

INTERVIEW OF PHIL MARTIN BY DAVE WEBB, AUGUST 19, 2022
KANSAS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT, INC.

Dave Webb: Well, good day, ladies and gentlemen. My name's Dave Webb of Stilwell, Kansas. I'm an auctioneer and appraiser by profession and a former member of this great body. We are here today as part of the Kansas Oral History Project. We're interviewing legislators who served from the sixties through 2000. Filming us today is Dave Heinemann, former legislator and very active in this Kansas Oral History Project, and we thank him for his work on that.

Today we have with us [Senator] Phil Martin from Pittsburg, Kansas. Phil has a great history of public service and has just done a wonderful job and has some great family history, which we're going to talk about. So Phil, glad you're here. Good to see you, and we've known each other quite a while.

Phil Martin: Yes, we have. We sure have.

DW: So if I could, I'd like to start, you have shared with me in the past, to me it's an incredible family story about your family emigrating from I think it was Italy?

PM: Right.

DW: To Kansas. Can you kind of go back and bring us up to date? Let's start there.

PM: My family came from around Turin, Italy. My great-grandfather and great-grandmother emigrated to the Americas around 1885, and they had eight kids.

DW: Eight.

PM: Eight kids that they took with them.

DW: From Italy.

PM: From Italy, right. The reason that they left was my great-grandfather's early sons were eligible for the draft over there, and he didn't want them in the draft. Italy was fighting all kinds of wars all over the place. So he took his family and packed up, and they shipped over to Ellis Island. And from Ellis Island, they took the train to Oswego, Kansas.

DW: Wow.

PM: It took them a week to go to Oswego, Kansas.

DW: And I bet with eight kids, that was a pleasant trip.

PM: Oh, unbelievable. They stayed in Oswego. They bought an eighty-acre tract. They sent some money over to an individual that was from Oswego, and he bought eighty acres for them, and they stayed there for about four years and decided to move over to Weir, Scammon area because it took a day to get over to Weir, a day to do business, and a day to get back. So they sold the eighty that was in Oswego and bought ground in my home place, which is about 160

acres. They had another 80 that they bought later on. They had 240 acres, and they were basically raising oats for the mules in the mines.

DW: The mining area down there.

PM: Right. My great-grandfather gave every one of his sons a farm.

DW: Wow.

PM: The girls didn't get anything, but the boys got a farm. My grandfather got the place that I've got right now, 160 acres.

DW: Wonderful. So that house that's on it is the original farmhouse.

PM: That's right, yes.

DW: You mentioned that they made their money raising oats and then sell it to [feed] the mules that were carrying stuff down in the mines. We think of mines today with conveyors and draglines. They didn't have that then, did they?

PM: No, they didn't have any of that.

DW: They had mule power, not horsepower.

PM: That's right.

DW: That's interesting. You had mentioned they had sent some money over to somebody in Oswego.

PM: Yes.

DW: Did they know this person?

PM: Yes, they did. They knew him and trusted him. He did what he was supposed to do.

DW: It's incredible as we think of today's society doing that, sending money from wherever to somebody you had heard of and hoped that when you got there, you had a piece of property.

PM: Yes.

DW: That's truly incredible. Probably it wouldn't happen as easily today as it did then.

PM: No.

DW: So that was your great-grandfather and your grandfather. Tell us about your grandfather and your father.

PM: My grandfather married my grandmother in 1906. They had five children. There were four boys and one girl. Three boys stayed on the farm. My dad got married, and his sister got married. The three boys eventually passed away, and my dad, and I inherited eighty acres that was just to the east of the house there, and the Simone's, which are my first cousins, inherited the eighty to the south. When Francis died, one of the brothers, he was the last brother, he left it to all of us, and I bought everybody out for that eighty. So I've got the 160.

DW: Back together.

PM: Yes. Right.

DW: That's awesome. That's a great story, and I hope your family keeps it together. You just don't hear of that happening a lot anymore.

PM: Let me tell you, it's difficult with the prices that are out there today. But I'm going to keep it.

DW: That's great. Your father and mother, what were their work and their life?

PM: My dad did a little bit of farming, but he got out of it, and after the war, he went to work for Joe Smith Tobacco Company and stayed there until Kansas went wet. I think it was around '53. He took a salesman job and sold liquor to the retail stores in about a five-county area there.

DW: And on liquor in that era, I assume there was a distributor somewhere that then—

PM: That's exactly right. The distributor was in Independence. It was Burlingame distributing company. They were bought out in 1960, I believe.

DW: Interesting. I think that process is still somewhat—there's a few distribution companies that control that that we have today. It hasn't changed a lot.

PM: Oh, absolutely. I forget the guy, Famous Brands is who bought them out, and they sold on service. All the deals and everything else that was done before were cut out.

DW: You have cash on the barrel now.

PM: Right.

DW: That's awesome. So you obviously were born in the Pittsburg area.

PM: Right.

DW: Pittsburg schools.

PM: Right. I graduated from PHS [Pittsburg High School] in 1966.

DW: Wow. Then I assume on to Pittsburg University.

PM: Right. I've got a graduate degree in economics.

DW: Was there any thought of going anywhere else or Pittsburg was it?

PM: Pittsburg was it for me.

DW: That's good. And you've lived there your entire life.

PM: Except when I was in the Service.

DW: Tell us about that.

PM: It was the Vietnam era. I was in the Army Reserves. I did my basic training at Monterey, California, and I was out there for six months, and then came back home and spent about the next five years in the reserve unit there.

DW: Did you ever have to go to Vietnam?

PM: No.

DW: Very fortunate. That's interesting. So kind of almost the reason your great-grandparents left Italy, then you were in the Army Reserves.

PM: Right.

DW: Thank you for your service on that. After college, come tell us what you did before you started getting involved in elective office.

PM: After college, I went to work as a Deputy County Treasurer. My dad knew an individual by the name of Bill Pinamonti, and he was the Deputy County Treasurer at the time. He left to come to the City of Pittsburg as an inspector. My dad said, "That's a bad deal for you." He owned a liquor store, and "You're going to make everybody mad. They're not going to come to your store because you're going to tell them you can't build here. You can't do this, or you can't do that."

I went over and applied as Deputy County Treasurer, and Gene Masterson hired me for that position.

DW: So you applied for the Deputy Treasurer, and after that, then you were elected Treasurer.

PM: No, Gene unfortunately was embezzling money.

DW: Uh oh.

PM: And he got caught. After that, Governor Bob Docking appointed me as County Treasurer. I never did run for County Treasurer. I wanted to do something else. The legislature passed a bill that said that any county over 10,000 had to have a full-time County Appraiser. So I moved from the County Treasurer's Office to the County Appraiser's Office, and I was the first County Appraiser in Crawford County.

DW: And at that time, it was obviously pre-appraisal that took place in '85, which we'll talk about later, but it was a little different scenario.

PM: Oh, yes. You didn't revalue real estate. Real estate set, and the only thing you were doing was picking up the additions and new buildings and stuff like that. Personal property was the major issue that you had back then. And inventories were taxed, farm machinery, oil, and gas, the whole personal property gamut.

DW: I remember as a younger child, in that time we had a township person who would come around and fill out the forms. In our area, his name was Wayne Hanson, and he showed up at everybody's house at dinnertime. Wayne was a bachelor, and he had this long rendition—how many chickens you had, how many cattle, how much money you had in the bank. We did that for the first year or so, but then it changed after that point. The appraiser started picking everything up at that point.

PM: I remember for some reason; I saved all that stuff and donated it to our County Assessor's Office. They had it on display for a while. I'm sure about anybody that would have ever gone in there wonders today, "Why would they care how many chickens you had?"

DW: Right. People used to hide stuff.

PM: Oh, yes. It was a game.

DW: When you knew that era, people talked about taking their tractors over to the neighbors and moving the cattle and doing these things.

PM: Right.

DW: You're right. It was a game. Well, then, from there, I think after John Carlin was elected Governor. He was Speaker of the House and then elected Governor. He ran against [and defeated Governor] Bob Bennett and then appointed you to Property Valuation Director.

PM: That's correct, yes.

DW: Tell us a little bit about coming from Crawford County to being a Director of Property Valuation and some of that history.

PM: Well, it was a time when the issues that were out there was the severance tax, [it] was the big issue.

DW: Yes.

PM: I came into office, there was about sixty, sixty-five people that were under me, and I had a Personal Property Division, a Real Estate Division, and Utilities. All three of those, we worked each year. Of course, the real estate was still fixed because they legislature hadn't address the reappraisal issue, but it was coming.

Like I said, the first two years were primarily severance tax. We would appear before committees on taxation and go over what the property tax was doing. When I was first County Appraiser, oil was selling for \$3 a barrel.

DW: You can't even buy a gallon of gas for that today.

PM: Then it went to \$12, and those guys who had oil thought they were wealthy.

DW: Yes.

PM: I remember [Senator] Frank Gaines ran for Congress after oil went to \$12, and he financed his own campaign. It went up to about \$40, and it was difficult to set the price that's as of January the 1st.

DW: Right.

PM: It was when you'd set it, and that first year, I think it went to about \$25. I set it close to that. The counties that had oil all of a sudden were filthy rich. I mean, they had valuation increases that were significant.

DW: Right.

PM: Of course, I changed the [property valuation] guide around a little bit. I got sued. I think I had like four or five thousand people that sued me. Charlie Joseph was chairman of the Board of Tax Appeals. Charlie combined all the cases. He just put them all under one.

DW: And my guess is that most of those five thousand were probably members of the Kansas [Independent] Oil and Gas Association [KIOGA].

PM: Oh, absolutely, yes.

DW: And 1978 I think is when I was elected that first year. That's when we first met. I was as green as green gets. I'm sure after we met, you said, "Who's this guy that doesn't know anything?" But I think that's when we first met. And the severance tax was the hot issue of that era.

PM: Right.

DW: I remember the discussion being, "Man, if we have this, it will take care of education for eternity. We will never have to come back and have another funding item for education." I think it's played out a little different than that.

PM: Absolutely.

DW: Education has been the funding question almost every session since that point in time, and there's been new legislation for that.

As the Property Valuator, you talked about setting values for the utilities. Utilities obviously includes electric, railroad, and some of those. Tell us how that process worked.

PM: Well, the railroads were the primary—it was a unit valuation system, and you would value the property as a total unit rather than segregating out individual railroad cars and all the rest of it—track and all that. It was combined as a unit, and it was primarily based upon income. Income was the—

DW: Driving factor.

PM: Because there wasn't at that point a lot of sales of utilities. There still aren't, but there's some. The railroads had a federal act called the 4-R Act, and they all sued me because they were [assessed] at 30 percent, and they said everybody else that was out there, the oil and gas, the real estate, and whatever else, was [assessed] around 12 percent. So they were seeking a reduction of 30 percent down to 12 percent.¹

And we went to federal court and Judge [Richard] Rogers, a federal judge, ruled in their favor. We had told the governor, "We're going to lose this case."

DW: Before you ever went there.

PM: Yes, before we ever went there. He said, "Go ahead and get back and take it to court."

DW: And that was still Governor Carlin then?

¹ Property was appraised first, usually at fair market value or on its income-producing ability. Next an assessment percentage was applied to that appraised value; then multiplied times the mil levy to determine the amount of tax paid.

PM: Yes. We would meet with him maybe once a month and advise him to what was happening with the case. But in the end, we lost, and the railroads got a reduction. That began to trigger the reappraisal issue in the state.

DW: At that time, about how many railroads were there in the state?

PM: I think when I first came in in 1978, there were about thirty-five. When I left, I think there were about six or seven.

DW: And in that original era, if a shipper complained, then the railroad had to provide service. Is that correct?

PM: That's right. That's exactly right. The 4-R Act changed the balance of power from the shippers to the railroads. After the 4-R Act, they were able to abandon lines at will. I mean, the shipper might have griped about it, but it didn't do any good, and there were hundreds of lines that were abandoned just all over the place.

DW: Right.

PM: And that set up a company that's in Pittsburg now called [Watco](#).

DW: Correct.

PM: They're a short line.

DW: Correct.

PM: They do the hauling to the industrial parks and around these cities because the majors, they didn't want to do that anymore.

DW: "See you, small-town America."

PM: That's right.

DW: And, of course, today when you see trains, most of them are unit trains. They don't have 110 cars. Or if a shipper can't handle 110 cars, they're out of luck.

PM: Right. That's how Watco grew. Watco grew from just a local to—they're almost worldwide now.

DW: Wow.

PM: Just because of that 4-R Act.

DW: Interesting. Okay, Property Valuation Director. What made you decide to run for Senate? That would have been about 1980. Is that correct? '82?

PM: It was 1984. Oh, I just had a desire to be in the Senate and decided I was going to run. Ed Roitz who was my predecessor, he turned down a term. So he didn't run, and it was an open seat.

DW: I do remember that. Ed came in in 1980.

PM: And he left in '84.

DW: He opened that. In fact, today as we sit here, we're just one desk away from where your seat was here in this Chamber.

PM: That's right. For twelve years, I sat right over there.

DW: As all of us who have served in here, you've had some great seat mates. Tell us maybe about your most interesting seat mate.

PM: Well, [Rip Gooch](#) was probably the most interesting individual. He was a Tuskegee Airman, or at least that's what I believe he was. He told me about the things that they went through. Rip was a Black American, and in the forties, they weren't treated quite as good as perhaps today.

DW: Right.

PM: In fact, they didn't think they could fly.

DW: I remember that. I remember seeing the movie about that.

PM: Yes. But Rip was Mayor of Wichita at one time. He was a fairly liberal individual.

DW: That has to be one of the great memories of this Chamber, you getting to sit with him and do that.

PM: Oh, yes.

DW: Okay, so we move into the legislative arena, and we all love campaigns, or we wouldn't do this to begin with. You came in in '84. Reappraisal kind of started happening about '84, '5ish.

PM: Right.

DW: And then it became a Constitutional amendment. You came in probably with more tax knowledge than anybody that's probably ever been in this Chamber from being a County Appraiser and then PVD. Let's start there with how that went down.

PM: My first term, like I told you before, I wasn't on the Tax Committee. I was on Federal and State Affairs at 11:00. The reason that I was on Federal and State Affairs was kind of a punishment for voting incorrectly on—

DW: We've all been there.

PM: The Minority Leader's race, and I really didn't care because I just considered it an extra committee. I knew everything that was going on on the property tax issue that the Tax Committee was working. They'd send bills out to the floor, and I'd get up and object to the bill because of the shifts that were there and the problems. They sent that bill back to committee probably at least four or five times.

DW: I bet that made a happy committee chairman.

PM: Yeah, right.

DW: As that whole process transpired and appraisals, especially real estate, had gotten out of whack over the prior thirty, forty years, and then it became a Constitutional amendment. Wasn't there some litigation that kind of preceded that that made the legislature go into the reappraisal issue?

PM: Well, there was litigation all the time. We had a Sales Assessment Ratio Study², and it showed that homes were about 6 to 8 percent, commercial property was about 10 percent, and farms were about 3 percent. There wasn't any argument that we needed reappraisal. That definitely was something that had to occur.

I would say that the biggest problems came after reappraisal with the classification amendment.

DW: Yes.

PM: That's the problem that caused all the shiftage. I voted against it. What I wanted was just a Constitutional amendment with no numbers and let the legislature come up with the numbers every year. Well, the Chamber didn't want that. Utilities didn't want that. The governor had to compromise, which I wasn't a compromiser at that point. I said, "This is going to be a bad deal," and it was a bad deal.

There were shifts that were tremendous out there. Little restaurants in my community went up 400, 500 percent. The only thing they had was real estate. They didn't have an inventory. It's like Walmart. Walmart might have had a 5-million-dollar building, but they had 100 million dollars' worth of inventory.

² The Kansas real estate ratio study is a statistical performance evaluation tool that can be used to make inferences about the relative level and uniformity of appraised values. In a ratio study, the county's appraised values are compared to true market value indicators (sale prices). Sales information is used primarily in studying the residential and commercial/industrial classes.

DW: And the same way with equipment dealers or feed dealers or seed dealers. All those people who had inventory, the inventory tax went away with this, and it all shifted to real estate.

PM: And farm machinery went away, too.

DW: Yes, I remember that. You're exactly right. I remember that.

PM: And airplanes.

DW: I remember that, yes, for business use only.

PM: That's right.

DW: There was something else that was exempt in there, but those were some of the major ones that were exempt.

PM: Right. The fights that went on for that took over a year, and eventually it passed. And when it took effect, John Carlin was gone. Mike Hayden was the governor. I went in and seen Mike, me and [Rep.] Larry Wilbert. I said, "Mike, you've got to get this thing changed because it's going to kill you." "Oh, Phil, how's the kids?" I said, "They're doing okay, but they're better than you are."

Eventually reappraisal hit and the classification numbers and people went nuts. I remember I was on the committee that they had. We had a special committee. [Senator] Dan Thiessen was the chairman. We had 5,000 people that were walking around this Capitol here, going, "Come out, Mike! Come out, Mike!"

DW: As you say that, I remember that. I remember that on the news. You're right. That was a huge deal.

PM: It was an unbelievable deal. I saw a couple of guys that I knew and I said, "What are you guys doing up here?" "Well, we had carwashes, and my taxes went up 500 percent."

DW: And they had no inventory. So it all went to real estate.

PM: That's right, and they were at the 25 percent level. They were commercial level. So that really created a mess. Governor Hayden got beat I think primarily because of that.

DW: I would concur with that, yes. Anybody that's been in Topeka at any point in time, there's been all kinds of different marches for everything here at the State House. But I think 5,000 people is about the largest one of current history.

PM: Yes, it's the largest crowd that I've ever seen up here, and they were walking around the Capitol. I mean, "Come out, Mike! Come out, Mike!"

DW: In that era, we had the driveway around the Capitol that you could walk around.

PM: Yes.

DW: Of course, that's all changed today. Well, tell us some other things about tax issues. We'll get to some other issues in a minute, but tax issues that might have come up after that that you had knowledge of.

PM: The primary tax issue was myself and [Senator] Dick Rock. We introduced a bill together that would have reduced the property taxes by about a billion dollars. And we were going to get that from income tax from the brokers primarily. Dick used to say, "Wealth doesn't go in and out of barns. It goes in and out of these small areas where the broker"—

DW: Service-type people.

PM: Right.

DW: That was probably a very wise statement.

PM: It was the truth because millions of dollars goes through those brokers. Barns are filled with hay.

DW: Right.

PM: And maybe a few small tractors.

DW: That are exempt now.

PM: We passed the Senate with that bill, and I kid everybody that we probably created about 125 lobbyist positions that year just to come in and lobby against that bill.

DW: It had one for every House member.

PM: Yes. And the House defeated it. It never came back up again.

DW: Who was President of the Senate at that time?

PM: I believe Bud Burke was.

DW: Bud was from the Olathe area at that point in time.

PM: Right. And I remember [Senator] Gus Bogina voted for it. Several of the Overland Park people were supporters of it because of the large amount of reduction in the property tax that we proposed.

DW: Right. So let's kind of move from tax issues. Tell us about some other issues or memorable issues. Obviously you can't tell us about every one. There isn't time today to do that. Let's talk about a couple of other issues that are memorable in your time here.

PM: Well, probably one of the most memorable ones was abortion.

DW: Still here today.

PM: Yes, it's still here today, but back then Kathleen Sebelius [chair, House Federal and State Affairs Committee] and several of the House members passed a bill and sent it over to the Senate, and Frank Gaines didn't want to deal with it. So he pulled the enacting clause. He made a motion, and I think Wint Winter [Jr.] seconded it.

DW: They were a pair.

PM: Right. We voted to pull the enacting clause. Well, Frank went home that weekend, and he come back, and he'd got his you know what thrown out.

DW: Hat handed to him.

PM: He came to Bill Morris, and Bill and myself and three or four others started to develop a restrictions bill. It took about three weeks. We eventually passed a restrictions bill, sent it over to the House, and it was opposed by several members over there, but it passed. It went to the Governor, which was Joan Finney at the time.

DW: Yes. She came in after Mike Hayden.

PM: Right. We went down and said, "Joan, you've got to sign this," and, of course, she had the opposition who went down to her.

DW: Some said, "Don't sign this."

PM: Right. "Don't sign this." And that went on for about a week. She eventually signed that bill.

DW: Right.

PM: The other bill that I remember was the death penalty. I was on the Judiciary Committee. There were thirteen of us on the committee. We had it stopped, 7-6.

DW: The death penalty bill.

PM: Yes, the death penalty bill. Mark Parkinson³ who was the big supporter of the death penalty at the time went to Dick Rock who was also on the Judiciary Committee and said, "I'll let you write the bill if you'll change your support over to us."

Well, Dick went ahead and wrote the bill out and said, "If you change one comma or anything, I'm out." They didn't, and it passed the Committee and then went to the Senate floor. It passed the Senate and went over to the House, and the House passed it, and then it went down to the Governor.

Several of us, I remember me and [Senator] Dick Bond and one other person from Wichita went down and begged her to veto it. She said, "Phil, I'm just mad at you guys. You're just playing games," and we said, "That's what we do. We play games up here, and you're part of the game, and you've got to veto this." "Well, I'm not going to do that. I'm just mad at you guys, and I'm just going to let it become law without my signature." And that's what happened.

DW: Interesting.

PM: I don't think we've had anybody killed from the death penalty or executed from that, and there was a murder that was down in my area, [Gary Kleypas](#) who killed a girl. That was in '93, I believe, and he's still alive and still on the Death Row.

DW: All taxpayer supported.

PM: Yes. I'm sure they've spent at least 10 or 15 million dollars on him over the years fighting and whatever.

DW: You're right. Nobody has been executed since that has passed. There's no telling where those laws will go here in the future.

You'd mentioned back on the abortion issue in '92, and I was in the Senate with you at that point in time. I remember your work on that. What's interesting is that law we all put together and you worked on it tremendously is still the law of the land today.

PM: Right.

DW: And there's been obviously a court case on another one, and the legislature wanted to put that on the Constitutional amendment which just recently was voted down. But what's interesting is most people don't stop and think that the work you did in '92, and it was truly a bipartisan effort to make all that work.

PM: Yes.

³ Mark Parkinson was Lt. Governor of Kansas 2007-2009 and assumed the governorship of Kansas in 2009 becoming the 45th governor of Kansas. Parkinson was first elected to the House in 1990 and the Senate in 1992 serving one term in each body.

DW: It wouldn't happen in this Chamber or maybe most Chambers across the country today and then with a governor that was willing to sign it. So it's still the law of the land today, and it works well. I think it was truly some model legislation.

PM: Right.

DW: That's great. After a time, you decided to not run for the legislature again as lots of people do. It's one of those things, and I think it's true. People should come here and serve for a while and then go on about their other business.

PM: Right.

DW: It should not become a career. Now having said that, I know that we've had several long-time career service people, and that's obviously been their choice.

So you're out of the legislature and back to Pittsburgh. Tell us what you've done.

PM: I had rental property. I had quite a bit of rental property and did appraisal work along with the time that I devoted to working in rentals, chasing people, primarily college is what I had. I had about thirty units. I enjoyed it myself. But over time, I eventually sold off everything, and that's when I bought out my cousins and my sister on the farm.

DW: That was a good trade of properties. Great. I also understand that you are a very fine collector of rugs and some very fine antiques.

PM: I've been buying and selling Oriental rugs for about forty years now. I just sent off to Cedar Rapids at an auction house up there about eight rugs, and I primarily—I don't do retail. I primarily do it through auctions and have enjoyed it.

I got started in the seventies when I met Michael Grogan. Michael was the head of the rug department for Sotheby's, and I've maintained a relationship with him over the past thirty years.

DW: Awesome.

PM: In fact I just spent probably \$20,000 on rugs in the last six months.

DW: All through the auction.

PM: Yes, all through the auction.

DW: As an auctioneer, I think that's the great method of price discovery. You let everybody throughout the country compete on those things.

PM: Right. For what I'm into, it's worldly.

DW: That would be true.

PM: Yes.

DW: And I know that you've helped me on some rugs where you told me what to look for on the bottom side which I would have never had a clue to look at, that side of it.

PM: Right.

DW: Your association here with a gentleman by the name of [Clyde Graeber](#) kind of got you into watches.

PM: Right.

DW: I know you're a big watch collector.

PM: Clyde was a wonderful person. We traded and bought and sold watches together. I probably during the time that I was up here probably bought twenty, thirty watches and sold them to various people that were out there and kept some of them myself. It's like I told you that one that I bought from him. I gave him \$3,000 for it, and it was a rare watch. They just sold one last year. They had an estimate of \$5,000, \$6,000. I left a \$6,000 bid, but the watch brought \$12,000.

DW: You were just halfway there.

PM: That's right.

DW: That's obviously been fun, and the relationships you've developed here in the Capitol, your seat mate Rip, and the friends that you've made here and our friendship that we met when we first got here.

PM: Right.

DW: That still continues today. Those are some friendships that last forever. I think the other thing you were saying, one of our conversations is, and likely was so privileged to serve in an era where you could be friends with everybody here.

PM: Right. I got along with everybody in the Senate. I really enjoyed the time that I was here. The last election that I had, I won by 9,000 votes, and everybody said, "You're going to be here as long as you want." I said, "I'm leaving at the end of this term. This is it. Somebody else is going to take my place. I've got three kids at home. My wife needs me, and I've got a business at home that needs me."

So I left and didn't run after '92 and left in '97.

DW: I was thinking that was mid-nineties, so that would be about right.

PM: Yes.

DW: This government is truly—it's an honor to serve in government and to bring your expertise that you brought, especially with tax issues that were at the time of the reappraisal and classification, I would hate to think where we probably would have been without your knowledge and expertise at that time.

PM: Reappraisal and classification were probably the biggest issues that I had to deal with. And as I said, I wasn't on the tax committee.

DW: Until it got to here.

PM: Until it got to here, and once it got to here then—

DW: You were chairman.

PM: Right. I had a lot of objections to both. The reappraisal, I knew what I wanted I would never get. What I wanted was the state to take over the reappraisal system, and each one of the county appraisers would have been a state employee, and it would have been funded. Neither the state nor the counties wanted that.

DW: Right.

PM: So that just fell by the wayside. And the classification amendment, like I said, what I wanted was an amendment that didn't have any numbers in it, and the legislature could deal with the numbers every year. A lot of people didn't like that because they didn't trust the legislature.

DW: Imagine that.

PM: I, for all the problems, trust the legislature. Still to this day, I really believe that the legislature will do the right thing.

DW: Right, and I think that's the governing process throughout state legislatures throughout the country as well as the nation. There're always things that we don't like, but at the end of the day, I concur with you.

I remember Mike Hayden, Governor at that point in time (he used to be in the House) said there's a couple things you really don't ever want to watch being made. One of them is sausage and one of them is laws.

PM: Right.

DW: I think that probably still holds true today.

PM: Federal and State Affairs, Ed Reilly was chairman, and I enjoyed that committee. We dealt with all the controversial issues: liquor by the drink, lottery. I voted for all that stuff. I don't drink, and I don't play the lottery.

DW: That was another item that was coming through the legislature at the time you were here.

PM: Like I told you, in the lottery, before we passed it, Mendenmines in Missouri, which is just about fifty people, was one of the largest lottery dealers in the state because everybody from Kansas was coming over to Missouri to buy lottery tickets.

DW: They wouldn't buy anything else while they were there, would they?

PM: No. A little bit of booze and cigarettes, too. But my district, 80 percent of them probably, 90 percent, wanted liquor by the drink and lottery, and they got it.

DW: I think there's only just a couple of dry counties left in the state today.

PM: That's probably right.

DW: Very, very few. When you talked about Federal and State Affairs and the lottery, and I remember all that discussion at that time. There was a gentleman by the name of Reverend [Richard] Taylor.

PM: Yes.

DW: Who lived out here east of town and came and, of course, was against all those items and was his own self-funded lobbyist. He wasn't funded by anybody else. I'm sure you remember him coming to your committee a time or two.

PM: Absolutely. I remember him just as clear as day as he was back then. I can remember him sitting in that Fed&State Affairs Committee. Of course, he was opposed to liquor by the drink and opposed to the lottery. Where he probably, like me, was-- I was opposed to abortion and the death penalty. Those were issues that he spoke to along with the other issues he was solidly against.

DW: Right. I think I remember some of his discussion was that if you need to raise money for the State, just do a tenth of a cent of the sales tax. We'll raise the same amount of money as the lottery.

PM: Right.

DW: And that might have been true at that time. I'm sure it's not true today.

PM: At the time, lottery was so interesting to the people. They wanted it, obviously because when you're sending over \$5,000 to Mendenmines to buy lottery tickets.

DW: At one little store.

PM: At one little store, and then they'd bring it back to Pittsburg.

DW: And give the tickets to everybody.

PM: Give everybody a ticket.

DW: Amazing. Anything else in kind of closing you want to share about your legislative experience?

PM: I enjoyed the legislature. I loved it while I was here, and to me, the Senate was like a big fraternity. You got along with a lot of people. It was an enjoyable experience for me, and I look back at it and I have no regrets.

DW: That's awesome. That's awesome, the friendships you make and being able to get along and the legislative process, which today is very divided, which it wasn't then. You disagreed about issues, but at the end of the day, you were still friends.

PM: That's right. That's exactly right. I mean, reappraisal and classification were difficult to work through. But the people that wanted those, they never said anything against me.

DW: Personally.

PM: Personally, right. They might have opposed me on the floor, but as far as getting along, we could leave this Chamber and go eat a meal.

DW: Let's close on that. There's a little place down here on Kansas [Avenue] called The Catch that was just great food. Tell us about—and there's lots of places and watering holes in Topeka.

PM: Well, Fidel, I forget his last name, Abdamanian or something like that, he owned The Catch. I started going down there to eat fish. I'd eat walleye every day. People started asking me. They'd say, "We'd kind of like to go down there, but we're a little leery of it." I said, "You don't need to be worried about it. Come on down with me."

So I started taking people down, and they liked it, and [Senator Jack] Steineger and [Senator] Ed Reilly, they discovered he had a little rental they could have parties at, and they started renting from him. When I left, Fidel said, "Boy, I hate to see you leave."

DW: You probably kept his winter business alive.

PM: Oh, yes.

DW: That was just one of the great little places to eat here in town as well as the others. A lot of those things have changed today.

Phil, thank you for taking time to do this today and share with us. As we come to a conclusion on this one, again, this is done [funded] by the Kansas Humanities, as part of the Kansas Oral History Project, and we hope that in the future, people will take time to listen to this and understand that government has worked, and it can work. Thank you very much. Have a great day.

[End of File]

From [Legislators Past/Present](#)

Martin, Phillip W.

Born: January 24, 1948 in Pittsburg, Kansas

Died:

Occupation: Appraiser

Town: Pittsburg

County: Crawford

Party: Democrat

District: 13

Chamber: Senate 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, SS1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996