. The votes were there the day that we gaveled in. They were there. But the Supreme Court screwed up royally when they said—

instead of saying the decision of the Supreme Court is that in order to fulfill the Constitutional duty or mandate concerning K-12 education, that the legislature must provide equal to or more, that this is adequate funding. That was what I thought it was about.

Instead they said, the Supreme Court therefore orders the legislature to appropriate on this day this amount of money. It was like gasoline on the fire. We looked at that, and I remember saying, “What is wrong with those people?” Were they all playing hooky on the day that Constitutional law was being taught about separation of powers? It was arrogance.

I had a large portion of the caucus, a majority of the Republican caucus, that said, “We're here until we get a Constitutional amendment. We're not going to let it go,” and it went on and on and on and on. The truth is, I don't think that the Governor had that much opposition, but the people around her hated it, and I think there were a number of Democrats in the House that would have voted for it, too, but it was not meant to be.

The way the session ended, I knew how to end that session. I couldn't believe there was a bill that was below the line, and it was just sitting there. I kept saying, “I wonder why they haven't brought that above the line.” They had the votes.

This went on for two weeks. Finally Dennis McKinney comes into my office, the Minority Leader, and says, “We're going to put this thing to bed later today.” I said, “How are you going to do that?” and he told me. I said, “What took you so long? It's been sitting there.” I did not have the power to move it. Had I would have done it, it would have been a firestorm.

This is where I got in trouble with the conservatives. I've always been a realist. If it's going, then let's get what we can. We managed to get a lot of things put into that bill that were things that we had insisted on. The Democrats agreed to it, and it passed, and we went home.

It was such an ugly session. We came very, very close to adjourning early. My Majority Leader, Clay Aurand, and I, and a few other people that we could trust to not go out and talk, we had decided that we were going to adjourn, sine die. This was after about a week. We were getting nowhere. It's easy to do. You sit up there. Everyone expects the Majority Leader to come up and make a motion to adjourn for the day. He was going to go to the mic, and I would call on him, and he would say, “Mr. Speaker, I move that the House adjourn sine die.” I'd say, “You heard the motion. All of those in favor say “aye”. The ayes have it,” hit the gavel, and get out of that chair and into my office. Once you drop the gavel to adjourn, you're out of there, it's over. You can't call it back.

Just about five minutes before we're ready to get out, Ray Merrick comes in, the Pro Tem. Of all people, Ray Merrick came in and said, “The Governor wants to meet with you. You don't want to do that.” I said, “Why? We know what she's going to say.” “It looks bad if you don't. Let's go.”

I said, “All right. We'll put it off.” I went down there. They were waiting for me. Until certain people are no longer in this world, I don't want to talk about the things that happened there unless you can get it from someone else, but it was ugly. I've never been treated like that. I'll just clear the air. It wasn't the Governor that treated me like that.

It was pretty bad. I was mad it came up. I don't even remember coming into the Chamber, I was so mad. We took the caucus at midnight. It was 11:00 or midnight. We went up to the fourth floor and met, told them all, “Here's the decision. Do we adjourn now and go home, or do we stick around and try to get a Constitutional amendment?” That's what some of them were advocating. Or what?

I had eighty-some members in my caucus. They all got up and talked. It was like 2:00 in the morning before we were done. My poor wife. She had never attended a caucus. She wanted to come down and kind of see what was going on. I looked back there. Usually she would have nodded off by that time. She was in tears the whole time.

We took a vote, and it was overwhelming—hold out for the Constitutional amendment. That added another week to it. It was hard. It ruined any chances that I would ever be able to run for Governor, which it's been suggested to me that maybe that was part of the plan. I don't know. It was awful. That two weeks was horrible.

AC: Then, on the other side, so that was maybe the most difficult, anything that you feel really proud of or anything either you were able to accomplish or maybe something didn't happen because of your efforts?

DM: There were some things that most people don't care about. Like I said, the whole demeanor, things changed, and I can't take credit for all of it. Former members of the House remember how noisy it was in the House during general orders, and I was sitting up in the chair one day of final action and thinking about how quiet it was in the Chamber, and what a good job the Minority Leader and I had done. Then I realized three-quarters of the seats had their laptops open. They were texting each other. I can't take credit for that.

We did the Bioscience Authority, which was a great idea, and it should have worked, but things went bad down the road. The wrong people got on the board. They decided they were going to have secret meetings, and there were some self-dealing that went on, and it blew up after about ten years. That was a real shame.

We put together, initially over the Governor's objections, the Health Authority. That was again another separation of powers. She kind of mishandled it. She didn't really talk to us about it ahead of time. We knew that health care was a big deal and a growing deal. We knew that something had to be done. If she would have just talked to us, we would have worked with her on it, but she sent an Executive Organization Order down with no—we didn't know about it until it showed up. That looked like a power grab, and the caucus didn't like it. The leadership didn't like it. So we put our own together.

But in our defense, towards the very end, we gave in. She said, “I'm going to veto this unless you give me another member on the board.” So we gave her another member, which meant that with the Minority Leader of both Houses, and I think she had three votes then, she had control of it, which didn't bother me nearly as much as others. I always thought that the legislature has not business deciding the boards on the organizations or committees or task forces or anything. That is permanently in statute. It didn't bother me, but that was a big one, I think. I have to think they've had some good effect.

We did not raise taxes in the four years that I was there which I took to be a major accomplishment because taxes went up almost every year prior to that that I was in the legislature. I would say that may be it, and the Washburn thing.

AC: I did notice in 2006, again with school funding and the litigation that you got in trouble with your wife over a comment you made about Alan Roupe.

DM: Oh, yes, Alan Roupe. For the record, Alan Roupe was the attorney for some school districts that brought the litigation, brought the lawsuit that led us to the special session of '05. The special session of '05 was about the amount of money. The issue in '06 was who got it. Johnson County put the full court press on. I really just sort of stepped back and just put together like a special committee. They were all working together, and the Senate was involved and everything. I remember the Minority Leader, Dennis McKinney, coming in, and he was upset because he said, “Every time we get a deal, these guys come back and say, 'We want more.'”

That happened about three times, and McKinney was just about ready—Dennis is a great guy, but he does have a temper. He had had it. I said, “Okay, I guess it's up to you and me to figure out what's going to happen then.” I said, “Look, what do you want?” He said, “I want to take care of rural schools. We can't send all of our money to the northeast.” I said, “All right. Put together a formula that helps your schools.” He said, “Do you want anything?” I said, “Why don't you take care of Wichita and see that they get what they need?” If Wichita gets what they need, Topeka will get—we operate under about the same formula, and I said that there are other cities that will, too. He said, “What about Johnson County?” I said, “Go back to what they agreed to last time and see if you can give that to them.”

He did it. There's kind of a funny side story. I said, “When do you think you'll get this done?” He said, “We'll work on it this afternoon. I’ll call you.” My wife and I were at dinner at a hamburger joint here in town at about 9:00, 8:00 that night, and he says, “Hey, I've got this for you. I want to show it to you.” I said, “Where are you?” He said, “I'm at the bowling alley on Huntoon. I said, “Okay.”

I walk into the bowling alley. There were not too many people bowling. It was like 9:30. I looked down there, and the closer I get, I see Dennis, and Dennis sees me, and the closer I get, I'm saying, “That's my son. My son's here.” It's all Democrats, bowling. He was bowling with Tara Gillum, who was the Governor's Appointment Secretary or Scheduler. Oh, boy. I wasn't

supposed to know about that. She was trying to keep it a secret from the Governor, too, which the Governor had her ways of finding these things out. But Aaron, he wanted to leave right then. He didn't know what to do.

We went over. We went down at the end, and we sat down with a piece of paper written in pencil the formula. That's what passed. I picked up a daughter-in-law and solved the school finance all at the same time.

AC: You mentioned Sebelius. Of course, you would have worked during your time with Finney and Graves as well.

DM: I had almost no relationship with Graves because Graves hated the legislature. He used to say, “My favorite day of the year is when the legislature adjourns and goes home.” By and large, I think he was an okay governor.

Finney, she was different than anybody. They were wanting to close the mental institution system here in town. The whole delegation was worked up about that, including Sebelius. I went up to the mic, I think I was a freshman. I got real excited. I beat on the podium a little bit and said, “What is wrong with our governor? This is an administrative thing, and she punts to let us here to try to figure out what's going to happen in Topeka.” I said some other things.

Well, it just so happens she was listening in. I get a call from, it might have been Hensley or whoever was in charge of the delegation then, who was head of it, “The Governor wants to see us down there.” I thought, “Whoo! I've never gone down to see a Governor before.’

I went down there, and there's Joan Finney and her daughter. Her daughter is sitting right behind her. I knew something was up. I sat down. I looked around. I look over, and she's like this, staring straight at me.

Governor Finney says, “Well, you all were talking about Bill Such and Such yesterday.” Everybody nodded their heads. She says, “Representative Mays,” I sort of jumped, she said, “You said some things about me that were regrettable. What do you have to say for yourself?” I said, “Well, Governor, I worked for Mike Hayden,” you'll understand this, “Here I am, Governor. Woodshed me.” She started laughing, and her daughter goes [stifled laughter]. “Okay. Just don't do it again.” That was my one and only visit with Governor Finney. I did see her in a grocery store about two months before she passed away. She remembered my name.

Governor Sebelius, I think I had a good relationship. We knew each other before when I was on City Council. I served with Vic Miller and some others. We would grab the reporter that had—after almost every City Council meeting, we'd head to Coach's Corner, a bar, or to what used to be a Holiday Inn here in town, the Reunion bar. We'd go over there and had a beer. Of course, that's why we bought a reporter with us. Technically we were violating some laws. He would call up Kathleen, and she'd come over. That's where I got to know her. Then she served in the

legislature while I was the Securities Commissioner one term after I was here. My first term was her last term.

We had what I'd say was a nodding acquaintance. I always admired her intellect, her ability to speak. I also knew she was a very, very astute politician, very astute. How do you go from being a lobbyist to a legislator? You're a Minority Whip to being an Insurance Commissioner and then becoming Governor. That's quite a feat, and she did it.

We talked quite a bit. It was always different when the staff wasn't around. When the staff was around, it's Doug and Kathleen. It took her a long time to figure out, maybe a year to figure out that she would pitch things to me. I never could tell anyone no exactly. I would say, “Let me think about it.”

Finally one day she was pitching me something, and she had this bracelet on with all kinds of stuff on it. She's standing there and she said, “What do you think?” I said, “Let me think about it.” She goes [thumping sound]. Whatever it was hit the table and made a big noise. She said, “Thanks for coming in.” She was, I think, a very successful governor.

AC: Yes. During your fourteen years in the legislature, did you, were there any big changes in how it worked?

DM: Yes. I guess this is one of the things I was proudest of. I looked at the way we put bills together, the way we did the clippings. We had the ladies who would clip all the newspapers and then Xerox them and bring them out, and all these things bothered me because we were now in the third millennium. It was past 2000, and we were still doing things the way we did a hundred years ago.

So I was lucky. I had a President of the Senate who was willing to go along with it. I tell you that the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House was not happy, but I insisted that we begin looking at electronic progress in that area. I knew that the Web was around. It wasn't near what it is today. It certainly wasn't fast like it is today.

I was Chair of LCC [Legislative Coordinating Council]. I brought it up. The President went along with it. Some of the others went along with it. We got a guy named Hyman, I can't remember his first name, that was kind of a visionary sort of a guy. He came in. They put it together, and we got it going down the road. It's taken years to where it is now, but I think it's working very well. I thought that if we had a good high-tech system, it would shorten the session. It would make the process much more transparent. One thing I couldn't guarantee is it would save money. It didn't. It cost money.

I felt really good about that. Things were changing. I have to thank my Majority Leader Clay Aurand, we shortened the session by quite a bit. Our first three sessions when I was Speaker were the shortest since they changed the Constitution in '72 or '74. We did that by tightening

up the deadlines. I think they're even tighter now than they were then, but it had a good effect. We could get out—sometimes it was around eighty days instead of ninety.

AC: This is the question I think I mentioned. I'm going to read you a question here and ask your thoughts on it. It's about personal identity. “Personal identity is loosely defined as gender, age, race, class, sexual or gender orientation, marital status. Did you experience times during your time during the legislature where you believe your personal identity influenced your ability to pass policy, work with fellow legislators, or provide constituent services? And then maybe the follow-up, “Were you ever given committee assignments or tasks that you believe were functions of your personal identity or maybe even your political, philosophical outlook?”

DM: I don't think so. My philosophical outlook was, with the exception of the first Speaker, which I wasn't sure really at that time what my personal philosophy was. It takes a while to figure out certain things. When you walk in and you've got a white light, which is if you want to go talk, you've got a red and a green button, you figure out pretty quick where you stand on things.

As a freshman, they don't know what to do with you anyway. I had really good committee assignments that first two years, and I think it's because I took back a seat that had been held by a Democrat, and they saw me because of my experience with some of the statewide campaigns and things as someone that might catch on a little quicker. I know that I disappointed some of those people later on when I emerged as a conservative, not a flaming green-eyed conservative, but a conservative just the same.

I don't know if I ever felt discriminated against at all. I was never threatened to be taken off of a committee. I just don't think that any of those things—and I frankly didn't see too much of it either, to tell you the truth. There were people that would get in trouble with the speaker occasionally, and would be removed from the committee, but that wasn't me.

AC: Your most recent work, in terms of being a government consultant type and your firm—

DM: I'm really retired. I don't do that. My son does it, but not so much.

AC: During that service then, did that change your perspective on legislature?

DM: It's got to be this with any leader. You lead a body, and you have a certain way you do things. You can't help but sit there and say, “What is wrong with those people? Why do they let them do that? When I was Speaker,” it would drive my wife crazy. But I haven't seen anything that I can be too critical, just little bitty things.

I'll tell you one thing, those big old computers up there—if you sit in the front row, you can't see anything but the top of the Speaker's head. That hurts short people. Sorry.

AC: Ever think about running for elected office again?

DM: I am on the board for the Sherwood District. We meet one Tuesday of the month for about thirty minutes and go over the invoices. I did run for Congress. I got that out of my system. I always wanted to run for Congress in the Second District. I grew up in the southern part, and I spent my adult life up here. I thought it was perfect, but I got in late. I really didn't stand a chance, but it was fun.

Will I run again? Maybe Township Trustee. I'm sorry.

AC: Is that Mission Township or Sherwood?

DM: I might. I was going to run this time, but I don't want to be on the ballot the same time my son is on the ballot.

AC: Anything else you'd like to share with us? Any topics or thoughts maybe that we haven't talked about that maybe you'd like to get on the record.

DM: Just say that I credit Tim Shallenburger with a lot of my success. I think he warmed up to me early on because I grew up in Crawford County, as did my wife, in southeast Kansas. Both of my parents grew up in Cherokee County. So there was some affinity there right away. He gave me a lot of good advice early on. Tim's not the kind of guy to come to you and say, “Let me tell you something,” but if you go to him, he was pretty wise. Then he became Speaker my second term in the legislature. He made me Rules Chair. That gave me the opportunity to really get to know the rules and how they work and how they shouldn't work. I was pretty successful. I was never overridden. And that set me up to run for Assistant Majority Leader, which put me in a good place to run for Pro Tem. But even as Assistant Majority Leader, he had me in his office all the time. Every meeting, he included me. I got a chance to see how Tim Shallenburger worked.

Kent Glasscock, I ran for Speaker. Kent Glasscock beat me. We had four votes, three or four, and on the fourth one, either one vote switched, or it went like this, several votes, and he beat me. I was as gracious as I could be in the loss. Why wouldn’t I be? He didn't say anything bad about me. I didn't say anything bad about him. But he came to my office. I told him I was going to leave the legislature, and he talked me into staying. He said, “I need you to help me.” I think Kent, who was a wonderful human being, did not understand how conservatives think. He relied on me to kind of help him. I helped him in every way I could to be a successful Speaker. I think he was successful in a very tough time. The session of 2002, right after 9/11, was horrendous.

Then he left, and I was Pro Tem when Robin Jennison was here. I got to see how Robin Jennison worked. Three different speakers, three different ways of doing things, and I learned so much. But It all started with Tim Shallenburger.

AC: Thank you very much for your time today in sharing your thoughts. I think it's very helpful. I appreciate your openness. You mentioned Speaker Shallenburger. The one question I finished

up with him, and given your southeast Kansas roots, Chicken Annie's or Chicken Mary's? Do you have a preference?

DM: Mary's. The rest of you probably don't understand that, but when you grow up down there, there were two chicken restaurants, both by the widows of miners in a little town called Yale—I mean a little town called Yale—and they both served fried chicken and a lot of garlic on the chicken. I loved it. In that town, it was like Republican and Democrat. It was like Chevy and Ford. You either were an Annie's person or a Mary's person. We were Mary's. I remember, you could stand in the parking lot of Mary's and see Annie's. I would wonder, "Why don't we go over there?" when I was a little kid.

My wife, one of her friends, this was after we were engaged, one of her friends got married, and she was in the wedding party. She said, "We're having a rehearsal dinner over at Chicken Annie's," and I said, "Really?" So I went along. I remember sitting there, saying, "I hope nobody sees me." That's how bad it was. They were both good.

AC: Again, thank you for your time this afternoon.

DM: Thank you, Alan.

AC: A great job, and I appreciate your thoughts.

[End of File]

