

INTERVIEW: NANCY PARRISH (REVISED)

Q: This is February 1, 1991. This is Sara Tucker interviewing Nancy Parrish, Senator, Kansas 19th District. Let me start out with a complicated question that might be easy to answer, might not. You are a Senator from the 19th district. How did you come to first represent the 19th district?

A: Mine was a little bit unusual in that there are a few of us who have come in under an appointment. Basically, my husband had been representing this district and because of business reasons he needed to resign from the seat. And when the individual that's in an elected office--like representative or senator--resigns what happens is the precinct committee people within that district of that party select who should be the replacement and then ultimately the Governor appoints the person that the precinct committee individuals have chosen. When I knew that Jim was going to resign, it seemed to me that I'd done a lot of campaigning in the district. I'd taken a lot of the constituent calls. I was very interested in the process. I thought I had some things to offer, so I decided, well, somebody's going to be appointed, why not me? So, I talked with the precinct committee people within the district and there was a race for the appointment. It was not uncontested. I had a gentleman from Valley Falls [who] also was seeking the seat, and so we both ran and I was appointed, and that was for the 1980 session. I served one session and then that following November was elected on my own to a four-year term in the Kansas Senate in a contested race.

Q: So, in a way, you got it the old-fashioned way. The wife of a man who quit, but at the same time, in a rather new-fashioned world. Tell me how you won your contested nominations and how you won your first election. What did you do right to get chosen?

A: It was a little easier with the precinct committee individuals as far as time frame because you needed to talk with--I can't remember how many it was at that time--thirty or forty individuals that would be making the selection. So, I went to visit them at their homes, called people on the phone, and basically solicited their support and my nomination as Jim's, my husband's, successor in that position. In the general election, obviously you've got...the number of people in a State Senate seat is ideally 58,000 people. That doesn't mean 58,000 voters because children and people who've not been registered to vote are counted in the 58,000, so you've got a large district. And I had what I considered to be a very formidable candidate. The gentleman who ran for the 19th district in 1980 was the former Director of the Kansas Bureau of Investigation and also the former Superintendent of the Highway Patrol. He had been appointed by a Democrat and, although it's a fairly good Democratic district, I felt that I really needed to work very hard in order to retain that seat and I enjoyed being in the one session, but I didn't want it to only be one session in the legislature. So, I did work very hard and basically did all of those kinds of things that you do to get elected. I guess the main thing I did was to spend about two months going door-to-door in the district and that was like from the time I got off work, which...at that time I was teaching school out at Topeka State Hospital, working with emotionally disturbed children. I'd get off about 3:30 and I'd hit the streets at that time and work 'till it got dark and then I would go all day Saturday and [from] noon Sunday until it got dark and that was probably about nine weeks being the time frame. Plus the copies and the candidates' nights and all the other things that you need to do in order to be successful in a legislative race. I worked hard.

Q: Now, did you opponent work hard the same way? Or did he...

A: Yes. Yes, he did and I can't tell you whether he had the same strategy I did to spend that much time going door-to-door, but yes, he was very visible in the election. He was going door-to-door. He did have copies. He appeared at candidates' nights. He was not someone who just put his name out and then sat back. He very much was involved in the campaign. I may have hit more doors than he did. I would expect that I might have.

Q: Well, leaving aside hitting a few more doors, why did you win?

A: A combination of things. I think women have a good opportunity to be elected, particularly it seems like in that time period. I think it continues to be that way, that voters...it was close enough at that time to Watergate situation and I think that a lot of individuals were leery of perhaps the people that you might describe as the 'good ole boys' and I think it was refreshing to a certain extent to see a woman who was interested in running and being elected. I think I had good qualifications, although mine may not... Side by side with his, his may have been a little bit better as far as experience in government. I had some pretty good solid qualifications, educationally as well as job experience, etc. I think I benefitted a lot on the other side because it was a very good Democratic district and I'm a Democrat. I benefitted from my husband's last name, the name recognition, so certainly all of those were factors. I guess I would have to say those were the items: hard work, name recognition, Democrat, and the fact that I did have some good qualifications.

Q: Would you spell out what you think your qualifications were that mattered?

A: I had been a teacher in that area and so I knew a lot of the parents in the area from teaching in two different elementary schools in that particular area. I had been involved in community activities in that area, so I think I felt like I knew a lot of the people and I had a sense of what they would want, how they would want to be represented and what kind of issues were important to them. I had been on the Boys' Club Board of Directors, and some other... Shawnee County Mental Health Associations and other things that I had been involved in. I had an undergraduate degree in Education, Master's degree in Special Education. I had been a property owner and manager. My husband and I had . . . and at that time I still did have some apartments that we had managed and I had been the primary person responsible for them, so I used that as part of my qualifications, that I was a business woman, understood paying taxes and the expenses of a business because we had been small business owners. I had done all the bookkeeping for that particular operation. So, those were the things that I had done. Obviously, I had not held state office like my opponent had, but I felt that I did have some solid qualifications. Different, obviously, than his. I was not as 'law and order' and all of that, but I had good... I talked about education. I talked about children's programs and issues and those are some of the things that I still am talking about because those are some of the interests that I find I share with many of my constituents.

Q: So, were there any issues that divided you and your opponent?

A: Yes, the death penalty was one that definitely divided the two of us because I was an opponent to the death penalty and continue to be. And he was certainly an advocate, and that was used in the campaign. Otherwise, there were probably not a lot of things that came out in the campaign showing the contrast between the two of us. I think there were a lot of other differences, but that was the primary one that we used in the campaign.

Q: Now, everybody tells me the same thing. No matter how hard you work, you can't win a campaign by yourself. What kind of people helped you do the campaign itself? Who were your best supporters?

A: Women. They were not necessarily women's groups, organized women's groups, but friends that I had. I think I drew more on personal relationships with friends I had known, other teachers, and individuals. I also had three younger sisters and they all came down for weekends. They didn't live here at that time...one of them actually lived here and then two others did not, but they all came down for weekends and joined in and went door-to-door. My mother-in-law, my parents. It was really [a] family effort. Jim didn't ever do any door-to-door which was kind of an interesting...because I had done an awful lot of door-to-door with my husband but he preferred at that point, partly because he was tired of doing door-to-door, but partly I think he felt he'd rather take more of a consultant role in the campaign, and so that was more of the role that he took. And he was a very good advisor and he did work hard. But he didn't do any of the direct campaigning like door-to-door.

Q: That's interesting. You've made it into the legislature. Can you tell me what it was like when you first got there? Your freshman legislature, and I'm thinking of things like the power structure there, what committees you got on, whether you had any mentors or supporters, your first experience in the legislature.

A: When I went in in 1980, I was the second woman in the Senate. That was way back. We've come a long ways since then. Jan Myers was the only woman and I joined her in 1980 and there were more women that were elected then in November of '80, but for that one session, there were just the two of us. And she certainly welcomed me warmly and I enjoyed feeling like there was someone else there I could talk to that was a woman, and certainly was glad to see another woman join the ranks. I would have to say, though, that in the Senate you're so busy that many times the sad part about it--and I find myself doing the same kind of thing--[is] that you don't have a lot of time to spend as a mentor for someone else or in the social kinds of activities sometimes you're just so caught up in the day-to-day activity that there's not a lot of time to just have a bite of lunch together or whatever. So, Jan and I did not spend an awful lot of time together, but it was nice to know that she was there and, certainly, that was real helpful later on when there were other women there as well. I think it was pretty much of a 'good ole boys' network to a certain extent at that time, and I think everyone was getting a little bit used to having more women as part of the body. I saw some struggles that Jan had. I felt at times, although everyone was very nice and very cordial, there were times that I guess I felt a little bit like a little girl joining the ranks and there was a little patting on the shoulder--'Nancy, this is the way we do it.' Fatherly advice, if you will, regarding certain things. Which I think was all well intentioned, but sometimes it was a little hard to feel totally an equal to some of the other members at that point in time. That was one of the reasons I decided later on that I was going to

go to law school and increase my qualifications and credentials and also broaden my knowledge in an area I thought would be helpful. Not only in just making good decisions in the legislature, but I suppose also to build my credibility with my fellow legislators.

Q: What committees did you ask for? What committees did you get, if you can cast your mind back to the first time?

A: When I came in on the appointment, it was kind of unusual because at that time, you are at the bottom of the barrel as far as seniority and, obviously, my husband had some really good committee assignments that were not automatically going to flow to me and did not flow to me because there were others who were standing in line. When he left, they wanted to juggle around. So, my committee assignments that first session were not particularly wonderful. They were okay, but they were not... I've certainly bettered them since that time as I gained more seniority. I'm trying to remember what I was on. I was on Local Government, Governmental Organization, and I didn't have Education at that time. I didn't have Judiciary. A lot of the committees that I really enjoyed since that time. I didn't have very many committees, so it was basically just getting my feet wet. I did do much better on committee assignments once I was elected in November and the beginning of the 1981 session. That improved immensely.

Q: Well, just taking in the whole last ten years, what committees have you wanted to be on, are you on, what kind of strategy or goals do you have in terms of what committees you want to be on? And how's it going?

A: It's going very well at this point. The committee assignments are basically made by the leadership and the House and the Senate and, if you support the correct person in leadership races you do much better in getting committee assignments. In 1980 I was still new and I was lucky enough to support the correct person who won the leadership race at that time and did okay on committees. Then in 1984 the gentleman that had been the minority leader for a number of years, Jack Steineger, was challenged by Mike Johnston and I did support Mike Johnston and also became at that time part of the leadership. I was one who was elected and my title is Policy Chair for the Senate Minority party, which meant that I was not only on the right side of the leadership race but I also was one of those that would be involved in selecting who got what committees. And I helped myself a lot. I think all of us did then that were in leadership at that point in time. Generally you're the one sitting around the table deciding how we shuffle what everyone's requests are with the committees that are available and, you know, taking into consideration seniority and other factors, and I did very well at that point because I think I got most of the ones that I did request. I had asked to be on the Tax Committee, Assessment and Taxation Committee. I was granted that request. I got on Judiciary. I had been, as of 1981, on the Education Committee, continued that committee assignment, and so I did very well. Then in '88 or '89 session, I was appointed to Ways and Means Committee which was one that I asked for. I did have to lobby for that one even though I was still part of the leadership and it was a little difficult. Those are highly sought after committee slots and the other factor was that there'd never been a woman on Ways and Means before, ever, on the Senate side. Rumor had it that there was talk that women might be too disruptive on the Ways and Means Committee and... I don't know, but anyway, they did in fact appoint two women in 1989. Senator Alicia Salisbury and myself, both received positions on the Ways and Means Committee, and have been serving

on it for the past two years. This is the third session that we've been on Ways and Means. I was really pleased to be appointed to that committee, and I don't think we've been too disruptive. I think we've been alright.

Q: You sound very professional when you talk about being a member of the legislature. You went to law school partly to gain credibility as a legislator. You're talking about these committees. Do you see yourself continuing to run for, to be in the legislature for the foreseeable future? Can you tell me how you see your future in terms of politics?

A: I don't think I intended to be in the legislature forever, but I find myself liking serving in the legislature better and better as I get more seniority and get to be more a part of the decision-making process because a lot of...it seems like the first few years, I was listening a lot and didn't see a lot of opportunity to impact a decision. Certainly, I was one of the votes but not really being part of the group that was really deciding whether you had this in a bill or that. Really changing public policy or maintaining...sometimes you're in a defensive mode as well in looking at various pieces of legislation. I find that I probably like it better than I like practicing law because I am currently practicing law right now. Though at some point I think I want to have just one job. It is very hectic for family and for my business and my clients on the law side of the private side of it when the legislature takes up as much time as it does. And although probably that's my favorite part of the job if you compare them one to another, it may be that at some point I'm going to have to make a choice. I'm not sure what that choice's going to be. I'm not there yet, but I would certainly like to run for another term. My term would be up in two more years and I would like to run for another term. Beyond that, I'm not sure.

Q: Okay. Are there some big issue fights, some big bills that you wrote or sponsored or helped through that you're particularly proud of, you remember as particularly important things you've been involved with?

A: Yes, in fact, last session was a pretty good one as far as being involved in a lot of issues. And I guess I've been involved in a lot of issues in two major areas: in the education area and then in more the human services area. But last session it seemed was one that a lot of things kind of came together and I was able to be a part of some fairly major changes, some things that have been around for a while that finally we were able to get enacted last session. One of them... I served since about 1982 as chairperson of a group called the Advisory Committee on Juvenile Offender Programs, and the state has been receiving money from the federal government to...basically, the purpose has been to get juveniles out of adult jails and lockups, and it's not a problem in the urban areas because there are detention centers available in those areas. But in the rural areas, you've got a lot of kids that are in adult jails and the statistics show that suicide rate is much higher. You have the isolation. You have children getting no programs when they're locked up in adult jails. So we've been working on this for eight years and last session we were able to get a bill passed that would phase in a prohibition of holding kids in...and I might add that many of the kids that are being held out in the rural area are not juveniles that have committed any crimes. They are runaways. They are girls that have run away from placements, either group homes or they've run away from their own home and because of the fear of law enforcement that they will be promiscuous or they will hurt themselves if they are turned loose, they are locked up as an alternative. And it may be that they need to be in a secure environment, but my opinion is

they don't need to be in a county jail for that type of behavior. So we've worked real hard. Last session we not only got the prohibition into the law, but we also were able to get some funding to build juvenile detention centers, regional ones throughout the state. I've been working on that in my off time since then, and it's going pretty well at this point. I also was real involved in an adoption law that passed last session, and it was a whole codification of the adoption laws, and was instrumental in getting a provision in that would provide insurance for the birth of the child and an option to provide insurance for the birth mothers' delivery cost if the adoptive parents carried insurance, which has not always been the case for all insurance policies. Insurance policies really have excluded both of those, at least for some insurance policies, and we got that through. I think it's a real helpful device for those families that are middle-to low-income families that would not be able to adopt because of financial problems if the birth cost were not covered through their insurance. There are some others. I have been able...one other I guess that I would cite that I felt pretty good about was that I developed a concept of a 'hold harmless' clause that had been part of the school finance formula two or three years ago which really helped provide a continuation of funding for some of the urban districts that received a real decrease in state funding for schools due to the lower valuations in the rural area. It really caught a lot of urban districts in a position where they were going to be losing millions of dollars in state funds and Topeka Public Schools was one of those districts and we were able to at least phase in that loss by use of this provision called the harmless, which was my original idea and I was kind of glad that that had worked out and it was tax-saving to people in my district. And I think not a bad concept because your districts can't take a \$2,000,000 hit in one year. That kind of loss is just very difficult to budget for.

Q: As you look over ten years, ten plus years of your own involvement in the Kansas Legislature, and quite a few years before that where you knew a lot about the Kansas Legislature, focusing in on women in the legislature, women's issues, women's legitimacy, how much change, what kind of change have you seen in this period of time?

A: Well, certainly, numbers alone. There have been major increases in the number of women who are serving in the legislature and, along with that, as more women have served, so more women have seniority and now are in leadership positions--chairmen of committees and in leadership in their respective parties. Which I think is a major change because I think that sometimes decision-making occurs in a bit different way when women are very involved in how the decisions get made, and I think that is a big change that I'm seeing due to women being involved. Women process information a bit differently and work a bit more, I believe and this is probably a bias and probably someone could rebut it, but I think that looking for consensus and trying to reach an agreement on an issue, I think sometimes that has not always been the case in the way the legislation has been handled. Not so much... I think the 'good ole boy' network was maybe a trading of things, where consensus I think is maybe a better way to resolve an issue.

Q: That's real interesting. In terms of issues, do you see any shift in what issues are taken seriously, which issues are important that would relate in any way to women's interests, whatever that means?

A: I don't like the term women's interests really.

Q: This is something some people have brought up and I'm interested to know how many others would agree or disagree.

A: Although I don't like the term because I really think people issues is what we're talking about rather than maybe highway issues, or you know, business issues, something like that. But the more human services issues. I do see those rising to a higher priorities I don't know whether I can attribute it to more women being involved in the legislature and I'm not even sure we're at higher priority yet. They're higher visibility at this point, and I am hoping that will translate into higher priorities as far as how money gets spent. I'm not sure in my mind that I would say we're there yet. I think we're moving in that direction. I think women have had a lot to do with that because I think they're very close to a lot of the issues that I'm talking about. I mean the issues of how much money goes into the AFDC programs, daycare, subsidies for poor women, issues even like some of the mental health reform issues. Issues, obviously, dealing with education. All of those kinds of issues. I think women certainly have been very involved in the debate and many times carrying some of those bills. Though I also see women very involved in tax issues, economic development issues, as well, so I would not want anyone to think that as a group that women are more skewed toward that type of issue. I will admit that my highest priority is not the economic development issues. I love the Tax Committee and I really like those issues, but I suppose the ones I've spent my time on as an individual legislator have been more in the area of some of the children and youth issues, budgetary issues for some of those programs I have felt that in the past have maybe not received as much attention as some of the other issues.

Q: Could I get you to just give me your impression of your district? What's your district like, its makeup, etc.?

A: It's a mixture of individuals within my district. I've got a lot of blue-collar workers. I have a lot of people who work out at Goodyear or Santa Fe, etc., because I have that east side of Topeka and I also have the north. The whole Seaman Township area, so that certainly has a lot of blue-collar workers. In the East Topeka area, a high concentration of minority individuals, both blacks within certain parts of East Topeka and then I also have the area around Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, which has a high number of Hispanic residents in that area. So, I certainly have a mixture as far as race within my district and economic level, I do, too, though I wouldn't categorize my district as having a high number of high income individuals. Certainly, there are some high-income individuals within my district but I would say the majority of my district would be middle-income, maybe some high middle-income, and then some low-income areas within my district. I think the people in my district are certainly hard workers, people who are certainly concerned about taxes. A lot of them, I think, are struggling to make a go of it in today's economy and all of that. In some ways some of the individuals in my district may not be as actively involved in some of the groups. When I go out to some of the special interest meetings and you don't always find a high percentage of the people in my district involved in some of those groups, but I think a lot of it is because that it's real tough. A lot of single-parent families within my district and it's very difficult when you have small children and you're struggling to really make ends meet. You don't have a lot of time for extra meetings, etc. Though I do have a lot of people who do go, but in comparison to maybe some of the other districts, there may be a lesser amount of people involved. I have groups of people that are, though, on the other hand, very involved in the neighborhood improvement associations, very active in those groups

and spend countless hours volunteering for those right there within their community. A lot of good people within my district and people that I like. In the Oakland area there... I particularly like campaigning over there. There are a lot of senior citizens over there. I think if there's any one group of individuals that I really like to talk with, partly because they have some time to talk with you as you're going door-to-door. I have some delightful stories about people I met during the campaign that--had I not been campaigning I would never have had the opportunity to meet--and those were some of the things I really like about campaigning. And the people in my district.

Q: Do you like campaigning? Do you enjoy it?

A: Yes, I do. It's almost too much of a good thing at one time because it's so all-consuming when you are campaigning, and it would be nice to be able--and I suppose you could arguably do this--but if you could spread it out a little more. It seems like so much has to be done in so short a time that it's pretty frenzied. But I do like it, particularly the one-on-one kinds of contact. That's my favorite part of the campaign. I like to talk to people in person.

Q: Well, let me turn a little bit more to you as a person. Why are you a Democrat?

A: That's a good question. I think part of it, I suppose, is the way you grow up to a certain extent. My parents actually were not Democrats. My parents were Republicans, but I had a close cousin that ran for the legislature when I was in high school and he ran for my home county and he ran on the Democrat ticket, so then the whole family sort of switched to Democrat, at least most of the family did. Some of my aunts and uncles retained their Republican registration and sort of disowned the rest of us at that time. I had an uncle who served in the Kansas Legislature as a Republican way back in the early '50s and I have a cousin that served in the middle '60s. Sixty-five is I think when he went into the legislature. That's when I became a Democrat from the family point of view. As I've gotten involved myself, and I was a member of the Young Democrats at K-State and all that, so I've been a Democrat really on record for a long time. I do find, though, that I believe in what our party stands for. My own views are very similar to the views of our party. Making sure that there is an equal shot for those people who are the working people. Making sure that--and I guess I kind of lean more toward the labor side than the management side when you have labor/management type issues--making sure that those people who are the least fortunate do have a voice on that. That they are adequately taken care of. So, I was talking about your elderly citizens and the people who are economically disadvantaged, the children, and I believe that our party does try to take care of those individuals and speaks out very strongly for that group of people. So I guess I'm very comfortable being a Democrat.

Q: Tell me about your childhood. Tell me about this semi-Republican, semi-Democrat family you grew up with. Where are you from? What were your parents like?

A: They're both deceased now. I grew up in Cedarvale, Kansas, which is a small town in Southeast Kansas and was the oldest of four girls. I had a real good, normal family. My mother didn't work, but was a very strong individual. She was a member of the WAFS during World War II and was a pilot. And [she] was a very independent, spirited woman, very neat woman, and certainly I learned a lot from her. My dad was a farmer/rancher. Both of them had gone to KU. My dad did not graduate. My mother had a college degree in business, which was kind of

unusual at that time. So, I grew up in a real good kind of family. It was a very small town and you could be involved in as many activities as you wanted to. In high school, I was and I did well in school. School was always important. I went off to K-State and was involved eventually in Young Democrats up there, but I didn't really do that much with that. But I was a member of Student Senate when I was at Kansas State University, so I ran for office there as a college student. I got a little bit of experience with governmental bodies at that point in time. Then, basically, I met my husband. We got married and moved to Topeka where he started law school and ended up, we've been here ever since and that was in 1970, so we've been Topeka residents for quite some time. My dad was one of seven boys and this was one of his older brothers who'd been in the legislature and I paged for my Uncle Robert when I was in second grade. We came up to Topeka and I spent two or three days up here with my Aunt Irma and my Uncle Robert. So that was the first time I was ever in the Capitol building, when I was about seven-years-old.

Q: That's a wonderful memory. Well, obviously, your husband is involved in politics. I presume it's a help, that this makes it easier on your relationship that both of you are involved in this. How does it work? How do you manage to be a lawyer and be in the legislature and meet your family responsibilities? How do you juggle all of this?

A: I'm not sure I do it very well at times. But I certainly have to have a lot of help from others and [you need] a lot of support from your spouse, which I do have. And it does help having Jim being involved, too, because I find . . . actually when I was first in the Senate, first became a member of the Senate, Jim was not involved as State Chairman. That has come up more in recent years. And I think it was harder at that point in time. Because Jim really missed the Senate. He had gotten out, but that was really his true love. It was really kind of tough and I was finding I needed to be a lot of places and it was real optional for him to be there, and it was a little hard for him to be the spouse. I'd been the spouse for a lot of years when I accompanied him. Lobbyists, they know who they need to talk to, who's going to be voting, so the other person, the spouse, is not always as important to talk to. And the tables sort of got turned and Jim was the spouse. I'm not sure that was a real comfortable position for him to be in and a lot of times I would go alone and he wouldn't go to a lot of the activities. But when he became State Chair, it really was helpful because a lot of the political things that I needed to go to, he also needed to be there because of his responsibilities. So it was really good, because it was a family outing and sometimes we would take the children with us. Particularly if they were just Democrat-type functions. And that really helped out, I think. I think it was more comfortable for me for Jim to feel comfortable with my position and, at that same time, I was growing a little bit more comfortable being my own person, and that worked well. It was good timing for him to get involved in the State Chair. There were times I didn't like it because, certainly, it doesn't make for great relationships with colleagues when your husband has just recruited a candidate to run against your fellow Senator that's a Republican. So sometimes I certainly got some teasing and I'm sure some people who were obviously careful what they said to me because they knew of the real partisan nature of the State Chair's job.

Q: Now, tell me, how many children do you have?

A: Three.

Q: How old were they when you first became a Senator?

A: Les was eleven, so I just had one at that time.

Q: So your other two children were born whilst you were...?

A: All my children are adopted. Our oldest one came to live with us when he was nine as a foster child--actually was eight, almost nine. And he was in our home as a foster child for a couple of years and became available for adoption and we adopted him. Then the other two--my boy that was eleven then is now twenty-one, obviously--and then I have a nine-year-old who came to live with us when he was four-days-old and a baby that's nineteen months that came to live with us when he was two-days-old.

Q: Did you have any warning when this two-day-old child came? Did you know he was coming?

A: I did with him. I didn't with the nine-year old. In fact, with the nine-year-old, it was kind of bizarre because I'd just started law school. I was four days into law school and I get this phone call that there's been a baby born and I really wanted to have other children and I had a couple of miscarriages and it didn't look like we were going to be able to have biological children. And I was in law school and I'd just gotten started and we kind of thought, 'Can I still do that and have a baby?' And I thought, 'Why not?' And I was in the Senate at that time, too, so it was kind of a real juggle for a couple of years there because, with the law school and being in the Senate, and with a new baby, it was a pretty big load for a while.

Q: Sounds like it. At this point I often ask how do you handle the commute. In your case there isn't a big problem with the commute at least. Could you have done this if you had lived anywhere but Topeka, do you think?

A: Oh, I think it would have been very difficult for me, with the kids the age that they are. It kind of depends on what Jim wanted done. It's different when the legislators have handled it differently with their children. Some children have stayed home with husbands. Others have accompanied the woman to Topeka and the husband has, too. Or sometimes... I'm not sure if we've had very many where the children have come without the husband. I'm not sure about that. I think it would have been pretty difficult. Certainly, you'd have to build up your support systems. I've got two shifts of baby-sitters. I have the daytime one and then I have an evening sitter who picks the children up from the daytime babysitter and comes to the house and begins dinner and throws a couple loads of clothes in the wash and that kind of thing. I could not do the family part of it without that kind of support. If you can find that. Obviously, there might be a way to do the commute and all of that, but there's so many hours that it would take doing the commute I would find it real difficult. It makes it easy... It makes it harder also, being in town. You certainly have the pros and the cons because while I'm still here in Topeka, certainly the demands of constituency continue always. I mean, the number of speeches that I give during the session increase and they're during the week kinds of speeches because that's when people want to hear about what's going on in the legislature. My counterparts who are from out of town, they have real tough weekends because they are going to coffees and all that, but they don't have the speeches during the week. So it's kind of back and forth and the family responsibilities certainly do take some time in addition to the time you spend in the legislature. Sometimes I think it might

be kind of fun just to be here for a couple of months without needing to do.... Like last night, I had several options of things to do, but I ended up going with my son to his open house. I think it brings you back to reality because I think sometimes in the legislature you can get so wrapped up in it and kind of forget about touching base with the people, your family and the people that are really within your community and sometimes it's a nice balance to really have both all the time rather than just on weekends or just at the end of the session.

Q: How hard is it to maintain a law practice while being a legislator, while campaigning?

A: It's extremely difficult.

Q: How do you do it?

A: Sometimes I wonder why I am doing it. I'm certainly concerned a lot of times because there are many times you need to be more than one place at once and that gets pretty frustrating at times. Still, the courts are pretty good at working around your schedule and that's good. But just because the legislature starts doesn't mean that the client's problems disappear and wait ninety days until the session is over. So there's a certain amount of things that need to be continued while you're in the session. And I found myself doing a lot of evening work. Some on Saturdays, but I really do try to reserve the weekends for the family during the session as well as the rest of the year, but I do come in to meet clients on Saturday mornings some. A lot of it, it really is just doing the very best you can to try to piece it together. I also teach an adjunct class at Washburn Law School. Add that on...which I like doing, but I'm probably going to have to give that up at some point because it does take some additional time.

Q: What does it cost you, if anything other than what you've told me, to be in the legislature? What's the downside of being a legislator?

A: Early in my practice, it probably wasn't as expensive to me as it is now because I'm a solo practitioner. I'm not in a partnership. I'm not receiving a set salary for my law practice, so it's whatever I bring in the door. And certainly, when I first started the practice, it took a while to build up the practice. At this point in time, I can basically make more in two hours of work in my law practice than I can all day in the legislature, if that tells you anything. And I work longer...certainly you work some pretty long hours at the legislature. It's not unusual to work twelve-hour days. Toward the end of the session it's even longer, so I spend a lot of time for not much in compensation. And the other problem that I have, from a business standpoint, is that my overhead continues even when I'm in session, so I can't cut back on that overhead if I want this office to be here at the end of the session. I continue to pay rent on the office and my secretary is still going to have to do my work while I'm in the session, the paperwork that I need to do, so there's not a real easy way to cut back on expenses. That's really the downside and I think we've seen a real decrease in the number of young attorneys that have run for the legislature or stayed in for any length of time because I think that most people that are in the legislature realize that it's just too hard. It's a little easier being right here in Topeka where my practice is. For those who live a long ways away, there's just almost no way to do it. Partners initially may think it's a good idea because you're going to bring some extra business, but they soon find that you're gone so much that it really is more of a detriment than a benefit to the practice. So I think we all are

having that same kind of problem and we're not the only business that has that kind of problem. I'm sure the same thing happens in a number of other businesses, as well. But it is problematic and you have to do a lot of balancing and you have to do a good job of setting your priorities and, at the same time, you have to be accessible to the constituents and you can't basically say I'm not going to meet with you because of clients. You can't do that and still get elected. I don't believe you can. You have to do the best you can in scheduling but you cannot diminish the time that you ordinarily would spend with constituents because you have clients. Nor can you slight your clients, obviously. I mean, you're in kind of a tough situation. I also think there's some strains that my family feels, too. That's kind of tough, too, and if you talk about what is the cost, there's some cost as far as the family life, too. But I think there's some benefits. I really see my kids as really having probably benefited more than the detriment, though my time with them is a little bit shorter than I would like it. Particularly three months out of the year. I think they've enjoyed it and we've tried to make them a part of [it], even as far as campaigning, they've all done their share of licking envelopes as well.

Q: Has all this--being in the legislature and so on--changed how people relate to you?

A: Some. Not people that know me well, but there are times that people... It's like, you know, somebody that first meets you, they're kind of in awe that you're a real person, like you're supposed to be someone out of touch to a certain extent or someone that they can't just talk with on a common level or whatever. I'm not sure that it changes that much. One thing I think, as legislators we have to be real concerned about is that you get rather used to the lobbyists who are very nice and very cordial, but I think you have to realize that a lot of what many of them are doing is it's part of their job to be nice and cordial and all of that. And sometimes it can go to one's head, the compliments or the type of treatment that you receive from a lobbyist. I think we all have to be careful that we don't change because we think all of a sudden we're a lot better than we were before we came into the office here.

Q: Well, okay. Besides not getting a swelled head, has being a legislator changed you?

A: Oh yes. I think it has a lot in terms of knowledge that I have. And people that I've met. All of those experiences certainly have really... And I feel very fortunate, very lucky, to have had all the experience that I've had that I wouldn't have had if I'd not been in the legislature. The people that I met, it really just makes your life a lot richer, I think. So I really think I have. I've learned a lot about people. All of that. I don't know if it's made me a better person, but certainly a more knowledgeable person, not quite so naive a person as I probably was when I came into the legislature and I've immensely enjoyed the experience. The part I like the best about the legislature is the people that I work with in the legislature. We have some real characters in both the House and the Senate and it's been a real joy to me, a lot of those people. It's been some really good relationships that you build up over the years, good friendships, people that you might not have ever had a chance to become acquainted with, and that's really a lot of the fun part of being in the legislature. So I think I've grown a lot probably.

Q: Final question. What else should I have asked you that I haven't asked you? What else would you like to get on record?

A: That's the toughest question. I think you've really covered most of the things that I would probably think are important. We've talked about family and about the job itself. Maybe how we might predict it will change in the next ten years.

Q: Okay.

A: And I'm not sure that I can, but I would like to see a lot of the changes that have come about continue to change because I think there are ways to change the process to make it a more open process and a better process. Maybe even a more thorough process. One of the things that probably bothers me the most about the legislature... I'm a little bit more of a slow decision-maker. I like to be real thorough and have all the information out in front of me and sometimes in the nature of the legislative session you've got to make decisions pretty fast. And sometimes we spend the next session correcting those fast decisions we made in the prior legislative session, but I would like to see us look at the way we make decisions and maybe make some changes. And I think women have evolved. I think we have a real role to play in making sure that that process over there, where a lot of people criticize the legislature, becomes the very best possible process that it can be. So that we ensure that those decisions that are going to be there, a lot of them for years and years to come, are well thought out, they're well balanced, and we cross all the t's and dot all the i's when we're dealing with the changes in the law.

Q: Do you think we can do that with a ninety-day citizen legislature?

A: It's really tough and I think you may need to structure it differently than it's structured right now. And it may be you meet for a month and go home for a month and then come back or something. I mean there may be some other variations that obviously would not be possible without some constitutional changes, but I think it's maybe time to look at the process. Since I've been there, the one thing that I guess I would have to say that has happened that I think is not a good thing, is that so many of the different decisions have been delayed until what we used to call the veto session. Now it's like the wrap-up session where the bulk of some of the most important issues get resolved in about a seven to eight day period, which is... You know, maybe it has to be that way, but I don't think it has to be that way. I think there are ways that we can structure our time and our decision-making so that we have a little bit less of a pressurized situation where you have to make a final decision and then you don't like any of your choices and yet you still have to come up with some decision. I think there are better ways to do it, and certainly I know the public has been critical of that veto session time and I think they're justified at being very critical of them.

Q: Okay. Thank you.