

The Legislative Wives, a conversation with SUE BOND and Joan Wagnon, August 9, 2019
Kansas Oral History Project, Inc.

Joan Wagnon: We had a great interview with your husband, Dick Bond, and this is Sue Bond. How long have you all been married?

Sue Bond: Sixty-one years.

JW: Oh, my.

SB: In August, sixty-one years.

JW: It's longer than anything else you've ever done probably.

SB: You're right.

JW: So Dick had always been involved in politics. You told us that. But when he decided to come to the legislature, what was your role in all that?

SB: My role was, I was excited because he'd been [working] in the Congress for twenty-five years. I was excited. I loved politics. I would go with him to all of the events. His rule was, "Sue, I will take you there, and I will take you home. But in the meantime, you make your own way. " Because people know who he is, and he can't remember the names, he didn't want to have to try to introduce me.

So we had a bunch of ladies. We'd get in the corner and have a great old time. I'd already been through that. Plus I had already through the twenty-five years of going to all of those things, I had learned that in order to carry on a conversation with a stranger, I would say to them, "Joan, I love your necklace. Is there a story?" and there always was. So they thought I was really a great conversationalist when they did it all. So that was my background in politics.

Coming to Topeka was exciting. Dick loved it. He took to it like a duck to water. I became involved in the Legislative Wives. Back then they all came and stayed all week long, the wives did. So we started, it was every Tuesday during the session, and we would start with devotions or sharing. They gave us a room in the Capitol Building. I'd hear all kinds of stories from things, friends they had at home—one time, Marilyn Mollenkamp shared the story that her family had called to say, "Don't come home this weekend because we've had a horrible dust storm, and there is three feet of dust, dirt in front of your doors. You can't get in."

So those were the kinds of things. Then Catherine Thiessen from Independence would share. They have a holiday where you take the word "Halloween" and say it backwards.

JW: Neewollah.

SB: Neewollah. So she would share all about that. Then one year, we heard every year about the pancake race in Liberal. One year we took a bus and a bunch of us went to Liberal and stayed all night. So then we watched the pancake race the next day. Then we had a luncheon

each day, and then the ones that were here all the time, they took different bus trips during the week. All of these books would tell of the trips that they took, and I was looking back through them. They went to Manhattan. They went all over. They went down to the salt mines.

JW: Was it important for the wives to be up here and to be part of it? Did it help, do you think, in making the legislature a more comfortable place...

SB: I think so.

JW: ...when you have to leave home and come to Topeka three months out of the year?

SB: Then they had this group, their friendship, there was in common, and then they got invited to events in the evenings. I would on Tuesdays Dick would know to make a reservation for me. I'd stay all night. I'd get up and leave early the next morning.

JW: What's this that you brought?

SB: This is the Capitol Cookbook. This came about because Patti Hayden had said that she couldn't find any serving pieces.

JW: You're talking about at Cedar Crest?

SB: Cedar Crest, yes. She couldn't find serving pieces. Through the years, the legislative wives would buy some. Anyway, we put together this cookbook, and it's wonderful because it's got all of these drawings in there done by local artists from Kansas who volunteered. All of us got together and everybody had a part. These recipes are all from legislators. Olivia Bennett's [wife of Governor Robert Bennett] got recipes in here, the governors past. This was a real special fundraiser. With that, we use the money to buy serving pieces that they used at Cedar Crest when Patti Hayden was First Lady.

JW: I wanted to just take a minute of your time and ask you to talk to the people that might be listening about what it was like to be married to a legislator who left home all of the time. The truth is, you left home with him. You came up here.

SB: Exactly.

JW: So the legislative wives, which I believe are still meeting today, filled a function for you and created what Dick was talking about in his interview, which was a sense of camaraderie, and the relationships that are important to making government work.

SB: You bet. I looked forward to it. It was so fun to look back through this and see the names of the ladies.

JW: Thank you for bringing those. I think you're going to leave those at the Historical Society.

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SB: Yes.

JW: Thank you so much.

SB: You're welcome, Joan. I'm happy to.

JW: This was a lot of fun.

SB: It was. Thank you.

JW: This is Sue Bond, wife of Senator Dick Bond.

[End of File]