

[This interview is one of ten oral history interviews of Kansas legislators in 2015 by Dr. Burdett Loomis, done under the auspices of the University of Kansas and the Shawnee County Historical Society with funding from the Kansas Humanities Council. This set of interviews became the foundation for the Kansas Oral History Project with its incorporation.]

LOOMIS: It is January 22nd, 2015. We're in Room E-121 of the Capitol. I'm sitting here today with Rochelle Chronister. Rochelle, thanks very much for coming in. CHRONISTER: Glad to do it.

LOOMIS: It should be fun.

Let's start at the beginning, maybe not at the very beginning, but how did you first come to run for the state legislature?

CHRONISTER: Well, I lived next door to my grandmother growing up, maybe not at the very beginning—

LOOMIS: No, that's fine. Go where you need to go.

CHRONISTER: —but it's getting it close. -And she was a very solid Democrat and was very interested in politics. Now, this was about 1945, '46, in that era.

CHRONISTER: And she used to do everything she could think of to get me to say I was a Democrat, including bribing me with a special kind of pie that she made. So, I was always kind of interested in politics and in how politics worked. But I got waylaid as a sophomore in high school by a very good biology teacher, who taught a science project method of biology in the days before anybody else did. And I spent three years under her tutelage, including two summers at KU [University of Kansas], with a science camp and then with an internship with the man who was the chairman of the bacteriology department. So, I kind of got waylaid off to the side. Got married. My husband was in medical school. I worked at KU Med Center as a virologist.

CHRONISTER: But, you know, we went on to Neodesha [town in Wilson County]. There was no call for a microbiologist in Neodesha who was a researcher, so I went back to my initial love of politics. Became one of the women who was a national committee woman for the Young Republicans shortly thereafter, and then got involved in regular Republican politics. So, I came, in some ways, in an unusual way because many politicians of the time that I was working, had never been involved with the party, but I had been knee-deep in party politics.

CHRONISTER: And my predecessor, who was Fred Lorentz from Fredonia, came to me. He hadn't been here very long, either four or six years. And he had four boys at home, who were just growing up and really needed more time at home.

LOOMIS: Absolutely-.

CHRONISTER: And he said, "Rochelle, I can't run. Will you run?" And I said, "It's too early. I still have my son"-- was I think a sixth grader, and my daughter was a sophomore in high school.

CHRONISTER: And I said, "I need to wait until my kids get out." And Fred said to me, "This district sends people to stay for twenty years. If you want to do this, you need to go now." And I thought about it and talked to my family about it, and they were all okay with it, which was kind of interesting. There'd never been a woman run from my district.

CHRONISTER: At that time, there were very few women—

LOOMIS: Right. Actually, at that time—

CHRONISTER: —in the legislature, and they were all Democrats.

LOOMIS: And this year is?

CHRONISTER: 1978.

CHRONISTER: And there were five women when I came to the legislature. And I think there were six Republican women who were elected that year. And so that's kind of how I got into the political business. My first session was 1979.

LOOMIS: Did you—was there a primary or were you—

CHRONISTER: No, there was not a primary. There was a Democrat man who ran, who was a farmer. He was an older man, but he was well established. My district is very much a farming and ranching—

CHRONISTER: And I am not either one of those things. Knew almost nothing about agriculture. And this was somebody who had been active in agriculture for a long time.

CHRONISTER: So, I thought, Lots of luck, Rochelle. But it turned out he didn't want to speak when I was there speaking, which gave me an advantage in many ways. If anybody wanted me to speak—two people—I'd go talk to them.

CHRONISTER: Anyway, the first speech that I made was kind of fun because it was before the Farm Bureau in Woodson County, and I told them straight up—I said, "I hardly know one end of a cow from the other, but I will tell you this: If I'm elected, I will ask anybody who wants to be on an agriculture committee for me, and I will send them any bills that come before the legislature to find out what they think about them."

CHRONISTER: Well, they liked that a whole lot. From that time, I didn't have any difficulty. But the other thing at that time was—I spent the first six weeks or more, maybe two months the time that I was running, telling everybody that it was okay with my husband—

LOOMIS: - Interesting.

CHRONISTER: —and that my children would be well taken care of. I had an aunt who was my babysitter in town, and my mother and dad had moved back, so—at that time, that was a very big deal in particularly rural Kansas. You know, we're pretty conservative out in the country.

CHRONISTER: So, once we got past those couple of hurdles—and I'd been a school board member at that time for about nine years, and I told them—I talked to them about the schools and the school budget and how much of the state budget that actually was. So, I think that that really helped me, where otherwise it could have been a very difficult election.

LOOMIS: So, did you win by a fair amount?

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: We'll come back to all the legislature part, but in terms of campaigns, was that pretty much the norm?

CHRONISTER: Normally—let's see, I had only one Republican run against me in those elections, and sometimes didn't have a Democrat.

CHRONISTER: But the year I was Chairman of the Kansas Republican Party, the Democrats ran a pretty good woman against me, and I told people that I could not campaign that year for myself. That was in [Governor] Mike Hayden's reelection year.[1990] And he needed as much help as I could give him. And so I said, basically, "You're gonna have to live with it because that's what I have to do right now."

CHRONISTER: She came pretty close. But in the end, it was okay.

LOOMIS: - That's interesting that your first year was the year that John [W.] Carlin won the governorship, and the '90 election was when Joan Finney did beat Hayden.

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: So, there was some real Democratic strength.

CHRONISTER: There was some strong—

LOOMIS: - So you're elected in 1978. What did you do in that six weeks to prepare for coming up to Topeka?

CHRONISTER: Well, one of the things, of course, that I did was vote for the wrong candidate for Speaker.

CHRONISTER: There was a group of older men who I got to know and who I came to believe that—their candidate for Speaker was Dr. Carlos [M.] Cooper, out of Bonner Springs [a town in Wyandotte County]. And I decided that I was going to vote for "Coop." And, of course, Wendell [E.] Lady won the election twice.

CHRONISTER: And I voted against him twice. - Which is, as I think about it now, politically—philosophically, I was probably closer aligned in many ways to Wendell.

LOOMIS: I would have just assumed that.

CHRONISTER: However, the cowboys was basically the group—they were pretty conservative, and they were also my mentors.

CHRONISTER: They were very good mentors. The things that I did try and get ready to go, I went to talk to the man who was from Yates Center and had been Speaker of the House and in the House for twenty years before he retired, and Fred ran. And that was Clyde Hill.

CHRONISTER: And Clyde Hill was a great politician, understanding the system and what it was, and I spent quite a bit of time talking to Clyde about the entire legislative process and what I might want to do.

CHRONISTER: And I knew from the beginning I wanted to be an appropriations person.

CHRONISTER: As far as I was concerned, it's one of the best jobs in the legislature because you get to look at everything. You get to look at all of government, and you get to learn where the problems are now and where they're going to be in twenty years.

CHRONISTER: I think about Mike Hayden saying to me one day, while he was Speaker of the House, "You know, probably the biggest problem long term in Kansas is water, especially in the western two-thirds of our state." And it still is—

LOOMIS: Of course.

CHRONISTER: —because nobody really took a hold of it.

CHRONISTER: There have been attempts, and there has been some—it's probably going to require so much money in order to do something effective, and it's been difficult to convince people that continuing to drain the aquifer is going to leave them in bad shape.

CHRONISTER: So, I've always been an issues person, probably because I was a researcher—as a microbiologist.

CHRONISTER: And I loved [Kansas] Legislative Research [Department] -because they could give me information that was non-biased, and there were some issues that—banking, especially, I think of—the big banks and the little banks. Well, nearly all of my banks were little banks.-

CHRONISTER: But it was not an issue that I was real interested in, but I wanted to be sure I was doing the right thing, so I'd ask each of the lobbyists to tell me if I was stuck on a bill—

CHRONISTER: —so that I'd hear both of the sides that were pushing something. And then my seatmate was a banker from Salina, and I laugh because Gerry used to say to me, "Just vote the opposite of what I do, Rochelle, and you'll be okay." [Laughs.]

LOOMIS: - So, Gerry?

CHRONISTER: Simpson.

LOOMIS: [Rep.] Gerry Simpson. Oh, yeah, sure.

CHRONISTER: - He was my seatmate for as long as he was there.

LOOMIS: - So, did you want to be an appropriator right off the bat?

CHRONISTER: No. But I spent four years sitting at the back of the room—

CHRONISTER: —to the stage where -I laugh because the legislative staff used to make usually just enough copies or whatever was coming around for the members of the committee. They finally reached the stage where they'd make an extra for me because I'd be down there [raps on desk], waiting for—

-LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

CHRONISTER: Took me four years and becoming Assistant Majority Leader before I became a member of Appropriations [at the time the Committee was titled the House Ways and Means Committee]

CHRONISTER: But at that time, all of the subcommittees except the "front five" were three-person

[sub]committees, usually with two Republicans and a Democrat, although I happened to get two Democrats for mine.

LOOMIS: No kidding!

CHRONISTER: - Yeah, I laughed about that. We laughed about it a lot. It was funny because one of the members never got to a [sub]committee meeting. We ran our subcommittee meetings at seven in the morning.

LOOMIS: I see.

CHRONISTER: And he couldn't quite manage to get there.

CHRONISTER: Well, by the time he decided that decisions were being made and he wasn't sure whether he liked our decisions, the other Democrat and I had bonded. [Laughs.]

CHRONISTER: And so, we managed to pass most of the things that our [sub]committee wanted to. And after that, I was—two years, I was on Appropriations. I went to the “front five” and was vice chair of the committee.

LOOMIS: Explain the “front five.”

CHRONISTER: The “front five” basically handled the really difficult departments. They always had education. They nearly always had either KU or the KU Med Center because there were nearly always problems.

LOOMIS: Sure, absolutely. Believe me, I understand that. Yeah.

CHRONISTER: And a lot of times, they handled at least part of SRS [Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services], so I had an opportunity to learn a lot about the biggest department in government.

LOOMIS: So when you say the “front five,” you mean five subcommittees? Is that five subcommittees?

CHRONISTER: No, five members.

LOOMIS: Five members. Okay. I see.

CHRONISTER: The Chairman and the Vice-chairman and the Ranking Minority Member were always on the “front five.” And then two of the most experienced committee members if they would rather do that than have their own subcommittee.

LOOMIS: I see. Got it.

CHRONISTER: And most of them would, because they liked seeing the big issues.

CHRONISTER: - And then, of course, the committee reports came to the full Committee so we heard all about what the other departments were doing. And, as I said, gave you an overall picture of government.

CHRONISTER: And that first four years, I was also on the Education Committee, which, of course, I had background as a school board member in.

CHRONISTER: And I did Local Government, which I hated, frankly.

LOOMIS: - Why?

CHRONISTER: Well, nearly all the problems were Johnson County problems, between the rural area and what was a growing number of cities, not just one city but a number of cities.

LOOMIS: - I see.

CHRONISTER: Used to kind of drive me crazy, but there's nearly always a committee or two that are that way.

LOOMIS: Just parenthetically here, you come from rural Kansas, and clearly you identify that way. What was your relationship with particularly the Johnson County legislators? I was going to say the delegation, but obviously there are individual legislators. How did you get along with them?

CHRONISTER: Aside from my Local Government experience [chuckles], I always got along with them pretty well.

LOOMIS: They had—well, the representative of the rural part of the county was on that Local Government Committee also, and he was pretty much run over by the large number of city folks.

CHRONISTER: So, I was inclined to kind of side with him. [Laughs.]

CHRONISTER: But on the whole, you know, the Local Government things were internal, and most of the people in the legislature were interested in bigger issues than that, so—

LOOMIS: So how did you end up getting into the leadership?

CHRONISTER: Well, it was—of course, I ran for leadership, which you have to do in the Kansas legislature. They had just created a new position, an Assistant Majority Leader, and I knew Mike [Hayden] was going to run for Speaker. Well, he was al—yeah, he was already Speaker? No, no, it was the first year that he was running for Speaker.

CHRONISTER: And I recruited people, for one thing. That's one of the things that, being a party person I had done in the past. And I was tied to the party here also, the state party after I became a legislator. And I was asked by them to help recruit, which I did.

CHRONISTER: And then after we had the election and we won a pretty good majority in that election, I went across the state and talked to the people who had been elected and told them that there was a new position of Assistant Majority Leader and I was interested in that position. And, you know, I don't think anybody ran against me, come to think about it.

CHRONISTER: And I think that it made a difference that they knew that I had been a party person before.

CHRONISTER: For some of them. You know, some of them didn't care.

CHRONISTER: But for some of them, the fact that I had been a party person and continued to recruit for the party—

LOOMIS: Sure. What was it like—I remember knowing Robert [H.] Miller a little bit, and I remember him talking about—

CHRONISTER: R. H.?

LOOMIS: R. H. Miller, right.

LOOMIS: Running for Speaker, unexpectedly [unintelligible; 18:42] decision, and then talked about driving around the state. As you did that in recruiting and then kind of telling people about the new position—what do you learn by driving around?

CHRONISTER: You learn a lot. I'm a person who likes to drive. And didn't mind going by myself.

CHRONISTER: And I think that you learn more about Kansas and that that's probably as important as anything. Before I was done with the party position of Chairman of the party, when I became that, I'd been in every county in Kansas. And you see what the problems are, and you see the difference. You see the Flint Hills, and you see how dry it is out west, and the corn circles [irrigated corn fields], and you see—I saw a lot of things I'd never seen. And I think that helped me understand the problems and the distances that particularly western Kansans had to cover and what it was that they needed to do. [Rep. Robert] "Bob" Frey flew an airplane in.



CHRONISTER: And he'd pick up some of the guys [unintelligible; 2003].

LOOMIS: That's what [Rep. David J.] "Dave" Heinemann was saying, too.

CHRONISTER: Yeah.

LOOMIS: He said, —

CHRONISTER: Or they'd ride the train together, some of that kind of thing,—which was fairly incredible to me. I'm two hours from here, and, of course, I stayed through the week and then went home on weekends. They'd be here for nearly the entire session, and maybe get home three or four times. And that makes a difference, too. And I think it made a difference in the way, over the years, —we talked about the way you campaign and the differences in campaigning between my friend, [Rep.] "Big Phil" Kline [Philip Kearney Kline] in Johnson County, who was my roommate here in the legislature for six years. He had about a one-square-mile district.

CHRONISTER: And, you know, he just went door to door to apartments and that kind of a thing, and my district—and mine was not a real big district, but still it stretched for— it'd take me about an hour—I was pretty much in the southeast end of the district—to get to the northwest end of my district.

CHRONISTER: And then knocking on doors and campaigning.

CHRONISTER: And our city folk didn't campaign the same way that we in the country did.

CHRONISTER: So that was part of what I learned when I was out talking to people. And what their communities were like. Were they strictly farming communities? Neodesha, which is my home, happens to be an industrial community. People laugh about that—you know, a town of 2,500 people.

CHRONISTER: But we may have 1,200 people working in industries with Cobalt Boats. I always have to say that.

CHRONISTER: And right now, they have probably around 600 people.

LOOMIS: No kidding!

CHRONISTER: Yeah. And they've been as high as 800.

LOOMIS: So, they come in from the surrounding areas?

CHRONISTER: They do. They do. Yeah. And in order to build the quality product that they do, they have to bring people in from all around. So, I have that in my background.

CHRONISTER: And a lot of people have different things, and when you go to their town, you see what's happening there, to a very limited degree. You can get some idea of is it a gasoline station and a diner?

CHRONISTER: Or is it a relatively—speaking for Kansas—like Liberal [County seat of Seward County], a larger town? Or clear out west—I've even been to Elkhart [County seat of Morton County]. [Laughs.] And then up northwest, which is different again, in many ways.

LOOMIS: - It's one of the things I learned working for [Gov.] Kathleen [Sebelius] about the number of small towns is just mind boggling.

CHRONISTER: Yeah, yeah.

LOOMIS: You were in the legislature twice, in 1981 and '82 and then '91 and '92, when there was redistricting.

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: Were you involved in redistricting?

CHRONISTER: Oh, yes. I was knee deep in redistricting. [Chuckles.] That is not one of my favorite things to do. We had the—matter of fact, '91 the Democrats were in charge of the House by one vote

CHRONISTER: —which meant that I had southeast Kansas with two Democrats, both of whom were brand new. So, in spite of the fact that we didn't have a majority, I was able to get to work with those Democrats because, frankly, I had a lot more experience than [they did]. But that's hard.

CHRONISTER: And our legislative staff, of course, since they only do it every ten years, are not really up on it, although in '91 when we did it, they had more computer power.

LOOMIS: Ninety-one is when you began to have—

CHRONISTER: Right.

LOOMIS: Now, of course, the computing power is overwhelming.

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: It's free, and everybody can draw their own maps.

CHRONISTER: Right.

LOOMIS: I'm not sure that's the greatest, either.

CHRONISTER: Yeah. Well, we had—I had to laugh because if we got just a little bit too far to the west, suddenly we picked up the Wichita suburbs.

CHRONISTER: And [then explode?] our side of the map.

CHRONISTER: So, we had to keep it just a little bit east of Andover or we'd get too many people just [snaps fingers] with a click.

CHRONISTER: So that was not easy, to figure out how to make that work.

LOOMIS: And one of the things you mentioned was working with Legislative Research. You've mentioned it a couple of times.

CHRONISTER: I have a great deal of respect for that.

LOOMIS: What was your relationship as—do you have a relationship as an individual legislator and as a committee chair?

CHRONISTER: Yes. - . Matter of fact, I had such a good relationship with them that the next to the last year that I was in the legislature—because I'd been a school board member and because I felt like that process that we went through in negotiation was so difficult, especially in small towns, for this board and the teachers, it became very adversarial.

CHRONISTER: And I never believed that was a good way to work together.

CHRONISTER: I mean, I understood why they wanted a union type of operation.

CHRONISTER: But when you're in a small town, you got to live with people.

CHRONISTER: And in many ways, it often made it very hard.

CHRONISTER: So, I'd been looking for years for some different type of process to order and finally read an article about mediation. We did not have any laws about mediation in Kansas. You could not do mediation. So, I decided in the summer—must have been the summer of '93, I think, that—Nebraska had a very thorough mediation, and, of course, they're a unicameral government, and so they told me who had written the laws in Nebraska, the Senator who did.

CHRONISTER: And I called and told him I wanted to come to Nebraska and have him talk to me about how it worked, what they did, who had a right to it, and all of those kinds of things. And when Research found out I was going to do that—because I did it on my own and paid my own expenses and everything, they sent a research person with me.

LOOMIS: Oh, really?

CHRONISTER: Yeah, because they said, you know, “If you’re gonna do it, we need to learn about it also.”

CHRONISTER: So, they sent a person with me. It was funny because I came home, and I thought, Okay, maybe I’d like to be a mediator. So, there was nowhere in Kansas that taught mediation—

CHRONISTER: —except the Mennonites in Newton, and they basically taught it for their churches, to be able to do internal mediation. So, I went to Newton and took a week with the Mennonites to learn about mediation. Discovered that I could never do it because I’ve got an opinion on nearly everything.

And you’re supposed to be neutral as a mediator.

CHRONISTER: But I learned a lot about the process and how they felt like it worked, so I came home with that information. I wrote the mediation bill, and the lawyers fought me tooth and toenail.

LOOMIS: Oh, really?

CHRONISTER: Oh, yeah, because this would mean that their practices would change.

CHRONISTER: And it would no longer be an adversarial process because it’s a win- win kind of an

outcome.

CHRONISTER: [Chuckles.] I laughed because I introduced the bill. I was chairman of the Appropriations Committee. Nobody really knew [Rep. James D.] Braden and R. H., I think, Miller. I think that was when they were in charge. Nobody really knew what it did. They saw mediation, and they thought it was meditation.

CHRONISTER: They sent it back to my committee instead of sending it to Judiciary, where the lawyers would be able to get at it. So, we got it out of committee, and we got it off and over to the Senate.

CHRONISTER: [Sen.] Gus Bogina was chairman of Senate Ways and Means, and because it came out of House Appropriations, they sent it to him. So [chuckles] the Judiciary Committee never got a chance [to review it].

LOOMIS: I'll be darned.

CHRONISTER: And we managed to—in the final negotiations on the bill, Judiciary convinced them to put a couple of lawyers on and expand the committee. And I said, I'm good with that. You know, I'll talk them out of it.

CHRONISTER: So, we did. And that's an example of also, then—Research was able to educate the Legislature on full process. And in a few years, the Kansas Bar started teaching mediation. And one of my strongest opponents showed up the first day, when they'd asked me to come in and talk about the [background], who was obviously a lawyer, but had just been through a difficult divorce and discovered maybe mediation—

LOOMIS: The benefits—

CHRONISTER: —wasn't all bad. -

LOOMIS: And mediation now is—

CHRONISTER: Oh, everybody—yeah.

LOOMIS: It's just huge for lawyers.

CHRONISTER: -. Yes, for lawyers and social workers, and the judiciary uses it a lot, especially where there are kids involved in a divorce.

LOOMIS: You know you've had, a lengthy career. As you look back, how did your role as a legislator change, do you think, over that time? Or did it change?

CHRONISTER: I don't think it changed a lot, Burdett. One of the things that I was involved in after the second year, I guess, was educating the next group of legislators, —House Republicans that came in. That's probably the reason they elected me Assistant Majority Leader.

CHRONISTER: Nobody told me to, but from my experience in learning the legislative process, which can be very complicated and there's lots of ways to derail things, and there's lots of ways to get it back on—and also things as simple as how do you read the journal?

CHRONISTER: How do you know what's happening? You know, how do you keep track of things? You know, all that kind of a thing was something I was interested in teaching people

because I believed that if they were better educated, they would be better legislators, and the faster we educated them, the better off we'd be.

CHRONISTER: So, I did that on a volunteer basis for probably three new groups of legislators who came in, and then kind of felt like it was the responsibility of the Assistant Majority Leader, that that was a duty that they had.

CHRONISTER: And unfortunately, I think it kind of slipped out. While I was, early days, in Appropriations, after they quit doing it kind of at the other level, I used to do it still, to a limited extent, just tell them to come in. We'd have lunch together once a week, or whatever it turned out to be, and just sit and talk about the process.

CHRONISTER: So, it probably changed because I got too busy to do that kind of a thing later on. So maybe it changed in that way. Also, after Mike's [Gov. Mike Hayden] loss to [Gov.] Joan Finney, I was—I had one time been interested in being Speaker, but after chairing the party—

CHRONISTER: —and recruiting people and raising money, —and my interest has always been in—not in doing that kind of thing but in the problems and trying to figure out how to make things work better. And you can't really do that from the speaker's office. So, along the way, I decided that was not something that I really cared about doing, that I would rather have the opportunity—for instance, with the mediation to learn about how we could make a process different, offer it, not force it on people. And so that's probably more of what I did. And also, that's when I went to SRS ultimately, for [Gov. William Preston] "Bill" Graves.

LOOMIS: - For policy.

CHRONISTER: Policy position.

LOOMIS: And that's a big department, of course.

CHRONISTER: Oh, yeah. There were 11,000 people when I went there.

LOOMIS: Is that right?

CHRONISTER: There were 6,500 when I left.

LOOMIS: - A couple of things strike me. One is you saw any number of new classes, groups of legislators come in.

CHRONISTER: Mm-hm.

LOOMIS: Could you pick out ones that you thought were going to be the—

CHRONISTER: Real good?

LOOMIS: —the good ones?

CHRONISTER: Yeah, better than just seat fillers?

LOOMIS: Yeah, I think you can.

LOOMIS: - What would you look for?

CHRONISTER: I think you can. You have to watch for a while and see who's really serious about the legislative process, and no matter where they are, whether they're in what we consider a minor committee—Local Government, for instance, would have been one of those. Or whether they're really involved in the Education Committee or the Public Health Committee, whatever that might be.

CHRONISTER: Also, people who understood you didn't have to talk on every issue—you know, that they knew how to choose their battles.

CHRONISTER: And that's important because we did have people who would talk on every issue, and then nobody listened to them.

CHRONISTER: My first year in the legislature, I had a good friend who sat behind me, who was an experienced, long-term legislator. He was the person who ran for speaker first. And he'd see me kind of moving around in my seat and such on some issue that I thought maybe I ought to go talk about. He'd say, "Put your seatbelt on, Chronister. You don't need to talk on this issue."

CHRONISTER: -And I learned that so that when you went down, people did listen, because there's always so much chaos in the House. That's what a House is.

LOOMIS: I think that always surprises people when they come up here, and they [say], "How do you get anything done?"

CHRONISTER: And they don't think anybody's paying attention.

CHRONISTER: Well, they don't realize a lot of it is very routine things that they've heard—maybe they've heard it in committee. Maybe they've heard it before, in a previous year, different things, you know, that they may not be paying attention. They're right. You know, they don't pay attention all the time. But when it is a controversial issue and somebody is speaking who they respect, because they don't talk all the time, that's when you figure it out.

LOOMIS: Who would have been a legislator that if you weren't paying attention—give me an example of one to give maybe a face to this. Who would be example of a legislator that, if you

weren't paying attention, you might not have thought was very significant and yet really had an impact—

CHRONISTER: - I thought you were going to ask it the other way. [Laughs.]

LOOMIS: No, no. Not the other way, I'm sure you can tell me. We can ask that one.

LOOMIS: But I'm thinking more the one who worked behind the scenes and yet had a—you know, maybe never was a formal party leader, what have you.

CHRONISTER: I was trying to think about who that might be, that maybe didn't talk very often. I can't think right off the top of my head.

LOOMIS: Okay. Well, if you think of something—and we'll stipulate that there were some people that would speak on everything and no one listened to.

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: A couple of things in terms of the people that were there, groups of people. When I did my book on the Legislature in late '88 and '89, and one of the things that I saw was—immediately—that there was a remarkable number of—on both sides of the aisle, Democratic and Republican—really qualified women. I think it was maybe the late '80, early '90s was really the golden age for women in the Kansas legislature.

CHRONISTER: I recruited a lot of those women. -

LOOMIS: Talk about how the women in the legislature operated in those days, to the extent they did.

CHRONISTER: Internally? LOOMIS: Internally, yes.

CHRONISTER: Well, I think it was a surprise in '79, when they suddenly doubled the numbers of women legislators. And [unintelligible; 39:01] tickled the Republican women. At that time, I didn't know Democrat women well enough to say. But every once in a while, we'd call a woman's caucus, and it drove the guys crazy. Well, most of the time we might have the tea and crumpet kind of thing.

CHRONISTER: But we did talk about issues and putting ourselves in a position where we became experts in an area that we were interested in. My friend [Rep. Denise C.] "Denny" Apt [originally] from Iowa, for instance, was one of the women who understood education, understood the formula, which was always a struggle, and Denny became a leader in the education area.



CHRONISTER: Wanda Fuller, out of Wichita was very interested in juvenile justice problems and in what she saw in Wichita and had contact with some of the juvenile judges. And that was an area that she wanted to become an expert in, and she did, and people would listen to what it was she said. Jayne Aylward went to the Legislature when I did. She was very young but she was very smart. And she became a tax expert.

CHRONISTER: And it was interesting because the guys thought that they could kind of get it up on her because she was young. I mean, she was twenty-three, twenty-four when she came. And she wiped a couple of [them] down at the microphone a couple of times, and that took care of that.

CHRONISTER: You didn't go after Jaynie on a tax issue.

CHRONISTER: So, I think that we talked about that. One of the things that we talked about, I remember, one time was trying to not get labeled in a way we didn't want to. "You're the little house mom, and so you ought to just take a back seat. Don't try and talk about commerce" — or, you know, some of that kind of a thing. But some of them—you know, [as far as issues, might have been? 41:19]—might be their specialty or that kind of a thing, so—but that was the kind of thing that we often talked about. How could we be most effective? How could we convince the men that we were there to make a difference in the various ways?

LOOMIS: In large and small ways, was the Legislature, even in the early '80s, a pretty sexist place?

CHRONISTER: Yes, it was. I don't think there was any doubt about that. You know, I had one of the doormen say to me one time—I don't know how we got in this conversation, although I used to talk to doormen a lot. I talked to a lot of people. [Chuckles.] And he said to me, "Rochelle, when you get to the stage where you have women who can just be chair fillers and nobody pays any attention to it, you will have true equality." And I thought that was one of the smartest things I'd heard anybody say. And I remembered it for years.

LOOMIS: I do think—it was always my opinion, particularly in [the] '70s, '80s, and might know better recruiting, that women—I think just women by and large, the average woman legislator was a stronger legislator than the average man because you really—you didn't have so many [cross-talk; unintelligible; 42:46].

CHRONISTER: We had to fight it.

CHRONISTER: We had to fight to get them to be elected, and that meant they were usually strong women to start with. They came from city councils. They came from school boards. That's where I recruited from because I knew those would be good women. I recruited Sandy Praeger for I think four years before I finally got her to run.

LOOMIS: I just had lunch with Sandy yesterday.

CHRONISTER: Did you?

LOOMIS: Yes.

CHRONISTER: She's a good gal. I even took her to Washington to meet [President Ronald] Reagan. [Laughs.] We had a bunch of Republican women legislators. Reagan was in trouble with the women in my opinion, rightfully—and his daughter, Maureen, organized— inviting women legislators, Republican women legislators from all over the country to come have lunch with the President and get a fill-in from you know, cabinet officials, the kind of thing. And I'd been after Sandy to run and couldn't get her to, and so I said, "Come and go to Washington with us when we're going to go meet the President."

CHRONISTER: She finally ran and was very effective.

LOOMIS: No, right, - and clearly had a great career afterwards. What about the relationships among women across the aisle?

CHRONISTER: We developed those over the years as we discovered issues. Women are pretty much issue oriented.

CHRONISTER: Or they were at that time.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

CHRONISTER: As we discovered women across the aisle who had similar opinions, you know, we would—Joan Wagnon and I defended the KU Med Center I don't know how many times together.

CHRONISTER: And that was just an example. But there were nearly always Democrat women who had similar views. They wouldn't be perfect [cross-talk; unintelligible;44:39].

LOOMIS: No, -

CHRONISTER: And Wagnon and I wrote some day care legislation together. You know, it always helps when you're writing legislation if you have somebody on both sides.

LOOMIS: Right. And in those days or certainly a large part of that time, Democrats, even when they were only the majority the one—for the one Session.

CHRONISTER: Two sessions.

LOOMIS: Yeah. They still held a substantial minority,—

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: —compared to today.

CHRONISTER: Yes. Definitely. So, there were friendships that grew up. Joan Wagnon and mine—

CHRONISTER: We have a very close friendship that I enjoy a lot and still do.

LOOMIS: Of course.

CHRONISTER: -Besides that, she's had the questionable pleasure of also being chair of the [Kansas Democratic] Party. -

LOOMIS: Right. You can commiserate.

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: Another group that came into being toward the end of your tenure in the legislature was the first inkling of—

CHRONISTER: Tea Party.

LOOMIS: —the Tea Party, the so-called rebels.

CHRONISTER: Yes. Yes.

LOOMIS: How did that evolve? And do you think it was kind of the first whiff of the Tea Party?

CHRONISTER: Yes, I do. Came out of Wichita initially.

CHRONISTER: And it was a group of mostly young but some older men.

CHRONISTER: I don't think there was a woman in the whole thing.

LOOMIS: No, I don't think there was, no.

CHRONISTER: And they obviously had been—which we didn't know then but probably had some contact with Koch Industries or maybe not Koch Industries, itself, but with the Koch brothers [Charles G. and David H. Koch with the type of belief that they had in limited government, which was different from my belief in limited government, which I also do believe

in that. And probably a lot of different things were tried to bring them into the circle —but they didn't really want to be.

CHRONISTER: So it's one of the reasons I decided to leave the Legislature. I was not going to run again after the last election that I ran for, simply because it was no longer a congenial place to be. It was full of—not full of, but there were people who were always trying to disrupt.

CHRONISTER: And it had not been that way probably the first ten years that I was in the legislature. So pretty soon, it just reaches the stage that you say, I've had enough.

CHRONISTER: But there isn't any doubt, I think, that that was the beginnings of what we saw. Part of it probably went back to the Summer of Mercy, in Wichita.

CHRONISTER: Because a lot of those were very strong right-to-lifers. And the leadership had nearly always been pro-choice. So I think that was part of it where the passion came from because it was passion.

LOOMIS: -- Yeah, I think that—I've always thought that there's some connectedness with the anti-abortion movement generally.

CHRONISTER: Yeah.

LOOMIS: But in the legislature, it was fascinating—

CHRONISTER: It was very clear.

LOOMIS: And they'd sit in the chamber when you guys would caucus and stuff like that.

CHRONISTER: Mm-hm.

LOOMIS: You served with a variety of Speakers, and you had contact with Clyde Hill, one of the great Speakers—

CHRONISTER: Yes.

LOOMIS: —beforehand. What was your general relation- —I mean, it sounds like it was good— your general relationship with the speakers?

CHRONISTER: On the whole, good. The two speakers that I got along really well with were Mike Hayden and Jim Braden.

CHRONISTER: And then Wendell [Lady] never came down on me, frankly, like he sometimes did.

CHRONISTER: So even though he knew I voted against him because I'm not afraid to tell somebody—

CHRONISTER: So probably it was better than it might have been. [Laughs.] Because I was young and—

LOOMIS: Right. And by and large, Wendell Lady is a pretty good guy.

CHRONISTER: He is, yes.

LOOMIS: I look back on those speakers with maybe not awe but great respect. Tell me a little bit about your relationship with [Rep.] Mike Hayden. You've mentioned it a couple of times, but, you know, what does it mean to have someone who is Ways and Means Chair, Speaker and then Governor and to feel a real strong connection to him?

CHRONISTER: I think my connection to Mike was so strong because we had similar opinions on so many things.

CHRONISTER: We both had a rural background. We believed rural Kansas was going to be in trouble which has proven to be true over the years.

LOOMIS: Sure.

CHRONISTER: And Mike is a very honest person. What you see is what you get with Mike Hayden. He doesn't try and pull the wool over everybody's eyes. And the fact that he accepted me sitting on the back of his committee for four years.

CHRONISTER: And it was interesting because at that time, subcommittee meetings weren't necessarily open to the public, you know. And suddenly I asked to be allowed to go when decisions were being made in the subcommittee,—

LOOMIS: - Sure.

CHRONISTER: —and he told me yes, it was okay with him, but I had to get the permission of the subcommittee chair. And there was one in particular I was interested in. I don't even know why—I mean, what the issue was.

CHRONISTER: It wasn't the Education Committee, and I don't know why, but [Rep.] Keith Farrar from out west headed that subcommittee. Keith kind of looked like Santa Claus. Had [a] white beard.

CHRONISTER: And I went by and didn't know him real well, really, and asked him, and he kind of looked at me, and I said to him, "I've asked Mike, and he said if it was okay with you," and it

took him a minute, and he said, “Yeah, that’d probably be okay.” And I think about that in contrast to what it is—I mean, that we try to keep things much more open now. You know, it’s tough when you’re sitting there and you’re going to have to make a decision that is not going to be popular and the people are sitting right there, looking you in the eye, and they prefer to make it in the dark.

LOOMIS: Exactly. When you hang around here a lot—there are 125 House members, forty Senators— you’ll probably find 600 registered lobbyists.

CHRONISTER: Yeah. There wasn’t as many in my day.

LOOMIS: Actually, there probably—it’s been pretty steady over the years.

CHRONISTER: Has it?

LOOMIS: Yeah. I think they may be more prominent, and more people are up here more of the time.

CHRONISTER: That may be.

LOOMIS: But how did you relate to lobbyists, by and large?

CHRONISTER: You get one chance with me. If you ever lie to me, you’ll never go across my doorway again. But on the whole, my relationship was pretty good with lobbyists. You always have to remember they have an agenda, and, as I said, sometimes I’d ask both sides and then you get at least a fairly good idea of what the issue actually is.

CHRONISTER: Lobbyists—there’s been a lot of talk over the years about time limiting legislators, as to how long they can stay.

CHRONISTER: I’ve always opposed that, and it’s because if that happens and your legislators only have six years or eight years or whatever it is, then the lobbyists and your Research people become the people with the memory and who know what it is. They have more of an advantage, even. Now, Research has to—as far as we’re concerned, they have to go with bipartisan or nonpartisan, I should say.

CHRONISTER: But [chuckles] lobbyists don’t have to do that, so you’re putting—I think when that happens, there’s too much power that goes into nonelected people. So that’s the way I feel about it.

CHRONISTER: Had very few difficulties with the lobbyists. Did have a couple of lobbyists from the pharmacy company in Missouri, who came across to push for a bill, who made me so mad that I reported them.

LOOMIS: Oh, really!

CHRONISTER: But that's the only time in seventeen years that ever happened. I think they didn't know how Kansas operated.

LOOMIS: Right. And I've always known the political culture differences in Missouri and Kansas'

CHRONISTER: Yeah.

LOOMIS: —are overwhelming.

CHRONISTER: Yes. Yes. And I told the chief lobbyist for the whole pharmaceutical group about it and what happened, exactly what happened, and he said, "You'll never see him again." And I didn't. [Laughs.]

LOOMIS: How did working in the legislature lead to and prepare you for your work at SRS?

CHRONISTER: SRS had problems from the time I came to the legislature —probably before. I don't know how long. [Secretary Robert C.] "Bob" Harder had a different philosophy than most Republican legislators. He was a gatherer together of the power in that area.

CHRONISTER: And I thought it was too big, that you couldn't really manage it. Bob managed it, but he managed it in a different way. And we'd had Lord knows how many audits of SRS, and we were in trouble with lawsuits, and we had changed our philosophy on both mental health and developmental disabilities, so we had hospitals we didn't need. And over a period of years, I read those audits and I saw what was happening and the difficulties we were having over there, and I asked a lot of questions.

CHRONISTER: And we had some very good legislative researchers, who understood what it was. And part of their job, as far as I was concerned, was to suggest what was happening in other states and how changes could be made or what we might want to do.

CHRONISTER: And when Bill Graves and I talked about [joining his cabinet?], that was not something I ever intended to do. Matter of fact, my husband said to me, "Are you crazy?" He said, "Can you make a difference?" And I said, "If I couldn't make a difference, I wouldn't take the job." And I was lucky in that I was preparing myself the last year I was in session with information that Research knew—Laura Howard knew that I was going to go to SRS. She was about the only person who knew. And Laura is an excellent researcher, and I asked her to provide me with information of what was going on, what she saw the problems—because she worked at SRS by then I don't know how many years—

LOOMIS: Sure. Of course.

CHRONISTER: —what she saw the problems over there and if I went, what I might decide to do. One of the things that had been discussed over the years was privatization of some parts of SRS, and I saw that as a potential solution to some of the size and the difficulty, and also the fact they wouldn't work together. I have never seen a group of people that were so [cross-talk; unintelligible; 58:09].

LOOMIS: People within SRS?

CHRONISTER: Yeah. So much turf protection.

CHRONISTER: And that drove me crazy, frankly,—

CHRONISTER: —trying to break that down and get them to talk to the people in the other parts of the department and work together. And one of the ways to break it was privatize part of it, which is what I did.

LOOMIS: Yeah. Is the legislature capable of overseeing a bureaucracy like SRS or the current— DCF? Is that what—

CHRONISTER: The what?

LOOMIS: Is the current acronym DCF?

CHRONISTER: Oh, I don't even know. I can't remember.

LOOMIS: SRS seemed too easy. -

CHRONISTER: Yeah, -it did, because it was so long that we had it as that. If they're going to make major changes, the only way that you can force an agency that there are continuing problems with is probably to make it a major change. When I went there, the expectation was that I was sent there to cut programs.

And I wasn't. Bill Graves basically gave me—he said, "You can go in, and I will back you with what you decide to do." He always knew, and he knew what the problems were, and he knew what my proposed solutions were to that. But in order—if you really have a large agency with problems, the legislature probably has to say, "You will do thus and so in order to change the culture.

CHRONISTER: And that was the direction that I was going, was to change the culture and to bring what we had left—bring them together. And it wasn't fun. I said any day I wasn't on the front page of the Topeka paper was a good day.



LOOMIS: We haven't even mentioned journalists, and I still stay in contact with [Lewis LeRoy] "Lew" Ferguson. John Hanna was a former student of mine. I've known—ever since I wrote my book—I stayed in the press gallery. I became friends with many of them.

CHRONISTER: Yeah.

LOOMIS: How do you think the coverage of the legislature has changed over the years?

CHRONISTER: There's less of it.

CHRONISTER: The Topeka Cap-Journal [Topeka Capital-Journal] and Lawrence

Journal-World, to a lesser extent the Wichita paper. Now, Kansas Health Institute does some pretty good work [reporting]. And theirs are usually longer articles.

LOOMIS: Yes.

CHRONISTER: I think that those are—they've cut back so much on the coverage.

CHRONISTER: And most of the time—not all the time, but most of the time now, their people have shorter terms. There's not as much experience. Now, John Hanna, of course, there is. Dave Ranney, who actually ran the paper in Neodesha before he—

LOOMIS: Is that right? I didn't know that.

CHRONISTER: Yeah. So, I've known Dave forever. And, oh, there's half a dozen of those guys who were there for a long time.

CHRONISTER: Understood the problems and were willing to—although, you know, if there was a problem, they'd break it if they could.

CHRONISTER: But they were also willing to learn what was going on. And I think once we got past the "everything is secret until it's public" to a more transparent—although I don't like that word very well—but until we got to that stage, I think that there was a lot—maybe more controversy, adversarial relationship.

LOOMIS: With the press.

CHRONISTER: Yeah. Roger Myers was there a long time. He sometimes had problems with numbers, but—

LOOMIS: And the other thing that's interesting to me is—aside from Kansas Public Radio—I mean, television virtually ignores the state legislature.

CHRONISTER: - Yeah, I don't get anything in southeast Kansas.

LOOMIS: Nobody gets anything. I don't think even Topeka, unless there's, you know,—

CHRONISTER: A big issue.

LOOMIS: —a sexy issue or something.

CHRONISTER: Yeah. And people—to be honest, they don't read newspapers anymore.

CHRONISTER: Very few. We've tried to help education people through Reroute the Roadmap the last couple of years with the six women who run that.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

CHRONISTER: Because I think the only way we can get to them is through the Internet.

LOOMIS: Sure.

CHRONISTER: You know, that if you spoon feed them the information, they might read it. If it comes up on Facebook—and some of our people that we have on Reroute will copy articles that they think—that they happen to think that we send are good ones and put it on Facebook. And a lot of the people—we've got around 2,000, a few more, who are—direct Reroute. But we know that it probably goes to five to ten thousand because there are so many people who sent the articles on. They just don't want us to—maybe they don't want to have those e-mails or—I don't know that. But they'd prefer—and that's fine. We don't care.

LOOMIS: Talk a little bit about the legislature today as you look on it from—you know, now you've been gone for twenty years.

LOOMIS: Earlier, you said you don't come up here very much. What is your take, as a former legislator, on the current legislature?

CHRONISTER: It's not a very nice place. That was happening at the end of the time although it may be more congenial now than—that is has a majority of Tea Partyers. You have to learn how to legislate in a positive manner. And some of them are doing that. But on the whole, I don't agree with a lot of the issues.

CHRONISTER: And so I can read articles from the Topeka paper and the Lawrence paper and KHI and distribute that information and knowing who probably are the best reporters to send on their information, a lot of times with a little comment.

CHRONISTER: But never very long. So I think it is—you know, it's kind of like, to a lesser degree, Congress is right now.

LOOMIS: Oh! I'm not sure it's a lesser—but certainly both of them have their moments.

CHRONISTER: Lesser only in that the President is a Democrat.

CHRONISTER: Here, you've got all branches of government, except the judiciary, and heaven help the judiciary, who are in agreement, basically, on things that I find—I mean, it brought me back into politics, which I had no interest in doing when they passed the tax cuts that I knew were going to mean that the budget was unbalanced and that things I cared about were going to get hurt: education, kids.

CHRONISTER: This drives me crazy, what's happening there, with the poverty level going up. So, I prefer, most of the time, to stay away. This is the first time since April of '13, I think since I've been here. And I came in then to castigate the governor.

LOOMIS: -A couple of things to clean up here before we get kicked out of this room.

CHRONISTER: Yeah.

LOOMIS: When you were a legislator, you'd come up for the week and then go home?

CHRONISTER: Mm-hm.

LOOMIS: So what were your living arrangements like in Topeka?

CHRONISTER: The first year I was here, I just took a room at the Ramada. There was snow on the ground when I came. There was snow on the ground when I left.

CHRONISTER: It was one of the worst winters. And I thought, I think I'm gonna stay, and so I got an apartment at the Ramada, and I stayed there after—because I never had to shovel snow. [Chuckles.] And at that time, at least in the earlier days, most of the time the receptions in the evening—a lot of them would be at the Ramada.

CHRONISTER: I could come, get rid of my coat, run to the reception, see if there was anybody from my district there, pick up my name tag, and I could make three receptions in a night pretty well and take care of that.

CHRONISTER: And so I had an apartment for sixteen years,—

LOOMIS: Is that right?

CHRONISTER: —in the back. Yeah, they were small, but they were fine. You know, one bedroom and a pull-out couch that sometimes some of my friends from Neodesha would come up and sleep on the couch.

CHRONISTER: Yeah. But it worked well for me because I never had to worry about getting out of the parking lot, and I didn't have to worry after I'd been to three receptions that it was nine, ten o'clock at night and I was wandering around.

CHRONISTER: So, yeah, that always worked well for me. But when I went to SRS, I didn't take an apartment. I was here year - round, except for weekends. I used to swear I was going to go home at four o'clock on Friday afternoon. Always a problem came up at 3:39 or something like that.

LOOMIS: -How did you know that it was time to leave?

CHRONISTER: Well, the new Speaker took over, but I decided before that that I wasn't going to stay any longer. And [Rep.] Tim [Shallenburger] was relatively good to me, the Speaker, because he made me chair of the Education Committee.

LOOMIS: And this is Tim Shallenburger.

CHRONISTER: I was tired of fighting it, you know, and things were changing. And that's always hard.

CHRONISTER: So the fact that, as I said, that it became a place that was no longer gregarious and it became limited—I talked to [Robert J.] "Bob" Dole the other day. He called—something entirely different. But I said to him, "We've lost the big tent" that he was the advocate for.

CHRONISTER: Because people didn't really want to get along. And that's not me. If I can get along with you, I'm going to do my best to. Now, that doesn't mean I'll agree with you —or you'll agree with me but—matter of fact, Kathleen [Sebelius] and I went around quite a bit over the years, but ultimately, when she wanted somebody to run the Education Commission, she asked me to. And I did that for five years. So there was still a respect there in spite of the fact that that you and I might not agree on things. And I didn't see that anymore.

LOOMIS: Right. There's both substance and process.

LOOMIS: And both substance and process start anew, it seems to me, in a direction—

CHRONISTER: In a direction that we didn't like, that I didn't like.

LOOMIS: Is there anything that I've m- —what about—how did you and your family—obviously, at some point the kids were in college—

CHRONISTER: Mm-hm.

LOOMIS: But how did that all work out for you?

CHRONISTER: My son got a kick out of it. He was younger, but he got a kick out of it. He liked doing the parades with me and stuff like that.

CHRONISTER: And he's always been my Renaissance kid that was interested in nearly everything. My daughter didn't feel that way about it. [Chuckles.] She really—I don't think she resented it, but she was not the least bit interested in politics in any way, shape or form. But once they both got to KU [chuckles] and they were just a few miles away from me, I'd go over and take them to dinner or when the really good receptions were going on—

CHRONISTER: One that [Rep. Duane S.] "Pete" McGill put on for the bankers or something like that, I'd call them to say, "Well, come over and go to a reception with me that's going to have good hors d'oeuvres and—

CHRONISTER: And they both enjoyed that. [Chuckles.] So on the whole, I think it was good, in some ways, for my family.

LOOMIS: Well, good. There are clearly costs for that.

CHRONISTER: Yes, there are. When my son was playing basketball, if he was playing at home or north, I'd go. I might get him back at midnight or something.

CHRONISTER: Wouldn't go south. That was just too much longer.

CHRONISTER: And when my daughter—they had what was a senior mother-daughter tea toward the end of the year, the year she was a senior, I flew home. Missed a bunch of votes, but I flew home. She thought that was so cool, that her mother rented a plane to go to her tea.

CHRONISTER: So that was—I tried to work at it to be there, and I had done all kinds of things. I had been a Girl Scout leader and a Boy Scout—Cub Scout and then with Boy Scouts, I taught their government or whatever the badge was you know, trying to do things to help make up—but there were things that I missed.

LOOMIS: Of course.

CHRONISTER: And I recognized that. But on the whole, it worked all right.

LOOMIS: Yeah. And I do think that even sixth grade, starting out [unintelligible; 73:32] positive, that young kids—I just find it amazing that some people can [cross-talk; unintelligible; 73:39].

CHRONISTER: -. They both liked to come up, although my son enjoyed it more, and paged for me.

CHRONISTER: I laughed the first time he was a page. He was probably only an eighth grader, something like that. And he came up on the day that I checked in, and he was helping carry the law books up and down the stairs and such. It was a good thing to get him to do. And he was gone for a long time. I was in the chamber. And I thought, "What's happened to that kid?" He came in just grinning, which was not unusual. I said, "What happened?" He said, "I couldn't figure out which way to go once I got to this floor," he said, "but I looked over, and the American flag is on this side." [Laughs.] So that was his first experience.

LOOMIS: Well, Rochelle, thank you so much. It really has flown by.

CHRONISTER: I've enjoyed it.

LOOMIS: And I've learned a lot, and I really appreciate it.

CHRONISTER: And if you smile, you keep them guessing.

LOOMIS: -There could be more of that these days, without any doubt.

[End of interview.]