

Kansas Governors Recorded History and Documentary Project. Dr. Bob Beatty and Washburn University. Governor Mark Parkinson, interviewed December 14, 2010 and March 27, 2021

**INTERVIEWS WITH
GOVERNOR MARK PARKINSON
GOVERNOR OF KANSAS: APRIL 28, 2009 – JANUARY 10, 2011**

**DECEMBER 14, 2010
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, TOPEKA, KANSAS
INTERVIEWED BY DR. BOB BEATTY**

**MARCH 27, 2021 VIA ZOOM
INTERVIEWED BY DR. BOB BEATTY AND DR. AMBER DICKINSON
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
WASHBURN UNIVERSITY
TOPEKA, KANSAS 66611
BOB.BEATTY@WASHBURN.EDU
785-670-1736**

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

**INTERVIEW WITH
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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, TOPEKA, KANSAS**

Parkinson: I'm Mark Parkinson, I was the 45th governor of the state of Kansas, having served from 2009 to 2011, and it was a terrific experience.

Question: Where were you born, where did you grow up, and what was your life like as a boy?

Parkinson: I was born in Wichita in 1957, at Wesley Hospital, and really spent pretty much the next 23 years in Wichita. My dad had grown up in Scott City, which is in western Kansas, and his parents lived out there and we would spend quite a bit of time in Scott City around holidays and over the summers, but most of the rest of the time I spent in Wichita.

My boyhood memories are all very good. I'm not just saying that, they really are. Wichita and Kansas were kind of a magical place at that time. To explain that, you kind of have to think about what life was like in the 1960s. We just came off of a time where there had been a President, Dwight Eisenhower, who was from Kansas. Miss Kansas kept winning Miss America. At school we would study William Allen White and there was the William Allen White book award and contest. General Aviation was just starting. Jim Ryun was running around setting world records. So, you grew up in Wichita thinking that Wichita and that Kansas were really a very special place.

My childhood, I think, was relatively normal. During the early years of my life, my parents were married and had five kids. I was the second of five kids, and we lived on a block where there were lots and lots of other kids. We ran around and got in trouble, but managed to almost never get caught and just really had a good time.

Question: Did you play any sports or do any specific activities in middle school or high school?

Parkinson: I really was never involved in sports very much. I was extremely interested in sports, but I am just a horrible athlete and went to schools that were big enough that you had to be at least decent to make it on the team. So, I am probably the least accomplished very, very tall person in Kansas. To this day everywhere I go people ask me, "Where did you play basketball?" and the answer is, "In my backyard," and that was about it.

But I was very knowledgeable about sports. I was a huge Kansas City Royals fan in the '60s and '70s and knew all of their players and knew all the people on their farm teams and listened to every game on the radio. I was a big Chiefs fan, at various times KU and K-State fan, but really my loyalty as a kid was to Wichita State, because we had very good basketball. So, I followed sports very closely, but didn't participate.

In high school I got involved in debate at Wichita Heights High School, and that really became the encompassing part of my life. I would go to class, but all that I would really think about and really work on after school was debate. It was a tremendous experience for me. It was something that I was relatively good at and could really focus on and really created a focus for my life. All the kids that were in debate were very focused and driven and they all wanted to be attorneys. They all have successfully done that. It was just a great place for me to be at the time, and I'm still in touch with those friends to this day.

Question: What about your parents, were either of them politically active or involved in any way in the community?

Parkinson: Yeah, my family has had a long history of sort of failed political involvement; some successes, but mostly failures. It really goes way, way back. My great grandfather, Sam Filson, from Western Kansas, came to Kansas in the 1800s and taught at a one-room school house and was sort of the patriarch of the family and in fact our second child is named Sam Filson Parkinson.

Sam Filson was down in Scott City and served in the Kansas legislature in the early 1900s. He had a daughter named Elma, who is my grandmother on my dad's side. She married Henry Parkinson, who also was very political, but as a Democrat, and extremely involved in Democratic politics at the state level, and was instrumental in founding the Wheat Commission. I did not know this until much later in life, but he actually ran for governor and lost. I can't even tell you what year it was. But he was a Democrat and apparently the only county that he carried was Scott County. His kids, because of that, were interested in politics. They had four kids and all of them had various levels of political involvement. My father never ran for office, but developed a public relations firm in Wichita and a branch of what they did was to consult in political campaigns. That put me around campaigning a lot and so we were very aware politically of what was going on.

Question: Did your father talk to you about politics or push you in any direction, or it was something he did and therefore you heard it in the house?

Parkinson: It was really just more being around it than having discussions about it, but because I was around it so much, I was very politically aware. Even at the age of eleven, I was closely following the Republican and Democratic Conventions in 1968, which was kind of a pivotal year in America. So, I was very aware politically at an extremely young age.

Question: And your dad was a Republican?

Parkinson: He was.

Question: But your grandfather was a Democrat?

Parkinson: We have a pattern of kind of switching around in our family that I certainly kept intact. I think that they were moderate. My great grandfather was a Republican, but very, very liberal for his time, and would be clearly identified as a moderate Republican. My grandfather would have been a Blue Dog Democrat, though that name didn't exist back then. My parents were both very moderate Republicans.

Question: So your great grandfather was in the legislature, and your grandfather ran for governor, and your father had a public relations firm?

Parkinson: He had a public relations firm, he was also a lobbyist. He lobbied in Topeka. His claim to fame was he lobbied for "liquor by the drink." That was a battle for about 10 years that ultimately was successful on. He had a monumental midlife crisis in his late 40s and my parents were divorced and he then went out to Washington, D.C. and was a lobbyist, with varied degrees of success.

Question: And is he still alive?

Parkinson: He is not. He died at a young age. He died at 59, about 21 years ago.

Question: And your mother?

Parkinson: My mother is still alive. She grew up in New Mexico, and after my parents were divorced, she went back to New Mexico. She lives in Albuquerque and is a terrific woman. She actually has reverted back to being a Democrat at this point. She is very involved with her church - she is in a Catholic church - and social issues. Dealing with the poor and poverty are very important to her.

Question: Do you think, now that you mention it, your family background, especially your father, was a factor in the fact that you eventually ran for office, served in office? I mean, a lot of the governors that we have talked to have stories like yours.

Parkinson: Oh yeah. Political involvement was just a given in our family. One of the very first memories I have of political involvement was when I was 10 or 11 years old and I was the little kid that was on the brochure for the school bond issue. When that passed they decided that I was good luck, so then I was the little kid that was on the brochure for the zoo bond issue in Wichita. I remember it was me standing there and the caption said, "Boo Hoo, we need a new zoo." So, I was in political brochures at the age of 10 or 11.

The first time I ever voted, when I was 18 years old, I voted for myself for precinct committee person. When I was 19 years old, I co-chaired the effort to fluoridate the water in Wichita. Believe it or not, Wichita did not have fluoridation in its water, and I teamed up with a prominent dentist and we attempted to get that changed. We lost by 1%.

When I was a junior in college at Wichita State, I ran for the state legislature. I gave the commencement speech at our high school and the topic was the importance of political involvement. So, being involved politically was very much part of the fabric of our family.

Question: Wonder if we can track down that zoo brochure, you don't have one, do you?

Parkinson: I can't find it. A horrible thing happened: my wife, Stacy - after I successfully won my first race, which was for the state legislature in 1990 - she took all that material and created this great collage of it all that she presented to me that night at the victory party, and I was really sick. I had gone door-to-door for like four or five months and I had just stretched myself to the max and I was sick and I left the collage in the hotel room and it's been lost forever, which is very, very unfortunate.

Question: We could guarantee that would have been in the documentary. So why did you go to Wichita State? Tell us about that decision and what you did at Wichita State.

Parkinson: When I was a senior in high school, Catholic University decided that they were going to create this dream team of national debaters. It's a university in Washington, D.C., and they identified 6 or 8 debaters from around the country that they brought to Catholic U to debate, and I was one of them. So, my freshman year I spent at Catholic University and had a great experience there, loved being in D.C. and loved my friends and loved the debate team. When I came back that summer, there were various things pulling me back to Wichita. There was a girlfriend issue at the time, my parents were struggling a little bit personally, and it really looked to me like it would be helpful to the family if I would come back. So, for a variety of reasons I decided to stay in Wichita. Wichita State has a history of having a great debate team, so I was able to keep that part of my life going and I have always loved the community, so I felt very comfortable with the change.

Question: We didn't know this, so you can tell us about it, you ran for the legislature in college. Tell us about the decision and the campaign, who you ran against and what happened.

Parkinson: Well, I was a moderate republican and active in the party. I had been elected precinct committee person when I was a sophomore in college and so I started going to all the local meetings and people don't realize this, but the moderate/conservative division was already there. So, those of us that were moderates were people that were supporting Gerald Ford and his reelection campaign in 1976. The conservatives were supporting Ronald Reagan. It was a huge fight but I found it interesting and thought that it was important.

There had been several very successful, extremely young candidates around that time. A guy named Paul Hess, who later had some challenges, ran for the state house and the state senate and was elected in his early 20s. Ron Hein had run for the state senate in Topeka in his early 20s. They basically figured out that if you go to every door, it doesn't really matter if you're qualified or not. If you go to every door and can make a good impression, you have a pretty good chance to get elected. So, I followed their model, and I ran against a 12-year incumbent named Ben Foster. Ben Foster was also being challenged in that primary by a prior incumbent named Frank McMaster.

I went for four months, door to door, from roughly May to August, and had a real organized campaign. What I learned is you can cover a state house district in a primary in just two months, so I literally went to every door twice. I was extremely young and in much better shape than I am now. I only had one suit, and it was a three-piece suit. I wore that same three-piece suit every day for four months and there were days where it would be over 100 degrees, but that would actually help me as people would say, "Wow, you're this committed!"

Long story short, on election night, we thought we had won the race. One of the TV stations that was covering the local races declared me the winner. I was getting ready to go down there and do the interview and then we got a call back saying "Hey Mark, we are down here at the election office and we think you've lost." We didn't really know until the next day, but we found out the next day that I lost by 36 votes.

As much as I wanted to win, somehow I knew almost instantly that that was the right decision, that the voters had been mature enough to elect the person who probably needed to stay in and if I had been elected at that early of an age, not only was I not really ready, it would have changed my life so dramatically that it would have been difficult for me to graduate from Wichita State. It would have probably been impossible for me to go to KU Law School. I never would have met Stacy, my wife. You know, there are just multiple things about it where I'm extremely grateful that the voters were smart enough to not elect me to that position.

Question: And what year was this?

Parkinson: That was 1978. It was a really fascinating year. It was a primary and it was the first primary where Nancy Kassebaum was elected. It was a very interesting time and it was a very good experience.

Question: And were your opponents, were they conservative republicans and you were presenting yourself as a moderate?

Parkinson: Among the legislators the labels of conservatives and moderates hadn't really materialized at that time. A lot of the issues that are very important now hadn't really developed full bore like they have now. Abortion was legal. It had been legalized by Roe vs. Wade in the early 70s, but it wasn't the primary issue, it

wasn't easy to label people. In hindsight, I think that Ben Foster would have been considered a moderate and Frank McMaster probably would have been considered more of a conservative.

My candidacy wasn't taken very seriously initially and Ben Foster didn't do that much. We probably made a tactical mistake, which was that we wanted to show that we were making real inroads, so shortly after the 4th of July, probably four weeks before the primary itself, we put out all the yard signs in yards where people had agreed that we could put up yard signs. Well, it was an incredibly high number, a house district with probably 400 signs, which is a shocking number. That appears to have really gotten Ben Foster concerned. Bob Bennett, who was the governor at that time, actually came down into the district and campaigned for Foster. So, somehow we got them concerned, and in hindsight that was probably a mistake. It probably would have been a better strategy to just take the whole thing by surprise.

Question: And what house district number was that?

Parkinson: It was the 82nd.

Question: So you lose that election but you're not depressed and don't go into hiding, and you graduate from Wichita State and you then do what? You mentioned law school?

Parkinson: I had always wanted to work on Capitol Hill and so after I graduated from Wichita State I packed up my vehicle and I drove out to Washington, D.C. I had a degree in secondary education from Wichita State. My intention was always to go to law school, but I felt like it didn't make a lot of sense to go to college and not have a trade and so I had a degree in secondary education.

My plan was to go out to D.C. and hopefully get a job on Capitol Hill. What I told myself is that if I did not have a job by July 1, I would come back and try to teach for a year before I went to law school. So, I drove out to D.C. and started going to door-to-door. I knew how to go door-to-door from my campaign. I had identified about 150 Republican House members that I would feel comfortable working for. I didn't really want to work for any of the extreme conservatives, but there was a pretty large pool there of people that I felt comfortable working for. So, I went to those 150 members, left my resume and was quite discouraged.

It was very hard to get a job in D.C. at the time. This goes up and down; sometimes there are a lot of jobs out there, sometimes there are very few; this happened to be a time where there was very few. Just finding out about a job opening was challenging. But I got very lucky and ended up working for a guy named S. William Green, Bill Green, who was a very moderate republican from New York City. Congressman Green represented what's called the "Silk Stocking District," that's the congressional district that's in the upper east side of New York City. I was a legislative assistant with my emphasis being foreign affairs, which is hilarious because I knew nothing about foreign affairs at the time. But I quickly tried to learn as much I could. That was an amazing time. I worked for Congressman Green for a year, but always with the intention of coming back for law school.

Question: Seeing you running for the house in college, driving to D.C. and knocking on doors, you seemed to have a lot of confidence in yourself or at least not afraid to fail. Is that a characteristic in your personality?

Parkinson: That's an interesting question. Several things had happened at that time that made me feel like I needed to succeed more and they are really kind of a trifecta of three things that had happened that really caused me to have a lot of drive.

One thing that we haven't talked about is that I was married as a junior in college and it didn't work. It was a one-year marriage to a wonderful woman who's still around and I have a very good relationship with, but we were just too young. So, I had three incidents in the time period from 17 to 21 or so that I did not feel like I had really succeeded. The first was - and this will sound crazy - but I really wanted to go to the national debate tournament. At the time, in high school, to qualify for the national debate tournament you had to win the state championship to do it. It was very difficult to get in, you had to actually win, and I took 3rd as a junior and 2nd as a senior and I was just crushed over that. I had a failed marriage at a young age, and then I lost a state representative house race by 36 votes. I was starting to develop a feeling that I could get close to success but not get there.

My time in D.C., where I was very much alone, was a great time for me because I made the decision that I was going to find another gear, that I had done some things that were good, but that I really hadn't recognized my full potential, I hadn't worked as hard as I needed to, and hadn't focused as much as I needed to really reach my potential. I made the conscious decision when I was 21 or 22 that I was going to try to live the best life that I could, at the maximum level that I could, for every single day. So, I think the combination of those three events were the foundation for the reason that I work 7 days a week now and I have for the last 30 years, the reason that I try to never waste any time, and the reason I really just look at results in every aspect of my life.

Question: Did you look at the Kansas delegation as a possible place to find that job in Washington, or did you purposefully avoid using the potential contacts that you had?

Parkinson: I didn't look at the Kansas delegation because I really didn't have any contacts. If you look at the composition of the Kansas delegation at the time, there wasn't anybody that I would have had any sway with. I think also, I never wanted to get somewhere because I had an "in." I sort of resented those people that did that. I wanted to get somewhere based on my own work. When you go to Wichita State or live in Wichita, I think you kind of develop a chip on your shoulder that there is a privileged class out there that maybe has an unfair advantage and I never wanted to be one of those people.

Question: In 1990 you have your law degree and you're practicing and you decide to run again for the legislature. Tell us about that race for the house and then the senate.

Parkinson: I started practicing law in Johnson County in 1984 and loved it and thought that I would practice law for the rest of my life. I liked it so much that I didn't think that I would get back into politics. Well, circumstances developed that I did. I kept being kind of drawn back in.

In 1990 I ran for the statehouse and was a huge beneficiary of the fact that Johnson County was growing dramatically. As a result of redistricting I lived in a district where there was no incumbent and that really made it quite easy. I ran against a community activist in the primary and then a well-meaning democrat in the general, but a democrat has no chance to win that district. I reinstituted the campaign that I had back in 1978 where I literally went to every single door and just crushed the opposition because they didn't understand how to do that.

I served for two years in the statehouse, I loved it. It is an amazing experience and everything authentic about Kansas is in that statehouse. But, I am not a career-type person probably in any vocation and so I made the decision that I would only serve one term in the house and was prepared to leave and go back and really focus

on our law practice. What happened then, though, was that the state senate was also reapportioned. The reapportionment didn't affect the state senate until the 1992 cycle.

The conventional wisdom was that Vince Snowbarger from Olathe would run for that state senate seat, but Vince decided to stay in the house and run for majority leader, so there was no candidate. So, Bud Burke, and others, came to me and said, "Mark, would you run for the state senate?" I gave it a lot of thought and decided I would devote four years to doing that and ran for the state senate. I had a more difficult primary than you might think. I ran against a social conservative named Al Heger and by that time the moderate/conservative republican division had become very clarified and living in Olathe as a moderate republican was quite challenging. I was, and am, pro-choice. and that's a minority view in Olathe. That caused me a lot of difficulties in the campaign, but again, by virtue of going to every single door, which people thought was not possible on the state senate race - but which I knew it was just a matter of simple math - by going to every single door I was able to win that race as well.

Question: So, you serve in the senate until 1996, one term, that was your choice, and then it's an interesting jump to chair of the Kansas GOP. What appealed to you about being the chair of the Republican party?

Parkinson: Well, probably one of the biggest decisions I ever made was in 1996, which is not just leaving the state senate, but not running for congress, because the congressional seat was open. I had just had some very successful legislation that unified the former government in Wyandotte County. Everyone was saying, "Mark, you've got to run, you've got to do this." I decided instead that I wanted to go into business and we built our first elder care facility. That really has been our work since then and my thought was that I would just spend the rest of my life building elder care facilities. We love the work, we love working with older people.

But what happened two years later was that the social conservatives had taken control of the Republican party and were causing then-governor Bill Graves all kinds of fits. You know, you would think that your own party would be supportive! The conservatives were issuing press releases attacking their own governor and it was causing him all sorts of problems.

The party chair ran against Graves in the primary, which is unheard of, and Graves decided he needed to put a stop to it. So, he got very involved in the precinct races and created the possibility and the ultimate solution of moderates winning back the party. So, once moderates won back the party, the question then became, who should head the party? And people came to me and said, "Mark, kind of as a favor to the governor, as a favor to the state, would you run the party for a while and help us get back on track?" It seemed like a really good fit for me and so I did it.

Question: You're party chair from 1999 to 2003. You're in charge of a party that has got some critical differences. Did these differences get better or worse? How does that play out?

Parkinson: I try to always do things the right way, not sort of the way people would lazily or maybe to their best interests want things to be accomplished. I managed to, I think, get everyone's respect, but at the same time not make anybody happy! Because what I did with the state party was, I said that the state party should not exist in favor of the moderates or the conservatives, it should exist to work with everybody. So, I raised funds and we used those funds to help everyone, and I think some of the moderates were upset with that. Some of the moderates said, "Why didn't you do what the conservatives did to us while they were in control, so just helping

moderates?” That became discouraging to me that people couldn’t see that if you did things on the up and up and the right way that maybe that was the right way to do things.

So, I ran the party very much in a transparent, I think, fair way for four years, hoping that by doing that people would see that the divisions weren’t helping anybody and it was better to go forward in a united way. It ended up that I was completely unsuccessful with that. Despite running the party in a fair way that included everybody, the divisions probably just got worse.

Question: In 2003, you’re chair of the Republican party, in 2006, Kansans would see you standing on the platform with Democratic governor candidate, Kathleen Sebelius. How does that happen? Who was the person that approached this idea to you?

Parkinson: Well, I have never changed my view on any political position over the last 30 years. I have always been pro-public education, pro the regents, pro-choice, against gun ideas like conceal and carry, I have always been a moderate. As time went on, it became increasingly difficult to work within the Republican Party because the Republican party got more conservative.

After I left being state party chair, there were a number of issues that I ended up working on with Governor Sebelius. I worked very hard to create a narrow income tax credit in the tax code. I worked hard to get public funding for schools when I was chair of the Shawnee area chamber of commerce, and felt so strongly about it that our chamber actually withdrew from the state chamber back before it sort of became fashionable to do that, and that put me in touch with Kathleen. I became the chair of a foundation that’s 100-million-dollar healthcare foundation where she gets to make the appointments, along with the Attorney General, and I worked with her people to become the chair of it.

Behind the scenes, I ended up in a lot of situations where I was working with Governor Sebelius on a variety of different topics. Believe me, I never thought anyone would ever come to me and say, “Mark, you ought to run with governor Sebelius, or you ought to run for any other office ever.” I mean, I thought I was done.

I began working closely with her after Larry Gates and Governor Sebelius recruited Paul Morrison to run for Attorney General. Paul Morrison was and is a friend of mine and I was very supportive of that idea and when he agreed to run, switch parties and run as a democrat, I agreed to come out and publicly support him, even though I was a Republican. That got me even further into her circle.

I think they really thought someone else was going to do this lieutenant governor job. Coach Snyder at a fundraiser for the K-State Athletics has talked pretty openly that he was being talked with to run. The impression that I have is that the inner circle of Governor Sebelius really thought that they were going in a different direction, whether it was Coach Snyder or someone else, I don’t know. It didn’t work out and so within very short timeframe, like maybe 10 days before the filing deadline, I received a call from one of her primary operatives - and I don’t want to violate this circle of trust by saying who that is - but just to say that I received a call saying, “I have a very interesting idea and I wonder, would you mind if I approached Governor Sebelius about this.” And she told me this and I just said, “This doesn’t make any sense at all and let me just tell you all the reasons why it doesn’t make any sense.” And then we talked about it a little bit and then she called me back and she said, “I think it does make some sense, let’s talk it about some more.” And I started talking to her some more, and one thing led to another, and within three days I had agreed to serve on the ticket and within seven days we were publicly making the announcement.

Question: This is more of insider-political stuff, but how does this work point after these discussions? Does the governor call you? Or personally visit with you? Or do you agree before that even happens? Or is there some point a discussion where you sit down or at least talk on the phone?

Parkinson: Because of the compressed timeframe that was involved in this whole process, immediately after I said I would at least think about it, I started to get vetted. There was a vetting team that tries to figure out everything about your life and see if there are any problems in your background. So, I told them everything about my life and that happened over the next couple of days. After that vetting process was complete, Stacy and I came up to Cedar Crest and met with Kathleen and her inner staff. The job hadn't been offered, I hadn't accepted it, it was just kind of a general discussion. Then by the next day or so I had been offered the position and agreed to do it.

Question: Was there any discussion or even thought by you that this would lead to you running for office down the line? Or is this just lieutenant governor?

Parkinson: Not really. Despite what people think - that the lieutenant governor would be a great position to run for higher office - historically it hasn't been. I don't think there's a lieutenant governor in Kansas that has ever successfully ran for any other office. It is actually a really, really, bad political position. (Governor) Fred Hall was lieutenant governor, but that was before you ran as a team. When you run as a team in a state like Kansas - (where voters) are very willing to switch parties and governors back and forth - when you run as a team I think the lieutenant governor ends up carrying all the baggage of the person that they were connected with and so when they attempt to run it on their own actually hasn't been very successful.

I was certainly open to the thought that maybe down the road I would run and continue to run for office, but that wasn't the central reason that I did it. The central reason that I did this is that I really wanted to demonstrate to moderate republicans that it was ok to become a member of the Democratic Party. The conservatives had won fair and square, there was no reason to gripe about it, but if we wanted to stay actively involved, we should be, and there was a place for us, and it was in the Democratic Party. But it wasn't with an intent that I would do this and end up running for various offices in the future.

Question: When you did this, you had people that you had known for years issue statements saying "Traitor, Turncoat," etc. Is that just politics or at some level did you take it personally?

Parkinson: None of the statements I took personally. It's kind of interesting. If you look at the statements that came out from moderates, they were much more moderate than the statements that came up from conservatives, and I had had my battle with conservatives already, so I wasn't affected by that.

I will say that, personally, changing parties, I had more trouble with it than I think I let on. I had spent 30 years as a Republican and touting Republican principles and ideas and recruiting candidates and to switch on a dime was a very significant change for me. It took a while for me to convince myself that it was really okay.

Question: As governor, what does the job entail on a daily basis and is there anything about it that surprised you or was unexpected once you got into the job?

Parkinson: The job of governor is a tremendous job but it's really what you make of it. It is certainly possible to be elected governor and just be careful and just kind of monitor things and make sure that nothing flares up or gets too far out of control and then move on.

Because I knew that I had such a limited time, that I would only be governor for 20 months, I made the decision that we were really going to try to do something with the time that we had. So, the first thing that we did when I became governor is that we held a strategic planning session, which is what I would do as a business person, where I pulled the staff in and we talked about what our goals were for the next 20 months and how we would achieve them. We really viewed the whole 20 months as a springboard because we had such a limited amount of time.

Because I had been lieutenant governor, state party chair, state senator, and state representative, I really knew what the job was. There were not any surprises for what I would face as governor. There were some very pleasant surprises. One of the pleasant surprises is that as a governor, you do not ever have to waste any time. You are kind of carted around and taken care of in such a way that if you want to work every minute of the day, you can, and that was good to know.

I also didn't really appreciate the degree that I think that the Kansas public wants their governor to succeed. I haven't really thought that through, but I get that overwhelming feeling that when I'm running around the state, that the public really wants the governor to succeed. I think that the public wants us to succeed and that is a built-in advantage that I had not really thought about or understood.

Question: How would you characterize your gubernatorial style?

Parkinson: My style was very proactive, very strategic, very business-like, developing specific policy initiatives, strategies to achieve them, implementing the strategies.

Question: What's been the most rewarding part of being the governor of Kansas?

Parkinson: On the policy side the areas I'm the most pleased about is that we were able to steer the state through a very difficult economic time without completely wrecking the programs that I really care about. We didn't completely wreck K-12 or the regents or our social service programs. I feel very good about that because when you look at other states, other states did not have that result.

I was very pleased with the transformation with energy policy in Kansas and really resulting in a tripling and quadrupling of wind power and creating a whole new industry. I feel very gratified that the board of regents and all the regent schools are now heading in a direction of strategic planning which I have encouraged them to do. And I am very happy with the transportation plan. There has been a history of governor's giving transportation plans enacted every 10 years and I didn't want to be the governor that wasn't able to do that during my time. So, I feel very content with what we achieved.

Question: What did you find most frustrating about the job or your time in office?

Parkinson: There's nothing that really frustrated me. There were policy areas that I wish we could have worked on that we just didn't have the money to get to, such as the underfunding of KPERS and the waiting list for people that needed disability services. The circumstances didn't allow us to work on those. There was nothing about the job that I found frustrating.

Question: If somebody would come to you now or the future and would say there were few skills that would help to have for this job, what would you say?

Parkinson: The ability to listen, the ability to be patient, and the ability to strategically plan and implement the plan are, I think, the three most important things to being governor.

Question: When people down the road think about your time in office, what would you hope they think about, what would you like them to think about, how would you like to be remembered as the governor?

Parkinson: I would like to be remembered as a true Kansan, who really loves the state, who came in at a very difficult time and helped us get through a difficult time so that the state could then go on to bigger and better things.

Question: Governor Sebelius is going off to Washington, D.C. Did you sit down and think about running for a full-term?

Parkinson: Well, I had decided as lieutenant governor that I wouldn't run. Initially I thought she would go to D.C. in the fall of 2008 and that is that is when I announced as lieutenant governor that I wasn't going to run. When it then became clear later that she was going to go to D.C., I had to figure out if I was going to reevaluate that decision. I made the decision at that time that if I came out and suddenly changed my mind again, my credibility level would really be in jeopardy. I had already sort of famously switched parties and to then say suddenly that I was going to run again, I thought would be awkward.

I also was able to see the strategic advantage of not running again as an opportunity to maybe bring people together who otherwise would have been sniping against me. But I will say this: over the course of the following six months or so, I thought about it. I thought about whether there was a scenario where it would be possible for me to have any level of credibility and also run. I didn't ever seriously think it would happen, but it was something in my mind that I was thinking about.

In October or so of 2009, the financial numbers with the state were so bad that I knew that I couldn't cut budgets anymore and retain the integrity of programs and that we were going to have to seek a tax increase. Once I knew that we were going to seek a tax increase, I completely stopped thinking about ever running for governor again; that's what in my mind really shut the door, because at that point, I'm now the architect of the largest number of budget cuts in Kansas history as a governor and I've also led the way for the largest tax increase in Kansas history. That's not a very good platform for a candidate ever, and certainly not in 2010.

Question: As governor and you want something passed or you are pushing with an issue, how do you go about doing that? Are you the type of person you would call a meeting with legislators or would you be on the phone all day?

Parkinson: I'm the kind of person who if we want a policy initiative, we figure what the policy initiative is, then we figure out if it's possible. There are a lot of things I would like to see happen but if they are not possible, I don't want to waste my time on them. There is not enough time to waste time on things that aren't possible. So, number one, do we want it? Number two, is it possible? Number three, if it is possible, what are the steps that we need to take to make it happen? Some of that may involve calling legislators initially. Some of it might involve talking to them at the very end. Some of it might be reaching out to lobbying groups and saying we need you to do x, y, or z. But it is having a strategy and implementing it and that strategy changes depending upon what the policy is. The strategy, for example, on the public smoking ban was much different than the

strategy to get the tax increase. But, in each case we had a very specific strategy with steps that we needed to implement that would get us to our end point and fortunately we were successful in both.

Question: Governor Anderson used to have legislators just come in the office and he said he would shut the door until they could hammer something out. What sort of things did you do?

Parkinson: Well, first off on the public smoking ban, it had passed the Senate but it had not passed the House. We thought we were one or two votes short in the House, so we had a multi-faceted strategy. Part of it at the end was me calling legislators one-by-one and putting a very, very, hard sell on them to get their vote. A governor can do that. A governor, even a lame duck governor, can have a lot of persuasion with a state legislator.

Question: You didn't come into the position of running with the governor thinking she is going to Washington. She gained a lot of notoriety and there was a lot of talk about her in the summer before President Obama's election. When did you sort of begin to have the idea coalesce in your mind that you're going to wind up sitting in that chair for the last half of this term in office?

Parkinson: I didn't take very seriously the possibility of Governor Sebelius going to D.C. until Barack Obama started doing very well in the primaries. She made it clear to me that she was a Barack Obama supporter. Conventional wisdom was that Hillary Clinton would be the nominee, and I thought that was fine, we will be on the losing side of this race, but as long as she is doing what she thinks is right, I'm fully supportive of that. Well, Obama started surprising people, obviously in Iowa, and then on down the road. Once that happened, I became aware that there was a very distinct possibility that she was going to go to D.C. and I really changed my focus as lieutenant governor from just working on energy policy to really studying the budget. I spent the three months of the summer in 2008 really learning as much I could about the budget and that ended up being very helpful because shortly after she did leave.

Question: Did you have any conversations with her about that or you're perceptive enough to realize you need to be moving down this track?

Parkinson: I was perceptive enough to figure it out - as was almost everybody else in America - that she was a rising star and everybody wanted her. She and I had some private conversations about the possibilities and I really wouldn't feel comfortable in saying too much other than I don't think Governor Sebelius would have gone to Washington for any job other than the one she did, Health and Human Services. She was not willing to just take any old cabinet post that came by. She only wanted to take one where she thought she could make a major impact.

**INTERVIEW WITH
GOVERNOR MARK PARKINSON
MARCH 27, 2021 - VIA ZOOM**

QUESTION: My favorite was probably Freddy Patek. He just looked like a normal person. He was below-average height and I liked that he was so normal. I loved Al Cowens. He could hit like crazy and not a lot of people knew about him or remembers him. I think he hit .300. That was before steroids and players looked like normal people.

QUESTION: In 2010 you talked about that you went to Catholic University to be part of this dream team of debaters, and you were there for a year. Then you transferred back, you transferred to Wichita State. I was curious if you felt like that was a bit of a letdown, or that you actually sort of failed, because you go to DC and you've gone to this big debate team. And then you're back in Wichita. Did that feel like a letdown doing that? And then that maybe fueled maybe wanting to do things later in your life?

PARKINSON: No, I did have some failures that did fuel my energy levels, but that wasn't one that I consider to be a failure. I came back that summer fully intending to go back to Catholic University that next year and my parents put on a soft sell for me to stick around Wichita. And I decided that I would run for precinct committee person - and the election was of course the first Tuesday in August - and that if I won the race I would stay in Wichita. It was not a hard race to run because I was unopposed. But I had to run as a write in, and back then you actually had to get 10 votes, and they had to be done in a specific way. So, I got excited about the idea of being a precinct committee person and sticking around Wichita.

Wichita State had just hired a guy that was a really good debate coach, and he had a good-sized budget. I went and talked with him, so I was able to debate at a very high level. So, I understand why you would see that, but that's not the way that it worked out. And interestingly at Wichita State, my first debate partner was John Carmichael, who's currently in the Kansas Legislature. And my second debate partner has become a lifelong friend, a guy named Brian Huffard, who was brilliant. He was I think probably the only person in the history of Wichita State to go to Yale Law School. And he's an incredibly accomplished litigator. So, I viewed that as a lateral move, not as a demotion.

QUESTION: In 2010 you mentioned that when you were 19 you chaired the effort to fluoridate the water in Wichita. Could you tell us more about that?

PARKINSON: I had completely forgotten about that.

When you're in debate you end up learning a teeny bit about a whole bunch of different things. One of the things I had learned about was this whole issue of fluoridation. At the time - believe it or not - whether or not you should fluoridate your water was actually an issue. It wasn't an issue in most of the world but it was an issue in Wichita, Kansas. There was an element of people that were convinced that the government was poisoning us with fluoride. There was this specific researcher named John Yiamouyiannis who made a living running around the country convincing people that fluoride would destroy them, and that effort had succeeded in Wichita. And I was one of the hundreds of thousands of kids that grew up in Wichita that was at the dentist all the time with cavities because we didn't have fluoride.

(In 1978) I happened to hear that there was a hearing at the Wichita City Council on whether to fluoridate the water or not and that John Yiamouyiannis was going to come in. I thought, oh my god, this is the guy that I've been following in research and debate and at least in my opinion he was a quack job. So, I went down and testified and I said look, here's what you need to know about John Yiamouyiannis and told them all the things that I learned in debate. And then somebody from the local dental society said this is pretty cool, some young kid that's up here talking. One thing led to another and I ended up co-chairing (a fluoridation campaign) with a respected dentist in Wichita. The effort came pretty damn close but I think we lost by one or two percent. I assume that they fixed that now, I assume that Wichita has fluoridated water. I hope so; maybe that could be my next cause.

QUESTION: So, was that like a public service campaign with advertising to influence the City Council or was it actually like a vote by the city voters?

PARKINSON: The City Council said OK we will do it but only if the voters want to do it. So, they put it on the ballot, and just getting it on the ballot was a pretty big deal. There was a campaign, but campaigning in general was very unsophisticated back then and so it was nothing like the campaigns now. I'd be surprised if we raised more than twenty-five or thirty-thousand bucks. We had some radio ads and a brochure and stuff like that but nothing like what would happen today.

QUESTION: In 2010 we talked about how you ran for the state legislature when you're a junior in college but I wanted to follow up because basically you later said that you ran against the 12-year incumbent named Ben Foster. You told us he wasn't super conservative. So, what prompted you in particular to run against him? Was it just you wanted to be in the legislature? You didn't like him? And then what did you tell the voters? Tell us about that please.

PARKINSON: My decision to run was not ideologically based, it was stupidity based. There had been a guy named Paul Hess – now there's an interesting political character - Paul Hess ran for the legislature when he was like 20. Went door to door and beat somebody that was probably well deserving to be in their position. But the power of door to door was not known at the time and Paul Hess revealed it by going door to door in a district in Wichita and winning. I met him and I was really intrigued by what he had done. He later went on to the State Senate and then there was a huge scandal involving his wife and all sorts of other issues.

So, I had it in my mind that this was possible and other people were starting to do it too, like a guy in Wichita named Eric Yost, somehow I got to know him, and he was going to do the same thing in the same year that I was doing it. Another kid named John Sullivan. Actually, he was even younger than me at the time I was doing it.

It was nuts, because, first of all it was probably unwinnable, even though I think I lost by 36 votes. But the other thing was there was no ideological basis for it. We just didn't have the Internet so you really didn't know exactly where people were at, but in hindsight Ben Foster probably would have been described as a moderate Republican. He supported Bob Bennett, for example, who was clearly a moderate Republican. But like many incumbents, he was not around, he was probably getting a little tired of it.

And it wasn't just me that ran; it was a three-way primary. There was a guy named Frank McMaster who had previously been in the legislature that ran.

The one issue that I did grab onto that was legit and would matter later on, was public education, and there was a sense among teachers that Ben Foster was not really with them. And so, I learned a good lesson in politics early on because when I first started making some noise like I might run, the Kansas NEA was very interested and I felt like I was going to get their support. But then Frank McMaster, a former legislator, possessed a lot more credibility than some nineteen or twenty-year old kid who just came along and I got quickly dumped by the KNEA, who endorsed Frank McMaster, who took a very distant third in the race.

It was an exhilarating and really important part of my background because I attacked it in a way that I never had attacked anything before. I learned the value of what I've done since then, which is hopefully never dialing it in, never conceding anything, and just trying to give it your all. I not only went to every door in the district, I went to every door twice. I was a maniac.

QUESTION: Did you go to doors of people you knew were against you?

PARKINSON: No, because you didn't have a way to know that then. And I only went to Republican doors because it was a Republican Primary, so that's what made it possible. What I learned about going door to door then was really critical to me getting elected to the State House and the State Senate when I was actually running for a reason and it made more sense later on. And door to door is still incredibly effective and very few people do it. Almost all of them say they do it but very few candidates actually do it.

I'm convinced that I would not have gotten elected to the State Senate in Olathe if I had not gone to every door. The conventional wisdom at the time was that you could not hit every door in a State Senate seat, but I knew that I could. I knew the regimen that it would require. And I did not fit my State Senate district and I didn't hide that and I didn't lie about my positions, they were very much out there. But I'm convinced that I won the race because the voters were just like, well, OK, we don't really agree with this guy on everything but he's willing to come around and what the hell, let's give him a chance.

So, in (my first race) really for four or five months I campaigned twelve hours a day, seven days a week, and to do it in a very smart and efficient way, that was a really good experience. I realized deeply into it that it was OK if I lost. I was trying to win but I realized almost that it was a mistake. The day after the results came in I felt an exhilaration. I did not feel the disappointment that you would normally feel. Exhilaration not that I had lost but just that whole experience and at that point I had a fuller understanding of what my life would have been like if I had won and that I really probably wasn't in the right position in my life to do it. I decided then that I may or may not ever run for office again, but if I did run for office it would only be after I was fully established as an adult with hopefully my family and then with my profession. I was not going to be a professional politician.

I actually felt like the voters made the right decision, you know? I lost, but I just lost by a little bit. So that's like OK, a little affirming. If I had gotten crushed I don't think that would have been right. If I won that probably wouldn't have been right.

And then another sort of interesting twist to my career is that when I got elected to the legislature in 1990 the desk that I had had a little sticker on it that said this: Former desk of Ben Foster. He had just left the legislature, that was his last term. I was like wow, amazing.

QUESTION: Let's carry on with the theme of your tenacity. In 2010 we learned that you drove to DC with the intent to get a Congressional aide job and that you knocked on 150 Republican doors but that was discouraging

to you. You said that you got lucky and got a job with New York Congressman Bill Green. So how did you end up at that job and what did you learn on Capitol Hill? Just walk us through what that experience was like.

PARKINSON: Well, again I got lucky, but I got lucky because there was a fair amount of tenacity to it. The Internet did not exist but the *Almanac of American Politics* existed. Back then it was like wow, it was amazing, something that covers every single district and can give you a background on the district. So, I went through that and I identified about 150 Republicans that I would feel comfortable in working for. At the time moderate Republicans were in the majority in the Republican caucus. The conservative Republican thing had happened enough that I wasn't really willing to work for every single Republican but I was willing to work for most of them and I felt like it had to be a Republican because I'd run for offices as a Republican and so I was pretty tied in as a Republican.

Jobs were really hard to get on the Hill but it does go in cycles and at that particular time it was really, really hard to get a job on the Hill. It was hard to just even find a damn job opening, I mean just a sniff of a job. My plan all along was to take one year out and then go to law school and my plan was if I didn't have a job by July 15th I was going to come back to Wichita and hopefully catch on as a teacher as my undergraduate degree was in secondary education. I had student-taught government at Wichita East High and Wichita Heights High and I enjoyed it.

It was amazing how lucky it was. Deeply into the process, when I was about to give up, somehow I found out about a job. I think I just got it by cold calling and walking into the office for Congressman Bill . They had made the decision that they did not like to hire people from the district. Some people have that philosophy because when things go south what do you do? And so the entire office was people that didn't work in his district other than what they then called the Administrative Assistant, they now call Chief of Staff. I got interviewed by Alice, the Chief of Staff, and she asked me about my background, and being a moderate Republican was really important to them. Bill Green was rated the fifth most liberal member of Congress even though he was a Republican, because he represented the Upper East Side of New York, the Silk Stocking District. It was a highly Democratic district, full of Broadway stars and movie stars and all of that. Super rich liberal people.

I got a job as a legislative correspondent, I think my title was legislative assistant. But I was really mainly answering mail and the reason I mainly answered mail was because the area of expertise that I had - I'm laughing because I had no expertise - he was not on the relevant committees. So, my (assigned) area of expertise was foreign policy, which was ridiculous because I knew nothing about foreign policy.

The first day of my job Congressman Green has a note on my desk that says it looks like the administration is going to get rid of the mutual assured destruction doctrine and, "I want a New York Times opinion editorial opposing that." So, I sit there and I'm like shit, I don't know what to do!

I had no idea what I would do to figure this out. Luckily, I had an uncle who was a legitimate legislative assistant for Senator Dale Bumpers of Arkansas. My uncle had been in the CIA for many, many years, a very accomplished person, and towards the end of his career decided he wanted to work on the Hill. So, I called him and we met for lunch at a restaurant on my first day and I said, Leonard, I am just completely screwed here. So, Leonard explained to me the mutually assured destruction theory. I completely understood why you could make an argument that it was dumb to rid of it. So, I put together an op-ed that ended up running. But, I don't think word processing existed, spell check clearly didn't exist. And it turns out that when you write an article or op-ed

about why it's a dumb idea to get rid of the mutually assured destruction theory you end up using the word missile a lot. Misspell the word missile a lot and it looks really stupid, I misspelled the word missile every time I used it. I put it on the Congressman's desk and the next morning it's on my desk and says this looks OK except fix the typos. Every single time I misspelled missile he had circled it in red.

QUESTION: I bet you have never misspelled that word again in your entire life.

PARKINSON: Now I avoid even the use of the word. So that was my first day.

QUESTION: You started practicing law in 1984, and you loved it and that you thought would never get back into politics. Yet in 1990 you run for the statehouse. Why exactly did you want to be in the legislature? Was it just to see what it was like, to avenge what happened in 1978? What were the motives behind that?

PARKINSON: Well, it definitely wasn't to avenge the Wichita thing. My wife and I clerked in DC after our second year in law school. I worked for a law firm named Nathan Young and Stacy worked for the General Accountability Office, the GAO. And we thought really, really seriously about just coming to DC after law school, but we ultimately decided to come back to Kansas because our idea with coming back to Kansas was that eventually we would form our own law firm and then practice law together. And we did that. We came back and Stacy worked as a prosecutor for Dennis Moore, who later went on to be a congressperson. I went and worked at a small law firm that was awesome. They taught me how to practice law. And then we formed our own law firm and we were really having a good time.

The master plan was to not get into politics. For example, we bought a house in Olathe. Now, the me back in the 1970s, I would have been looking for a house in the district where there might at some point be an opening for the statehouse and then run. But I didn't even think about that. We bought this house in Olathe and then just got extremely lucky that Olathe was a rapidly growing community that ended up having a bunch of new statehouse seats every time there was a reapportionment.

What happened was that when I was at the law firm, which was from 1984 to 1986 - before we formed our own firm - one of the partners there insisted that I go through Leadership Olathe - and you know how all these cities have these leadership things. And that really got me back thinking about it. I met a person in Leadership Olathe who wanted to run for the city council and I'd run for office before so he asked me if I'd manage his campaign. I managed his campaign and he ended up winning, and he went on to become the mayor.

Then Dennis Moore decided to not run again for DA, to go out and practice private law. So, an opening came to be for the DA and he had hand selected a replacement, but we felt like the best person in the office to be the DA was Paul Morrison. Paul Morrison then called me out of the blue and said I understand you've been involved in politics before, would you be my volunteer manager for my campaign? So, I was the volunteer manager for Paul's campaign. And we did everything wrong and still won because Paul was the Republican and Dennis' hand-picked person was the Democrat.

By then I was deeply involved in local politics. Then in 1990 when Olathe got a new state representative seat because of reapportionment I actually got recruited to run and I was an easy sell because at that point I was re-engaged in the whole thing. We had one child at that point but we felt like we were stable, our law firm was doing well, I felt I could commute.

When I was in the legislature I commuted every day. In those six years I'm sure there were a few nights where I probably stayed over in Topeka, but very few. People at that time said, oh you can't do that because all the relationships are formed at the cocktail parties and all that, so I missed out on all of that. But I was able to get home every night and hang out with the kids and Stacy. It was a really good fit and it made sense.

QUESTION: So six years that you were in the state legislature, some things that we wanted to note. One was that you helped write the death penalty law. Could you tell us more about what you thought about in terms of it coming back up again in 2010 when you Governor.

PARKINSON: The death penalty debate is really a tough one, so I'll now tell you what the critics were saying, now that I'm 10 plus years out, I'll tell you that it's true: I wrote a death penalty law that in my opinion would never be utilized to actually execute someone. At the time we had a "hard-20" and it ultimately became a hard-40. But what we had for the most egregious criminals we didn't have a serious enough penalty. You could go out and commit multiple murders, premeditated, and people were serving a hard 20 years. Well hell, you know, that ain't enough. And so, because we didn't have anything that was a serious enough hammer most of these defendants were just taking these cases to trial because their worst case-scenario was a 20-year sentence.

In part because of my close work with Paul (Morrison) with the DA's offices and all of that, I became convinced that we needed a stronger hammer than that. I didn't want to institute a death penalty that would ensnare too many people, which some states have done. This gets very much in the weeds, but in a number of states, I think Florida, they had the death penalty even for things like felony murder. They had hundreds, even thousands of people on death row. But I liked the idea of having a death penalty for really, really serious crimes; premeditated stuff, aggravated circumstances, multiple crimes involved, that would mainly be a negotiating tool to get people to then plead to a hard 40.

It's a really difficult subject and if I had to do it over again I would not have pursued it. The principal reason I wouldn't have pursued it isn't so much the way that it's being utilized in Kansas now, but I now know more about the history of the death penalty and its unfair utilization against people of color. I think that probably alone is enough that it shouldn't ever be used again. I'm not sure that I regret it because it's not really utilized that much other than a negotiating tool.

There were some people that figured that out and so there were some people that were saying, Mark's just proposing something that he knows will never be used and it needs to be harder and stricter and all of that. And of course there were all the people that were to the left of me on the topic that just think that it's inherently bad. So, it was a tough time and its part of what I've done.

QUESTION: If there was a way to ensure that it was not carried out or executed in a discriminatory fashion, would that change your opinion on that?

PARKINSON: I'd have to think long and hard about that. Even though it's been 10 plus years since I've been in the governor's office, I haven't had a time to really sit back. I started this job the day after the inauguration of Sam Brownback and I have literally worked almost every day since then. So, I haven't had that period of time to wait around for a month and sort of think about, you know, should I have done this differently or that differently or all that. But I would say that my gut reaction is that if I did have a chance to think about it I probably would want to undo it, and I probably do wish that I hadn't done it in the first place.

QUESTION: So, we always ask the governors about the other governors that they served under or might have known. You're in the legislature 1990 to 1994 and Joan Finney is the governor. Through the years I've certainly heard interesting things about her. I never met her. So what kind of governor was she? And she doesn't run for reelection which always intrigues me too, but then she runs for Senate later and loses. Felt like she just gave up and said I'm out of it. You're a legislator for 4 years and she's governor, tell us about her.

PARKINSON: Well, my interaction with her was limited because you know a rank and file legislator typically doesn't have much connection with the governor and I certainly fell into that category.

I would say two things: One is her unbelievable memory, her savant ability to remember somebody that she'd met like 30 or 40 years before. That is really true. And it was astonishing. Many people have talked about that. Incredible.

And then the other story that I remember, it's hearsay, I think I heard it from Anthony Hensley, but I've always remembered it: Based on the 1990 census there was reapportionment of all the statehouse and state senate, so the legislators in a bipartisan way had put together a map. It's really hard to get a map that everybody agrees to. But they finally got a map to her and they didn't know it but she was going to veto it. In a surprise after all of that work she vetoed the map. Somebody went to her and said, why the hell did you veto this? She said, I'm not going to sign any map unless it abolishes Rochelle Chronister's district." So, she vetoed it. You'd have to know Rochelle and Joan Finney and all that but it was actually quite funny.

QUESTION: You also served your last two years under Bill Graves as governor. What kind of governor was he? In terms of what you observed, like his style or you know how he approached his job?

PARKINSON: Bill Graves is a great leader and sadly probably the last moderate Republican governor that will ever exist in Kansas. That's just a unique combination to have a moderate Republican that loves the state like he does, that has the business background that he does. Those were a magical eight years that the state was really fortunate to have him as governor. When I think about the governors of Kansas that I've served with or had kind of known the two that really are head and shoulders above me and others are Bill Graves and Kathleen Sebelius.

QUESTION: You mentioned Kathleen Sebelius. You observed her as governor, what skills or traits did she have that made her in your opinion a successful governor?

PARKINSON: She has a star quality that just attracts people. The first time that I met Kathleen she was the chair of the Federal and State Committee in the House and I was a freshman legislator in the state house from Olathe. I wanted my time in the legislature to matter so I adopted an issue and decided I was going to do everything I could to get it through, which was to raise the driver's age. At the time you could get a license when you were 14. You could get a license and drive in Kansas City when you were 14, which was nuts. I took that issue on and it got assigned to her committee so I had to go meet with her to hopefully get her to support the bill and have a hearing. I think that's the first time that I met her was going over to do that. And what I remember then about it was even when she was in the state house she had an entourage. She had like four or five people that were just kind of always around as she walked down the hall, sort of like you see an important member of Congress right now, like if you ran into Chuck Schumer or Nancy Pelosi up on the Hill right now. She had that when she was in the Kansas House and everybody just kind of knew then that someday she was going to be governor or senator or something incredible.

The results speak for themselves. What is shocking is not just that she got elected as governor as a Democrat, but she came from out of state. Now she did get the Sebelius name so that helped but she came from out of state. Her first job was to be the executive director of the Kansas Trial Lawyers Association. I mean, if you were saying to somebody, OK, let's put together a blueprint for what would be a great path to become a governor of Kansas, OK, let's get an out a state Democrat that runs the Trial Lawyers wouldn't be it! But she's just so incredibly talented and effective. She just outclassed the whole field.

QUESTION: So, I have a follow up from 2010 and the conversation about your four years as Republican Party chair. You said that you thought the state party should work for everybody and we're curious to hear your thoughts on whether or not you felt like that was sort of a naive viewpoint because you know the history for Kansas is that it's conservative in nature. And when they take control of the party apparatus they go on this sort of search and destroy mission against moderates. So, if you could describe the state of the Republican Party in those years and then perhaps touch on who was your worst nemesis in this new Republican Party at the time in terms of you making this real attempt to unify the party.

PARKINSON: Until the mid-1980s the Republican Party was always controlled by moderate Republicans. It wasn't until really David Miller came along and sort of took over that conservatives were running the party. That would have actually been in the 1990's. I subscribed to a belief that I later realized was wrong, and my belief was that the conservatives were a small part of the party and when they had control of the party with David Miller they had hijacked the party; that in fact the general view of Republicans in the state was much more moderate and much more progressive. And so, when we were able to win back the majority of the precincts, which would have been in 1998 I think, we thought OK, this thing that is temporary is over, we'll get in there, we will bring the party back to what it was.

In my view my job as state party chair was to not pick between people that are Republicans running against each other, in fact, it was just to help everybody and legitimately treat everybody the same. I was comfortable in that belief because I thought that most other Republicans in the state were moderate. They still were in the legislature. You know the legislature still had people like R H Miller as the leadership types and Dick Bond and those kinds of people. I made a commitment to visit every county, all one hundred and five counties, and not just drive through, but go to the county, make a speech and get to know the people. And what I learned was these people hadn't hijacked the party, they were the party. They were a clear majority. And this notion that, oh, this is some temporary aberration, that most of the Republicans in the state are pro-choice and don't hate gay people and love public education - that ain't it. So, in the process of visiting one hundred and five of these counties it was extremely depressing because what I realized was the party that I had grown up with wasn't there anymore. And it's not like it got hijacked, we lost fair and square. There's just more of them.

It harkened me back to when I was running for the state senate in 1992. I'd go door to door every night and about once a night somebody at the door would say, what's your position on abortion? And as soon as they asked that question I knew I was in trouble and so I would say, I understand both sides, but I believe a woman should have a right to choose and all that. Sometimes they'd be kind and that would be the end of it and sometimes I'd get yelled at. I remember one night I came back, and I said to my wife Stacy, I said, Stacy, if these people ever figured out who the other ones of them are, we would have a real problem, because there's a hell of a lot of them and if they would figure out a way to pull together. Well, they figured out a way; the Internet came along and communication got more efficient.

Basically, my time chairing the party was really good because I was able to chair the party during the time of Bill Graves, but it was also a really unfortunate recognition on my part that we had lost fair and square. So, when I didn't run again for party chair in 2002, I was convinced that I was completely out of politics. I wasn't disgusted with that, I was OK with it, it had run its course. My viewpoint just didn't exist in my party anymore, so I thought it was time.

The hardest time of being chair was my final three or four months because that was after the primary in 2002 where we had an open governor seat, and I was hoping that Dave Kerr would win the primary and that I could then enthusiastically campaign with him and for him for four months. But, low and behold, David did not win the primary, Tim Shallenberger won the primary and because I really do believe that you should do things in a right and fair way, I did my job as state party chair. I didn't dial it in for Tim Shallenberger, I really campaigned. I've seen quotes from him where he said that I didn't do that, that we did the least amount possible; completely untrue. We raised more money for Republican candidates in the four years that I was there than had ever been done before. We gave more money to all the Republican candidates than ever before.

So that that was a tough time. Running around the state campaigning for Tim Shallenberger, which I did because it was my job, was not fun. I ran in 1998 and it was fun because we just won the precincts and we were going to take the party back and had the governor and all that, that was great. In hindsight I really wish I hadn't run again in 2000 because I just wasn't thinking through that, hey, what am I going to do if some right-wing person gets the nomination? So, the toughest time was those four months.

In terms of anybody that was an antagonist, nobody jumps to mind.

QUESTION: Paul Morrison, a friend of yours. How shocked were you by the scandal that brought him down and how devastating was this for the Kansas Democratic Party?

PARKINSON: I was completely shocked because Stacy and I weren't just close to Paul, we were and are close to Joyce, Paul's wife. Joyce gave me a call late one night and said, "I need to come over and talk." I mean I'm talking late like 10:30 or 11:00 and I'm like, Oh my God, what's the deal? thinking health or something like that. So, she comes over to our home and she tells me about this stuff and we just couldn't believe it. We were then able to piece together things that were really tough to think about.

When I was running for the state senate and going to every single door there was about a two-week period of time where I was trying a case in federal court defending Paul against the sexual harassment claim brought by a woman named Kelly Summerlin. That was a really tough time for me sort of physically, because when you are in trial it's 24-7. I was in trial and I was getting up at four or five in the morning, getting ready for trial, trying the case all day, and then as soon as we ended in federal court zooming down to Spring Hill or Gardner or Olathe and doing my door to door. I was completely convinced that we were in the right in that case and it was hard for me not to immediately think about that case and wonder, and to not think about Joyce and their kids and what the impact would be on all of them. So, it was really bad.

I completely agree with you. My belief – and I think a lot of people thought that one of the reasons I was comfortable when being lieutenant governor and saying I'm never going to run again - was the thought was that Paul was going to be the next candidate for governor. He was just perfect, and I think if this hadn't happened, a tough on crime, really earthy person that says hilarious things, just because he talks that way, he was everything (as a candidate) and it just turned out that this was going on and it was devastating. I've heard people say, could

Paul have survived this? The new playbook among politicians appears to be to not resign and just kind of ride stuff out. So, I wonder about that.

QUESTION: Governor Sebelius had to pick an Attorney General. Seems like she had one down the hall in you. Was that ever brought up? Did you ever think about it?

PARKINSON: I had made it very clear that this was a four-year deal for me. Honestly never even thought about it and at that at that point in time keep in mind that I hadn't been practicing law for a while. We quit practicing law in 2005 and really fell in love with building care homes and taking care of older people. I spent a lot of my time in nursing homes and assisted living buildings and really wasn't practicing law. Steve Six was just another guy from central casting. He was a perfect pick.

QUESTION: Because you posed the question with Morrison, "Could he have survived this?" If he would have decided to move forward, would you have campaigned for him or stuck beside him?

PARKINSON: I think that we were really hurting for Joyce and so we were pretty upset. We are still in touch with Joyce and we are not in touch with Paul.

****After a mention by questioner about ambition, Parkinson says:** "When it came to politics I wasn't (ambitious). I closed a lot of doors."

QUESTION: Lt. Governor pick: You said that ten days before the filing deadline you received a call from Sebelius' camp. You said you told them it didn't make sense. But actually, nothing makes more sense! So, when you said this made no sense, was it because you were trying to play Devil's Advocate? Why did you say that?

PARKINSON: Before I got that call I had never, ever contemplated that Kathleen Sebelius would ask me to be her Lt. Governor candidate. What had happened was that she actively recruited Paul to run for AG. She did not know when she was doing that that I had been close to Paul and managed his campaigns and all of that. So, when he went to the first meeting he called me and said, "This has to be super-secret but Kathleen's trying to recruit me to run for AG as a Democrat. I'll only do it if you'll be with me. Not just in the campaign, but along the way, so, would you come to this meeting?" I went to what was the first meeting and I think Kathleen was surprised because she knew me as past GOP Chair. I don't think she knew the Paul connection. So, we had several meetings and Paul ultimately decided to do it.

I had committed - which I was happy to do because I thought Phill Kline was uniquely dangerous - to openly supporting Paul and managing his campaign. By then politics was sophisticated enough that I was a manager in name only, you have real political consultants and pollsters and all that. We were doing the work, this was a long effort. I don't remember when Paul started campaigning but in January, February, March, April we were working really hard on Paul's campaign, that's what I was doing, and there was no thought in my mind about Lt. Governor.

In fact, after we had the third meeting or so "Paul said "OK, I'm going to do this," I remember walking out of that meeting with Paul and I said, Paul, the great thing about this is I'll never have to think about running for office again, because I'm going to be completely *persona non grata* after this. So that was my mindset and that's where I was at. Then I got the call.

I don't know for sure but I think Bill Snyder had either said yes or had come very close to saying yes. It was like, we're basically there. And apparently he then talked to Tom Osborn, who had been in Congress and then ran for governor and somehow somebody got to the right of him on gun control, which is pretty hard to do, and he lost the governor's campaign and was fed up with it. And he said to Bill Snyder, you're nuts if you get into politics. So, I got the call.

The reason I thought it was crazy was because the immediate things that I started thinking about was the 2002 campaign and when I was state party chair and the things that I had said (against Sebelius). It turns out that the things that I had said were probably relatively mild, certainly by today's standards they were mild, but even by 2002 standards they were mild. So that was my immediate thought. But, after having a little while to think about it I came to the obvious conclusion that it really elevated her ability to work across party lines, it became a national story and I think it helped her.

QUESTION: You told us in 2010 that you went to Cedar Crest to meet with Governor Sebelius and had a great discussion and it wasn't offered. Then the next day it was offered. So, how did that process work, exactly?

PARKINSON: Because Kathleen is at that major league level she does everything just right, so she followed a protocol. The call that I got asking if I was interested was not from her, it was from Joyce Allegrucci. The call that I got saying, OK, if you say yes, it looks like we're doing it, was also from Joyce Allegrucci. Kathleen had it set up - and I'm sure she did it with all of her appointments and not just me - it wasn't a situation where I could say, by god, Kathleen offered this position and I told her no.

QUESTION: Switching parties: You made a statement that you had much more trouble with it than you let on. What was so difficult about that switch for you?

PARKINSON: It wasn't just that I was a Republican, I was the GOP state party chair and so everything happened very quickly. First of all, let me say it's a great opportunity and I'm very thankful and I feel like an insane number of very lucky things occurred for me to have the four years that I had. But after we got past the announcement, I felt disloyal, I felt some level of guilt. And it was more than I let on. I was acting like I was handling it very smoothly and switching was quite easy, but it was a little bit disorienting. To be honest I've never felt completely comfortable with it.

I don't regret that I've done it. I feel liberated as a Democrat and talk to other Democrats that have switched that have held office and they feel very free and open and liberated. The thing that has made it challenging for me is that I was the state party chair. Does that involve some sort of lifetime commitment? I don't really know. But it did impact the way I was thinking about it. Some Republican stalwarts were saying some very negative things and I was understanding where they were coming from.

QUESTION: Some of the reaction to the change was pretty nasty. Personally, was that challenging for you to deal with that?

PARKINSON: It was. I'm not critical of those people. It's really weird when a former state party chair switches parties, I get it. I invited the criticism and I absorbed some of it and some of it hurt and it may have been justified.

QUESTION: There was a 2010 NY Times article about the national Lt. Governors Association Conference and the jokes: Lt. Governor: "Ribbon cutting version of the appendix." "Spare-tire politicians: Kept in the dark and

only used for emergencies.” The Illinois Lt. Governor once resigned and cited “boredom” as the reason. Why in the world did you want this job?

PARKINSON: A number of events had occurred that made it make a lot of sense. We had no intent to sell our business but in 2006 the largest provider in our space came along, a superb provider at the time, and they made an unsolicited offer for our business and with some provisions that allowed us to continue to stay involved and basically doing the fun stuff but not the hard stuff. We did that and we closed on April 1 of 2006 and I would have been 48, 49 or so at that point trying to figure out what's next and what are we going to do next.

The timing was unbelievable, the timing worked out great on a personal level. Then on a professional political level it was part of the effort that I was undertaking to get rid of Phill Kline. I felt like Phill Kline was a uniquely dangerous person to Kansas and possibly the country. So, getting involved with Paul to do that and the next step, which is being involved with the whole thing at a higher level and running for lieutenant governor, it all made sense to me.

QUESTION: What were your specific responsibilities and what did you spend your time on?

PARKINSON: One of the great things about being lieutenant governor was you had an unlimited source of humor because you could always make fun of how irrelevant you were and so my speeches for those two years were the best that I ever gave because I had so many great openings on how irrelevant I was and how irrelevant the job was. I have so many stories on that.

The basic theme of my openings were, “I'm completely irrelevant,” A standard line is, “Before I decided to do this, I looked at the constitution and in many states the Lt. governor runs the senate or is the secretary of something or has some official responsibilities - in Kansas the lieutenant governor has no responsibilities. (My wife) Stacy said to me, ‘What are your constitutional responsibilities?’ and I said, Stacy, I have none. She looks me in the eye and said: ‘Mark you are uniquely qualified.’” I still use that story.

I brought all the former lieutenant governors into the office after I got elected just to ask for advice and it was fun – there’s a ton of former Lt. governors alive. Nobody probably keeps track. Gary Sherrer - who is brilliant and hilarious, he was Bill Graves’ Lt. Governor – we were talking about how irrelevant Lt. governors are and I asked. what’s it like to be a former Lt. governor? And he said, there is nothing quite so former as a former Lt. governor. I love that one.

The story that I use, and I still use this when I can figure out a way to do it, is that I was at the Washington Days event, the big Kansas Democratic event, the year that Bill Clinton was coming, and so as current Lt. Governor I wanted to be on time and do everything right. So, I get to my table early and there's a young man at the table. We get to talking, we have a really nice political conversation. I'm super impressed because he is only like 18 years old and I said, I am really impressed that somebody this young and you have all these views and normally when I come to these events it is people my age, what are you doing here? He looks at me and he said, well, you're not going to believe this but the Democratic Party called my dad, and they said if we gave \$10,000 for this event, we could have dinner with the Lieutenant Governor. Then he says, what are you doing here? I said, I’m the Lieutenant Governor! So, once he asked me what I was doing there what I immediately realized was that this is going to be the greatest opening story of a speech of all time.

QUESTION: What were your specific responsibilities and what did you spend your time on?

PARKINSON: So, I went to the national lieutenant governor orientation – believe it or not, they have that. So, they bring all the lieutenant governors in and they tell you how to be a lieutenant governor. I got great advice. One of the lieutenant governors - he went on to be governor of Utah for a long time, Gary Herbert - he said, make sure you meet with your governor all the time. So, I came back from that and I said Governor, can we meet once a week?

And so we did that and thank god, that turned out to be invaluable advice. That allowed me to sort of know what was going on. What I later learned when I became governor was, I thought I was in the inner circle; I was not in the inner circle. Most lieutenant governors are not in the inner circle. The most important people in these states, everybody thinks it's the governor and that's basically true, but it's really like two or three people in all of these offices in all 50 states that are running the state and it's usually not the lieutenant governor.

In my case it was the lieutenant governor because Troy Findley was the chief of staff for Kathleen, and we just made him move to the lt. governor so our office was run by Troy Findley and Rae Ann Davis.

I needed something to do. I did not work full time as lieutenant governor. I did not take a salary because I know if somebody realizes that I'm still doing the stuff that I really love to do, there's going to be a big story. So, I worked four days a week as lieutenant governor and I worked three days a week developing our elder-care buildings, building more buildings.

But I still needed a portfolio. My portfolio was Kathleen gave me energy, which was great. I didn't know anything about energy other than what you would just normally know. I had no particular expertise coming into it, but I spent two years really, really studying and I developed way more than a normal politician's understanding would be of energy. That turned out to be fantastic because it's such an important issue moving forward. I was in charge of running around cutting ribbons and doing all of that but the substantive stuff to work on was energy policy.

I think that lieutenant governor job, if you're like me, is really a good job. If you have the right relationship with the governor and you have an interest in policy and get a portfolio it's doing all the policy stuff without all of the stuff that a governor has to do on the non-policy side. I had a political science professor that talked about how in the United States we'd sort of merged together the role of the royalty and the substantive politicians in the UK. Our politicians kind of have to be both. I didn't really ever like the royalty stuff, I liked the policy stuff, so lieutenant governor was a really good position for me. And, I was really good at doing nothing. I was great at it!

QUESTION: We've read you've said nobody knew who you were when you became governor and have told some stories to that point. Can you tell us those? One might have involved ordering pizza...?

PARKINSON: I don't know the pizza story. If I've told it, I forgot. The one that I remember the most: We're at a Midwest Governors' Conference in Saint Louis and because I've Forrest Gumped my way into the governorship as I didn't run for office, no one knows who I am. People really don't know who I am, including other governors and other people connected with that world. So, I'm at one of these meetings and I'm standing back and I love to talk to the detail, or the highway patrol people that take care of the governors and make sure they are safe. I love talking to the detail because I'm really curious. What I learned is if you really want to find out with these governors are really like you talk to the detail. If they suck as human beings, you're going to find that out.

So, I'm in the back of the room and each governor is getting up making a speech. I'm in the back of the room and I'm talking to the detail from I think Illinois and there's a couple guys and get in a conversation with them. I said, how long you been on the detail? and then one of them says to me, so, how long have you been on the detail in Kansas? I said, well, actually I'm not on the detail, I'm the governor. There were lots of things like that.

One of the enchanting things about Kansas is that in rural Kansas they know who the governor is. Whether you Forrest Gumped your way in there or not, they know, so I actually had more anonymity in like Johnson County or Wyandotte County where nobody really cares who the governor is than out in rural Kansas. So, people figured out who I was a little bit.

I love anonymity. It's part of the reason escaping to D.C. has been so great.

QUESTION: You had to pick your own Lt. governor. Are you willing to reveal who was on your list? And did Democrats are anybody hint that they would like anybody who would run in 2010? Tell us a little bit about that.

PARKINSON: I really wanted to try to find somebody that would have been a viable candidate in 2010, I just couldn't do it. There wasn't anybody that was willing to be lieutenant governor and because I'm not at the major league level of politics I'm happy to disclose that. I asked some people to be lieutenant governor that decided it wasn't a good fit for them. I don't think she would mind me saying that the obvious choice was Laura Kelly. She was a state senator from a pretty tough district who got elected. I had served with her in the governor/state senator capacity, so I knew she was super smart. Believe it or not there actually is a lieutenant governor debate, so when we did the mock debate for that she was the stand in for Susan Wagle, so I knew that she was superbly talented and if everything fell together in the right way at some point, she could be governor of Kansas.

So, we made overtures to her. The roles were a little reversed. I don't think she ever wanted to have to say that she turned down being lieutenant governor, but she made it clear that she thought that where she was was the right place, and that proved to be true. I strongly suspect that anybody that would have been lieutenant governor that would have run for governor in 2010 would have lost. I think that Laura made the right decision. She was the only person that I could think of at the time that I thought would have been like a super credible candidate in 2010.

Once it became clear that that option wasn't out there, then it was like, oh my god, this is going to look pretty bad if we can't find a lieutenant governor! I loved Troy Findley. Troy and I served in the legislature together back in the 1990's, so I knew Troy before I came back into politics in 2006. I think he was as surprised as anyone when I just kind of sat there and thought about it and said, Troy, you ought to be lieutenant governor. It was a really weird time because we were just appointing Democrats to every office in the state. People were retiring or moving on and it was like, hey, you wanna be this, you there, you wanna be this? Everybody gets to be something!

QUESTION: 2009 budget cuts: How bad was the situation, what was your approach on those, what cuts did you make, and what were the hardest ones to make?

PARKINSON: I am so grateful not just that I had the chance to be Lieutenant Governor and Governor but that I had a chance to do it at the time that I was able to do it because of the fact that Stacy and I had built a very successful business from scratch. We ended up building ten buildings and we didn't buy these buildings, we built them from the ground up. We had hundreds of employees and lots of responsibilities and had really

developed an operational philosophy about running an organization. My philosophy is that organizations need to be driven by missions and they need to hold themselves accountable to metrics so everything that we do is about mission and metrics.

We brought that same approach to the governor's office, so the first thing that we did when I got sworn in is we had a strategic planning retreat in many of the ways that a real business would do it. Rae Ann Davis was my chief of staff. I've been really fortunate Rae Ann Davis came out to DC. She's our chief strategic officer. I've now had 13 years to work every day with Rae Ann, which has been awesome.

So, because I'd run a business, I knew how to do the job that needed to be done. Kansas has - I don't think it's unique but I don't think it's normal - a system where if the legislature is not in session and if it looks like the budget is going to be below the forecast the governor can unilaterally balance the budget; doesn't have to take it to the legislature, you don't have to monkey around and all that.

I get sworn in April of 2009 and the budget is in horrible shape. It's not Kathleen's fault; we're in the deepest recession that we've ever been in. We have a brilliant budget director in Duane Goossen, and because Kathleen looked like she might be leaving either to be vice president or in the cabinet, I had gotten deeply involved in the budget from the prior year. Heading into the budget that would have been relevant in 2009 I had already been leading the budget efforts behind the scenes with Duane and meeting with all the cabinet secretaries. I'm pretty good with numbers so I understood the budget exactly, or as well as somebody that wasn't a budget director would. Duane knew more than I knew, but I knew where we were spending money, where cuts could be made, where we had reserved funds etc., and we created multiple scenarios for what might or might not occur.

The national stimulus act passed so we got a bunch of money at the state level like every state did, but it was much more modest than 2020 and 2021. Obama was being criticized because it was almost one trillion dollars, well hell, we spent like 7 trillion dollars in 2020/2021. So, we got some money but it wasn't enough. We get into April and we realized that we don't have enough money and so I called in the legislative leadership - and I had extremely close relationships with Steve Morris, Republican leader of the Senate, with Anthony Hensley, the Democratic leader of the Senate, and with Paul Davis the Democratic leader in the House. I did not have a close relationship with Mike O'Neill, the Republican Speaker of the House, the conservative. So, I say to the four of them, but especially to the three of them that I'm close to, look, if you guys will leave town I will balance this budget and you know, trust me, I'll do it in a fair way and you'll be okay with it. I understand you're going to have to criticize me because I'm going to make some nasty cuts but just try to keep the criticism at a level where you're satisfied you've criticized me but that I can still function as governor and I don't have all these editorials being written that I'm heartless and all of that. They do that, they agree.

So, they leave town and I use the recession power and it's easy. I go to our cabinet secretaries and I say, look, tell me where you think there might be three or four percent that we can cut in the budget, and if you don't tell me where it is I'm going to find it myself. You find it and tell me your preference. The things that we had to cut from the get-go were not that difficult; they were not the kind of things where you are like, oh my god, this is bad. So, we get the budget balanced and we're able to end that session.

As the summer and fall of 2009 progressed the budget kept getting worse, the numbers kept getting worse, there were weeks when we weren't really sure we were going to make payroll. I mean, are we going to make payroll for the state? That's how crazy it was. We made another round of rescissions and they weren't that bad, and then we got to the fall and we had to do it again. When we had to do it again in the fall the cuts were really bad. I

think we might have had to cut Medicaid 10%, which is an astonishing number. It's at that point that I said, this has gone too far. The only way that we can feel good about ourselves as policymakers is we're going to have to have a temporary tax increase to fill this hole.

In the meantime I went ahead and made the cuts so that we were constitutionally balanced and all of that, but at the time that I made them I called the interest groups up that were getting really hurt; I called the Hospital Association, I called the doctors, I called the nurses and nursing homes and all of that, and said, look, I'm cutting the hell out of you, and then there were tears and we hugged and they all knew it in advance. I said, we can we can get the money back but I need you and your people in the capital every day in 2010 because we're going to go for a temporary increase in the sales tax and fill this hole.

So, I became a governor who had instituted the most budget cuts of any governor in the state and then subsequently had the largest tax increase of any governor in the state, which is not a really great combination for a politician. It was very unlikely that I was going to run again but when we decided in the fall of 2009 that the only way to make this work was with a tax increase, that's when it became absolutely in my mind completely impossible. The goal just became, let's try to get the state in a really good position and do everything we can with this very limited amount of time that we have. And we were able to do it.

QUESTION: The amount of political capital that you have, what level was that at, in terms of getting things done. Did you see you had a high level of political capital, a lot of currency there or was it you didn't think you could do too much?

PARKINSON: I had no political capital because I wasn't running again and on top of that the Republican Party was upset at me for switching, so I had no political capital. What I said to our team was, look we have nothing going for us. We don't have any of the advantages that people typically have except what we have going for us is the power of ideas. And if you look at the course of human history it is true that for temporary periods of time people can succeed with brute force and often do but over time the most powerful force is the power of ideas. And so although we go into these battles with no political capital we're going to win because of the power of our ideas. And we did. Every initiative that we felt was important we achieved. Everything.

There were so much we accomplished in 2010. A lot of stuff got done in 2010. We got the budget balanced with the temporary sales tax increase that would have put the state in an incredible financial position if it hadn't been undone in 2012, obviously Governor Brownback undid it. We developed a multi-million-dollar highway project in the middle of a deep recession. We got public smoking banned. And most important, we instituted an energy policy and got it deep enough into the structure of the state that even though they tried to undo it after we left they weren't able to undo it. Along the way we negotiated some agreements with some major employers in the state to not leave. I wanted to make sure that all of the commercial and all the general aviation companies that are the heart and soul of the state were going to stay for a long period of time. That was all accomplished without any political capital. It was all in my view accomplished by the power of ideas and just some really great people to work with. We had a fantastic coalition of Democrats and moderate Republicans that got it through, many of whom sacrificed their political careers to get the state in a good financial shape.

QUESTION: Sunflower coal plant deal. Tell us about the deal, your thinking, and why you decided to do it. You did get criticism from some Democrats and the Sierra Club.

PARKINSON: I spent 2007 and 2008 working on energy policy and a big part of that was the Sunflower coal plant and whether or not it should be approved or not. But the more important part was my effort on wind energy. When Kathleen and I got elected in 2006 Kansas had approximately 2% of its energy from wind energy and we internally set the goal of raising that to 10%, which makes complete sense because we're the second windiest state in the country and we just had not taken advantage of that asset at all.

I always want to have a project. When I was in the state house my project was the drivers age, when I was in the state senate it became the death penalty, and when I was Lieutenant Governor it became to get 10% of our energy through wind. I remember going to an editorial board in Wichita and they asked me what our goal was and I said, "If we don't have 10% of our energy as wind by when I'm finished with being Lieutenant Governor in 2010 I will have failed." Our staff said you're not supposed to say that kind of thing to an editorial board, and I said no it's the opposite; you have to lay down a marker and a goal and then go out there and get it.

We had the whole Sunflower issue and tied into that was wind. I learned a heck of a lot about it and what I learned about the Sunflower plant was that in the time between 2002 and 2006 they had approved their Sunflower permit for three very large coal plants with very little mitigation. Sunflower let the time run out and so they re-filed. I was taking a close look at it and really studying it and just thinking that this this does not make any sense. Climate change is real, the world is headed in a whole other direction, we've got all this wind, we need to not approve these plans.

I went with that recommendation to Kathleen and Kathleen took the bold position that she took, and the permit was denied. We had enormous furor from western Kansas in particular, the business community a little bit, about the decision and it ended up being kind of a huge stumbling block to getting anything done in the legislature. People were saying I'm not going to vote for anything unless we get the plant, or if we get the plant I'm not going to vote for anything; I mean it was enormously controversial.

I had been developing an idea which was, what if we went to Sunflower and instead of them suing us over this or bringing bills to reverse the decision - which is what they had done - we reach a compromise where we let them re-file but with a very heavily mitigated proposal; much smaller, much more wind energy. When I became governor, I was in a unique position to try it out and so shortly after I became governor, I contacted the folks at Sunflower and I said, let's sit down and figure out if there's a way that we can reach an agreement on this. At the time that I entered into this agreement - which was not to approve the plan but to give them the ability to apply under some pretty significant mitigation and agreements to do various things with wind - I didn't think they would ever build a plant. I knew enough about the energy world at that time that there were like five different ways that Sunflower was not going to get built in my view.

So, in my view we were giving them nothing, and the agreement they gave us in return was that they would back off the legislative stuff and let us write energy law any way that we wanted to. So, we got a bill written that did two important things: it required a certain percentage of energy to be wind in Kansas, and it allowed for net metering so that people could have their own wind towers and get paid off of their own stuff. Those are two things that people said would never happen in Kansas. When I came in as a Lieutenant Governor in 2007, they said we're never going to get an RES - renewal energy standard - and we're never going to get net metering, but we got it as a result of the agreement.

I thought the agreement was really smart and as soon as we entered into the agreement, I arranged that right after the press conference I would have the environmentalists who had been working on this to meet me in my

office so that I could debrief them on what I had done and the logic for doing it. There were three of them, so they came into the office and I'm explaining to them what I think is this brilliant approach and they are clearly upset. As upset as you're going to get under a new governor. I realized at the time that this was going to be widely hated by the environmentalists, and that proved to be the case.

I will say that I'm very proud of what we did and it ended up to be correct. There was a bit of a gamble involved. It's possible that the stars would have aligned in such a way that Sunflower would have built the plant. I felt that there was a very low probability of that, and the fact that we were able to get the RES and net metering into statute and get it far enough along that even though the conservatives tried to undo it after we left, it held. I know there were some attempts to undo it. We got it so ingrained that it became hard for them to do it and all of a sudden there was an industry around wind that wouldn't have existed if we hadn't had the statutory stamp on it.

Hopefully, it won't get undone from here on and Kansas will be a major producer of wind energy for a long period of time. You know, once we solve the electricity storage issue, that's going to be really a significant part of our energy down the road.

QUESTION: The Topeka Capital Journal article at the time said, "Parkinson had an informal meeting with House Democrats after the announcement who were shaken by the settlement." Is that accurate you went and then met with House Democrats and that was a difficult meeting?

PARKINSON: The specific meeting that I was just now referring to was with three lobbyists where I realized I had a problem. The meeting with House Democrats: I think that the vast majority of House Democrats were actually quite relieved. We were really having to strongly encourage a bunch of them to stick with us on the Sunflower votes and it was starting to create some real problems. There were a handful of very strong environmentalists on the Democratic side that may have voted against the proposal, but it was a small number.

QUESTION: In 2010: Another \$400 million in the hole. How did you come up with your two main proposals to find the money? (raise cig/tobacco tax and raise sales tax)? What were the other possibilities?

PARKINSON: I knew from the fall that we had to come up with more money both to fill the hole that we had and also to reverse the cuts that we made in the fall and to not have to have any more cuts down the road. When you start to think about what taxes you can raise (laughs) - it's hard. If you decide you want to raise the income tax you're going to get crushed by Republicans and by Johnson County, etc. etc. Historically, when you decide you're going to raise the sales tax you get crushed by Democrats because the sales tax disproportionately impacts poorer people. But the benefits of this were probably disproportionately beneficial to poorer people.

I felt like the only taxes we had any chance to increase we could get to work would be the sales tax. I needed Democratic support to do it so of course I talked to Paul Davis and Anthony Hensley about it and consulted with Troy Findley and others. Everybody agreed that it really was horrible as a Democrat to raise the sales tax but given the options that were out there - which would be laying off thousands of state employees, not restoring the Medicaid cuts and maybe even having to have more Medicaid cuts - that it was better than the alternatives.

The only other tax out there is the property tax, but you can't raise the property tax, that's just impossible. So, we weren't 100% sure of course that we could get it done because we had a really small number of people in the

legislature. In the House, maybe we had 45 Democrats and in the Senate we had like 9 or 10, and one of them was never with us. We knew we had to get a bunch of Republicans. I remember (KC Star reporter) Steve Kraske wrote a piece two days after the State of the State speech saying that Parkinson's already failed because people were saying that the tax proposal was dead on arrival. But there was just no other alternative if you believed in the programs that we believed in and didn't want to lay off thousands of state employees. We always thought we had a shot; I never knew if we could get it done.

An interesting sidenote. It was proposed as a three-year proposal. I went to our team and I said we don't need three years we only need two. I studied these numbers and if we do three the next administration is going to be really tempted to cut taxes and make things bad. Unfortunately, I was right. What we really thought was the legislature would say no we are not going to do three and we would end up compromising at two years. I wish we would have done that; it would have made it harder for Brownback to do what he did. But, once they said three, I couldn't say, well, we were just kind of joking on three, we're blushing there, but we really want two! We ended up with a three-year sales tax increase.

The other thing that happened is that Wichita had had a special one cent sales tax to fund an arena. It had worked really well, people were saying hell we didn't even notice it and it raised the money and they ended it like they said they were going to. So, we had all these people from Wichita saying we've done a one cent sales tax before so it's just not that big of a deal. The only other option would have been more cuts, there was no other revenue option.

QUESTION: Is your strategy, in the State of the State, here's the two best ideas in your opinion, if you all can come up with something better - and then wait it out and sort of think they're going to come back to where you started?

PARKINSON: Yeah, that really was my strategy, and I had watched Bill Graves do that. Bill Graves used to get criticized for not being involved enough in the early parts of the (legislative) session and I remember him saying, well, the right time to go fishing is when there's fish out there. So, I learned from watching him that there's a real value in being patient the first sixty, seventy, almost eighty days of the session. Let the legislators do their deal, let them try to work things out, hope that the reasonable ones come to the conclusion that you come to in terms of how we're going to solve this. So, I wasn't overly worried that early on everybody was saying, no way, we're not even going to have a hearing. I wasn't worried about it.

Now, we were campaigning to end up with the result, so we were going to all of the groups that we had cut and said you gotta get your ass up here to the Capital every day. And they did it. I think the risk of being cut, I'm not sure that would have been enough to compel the policy change. The fact that people had actually been cut and were lobbying to get that reversed, that was a really important part of the strategy.

QUESTION: Did any of the moderate Republicans say what actually ended up happening: Hey, we're with you but if we vote for this, we're not going to be reelected. We know now what ended up happening under Brownback is in 2012 they were targeted and every single moderate Republican except Vicki Schmidt lost in 2012. Did that they know that?

PARKINSON: Legislators knew (it would hurt them). It wasn't just the moderate Democrats or moderate Republicans. There were a bunch of Democrats from swing districts that voted for it in and lost in 2010. They

all knew that if you vote for a tax increase you got a really good chance to lose, and that's why it was just so disheartening to see all of that work undone through the subsequent tax cuts.

I naively thought that maybe Governor Brownback would come in and look at the budget projections and see how healthy the state would be and then run for president again saying, look I came in and there was no money in the bank and now there's like a zillion dollars in the bank. If he had just done nothing he would have had a really great resume to run for president, if he'd just done nothing. But he didn't do nothing. He took the gift away of all of that work that had been done to put the state in a good position and he reversed it. So, at that point I thought, my god; I felt really bad for the people that given up their political careers.

QUESTION: November 16, 2010, headline in Lawrence Journal Word: "Governor Mark Parkinson says he has no apprehensions about Sam Brownback taking over." Did you really have no apprehensions or were you being a nice outgoing governor?

PARKINSON: I would say that it's somewhere between the two. It was 50% me saying and doing the right thing that you do as a sitting governor with somebody coming in. It's just not the right thing to do for somebody that's about to get sworn in as governor to already be speaking against them. So, it was 50% that and then it was 50% me thinking through what would be the smart thing for him would be to do, which was obviously to leave the budget surplus alone and campaign for president as a savior, as opposed to cutting the budget so deeply that we're not adequately funding education. It did not cross my mind that he would pursue policies that were so obviously counterproductive. I thought that we had set him up in a really good position and that he would take advantage of that and I was wrong. His policies went far beyond what I imagined he would do.

QUESTION: Would you run for office again, knowing that you love what you do? Would you put that on pause to run for office again?

PARKINSON: No, because I don't fit into any lane. I'm confident that if we didn't live in a democracy and I could just be placed into various positions that we could get a lot of things done and maybe do some good things for people. I'm glad that we live in a democracy and you actually have to run for these things, but I don't fit any of them, I'm far too liberal for the state of Kansas, and I don't want to spend my life acting like I'm not.

I'm not criticizing the people that do run because they're making a real sacrifice; the people that in their heart are quite liberal but say everything in a nuanced way so that somehow they can actually get elected, or even vice versa, the people that are more conservative than they can actually allow to be shown. That's a lot of work and it takes a lot of discipline and a lot of patience. I don't feel like I have enough time left in my own life that I would want to come back to Kansas and act like I'm conservative enough to get elected, because I'm just not. I don't fit the state.

QUESTION: It was rewarding to be governor but thinking about what you do right now, what's the difference and then what do you find more rewarding?

PARKINSON: Probably the most important opportunity I've ever had in my life was to be the governor of the state when we were in the deepest recession that we've been in since the Great Depression, because it really allowed me to use every skill that I may or may not have developed and be surrounded by a group of incredible people. And I haven't said enough about like the Duane Goossen's of the world and so many other people in the

cabinet who were just phenomenal. The fact that we were able to put the state that we all loved back on good solid footing, that's the most important thing that I've ever done.

The most enjoyable long-term, rewarding thing that I've ever done has been long term care. It would be a tie between when Stacy and I had our buildings and were literally working bedside every day with residents and fellow staff, and what we do now, which is just doing that on a much bigger scale because we now represent 15,000 people that are doing what Stacy and I do. The thing that I love about the job that I have right now is that everything that I've ever done in my life is has sort of prepared me for it. Even that one-year stint that I spent on the Hill has given me such an insight of what it's actually like to be in those offices. Having been a lawyer has been helpful, having been in politics has been helpful, running our own buildings has been helpful. I feel really blessed and really proud.

It's hard to run an association. There are not very many successful trade association CEOs. I think it's great to follow in what Bill Graves did, who also successfully ran an association.

I've just been very lucky. The number of things that had to have occurred for me to have become Lieutenant Governor and Governor is just astonishing; it's literally like winning the lottery two days in a row, the odds of all that coming together. And if that hadn't come together I wouldn't be here in the position that I am. I could have run the American Healthcare Association whether I'd been a governor or not, but they never would have hired me if I had never been a governor.

QUESTION: You keep saying that you are lucky, and I don't think that its luck here. It's just hard work and tenacity.

PARKINSON: Jim Collins, who wrote the book, *Good to Great*, has actually written quite a bit on the concept of luck, and successful people tend to view themselves as luckier than non-successful people, which I genuinely do view myself as luckier. What the deal is is that if you work really hard and you are working in a directed way, then you have a better chance to get lucky than if you're not working hard.

But it's still luck! I mean what are the odds? At the end of the day, if we hadn't sold our business on April 1, 2006, running would have been a have a nonstarter. If I hadn't been the state party chair, if John Moore had continued as Lieutenant Governor, if Bill Snyder had said yeah, I'd like to be Lieutenant governor, if Kathleen Sebelius hadn't recruited Paul Morrison - it is literally a millions to one type thing. Yeah, the fact that I had worked hard and built a successful business that sold and been state party chair, that all kind of created the scenario, but I still believe at the end of the day that I Forrest Gumped my way into being governor.

QUESTION: June 28, 2010, you were asked about your legacy. You said, "I will leave that to the real historians to figure out." We'd like you to do it! What do you think is your legacy as governor?

PARKINSON: I think the two most important things that we did was put the state back on a good financial path and then we created an energy policy that I think will be lasting. I don't think I was governor long enough to have a legacy. I think you'd have to be a real nerd to know me. I would be like the worst double jeopardy answer ever because no one would know me. I just wasn't there long enough to have a legacy. But I do think that hopefully what Kathleen has shown and what Bill Graves showed and I followed up on is that if people work in a bipartisan way and they're willing to listen to other folks, you can get a hell of a lot done as a governor.

I'm just repeating things that everybody else has said a gazillion times. It's really unfortunate that we've headed in the partisan direction that we've had because it makes it really hard to get stuff done. The other thing is that it takes a very unique set of circumstances for somebody to end up as a governor that's actually had a business. The fact that Stacy and I developed the business that we had was really important. We ran the state as a business. We ran it as a mission driven, metric-based organization. That's what we did as governor. We weren't just responding to stories day to day. We set all of these policy objectives as goals that had specific work plans that were objectively verifiable connected to them.

But that probably doesn't matter. I don't think I'll have a legacy to be honest.

QUESTION: People may not say that due to Mark Parkinson this is what happened. But - but the smoking ban, the minimum wage increase, the renewable energy plan - which is now I think 40% in Kansas - those are pretty powerful things that happened that affect people's lives. You're right and that your name won't be associated with the legacy but the actual things that were accomplished leave a legacy.

PARKINSON: I agree with you completely. I'm really satisfied and happy with what we accomplished and what I think the long-term impact will be. I just don't think people will connect it to me. It should be connected to Kathleen. Kathleen is the person that did all of the work and made all the sacrifices to make it possible. I got all the benefit with none of the sacrifices. No, really. To commit to a career in public service and to run for office, it's a horrible job, and I got to do it for free.