

INTERVIEW: SHEILA FRAHM

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- Q: I'm Sara Tucker. You're Sheila Frahm. You've very kindly agreed to take part in the Kansas Women in the Legislature oral history project. And this is the 22nd of January, 1991, and we are in the State Capitol of Kansas. You understand, I hope, that this will produce a transcript. You'll have a chance to check the accuracy of this transcript, make any changes you feel you should make, and that you'll receive a copy. A copy will be deposited in the Kansas State Historical Society Archives. A copy will be deposited in Washburn's Mabee Library and it will be the basis of scholarly research.
- A: I understand. Thank you, Sara.
- Q: First of all, I'd like to establish your legislative identity. You're a Senator from the 40th district?
- A: Correct.
- Q: Colby? Which is, I think of it as in the far northwest corner of Kansas.
- A: It is. It's the twelve counties in northwest Kansas.
- Q: You were elected the first time in 1988?
- A: Correct.
- Q: So you are in the middle--second half--of your first term?
- A: Correct.
- Q: I'd like to begin with your early personal background. Where you were born, when, if you don't mind saying, what kind of family circumstances you grew up in?
- A: I was born in Colby, in Thomas County, small rural hospital. I'm the oldest of five children. One sister and three brothers. Farm family. Our farm heritage and tradition goes back many generations. Early 1800s. Settled in Thomas County. All four grandparents, two paternal and two maternal, so we can identify many generations of ancestry and all were involved in farming, with the exception of one great-grandfather who was a city employee and ran the power plant in Colby. But the heritage is very much a western Kansas one. Being the oldest and a farm family, I was born in 1945 in March. It was not blizzarding that day, but most years it is blizzarding in March in Colby in Thomas County. I never had cashmere sweaters, being the oldest in a farm family, in a time of struggle. My father was just coming back from World War II as I was growing up as a young child. I don't have recollection of that, but I know it impacted my mother.
- Q: So, would you call it a traditional family?

- A: Oh, very much, yes. Mother at home, which is very traditional for farm families. I know what I wanted to say and lost my train of thought, Sara. Never had cashmere sweaters. Didn't know that was any great loss, but it was also not unusual to have steak for breakfast, which to my city colleagues later, as I went to college and talked to girls from other parts of the state, that's very unusual. Well, we grew our own cattle, fed them, Obviously, beef in the freezer was no big deal. So, it's all in the perspective of what you have and don't have.
- Q: So, you as a child, certainly did not feel deprived. Just later on you discovered steak in the freezer but no cashmere sweater.
- A: Certainly. And that's an extreme example.
- Q: Well, I think that brings it alive. Where were you educated?
- A: Colby through twelfth grade. Colby High School, at that point was Colby Community High School. That was before consolidation, which is an important part of rural school districts, and then four years at Ft. Hays. I graduated from it. Then it was a college, now Ft. Hays State University. In Business Education. At that point, we immediately went to the University of Texas in Austin, where my husband got his master's degree, got his MBA in Texas, and I had an opportunity to take Child Development classes which I never had opportunity to take before. That was the era of New Math, so I took as much New Math as I could get hold of. Even auditing a couple of classes, which the professor was very happy to let me do because it was such a new faddish thing. So, no degree from UT but certainly a strong feeling about the university since we spent a year and a half there.
- Q: So, your husband was a childhood sweetheart or....
- A: Oh yes, his family also--not quite as many generations back--but also a Thomas County family. Ken was fourteen and I was fifteen when we began dating.
- Q: How then, did you come to get into politics?
- A: We were away from Colby for ten years. At Ft. Hays four years, two years at the University of Texas, a year in Chicago living in a high rise apartment on the 43rd floor right on Lake Michigan overlooking the entire city. Incredible experience which we wouldn't trade for anything, but certainly missed the prairies of Kansas. Then four years in Wichita. First home, first church, establishment of family, etc., and then the decision would we farm or would we not farm. And I should have known always and had no opposition, but hadn't really put into words that my husband was going to be a farmer no matter what.
- Q: Now what was his education again, exactly?
- A: He has an MBA.
- Q: Makes sense, especially today in farming.

A: It makes his farming attitude a little different than my grandparents and parents, I'm sure. In returning to Colby, we made a list, which is something we've always done to take advantage of any opportunity that comes along, evaluate it carefully, list reasons we should move to Colby, reasons we shouldn't move. The list to move there, obviously, was longer. We did. We loved it. We wouldn't trade it for anything. It's home. It's easy to raise children in a small town. We valued that experience. He's farming. I'm doing support work. Papers, going for parts, making sure there's meals in the fields, those kinds of things that a farm wife does. What else am I going to do? The children, we had two daughters at that point, already in grade school and I had an opportunity to run for the school board. The local board and thus began.

Q: Okay. When did you first run for the school board?

A: May I pull my resume? We ought to give you exact figures instead of--and, Sara, I may have to pull it off the computer, but--I believe I have a relatively accurate copy. This is probably as accurate as we can get. I don't know that I can give you the exact date. We'll have to figure it out.

Q: That's okay. We'll figure it out. Would you say about ten years ago, maybe....

A: No, it would have to be longer. Approximately. Well, I served seven years on the local board and then nearly three on the state board before this, so...ten years in round figures.

Q: So, then I take it that this board of education, first local and then state, was very much a political education for you?

A: Absolutely.

Q: What did it do? What did you learn?

A: Local politics is totally different, of course. For one thing, it's non-partisan for local school boards, so you're not a Republican or a Democrat. But certainly the politics of a small town and a school is so critical and how much money goes to hire the coach and how much money goes to hire the math teacher and should you have one who does both you're in wonderful shape to pass a bond issue, combine a gymnasium with a elementary classroom complex, too. So that kind of keeping the tax down and providing all you need. That kind of politics. Rather than the parochial or partisan politics we look at now. Excellent beginning to understand why and where and what we're trying to do in politics.

Q: I take it you liked it?

A: Very much. Extremely frustrating days, of course. Particular interest of mine is special education. Colby is one of twenty schools in an educational service center coop working together to provide special ed. Each of the boards involved has a representative on that. I also had the opportunity to serve on that. That was probably more political than even the local board, in the sense that you've got to satisfy having one board

member from all schools, all the same size. Colby being the largest school down to Herson (?) which is the smallest school in the state of Kansas. The needs of those two schools, while we joined together, still are very diverse, even though we're all still small rural schools. That's kind of like comparing Colby to Topeka. You know, the bigness and littleness and yet we've got to cooperate. That same number of superintendents meet; that same number of board members meet; and you must pull your urgencies together to accomplish what the children need. So, those two experiences for nearly seven years. Then, I attended a meeting and a Saturday night we'll probably never forget. Kansas Association of School Boards had their annual hog roast in Topeka, which is because I was a member of their legislative committee, beginning to be interested, obviously, in what was happening in Topeka. Learned that our local state board of education representative, representative of 34 counties in western Kansas, would be resigning. I had thirty days and sixty-four voters. It was a very unusual situation because it was to be an appointment by the chairman and co-chairman of each of the 34 counties. It is an elected board, but when there's an appointment, so I had one month and I knew exactly which sixty-four people. Number one, I had to get to the caucus, and number two, had to get their vote. They had to come from as far away as Liberal and St. Francis and Hays and Ellenwood to come in to Scott City. They called it a central location, which is to my advantage certainly, to receive that appointment. Got it.

Q: And, obviously, greatly enjoyed the various skills and all the rest that went together?

A: I think my background, at least one of the other individuals who wanted it was also a local board member and served on the local education coop, so they had to decide who they wanted. And we had to settle. And a campaign doesn't have to be expensive and it doesn't have to be lengthy. You can do it very cheaply with your home copy machine and a lot of time in one month.

Q: Obviously so. I'm impressed. How then did you come or be asked to run for the Senate?

A: Well, twelve counties, it's a large area. I think that our powers that be in that area, be they Republican or Democrat, are always kind of conscious of someone who's interested. Part of being in politics is being in the right place at the right time. And, while I didn't plan it since I was in kindergarten and worked toward this step by step which some people feel they have done, as I told you we tried to take advantage of every opportunity that can come our way. It began to be apparent that perhaps a House seat might be available. As it turned out, the Senate seat was available sooner and we were once again in the right place at the right time. And I do say we in this situation because without my husband's support--farm northwest Kansas. We couldn't come to Topeka and do what we've been able to do without a lot of working together.

Q: So, I take it the Republican slot was empty?

A: No. I replaced a Democrat who had been there for sixteen years. Hadn't decided if he would run. I believe preferred to look into other things,

but had to know he could find those other things before he made his decision, so that did not affect whether or not I was going to run or not. But on the other hand we have been in the right place at the right time. I believe it was people knowing it was time for a change, also.

Q: You were born in 1945. You were then 42-43?

A: That's right, 42. Yes.

Q: How did you win? You suggested it was tied to a change, but....

A: We didn't have to campaign on that. That was not--you know, this past two years, time for change was the urgency in all campaigns. My situation was not that, except I think after sixteen years people were ready for a change. As it turned out, there were two people running. My opponent in the race was appointed to fill the vacancy of our past Senator. But he had never really served. Came to a couple of interim committee meetings, so he couldn't really run as a true incumbent. So it wasn't time for a change in that sense. But a time for looking at possibilities. How did I win? I worked like a slave. Twelve counties, twelve county fairs, and twelve farm bureau meetings, and twelve school board meetings, and twelve county commission meetings, and twelve reunions in the park. Every event, and then door-to-door in all twelve counties. It's different. One of my colleagues would tell you that she can, almost out of her front door, see all of her district. I may need to drive two hours before I can get out of the car to begin with. The difference of the districts. Certainly, a lot of road time. People in our area may not have an opinion, may not care what I'm going to do, but were interested to know that I care. I or anyone else. That their person cares. So they're glad to see us. They don't always get that. So, that was important. And certainly my commitment that they'd see me more than just for a luncheon. And they have.

Q: Can you tell me something about what organizations you used? No matter how hard you worked, you had to build an organization.

A: First of all, raising over \$50,000, which at the time, seemed as though it might be impossible, and thinking back, almost feels impossible. People in my part of the state are not used to giving money and if they give \$5 they feel like surely they've made a significant contribution. And when a little old lady walks across town many blocks to bring me her \$5 check, beaming from ear to ear, it is from her heart and it does mean a lot to her.

Q: But, you've got to have an awful lot of \$5.

A: Yes, you do.

Q: Was that basically what you did was get a lot of....

A: I have a lot of individuals and they weren't all \$5, but there were very few \$500s also. And so, yes, it takes a lot of time to add up, but those people have a lot of commitment, and a lot of interest, and hopefully they tell someone who tells someone. I had a contact person, a county chairman in each county, not necessarily a Republican chairman. You know there is

a Republican chairman and co-chairman. I don't mean that. I mean for my campaign. Sometimes there were overlaps. Obviously, there was at least one school board member in every town that I could call on. So certainly my advantage of having worked not only on the local board and gone to school board meetings, worked with teachers, worked with administrators, and knowing them in all the districts, but also there was the special ed co-op. Because then a close networking with another group of school district individuals certainly didn't hurt my contacts to begin. I didn't want to be just education, though I think it's obvious that's very important too. I was not just an education candidate and, in fact, had to fight that a little bit to have a little bit broader image. Certainly, I am a farmer. I own land and that's very important in my understanding that our small main streets do not exist if the farm community isn't thriving and able to come to town and purchase. So, I had to have understanding and had to prove that I had understanding in all those different circumstances, so I suppose we're perceived as upper middle class, and so I need to be just as concerned about the little people, also. And not just the children, but the old people and the poor people and, so I try to--you don't satisfy everybody all the time, but more than just education. So the importance of a contact person, and often a school board member then was a respected community individual, branched out from there and some counties had a sizeable group of individuals working. We needed to have a fundraiser in nearly every county. Didn't always have a huge crowd, but we sent out a lot of invitations. Didn't always raise huge amounts of money, but people had an opportunity and one more time my name was in the mailbox, with the name of someone they knew. Because, obviously, I was not known and still am not known by everyone in twelve counties. Hopefully, Frahm is a name they're beginning to recognize after two years, but it's not automatic.

Q: Where did you get all these names? I take it it was just....

A: Well, you start with a base. And the school board was the base in many communities when I didn't know someone else. Or maybe we knew the John Deere dealer in a town. Or perhaps it was a teacher. A couple of towns a person who was very important to me was a teacher. One town it was a minister who used to be a minister in Colby and now is a minister in one of the neighboring towns. I think you take whoever. Sometimes it's--I can think of one little community the gentleman who worked for me and organized his county used to serve on an endowment board of a vocational school with my father.

Q: Okay. I guess the reason I asked is I generally get the impression that it's kind of up to the candidate to do lots of this work, as opposed to the local Republican or Democratic party steps in and says this is what you're going to do.

A: Yes, that's true, I believe, Sara. As a state board of education member, which is a partisan position, I had made a point of keeping very close contact with the county chairman, co-chairman of each of the counties. So there was an automatic tie. But I had a primary. So before the primary, technically, none of those really should take a position until after the primary. Now some were working for me, but that's okay. You know, they didn't need to be public about it. Some were, but that's circumstances.

I could not count on them to be my structure. And I took a position that I wanted them on my team but they had party work to do, and I needed their help and support, but I also needed to have my own structure. Nobody told me I had to. I wanted to have somebody to call down there. Some other far strange town, and I wanted them to call me and say 'Sheila, there's a reception at the city park at 4:00 next Sunday afternoon and you ought to be there.' I read all the newspapers but I wanted them to identify what's ...or if they were hearing rumblings or.... I can't be in every town in twelve counties and I can't keep a finger on them and it's not like the Topeka Capital doing the news for one town. So the polls from each of those areas, from my contact individual, be they friends, acquaintances, whatever, was critical.

Q: Can you tell me were there any issues that you felt were make or break issues in your campaign?

A: There are several issues that could have been. Except that I and my opponent came down very similar on many of them. Capital punishment could have been a make or break. We have people who are opposed to capital punishment, I'm sure, but we also are a capital punishment part of the state. That is something that's very important. It happens that that was my position, always has been my position. I sense that my opponent chose to have the same position over his wife's dead body. He was facing some dilemma himself. Abortion could have become an issue. Could potentially have been critical. But once again, after I stated my position, we found his to be very similar.

Q: Are you saying for the record what your position was?

A: Certainly. Our youngest daughter--my position on abortion is not just black and white. It is not a black and white issue. Our youngest daughter is an adopted child. I am very, very glad her birth mother, who I know, did not have an abortion. So it's an emotional issue for us. But I am not in a position to tell anybody how to live their life or what to do. I hope and encourage any young woman to go to her mom or her dad. Being the mother of three daughters, I never want my daughters to have to make that decision by themselves if they're in that situation. Don't think the government should make that decision. Certainly don't support third trimester abortions. Some would perceive that we're trying to keep everybody happy, but that's how I feel.

Q: Thank you. I think you've told me part of the nature of your district, but I would like to just make sure we've got it. You have twelve county districts. Its makeup is generally western Kansas farming.

A: Agriculture is our prime, and almost only, industry.

Q: Is there anything else about your district which seems to be important?

A: It's a very, very conservative part of the state. Not inclined to elect women or young people.

Q: Seems to have elected you? What did you do right?

A: Well, there are some who still, I'm sure, would sit in the coffee shop and say 'I'm certainly never gonna vote for a woman.' So now, in the next election I have to persuade them there's reason now to vote for me. We're also statistically the area of the greatest aging, so the average age of my constituents would be older than other parts of the state. And that continues to be the case. Additionally, our district is probably second in needing to--how do I phrase this--I'm referring to reapportionment. Second in declining population, is how I should phrase it. We will pick up at least four new counties, in addition to my twelve, which gives you a real feel of what's happening to the people in Kansas. And they're not moving into western Kansas.

Q: That is a dramatic statement.

A: My district unquestionably has the largest geographic area in the state. And that's already obvious and certainly will even be more so as we look ahead, after reapportionment.

Q: So, what issues other than those you already told me about, are going to be or are important to your district?

A: Well, the federal government determines the farm program, but we at the state government determine taxes, be it on sales tax or property tax for our constituents. That's important to all business people, certainly a question if you're going to have to buy a \$150,000 combine and that's before you buy a cutter, bark of wheat, or cornhead, 4 3/4% sales tax is significant. Obviously, I feel that's an exemption that has prudence.

Q: I look forward to hearing the debate. Here you are. You're in the legislature. You are a freshman. What committees...?

A: We like to feel like surely we were done being freshmen the first year.

Q: Okay. What committees did you want to get on, what committees did you get on?

A: The committees I requested I received. I wanted committees that number 1, I could use my expertise, and number 2, represented my district. Obviously, I asked for Education Committee, and I asked to be vice-chairman and I am. I asked for Agriculture. I asked for Energy and Natural Resources. I asked for Local Government. No one has more local governments than I do. And I asked for Assessment and Taxation. In the last two years I couldn't have been more in the middle of the fire on those committees. When our leadership called and said, 'Yes, Sheila, you can have the committees you asked for,' they said, 'if you will also chair Administrative Rules and Regulations.' Being a freshman, I said sure. Sounds fine to me. Administrative Rules and Regulations has turned out--it's a joint committee I chair every other year with the House Chairman--has turned out to be one of my greatest joys. It is painstakingly tedious because you read everybody's rules and regs. Every organization, every agency, every department, public and private, that they must write to carry out the intent of our legislation. And so, I learned far more than I ever realized I would learn as a result of this.



Q: Spell it out. Why is it a joy?

A: The details. To find out how an agency comes to the point of writing their rules and regulations. How they think they're gonna carry out our law. Are they trying to carry it out? To carry out the intent of our legislation the agency writes the procedure that they're going to use, in essence, their guidelines. And we need to be certain they're not trying to slip something in or to do it in a different way than we intended. The court has made the decision in the past five to seven years that the committee does not have authority to require the agency to change their rules and regulations if they don't write them the way we think they should, so we simply request that we would like a change. Usually get it. If we don't, then it's the responsibility of our rules and regs committee to introduce new legislation which then, if passed by our colleagues and signed by the governor, is legislative intent and the agency will have opportunity to rewrite their rules and regs.

Q: Very interesting. When you got here and over the more than two years, have you had a mentor or mentors or a support group that has helped you?

A: My representative--while I wouldn't call him a mentor--has been a friend for many years and a family friend through the years, and I certainly know that I can go to him at any time. I have found our leadership and all my colleagues to be very, very helpful. Now as far as a formal mentor or support group, I haven't asked for one.

Q: I've talked to a couple of people who say they did find the people they came in with, the clump they came in with, and especially women or especially one's own party, were very easy to talk to. Is there any pattern like that that you see?

A: Well, you see the room. And in here, I may not go to someone who is also a freshman or who is also a woman, but I will go to someone who's on a committee I need to know about. Now with that list of committees I gave you, which is massive for Senators, we still don't serve on every committee, and in the middle of the session it's difficult to keep up on all bills and all issues. And I may have a constituent who has called and I need an answer about judiciary or transportation, two that I don't happen to serve on. So I've got a neighbor and very quickly an answer about a specific issue. So I think it's--you wouldn't get all your answers from one person, and yes, those you come in with, you automatically feel some camaraderie whether they're of your party or not, and certainly can commiserate and/or chuckle at your mistakes because they're more understanding.

Q: You are a part of the Senate that now--the House is passing through the thirties by leaps and bounds of women--what would you say or what do you see now is the status and position of women in the Kansas Legislature?

A: Both as a beginning legislator and as a woman, who is a woman, I have found virtually complete acceptance and opportunity to do my own thing. A, in fact a requirement that I pull and carry my load, my share of the load. Senators--Senate freshmen--do not have the luxury of spending a couple of years getting their feet on the ground. There are not enough of

us. We must chair and co-chair committees immediately, the first day we get here, and as a result, I think, the acceptance. I mean obviously we are going to do it or not do it and they're going to find out. I have sensed that House individuals may feel leadership looking over their shoulders. Our leaders haven't had time. It's either do it or don't do it. So I did start my sentence there by saying virtual acceptance. I think there are still lunches probably that we're not included in. They must not be going somewhere where it would be appropriate for us to be.

Q: Well, you can probably live with that. Have you introduced, sponsored, had a role in some bills that you are particularly proud of?

A: One that was especially--we worked a lot on reform, education reform last year--and we can dwell on that a moment. One that comes to mind--I guess I can think of two from last year that were particularly valuable to my part of the state and so much fun to work on. When we reappraised land and much land went into what is called conservation reserve, the government program taking it out of operation, and it was then put on the tax rolls and you get \$50 an acre from the government. You get \$50 an acre whether it was originally grassland or dry land, farm land, or irrigated land, and you expect, if you were farming it, to get a whole lot more if it's irrigated land, to you as a producer than if it were pasture land. The way it was set up, all the land was taxed the same no matter what it was before. I was still paying as though it was irrigated land on my taxes and receiving the same \$50 an acre that the individual who had grassland also received. But he was paying grassland values. If, in my research, I determined that it had not been moved all to grassland, which would be logical since it wasn't making anything, because that would just totally erode many small counties tax base to take it all from irrigated value down to farmland value. My proposal was to put it to crop land value which is a compromise, and did have the support of the gentleman who had opposed putting it all to grassland because it affected his county very severely. And that was southwest. There's a couple of counties there it hurts even more than the northwest, though it's very similar. We were able to get that through. Did that impact every farmer? Certainly not, but to the farmers who had irrigated land and were paying irrigated assessment values and receiving only the same \$50 an acre as the farmers who had pasture land, that was very significant. I think it was to my advantage to be on Tax Committee as it came before us than if I'd gone on Tax Committee cold. The other issue had to go to transportation, which I don't serve on. Transportation is one that has no women on it which is maybe a quirk, I don't know, but circumstances. And so it was very interesting to experience a committee that I was not a part of. When I carry education bills, that's a cinch. Because it's my committee and I'm used to it and it's the people I know and the people I've worked with for a long, long time. The custom cutters, who come into Kansas to cut our wheat, whether they be Kansas boys or from another state just coming through Kansas to cut and then go on through, were facing extreme dilemmas on being able to get their permits at the state line. The Department of Revenue's response was 'well, we'll fax it to them any time.' Not too many of our custom cutter crews had a fax machine in the harvest field at 12:00 at night when it was time to move. Because when the farmer at the next stop says, 'I wanted you yesterday,' they had that dilemma. The agency, PVD, Department of Deployed Vehicles, who were at work on it--we

only had to rewrite it sixteen times. The custom guys all came up and-- these are my friends, I mean I didn't know them all--but I can speak their language and it was very rewarding. Now we have a couple of other states who are modeling their legislation after our legislation. Because, you see, if the Kansas boys had made it difficult for the other state individuals, what do you think Texas would do to them? So they worked almost obsessively hard to make sure we treated the out-of-state boys the same we were treating our own. And two options--you can buy a whole year permit or for those who just want to come through for a brief time, a shorter time option, but still the accessibility of having it ahead of time. So, this time of year, they're kind of twiddling their thumbs, preparing their machines, and cleaning the chaff out of the cutter bars. They can also order their permits this year.

Q: Do you have any other vivid memories of the first two years?

A: Obviously, I'd anticipated being here for a long time. The campaign was hard and tense. Nobody'd had a vacation, nobody'd slept, you know, but I'm sure the stress.... Get here, the family all comes, all that, and a week later, we look back and can't remember what the week's been like at all. It is such a blur to try to recall. I think my youngest daughter put it in real perspective when we came the second year and she said, she goes to school here, she's a fifth-grader. So she was a third-grader the first time we came. New school, new books, new teacher, new friends, etc. The second year, Chrissie said as we were beginning to move down the first of the year, said, 'Mom, I don't think I'm gonna be as scared this year because I know where my books are and I know where my room is.' I said, 'Chrissie, let me tell you something. That's exactly the way I feel, too.' It is absolutely no different. So some of the first year just has to be a blur and any procedural manual that could be written, which isn't, would tell you where to find things and how to do things and what to say and to whom to say it, and where to be and where not to be. You've got to experience a lot of it and it wouldn't be very useful. The second year you don't need a manual quite as bad. I assume, two years from now, I would say to you, 'I've learned some more.'

Q: Let me turn then to your private life. You've already half answered the first question I had for you, which is how do you manage this family life? I take it you and your children and your husband move to Topeka?

A: Just our youngest daughter. Our oldest is a KU law student. This semester she's halfway through and our second daughter is a K-State junior. We try to cover all the bases. And our third daughter then is a fifth-grader this year. She and my husband and I move to Topeka. Ken can farm in Topeka for three months because a farmer in the winter does paper work, does tax planning, talks on the telephone, etc, and if the weather's nice, plays a little golf. And it's been nicer in Colby than it is here. He has not been on the golf course. That is a dilemma. We determined, of course, you make some adjustments after things actually happen you haven't expected, but it was certainly our decision that we would all live in Topeka, that it's far too long a commute. That is not a family life for a husband and wife let alone for a young child. I'd like to think this is. It is a juggle, there is no question.

Q: So you rent a house? Stay through until school lets out?

A: No. It's very important by the middle of April when we adjourn to go home and plant corn. And so Ken, Chrissy and I move back and then I just come back for end of session. So she goes to school here from the first of January--well, this year we were here a week and a half early because she needs to start right after Christmas vacation when other children come back to school.

Q: Are you going to be able to keep on doing that as she moves on in school or will she maybe need to stay here on her own?

A: I don't know. So far we're making it and certainly you raise a question that has crossed my mind.

Q: The next few questions I want to ask you are very much personal impressions. What has been the impact of your legislative service on your personal life and, I will get as nosy as you're comfortable with, what has it cost in every way--finances, emotionally, etc.?

A: It's difficult to deal with comments that we make too much money because certainly legislators who must maintain two homes do not make too much money. The challenge of--I have three apartments furnished--one of them at K-State, one in Topeka, plus the home in Colby--there is no excess furniture. What came to my mind when you asked what is the cost, ironing, washing your own clothes, mopping the floor, are not the things that necessarily appeal to most of us, but I can tell you that it feels kind of good when you've been so busy, so intense, so engrossed that you haven't made that a very urgent commitment. It feels good to just do ordinary things. And certainly there's a toll. The opportunity, be it for I or my family--Chrissy's gotten an incredible challenge going to school down here, but also incredible opportunity. I would say the same goes for me. There are days when I would give anything to be back in Colby, Kansas, just going to a plain ordinary school board meeting. I would be no different than you interviewing people or teaching your class and go home and read a book.

Q: Actually, I'm having an awfully good time right now, but I do know what you mean. I take it you could not have done this without your husband. Certainly this is somewhat unusual. I know fewer men.... What is the impact on him?

A: I think I've indicated to you, certainly, support has been critical. To some degree a lot of what we do may have been his idea originally. I mean he was with me when we learned of the state board appointment and I looked across the table at him and I knew exactly what he was thinking. 'We're going for that.' That's a possibility to consider. It took us half the drive home to know for sure that's what we were doing, literally. Today, for example, he was here to listen to Mrs. Finney speak and probably now he's at home trying to be Cheyenne County Board of Registration, because he is caught up to date. He can't play golf. I mean, he could go bowling or go to the library.

- Q: What does--how much does all this affect you in terms of your personal outlook, your attitude, what you know? What are you learning?
- A: There are days when I feel like there's not any way I can know enough to go the next day. There are so many things, so much we need to know about. And then I get a call from home and someone whom I respect very much, someone who I think is very intelligent, very smart, very clever, very creative, said 'Sheila, you have to help me with such and such,' and they assume because I am in the middle of it, I can. And lo and behold, if it isn't something I can answer. Because I am in the middle of it, so while the recognition and the anxiety that you don't know nearly enough, the reward of being able to assist, makes up for it.
- Q: Do you think people have changed in how they see you?
- A: People who knew me well in Colby expected me to do what I'm doing and do it the way I'm doing it and have it in the file, very organized. Individuals in outlying counties whom I had not met are having to learn that. So, the expectations of what I do are different depending on where I am.
- Q: What do you think about the changes you're experiencing in the Kansas State Legislature? I would imagine as a thinking woman, you probably have some picture, some interpretation of what's changing up here? What is your perspective on this of which you are a part?
- A: We're in a changing era. Women are having opportunities everywhere. We have women in Saudi Arabia. Once again, it's partially being in the right place at the right time and second, being able to further that. And if women come to Topeka and act like dingbats, then that's how we'll be treated. So there is more pressure at times on us to perform than our male colleagues. And I think even the guys would admit that. Also, more opportunities for women to work not only for themselves but to pay for work for others. Now I don't feel like I'm necessarily preparing the way for the Senate to be half women. I want it to be a balance, to continue to be a balance. I don't want women to take over, so I'm probably less of a feminist than many of the women who are actively involved in whatever they're involved in because I feel like you are the individual you are--not whether you're a man or a woman.
- Q: Is there anything that you thought I'd ask you that I'm missing? What else should I be asking? What else is there that you'd like to have on record?
- A: I can't think of an interview regarding being a Senator when you didn't ask if I felt like I'd been discriminated--you or your peers--discriminated against.
- Q: Have you been discriminated against?
- A: I have not been discriminated against.
- Q: I guess I thought you'd tell me if you felt that way.

A: There are times when absolutely it is a disadvantage to be a woman. There are times when it's an advantage to be a woman. You can use it or not use it. I think that all depends very much on the individual.

Q: Thank you very much.