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Bob Brown: This is Bob Brown. This is September 29, 2009, and I’m interviewing longtime legislator and political activist Dorothy Bradley here at the Mansfield Center in Missoula. Dorothy, how or why did you first become interested in public service?

Dorothy Bradley: Politics in general wasn’t anything I was involved in, and as I grew up I wasn’t generally sort of a student council member or anything like that. I thought right after I got out of college that I first was spending a year in Germany. And then I was called home because my mother was ill and actually dying with cancer, and I went straight to the University Hospital in Wisconsin. That’s important because I met a longtime friend of my father’s: Estella Leopold, who was the wife of Aldo Leopold. We brought my mother home eventually and she died. I decided to stay with my father for a year while he got back on his feet.

BB: Now Dorothy, home is Bozeman.

DB: Home is Bozeman. While I was there, I started figuring out what I was going to do in graduate school. I was still kind of floundering around, thinking, “What next?” And you know academia always has its call. Just as I got a fellowship from the University of Wisconsin—because I’d quite fallen in love with that campus—I got involved in some wild environmental activities, which culminated—we started the Bozeman Environmental Task Force—and it culminated in Earth Day in 1970. The first Earth Day, driven nationwide by Gaylord Nelson. Right at the end of that event, I was suddenly feeling my sense of urgency about environmental issues and feeling my roots and sort of my calling. Actually my family had been involved in conservation matters. As I watch the Natural Parks Program by Ken Burns, I’m reminded that my grandfather, long-gone in Berkeley, was involved with the founding of the Sierra Club. And then there was that meeting with Estella Leopold and reading my mother the Sand County Almanac at her bedside in the hospital. That culminated into this final, amazing last-minute decision that I would drop the fellowship and run for the legislature. It was the event of Earth Day that definitely triggered it, and my feeling that these were urgent matters.

It was also some interesting friends like Dorothy Eck, my near neighbor, who was always working to get young people involved, both Bob Brown and me I might say, both parties. And a wild and crazy but marvelous political spokesman from Great Falls in the state Senate named Harry Mitchell, who had made this rather infamous comment to me that night at the closure of Earth Day, saying, “Well, what do you have to lose? You’re the wrong age, the wrong sex, and wrong party.” Which was pretty much what it was all about in Bozeman. So I dropped the fellowship, and thought, “I’ll run a campaign, and of course, I won’t win. But it’d be an interesting time to voice these concerns.”
I think the concerns were, although I didn’t know the word at that point, about sustainability. That was certainly the driving force in my soul, and those were the issues that were capturing my imagination. I should say that right at that time, we were suddenly the focal point of huge coal development and energy development in eastern Montana. That was startling all Montanans. Even a few were in the west part of the state which I was in, which amounted to vast, new kinds of strip mines and uses of water and transmission lines and perhaps coal slurry. And we were all thinking about those issues, and they were the ones that grabbed me.

BB: So you ran for the legislature, as a Democrat in traditionally Republican Bozeman in 1970. And you’d been away to Colorado, I believe, hadn’t you?

DB: I was in Colorado College at Colorado Springs.

BB: For four years preceding, so you really, you just kind of got back to Bozeman, and you hadn’t been back there very long, and you ran for the legislature.

DB: That’s true. And it was odd just as Harry said it was, as far as my age. The legislature at that time was mostly retirees. It was mostly—

BB: You were what, 23, 24?

DB: I was 23. It was mostly founding fathers in Bozeman, businessman, mostly Republican. It was a multiple-member district—it was before the Constitutional Convention that changed us to single-member districts—so all I had to do was run countywide and come out of the top of four elected positions.

BB: You had to run at least fourth out of eight.

DB: Correct.

BB: And so you’re somewhat unique, as Harry Mitchell described you, which might have worked to your advantage actually. But—

DB: Sometimes an oddity is okay if you just don’t cross the line.

BB: But you would have been uniquely memorable. Because I ran the first time too, and I wasn’t a woman, but I was distinctly the youngest guy up in the Flathead County—Flathead County when I first ran for the legislature in the same year you did, in 1970. I think it helped me a little bit because there was some uniqueness about me that was maybe, might have helped me. Where I might not have been the first choice of very many voters but I could have been the fourth or fifth choice of quite a few who thought, “What the heck, we’ll give the kid a chance.” And the same might have been the case in your case.
DB: Very much, it was. And I made my mark. As I say, I was a pretty freewheeling agent because I never predicted myself to win. So I just was sort of letting it all hang out. For example, this first campaign, we came up—we were a wonderful band of restless people—with a little litterbag that would hang in your car and one side it said, “Dorothy is for the birds.” That was one of the best things I ever did, and it was a very good lesson early on that if you can make people smile, you’re one big step ahead. They thought that was really funny. It said, “Dorothy is for the birds,” and then it said, “For the bears, and the elk, and for the people of Montana.” And they really liked that I was humorous. And on the backside, amazingly, it had a list of all these things that you should do to help the environment like ride your bicycle, and turn off the lights, and carpool, and then amazingly enough I said, “Have only three natural children.” Course I thought I was being very generous because I really thought it should be two. I was raised on the book *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich, and I was really concerned about the numbers of people populating the planet. Still am. His forecast was absolutely true.

I look at these things and even now—you know this is 30 years ago, this is more than 30—this is amazing that we had all these ideas then and they’re just as legitimate today as they were then. However, I campaigned all over the county. I decided my only hope was to have people meet me because I could tell they liked me okay. They would trust me, and while they might not agree with me on everything, they might throw me a vote. But when you’re advocating only three natural children out in the Dutch district of Amsterdam and Churchill, it really isn’t a very popular thing. I had very few votes out there, and that was a learning lesson too, to try to know your people when you’re campaigning in that area.

BB: You remember anything unusual about when you filed?

DB: I remember at the Secretary of State’s desk she said, “Are you old enough, honey?” (Laughs)

BB: Well, don’t you recollect you and I filed at the same time?

DB: Did we?

BB: Yes. And we did that, I think, on the advice of somebody, Dorothy Eck or Linda Skaar or somebody like that that we’d be able to get more publicity, each one of us, if we were these two young people who filed in different political parties at the same time.

DB: Yes, we both were getting our share of it, I’ll say that. I think your district might have been a little more amenable to you than mine was to me. But you know, my family was well-known and my parents were liked and that carried me a ways, at least. I was a known quantity because I’d been there all my life.

BB: Now you’re dad was a professor of geology?
DB: Professor of geology and then Dean of Letters and Science.

BB: Okay, there at Montana State University in Bozeman.

DB: But I do remember distinctly that my mom, who was a very Episcopalian, I knew a lot of friends in that church and they were fairly conservative and mostly Republican. Now by this time, my mother had died. But I know these people looked really askance at me. And that was also a lesson in and of itself. It was also following a period where the John Birch Society had been very active in the late ‘60s, where Rolland Renne had run and been very mischaracterized in the campaign.

BB: Now he had been the president of MSU in Bozeman, MSC, that became MSU, and he ran as a Democrat for governor in 1964 and was defeated.

DB: And they thought his ideas were rabid radical. And anybody who reads his textbook on economics today is put to sleep. I mean it is the dullest thing in the world. So this was all a great awakening to my dad, who’s watching this all happen with me in a community that had just sort of come out of this interesting slump. And another thing of concern to him, of course, had been that [Donald] Nutter, he felt—my dad was really quite Republican as was my mother, a New Yorker—he felt that Nutter had been anti-university.

BB: Nutter was the governor who preceded, not directly, but he was a Republican governor first elected in 1960 and killed in a plane crash in ’62.

DB: Yes, I think he beat Roland Renne, didn’t he?

BB: Nope, he beat a guy named Paul Cannon. But Babcock beat Roland Renne in ’64.

DB: Oh that’s right, there we have it.

BB: Go ahead.

DB: Okay well that’s it.

BB: (laughs) All right, but your dad was put off by the way Renne was treated by the John Birch Society element there in Bozeman when he ran for governor in 1964.

DB: Absolutely.

BB: And you remember that?

DB: I remember that, and then I went through Colorado College, which is [in] the Vietnam War era. And I remember us really focusing in on Bobby Kennedy, on Martin Luther King, on the
war, on McGovern, I mean, McCarthy—all of these things that were going on, which made it really quite easy for me, in spite of my parents being Republican, for me to be a Democrat.

BB: But I think they were certainly, obviously, supportive of you.

DB: My dad was very supportive of me, and [it] wasn’t long after he retired I felt as though he became way more radical and liberal than I was (laughs).

BB: (Laughs) So you’re elected. And I think what, I don’t know, my guess is probably close political observers wouldn’t have felt it was an upset if they’d followed the campaign closely. But certainly it was unique. I mean, because of Harry Mitchell’s description, you’re a very, very unique and unusual person to join the Bozeman Legislative Delegation. You were the only Democrat?

DB: I was.

BB: And you were the only—

DB: With very conservative city fathers, and I love them all, and they were very kind to me, and we all got along very well—people like Monty Lockwood, Bob Ellerd, Bob Dye. You know car dealers, banks, auctions—conservative, really respected Bozeman city fathers.

BB: And you were the only woman in the House of Representatives. Of the 100-member House of Representatives in Montana in the 1971 Legislative session, you were the only woman.

DB: Which was quite hilarious. There was, however, a wonderful woman, Republican, in the Senate, Toni Rosell, who was a great mentor and to this day is a great friend. A very, very fine lady who taught me good lessons, both in advice she offered that I took and sometimes didn’t take.

BB: Just as a real broad general question, what were your early impressions of the legislature? You’re arriving there, this unique individual.

DB: Well, I was quite terrified. I’d barely walked into the Capitol before this time. People were amused by my presence, and that was to my benefit because I was such a, you know. I can be very critical of myself now about how little I knew, how little I even knew how to study issues. I’m so much better at that now. I didn’t know how to do that. But unfailingly polite, not ever trying to embarrass me, but trying to make me [feel] at home. They gave me the committees I wanted to be on. ‘Course I barely knew what committees I wanted to be on. They treated me so thoughtfully and when I was floundering, both parties always gave me help.

It was not a place that was used to women. All those little bonuses you get in the mail, I still remember laughing over some of them—it was for a free shave and an opportunity to try on

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toupees. I mean, clearly this place was not tuned in to women. And course the funniest jokes of all, and truly it was all in good humor, kind of surrounded the fact for a while that there was quite a famous madam—and she still lived about the time I ran—named Dorothy Baker who was referred to as Big Dorothy in Helena, who ran a place on the [Last Chance Gulch] gulch and was even listed in the directory. I once looked it up and there it was: Dorothy’s Rooms. And it led to many raucous jokes. For example, the very first time I timidly tried to chair the Committee of the Whole, and everybody was making a big deal about what to call me, and they were joking about Ms. Madam Chairwoman, Man Person. And finally a wonderful legislator from Great Falls, Gorham Swanberg, stood up and said he’d just polled the Rules Committee and they’d all agreed to call me Madam Dorothy. And you know, all of it was in such good fun, and I was lucky that there were some things like that that were such good ice breakers.

I do want to say one thing about Toni Rosell, who would spend time and come over and check with me. Interestingly we were the only two women in the restroom. There wasn’t much of a restroom there, but we would meet there from time to time. There were not even really women lobbyists to speak of. There were the League of Women lobbyists: Dorothy Eck and Daphne Bugbee. And there were the Tawneys, Robin and Phil Tawney with the Wildlife Federation. This was not a place of citizen lobbyists. It was a place of lawyer, corporate lobbyists.

And then of course the issue of abortion cropped up. And this defined me to a certain extent, although I don’t feel like it’s something I really want to be defined by. But it just was an issue that gets hung on your head, sort of like Jeannette Rankin got hung with the issue of war when she did so many thousands of other good things. Nobody would introduce, this was pre-1973, yes ’73 pre-Roe vs. Wade; nobody would introduce the bill that year to legalize, to define and legalize abortion within certain limits. Nobody would introduce it, including all of these men who believed that it was the right thing to do. And so somebody handed me the bill, and I was quite terrified of it because I really believed in it. The medium compromise I found, which I don’t particularly feel happy about today because I think it was a little too timid—Toni Rosell advised me not to do it, and she said, “You know you have an opportunity to make your mark and come back and your presence here may be more important than one bill.” Those are, of course, the things that all politicians have to figure out, but it suddenly occurred to me that if no one else was going to do it, then of course I had to. So I wasn’t going to take her advice, and I did put it in. But I put it in by request. I’m the first to say that that’s a cowardly thing to do because it wasn’t saying that I did it, it was just saying that by request of others. However, we did have extraordinary fireworks over it, just unbelievable, which seem to have tagged people to this day. Of all the issues that persist, that strikes me as the oddest. But we did have this absolutely great hearing, and it was one of my best lessons that sometimes you make progress not by passing or killing a bill, but just by educating, by discussing, by elevating the debate and making it good and articulate. And it was the right thing to do, although I wish I had done it better.

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BB: Well, certainly it was an act of incredible courage. Now the bill failed to pass, isn’t that correct?

DB: Oh, it was so—it almost couldn’t get a hearing people were so upset about it. And to this day I can tell you the five people—there were four besides myself—that helped bring it forward to have a hearing. And we had a hearing in the court chambers at night, and it was civil but it was very crowded and those balconies were overflowing with people. But no, of course there was not even a prayer of its passing. It did pretty much what Roe vs. Wade did, probably not as carefully and thoughtfully, but it left a great deal of the decision making to doctors. But I wonder to this day what would have happened without Roe vs. Wade.

BB: Do you remember the names of the five legislators that were instrumental in helping you get the hearing?

DB: I can give it a try. I believe it was Jack Gunderson, Francis Bardanouve, Pete Jackson and Art Shelden. Always people I have been amazingly—great feelings of reverence to the fact that they would do that when there were so many others who should have (laughs).

BB: Was abortion legal in other states?

DB: No. I don’t think it was legal anywhere.

BB: Anywhere in the country?

DB: No. I don’t think it ever moved until Roe vs. Wade.

BB: I see. So there might have been legislation such as yours introduced in other states, but—

DB: Correct. I expect it was circulated far and wide, but I don’t think anybody had passed it.

BB: Well, certainly that’s a memorable piece of legislation, and I just might ask you because I identify you with the coal moratorium.

DB: Oh, yes.

BB: And that was another, I don’t remember if that was in ’71 or it might have been in ’73. I think it was in the ’73 session.

DB: I think you’re correct. I think it was ’73. No, it was not ’74. What happened at that point was when the North Central Power Study came out and talked about this massive development that was planned for eastern Montana: without eastern Montana’s say-so, without any planning, with just a massive kind of development in mind. And in some of the language, they
actually referred to the Great Plains there, the Northern Plains, as a national sacrifice area. That really riveted everybody.

Now a funny little precedent to that story about the moratorium is that after both J.D. Lynch and I ran and lost for Congress in 1978, we once were having a drink in Butte. I was working there after I lost that race. I worked there for a few years. And we had this conversation about what we felt was the most important thing we’d ever done. And I said it was the moratorium because while it hung over the legislature as a tabled bill ready to be pulled back, we passed all that extraordinary legislation that set the stage, I mean, that really said what we’re all about in the ‘70s. And I said to J.D., “What was yours?” He said it was—and by my perspective it was quite unethical—but it was getting the library for Butte Tech, which was done with all kinds of shenanigans, the kind of shenanigans that Butte just loves. They think it’s all right. And I love J.D., but I thought that just says the world between what kind of people we are. I thought my best bill was something that failed and he thought his was something materialistic he brought home for his community. And that says it all about the legislature; we’re all so different. We think different things are important.

BB: Just to make sure here, now in the early 1970s there was an effort to develop coal on a massive scale in the Northern Plains region, especially in Montana. And this study comes out declaring us a national wasteland and that sort of thing. So you stepped forward with a proposal to declare a moratorium on coal development, I think, pending studies or something or another. But at least that you better—you didn’t want us to rush into it.

DB: We had a two-year moratorium. That was all. It was two years pending studies and information and the ability to study and put together appropriate legislation that dealt with reclamation, that dealt with the fact that the coal is the aquifer and that would protect people’s water source, that dealt with transmission lines, coal slurry, major facility siting. Yes, all of those things.

BB: So what happened was, I believe, your bill got to the floor. It must have been referred favorably from the Natural Resources Committee.

DB: That in itself is a great story. It was suddenly just quickly scheduled for a week morning, and a weekday morning. And judiciary, they’d sent it to judiciary. And I went to John Hall, another person for whom—

BB: State representative from Great Falls.

DB: Great Falls lawyer, single man, unusual man, just bright as the day is long.

BB: And he was the minority leader at that time or perhaps had been. Anyway, he was a prominent Democratic state legislator.
DB: He was very prominent and very smart, and he chaired judiciary. I think other leadership might have been Larry Fasbender, Bill Christiansen; I can’t remember. I whined to him that he had given no-fault insurance a great big hearing and had its day in court on a Saturday and that this was an equally important issue. And bless his heart, he said, “Okay, I’ll give you a Saturday morning.” I couldn’t believe it. But we had a phenomenal hearing on a Saturday morning, and the eastern Montana ranchers did have a chance to have their say and voice their concerns. And the committee, the judiciary committee, couldn’t deal with the bill, so they brought it out with no recommendation, a kind of unusual move. They brought it out for a floor debate with no recommendation to do- or do-not pass. It produced I think, without question, the best hearing, the best debate on the floor I’ve ever heard. I only wish it was recorded. I frankly had almost, I mean I had little or no role in it. I was the vehicle that got it there.

And what you heard, I felt, was this extraordinary debate where people reached beyond the details of a two-year sequence in the state of thinking: what’s going to happen in two years, and how do we balance the budget, and what do we do with workers’ comp? And they actually looked ten and twenty years into the future. What is it that we’re doing because we all know that it has implications way into the future. What kind of a place do we want to be, what do we envision? And it still brings tears to my eyes to remember the debate and the way that various people expressed their sentiments. At one point it was all just as quiet as, just as quiet as a funeral home. It started to get really serious when Speaker Jim Lucas got up and he talked about the problems of eastern Montana—which I have come to so appreciate having spent some time there—and how all the attention goes to western Montana and the tourism and the mountains and the lakes and the water and the education and the opportunities, and that eastern Montana struggles and is still losing their children. And this was their hope for the future. It was one of his most beautiful debates, and he was just as masterful at debating as you could be.

BB: Energy and coal development he felt was a—

DB: Crucial. It was their future to try to build something so that they could have something that western Montana already had. And he didn’t frankly think it was our right to try to block it, us in the west. And then you had these series of people that tried to tone down his extraordinary—they tried to bring the people back home to vote for the moratorium. And I remember Bob Watt from Missoula, one of my favorite of all legislators, saying, he gave this talk about, “Why is it people like me that are talking here? I’m an older person. It should be you younger people that are thinking about the future of this state. It’s for your children. I’m almost gone.” But when they—it was a beautiful statement, and there were several others that were pretty extraordinary.

Then of all things John Hall got up. Nobody expected him to do a speech, most of all me. And he gave this incredible—it was clearly on the spot; he had not prepared in advance. It was not theatric. He said that we have this. What’s offered here is nothing more than this little piece of time. It’s like a piece of magic where we actually get to work on these things and do it the way

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you want. And that’s all it is, is it’s just the magic of time to lay down some rules, this coming upon us so quickly that we have a right to ask for [a moratorium].

It was extraordinary, and the vote was a tie. And everybody almost fell over because they expected this to go nowhere. One of the tie votes was my dear friend from Bozeman, Wallace Forsgren. He had been my, the principal of my primary school, the Longfellow School, and he liked the bill. Well, you can believe it, by morning he’d been beat upon to a pulp and he got up to change his vote so that the bill was killed. And then I believe it was Tom Towe said that we would table it. That meaning, it wasn’t dead, but that we would keep it alive until the end of the session.

BB: Why do I remember that it hung up there on the second reading board for two weeks or something?

DB: It did. But I don’t know what the—

BB: Remember how—

DB: I don’t know how you do that.

BB: What I remember, a couple of things: I was there too and I remember listening to the speeches, and I remember one of the things that Hall said with eloquent emphasis was, “Act in haste, repent at leisure.”

DB: (laughs)

BB: Remember that?

DB: Absolutely.

BB: Then I remember too that Representative Forsgren had some conditions for changing his vote. And frankly, Dorothy, it might have been that rather than vote to indefinitely postpone the bill, what he may have done is voted to pass it for the day or something because I thought I remembered it stayed on the second reading board for quite a while. And what he had done is, I remember, he said, “Okay you guys, I’ll agree not to vote to pass the bill if you’ll get serious about some other legislation.” And that’s what you said earlier in our interview that that bill was so important, not because it stopped coal from being mined but because it established the extremely important conditions under which coal could be mined.

DB: And then everybody got very serious and down-to-business about major facility siting—which was Francis Bardanouve’s—and strip mine reclamation, which was Dick Colberg’s, and all those other things.
BB: And it was the Damoclean Sword that was hanging up there that would drop on those guys if they didn’t get serious about some of the other legislation.

DB: Exactly.

BB: Can you remember—you just started to recite them—but just for the record here, there was a—

DB: Reclamation, facility siting, water use. I think those were the biggest three.

BB: Yes. When they were all safely through the process—

DB: And everybody was satisfied.

BB: Then your bill was allowed to die.

DB: That’s right.

BB: Well that’s an incredible accomplishment. There’s no question about that.

DB: Well, it’s an interesting story about a process and how you learn as you go.

BB: Yes. Any other piece of legislation that stands out in your memory? Those are two certainly very significant ones.

DB: You know, in my legislative career, I did eight years, starting in 1971. Then I was out six years, having lost that race to Congressman Williams. And then I had another eight years, and it was a totally different eight years.

BB: Let’s focus on the first eight years for now.

DB: Okay, well the first eight I had a fabulous Natural Areas Act. My then-husband Rick Applegate wrote it. It would have been as great for this state as national parks, of course on a tiny, miniature scale. It wasn’t a wilderness bill; it was a science bill to try to protect areas with unique features. And that was an interesting experience. Governor Schwinden, as much as I respected him as commissioner of state lands and a rancher-farmer, really hated it. And eventually it ended up in la-la land because it was interpreted by his lawyers and subsequently the attorney general that you had to—while this was supposed to be state land—it was interpreted that you had to buy it from the school trust in order to create a natural area. And the fact that such money was involved was going to render it pretty useless. That was a too bad demise of a very good idea, although I keep thinking somebody with some leadership one of these days is going to pull that thing out of the ashes. It’s still there and there are a few pieces,
there’re a few natural areas that are designated that are state land that I think that are worthy. It was a good idea. Did you want to talk about that second eight years because in my shift—

BB: Yes, do please now, if you’re ready.

DB: Okay. And we covered choice. Oh no, there’s one other thing in that early period of course that you were so involved in that we should not skip over. This deals with how that era will be remembered. Well, we got to implement the new constitution. And that was one of the most exciting and challenging and innovative things of my career for sure. And also gave me another set of heroes who were so good at it and so thoughtful and so quietly brilliant and studious. The legislators, of course, couldn’t run for the Con-Con [Constitutional Convention], which I thought was a fabulous blessing. We didn’t think it could happen without us, but it did. But then we got to implement it, and there were several there—huge pockets of things that were very interesting, like local government reform.

And the one I was most involved in, sort of as a side role there, was the equality of sexes. We had an equality of sexes study that was chaired by Dan Yardley of Livingston, one of these quiet, studious types. He’s one of those people who gave me a model to look at as far as figuring out how I want to be as a political person. He was very interested in doing the right thing. You think about how, after all that was done, and over in Montana, that eruption that occurred over the Equal Rights Amendment, we somehow avoided all that. And I still—he died a year or so ago—but I still give him huge credit, and every time I’d see him I’d say, “Dan, you made that serious and thoughtful. It didn’t get hysterical until it was all done, and you staved off the hysteria in Montana.” And I really believe that. It was a phenomenal package of legislation. I mean, we even made patrons of prostitutes pay the same penalties that prostitutes do. We made sure that—well this one is the one I carried and I kept getting tramped for it—but barbers could always, barbers could cut women’s hair. And we were trying to say that beauticians could cut men’s hair, and that was the most controversial of the whole group. But it really changed the whole system in Montana of divorce, custody, the division of property. And that led to some family leave, to some—

BB: Unisex insurance?

DB: Unisex insurance, to shared work, you know job sharing, to just a whole variety of things. Fair credit and, you know, we quietly handled that in the state. It was so well-handled.

BB: Because the equal rights provision that was later proposed as an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, or maybe it even was during that same time, was a focal point of enormous controversy. But what you’re saying is we had essentially the same provision in the state constitution, which was implemented by statute in various ways. Well you and I both served in the legislature, and it wasn’t tremendously controversial.
DB: It wasn’t. People were much more interested and involved in the detail and not in the frenzy of the meaning of it all.

BB: Or attacking the fundamental concept. I don’t guess I remember, there may have been legislators who just felt, “Look this whole idea of equality of the sexes is plain wrong.”

DB: Well, what the Constitution says, and you can correct me here, is it sort of buries (?) sexual discrimination into a whole array of things. It says there will not be any discrimination based on gender, religion, race, etc. I think it even might have said something about marital status, I can’t remember. But at least the language led to that. One of the first people to thank me was a single man I knew in his 40s who said he used to have a terrible time getting a loan, “Because I’m not married.” And then the rights were broadened to include everybody, so we were studying how to eliminate existing laws that carried a sexual bias in them. We were dealing with a whole array of things. But the study was only brought about because what was already in the Constitution that had been adopted. And, you know, it hadn’t been a matter of heated controversy when the Constitution was being debated because there were so many other things that were, like water.

BB: So you ran in the Democratic primary for the U.S. House of Representatives, I think in ’78.

DB: Didn’t you?

BB: Yes, and Pat Williams prevailed in the Democratic primary that year.

DB: Right, I came second in the state to two probably of our strongest male leaders, Pat Williams and Marc Racicot.

BB: Well, I didn’t come out as high on the totem pole on the Republican side. I think Jim Waltermire was the Republican nominee in 1978 and he went on to lose to Pat in the general election.

DB: Right.

BB: So you were out of the legislature for six years. What did you do during that period of time?

DB: I worked in Butte for the National Center for Appropriate Technology, and then I went to Washington D.C. to law school at American. My husband, Rick Applegate, was in D.C. at that point working for various people.

BB: And weren’t you the Democratic National Committeewoman for part of that time?
DB: I was. Not my favorite office. I’m not a good party person. I went to the meetings, and I tried to do my best. But there were several party things I’ve done in my life that I did it very briefly and really did not enjoy that role. I’m not a big party cheerleader.

BB: But you were back in Washington, D.C., where maybe you could participate.

DB: That’s what I was trying to do. And it was interesting, and it was good to be there.

BB: So you came back into the legislature in the election of ’84?

DB: Correct.

BB: Is there a story?

DB: Well, I knew I wanted to get back if I could, and I was just very lucky. I was working for a judge then as a law clerk. And who was the great physicist that held that seat of mine for six years—my district could go back and forth and back and forth, and everybody knew it—Ken Nordtvedt.

BB: Yes, he was a Republican, a professor of physics at Montana State University, was in the legislature from what, ’78 to ’84?

DB: Correct: extremely bright, very intolerant, very outspoken, almost mean-spirited, just not putting up with fools. And he felt he was the biggest, I mean, he really felt very strongly about his opinions, and he was very difficult to be around. But yes, he decided—and then he was Governor Stephens’ head of Department of Revenue, which was very interesting. He just got restless, you know. If you have somebody who’s an impatient sort—plenty bright as he was, he was not patient—and people will get tired of the legislative process because you have to go into it with a great deal of affection and interest in patience, to detail. And he didn’t have that.

BB: So he dropped out in ’83?

DB: He dropped out, and I didn’t have to run against an incumbent, and I got my seat back.

BB: Okay, same one you had represented before?

DB: Well, it had been slightly re-districted, but it was a piece of Bozeman. Course, the first two times I ran both countywide and Gallatin and Park [counties] at one point because we were multiple-member districts. Thereafter, I always ran in a piece of Bozeman. Now an interesting thing for, particularly for political philosophers like you, is that I always felt that Bozeman and the Gallatin did a shift in this period. This is only my own philosophy, but when I started, Bozeman, the heart of Bozeman, was quite Republican. It was the old-fashioned calm Republican. And the county was a little bit more Democratic because you had some kind of
conservative farmers’ union Democrats there like Paul Boylan and Virgil Hanks and eventually Leo Lane, people like that. Then when I was doing my re-entry, it seemed like there had been this quite amazing shift and suddenly Bozeman is the only Democratic—other than Three Forks is still a little bit Democratic because of the old railroad days—but suddenly the county is becoming much more conservative, and Bozeman is becoming much more liberal. It’s been one of the most interesting shifts I’ve seen in that county, and I think it’s quite enhanced to this day. If you want to be a really adamant liberal Democrat, you’ve got to get in that city district.

BB: Exactly that same thing occurred in Flathead County where the Democrats for the most part were out in the rural parts of Flathead County when I was starting out in politics. And Kalispell was a rock red Republican town. Now Kalispell is not really a Democratic town, but it’s had at least one Democratic state legislator from there for most of the last, I suppose, ten of fifteen years. And the parts of the county that used to be the most solidly Democratic, especially up in the Columbia Falls area, those are redneck Republican and conservative areas now.

DB: I’ve had this feeling in my own assessment of it, and I could well be wrong, but I thought it’s been what I’ve called an unholy alliance. I felt that it was an alliance of three entities: The old-fashioned Republicans that I knew well and grew up with. It was then the quite adamant religious conservatives, the evangelicals. You watched the churches just burgeon there in the county. And then it sort of included some nouveau Republicans, who come in with big money and basically want their independence and to be left alone and to not pay taxes. And I thought those three entities tend to vote Republican, and that was the shift that I felt was changing the demographics.

BB: I think a lot of that went on in the Flathead Valley too. Although I think the old-stock Republicans that you speak of are just about extinct now.

DB: Ours are not extinct, they’re just quiet. And every time I see them, and I am very fond of many of them, I tell them to reclaim their territory.

BB: Well, the side that they’re not on—the dominant part of the Republican Party now where the spirit and activity is—seems to be, as you’ve mentioned, the evangelical right and that sort of thing. I think that’s the key. It’s pretty much nationally in the Republican Party and certainly in our state. And think about this: just intrude on the interview for just a minute, but if you described someone as maybe a somewhat angry proprietor of a bulk fuel dealership or a gravel pit or a small homebuilder, probably not college-educated back in the ’40s and ’50s and ’60s, you’d be describing someone who was probably a Democrat. If you described an officer in the bank, if you described a medical doctor, if you described an attorney, if you described some civic leader maybe some woman civic leader in town, those people would fit the profile of Republicans back in the ’50s and ’60s. Now that seems to have almost completely changed. And you find the not-real-well-educated small businessman who resents government control and government taxation and that sort of thing who might have been a—likely was Democrat in the ’50s or ’60s—is now a militant Republican. The highly educated professional person in town
who used to be a Republican is now a liberal Democrat. I think there’s a fair amount of truth to that.

DB: I do too.

BB: I’m not sure how to understand it exactly. I know it used to be that the South was the private property of the Democratic Party and New England was the private property of the Republican Party. And now that’s completely reversed. So I guess it just goes to show that nothing stays the same forever. Anyway, so you were out of the legislature for six years then you got back in in 1984. And you remained there for eight years. Any memories stand out in that second experience in the legislature? By then of course you were experienced, and you were older, and you had a law degree.

DB: I think as much as the environmental stuff in the first eight years, I do remember a friend saying to me partway through that period of my involvement, she says, “You know Dorothy, I think you’d be a whole lot more...” She says, “You didn’t ask my opinion, but I think you’d be a lot more effective if you’d talk about something besides the environment.” (laughs)

I remember thinking, “Oh, yes, I suppose I should do that. There are all these other issues.” I was completely reoriented in my second eight years. It was a great thing to spend six years out. It was very, very good. I was interested in doing totally different things. I really wanted to become a master of the state budget and put myself under the tutelage of Francis Bardanouve.

BB: So you became a member of the Appropriations Committee?

DB: I did. And he—sort of begrudgingly—but he let me chair the biggest one of all, which is Human Services. I mean, that’s where all the money goes.

BB: The biggest subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee?

DB: Well, the biggest money (laughs). That’s where all the money is. He probably didn’t want me on education because he thought I was too soft. He was very worried, but it did teach me the most unbelievable...When he put me on there, I felt, “I have this huge responsibility, not just to do a good job but to prove myself to Francis Bardanouve.” I said, “Put your toughest people on there.” I didn’t want it run as I had seen it run with little tricks and votes that would come up and surprise you when you weren’t prepared. I wanted it to be run totally fairly. I wanted the most conservative people on there because I felt the issues would do their own talking. And so I had people like Tom Keating and, at some point, John Cobb. I had Pete Story. They gave me some real conservatives, and then all the Republicans got mad at them because they started voting for money. Because these issues are tough, they’re the toughest of all issues, and you know that you never can do enough. All the money in the world would not let you do enough, so you have to make these choices. I had an equal vote on that committee. Now some say it was before but I don’t remember that. I remember surprise votes and tricks,
and I hated that. This committee couldn’t move anything forward without at least one vote from each party.

BB: So you had three senators and three representatives. You had three Democrats and three Republicans.

DB: Right. And ever since then, I’ve always asked for an equally balanced committee. I think it’s the only way to work. And we developed a huge sense of trust. And when we were sent back at that waning days of the legislature and told to make cuts, we worked together and figured out what we could best take out. It was a very, very fine experience, and I just can’t say enough for all those people I worked with. John Cobb was the most clever of all. I’d never knew anybody to work so hard on detail, and he’d always come in with some new piece of money he’d found somewhere and he was going to move it over to somewhere else and get a match and subtract it here and add it there. And nobody could follow him, but they finally just said, “Okay, John.” (laughs) Very, very well meaning and smart person.

In my second eight years I had also learned as I—partly from national committee woman because I’d also been whip once, and I hated that job most of all—I didn’t want to go for leadership. It didn’t suit either my personality or my skill. I never was that quick of a thinker and that fast of a debater. I was a bill machine, and I loved bills because if you want to ask what was the root of, of the biggest root of my political philosophy was that I wanted to be a problem solver.

So here were all these huge issues lurking there, and I worked on bills and resolutions and all kinds of things of every kind. Certainly the biggest was the sales tax, but there was also welfare reform. I was one of the first people, and hated by my work, to take able-bodied people off of the state welfare system and only give them job training and certain kinds of help. But at some point taking them off, really leaving the bulk of it to women and children. We did the science and technology bill, one of the most exciting to try to get the state into the next century where it was, it both had money and education to support entrepreneurs and new ideas. Telecommunications reform, getting it out of the olden days and into competition. That took a huge amount of work just even to figure out the dictionary, the glossary, of the telecommunications system. So all of those, I honestly would churn out about 30-35 bills a session, and I loved doing that.

BB: During this period of time, of course, you also came in contact with numerous legislators, and you’ve mentioned a number of them already. Are there some that particularly stand out in your memory? For various reasons.

DB: For many reasons. And I have to say there’re very few people I disliked. I just liked them all. And not just because you’re interviewing me, Bob, but all the Democrats liked you. And it wasn’t because you were more moderate; it was because you were so honest, you know. You knew when you could do something, and you knew when you would not. And so you were very
trusted for your thoughtfulness. I’ve always wished you had more, bigger opportunities in this state, not to mention the fact that you’re our best political historian. I loved so many of them. I think I have to give a checkpoint to Tom Towe. Although he called me a traitor, which is pretty hard, when I was supporting the sales tax, he did teach me the value of thinking new. He gets so much credit for the coal trust and all of those ideas. We used to have contests in the legislature to see if we could get a House bill to the Senate without a Towe amendment, and we never did. But you know, talk about someone who took his job seriously.

Francis Bardanouve, absolutely one of the giants, and there will be stories written about him. We had our fights too, which makes me sad because I just loved him so much. But we had some terrible fights, and I always thought he was unfairly hard on the university system and would throw out words like, “Crooks that did nobody any good.” But when you look at the procedural reforms like setting up the finance committee and legislative services and all the things that he did. And in the early days, camping out in places like Boulder to watch over the children with disabilities in the state. I mean, my gosh, never ever wanting to go into higher office, but just being very happy with where he was.

But I would say in contrast to him, I also loved Gene Donaldson, who tragically lost his battle with cancer while he was in the legislature. But in one of the Republican years I served, he chaired Appropriations, and I saw their difference of style where I thought Gene really made the Appropriations Committee room a home for everybody. They felt that they could come there and make their pitch, and it was their place and their committee. Where Francis, there was no question that it was Francis’ room, Francis’ committee, Francis’ budget. And I wanted to be, in that respect, I wanted to be a little more like Gene.

Then to look back on another person who made a difference. We spoke briefly about our affections with Mansfield and Metcalf and the impact they had on our families. One of the first stories I heard about Metcalf was that when he won by something like a mere 51 percent and went to the Senate, he bought a house right away. Someone said, “Wow, you must have had a big margin.”

He said, “No, just 51 percent.” I always called—particularly when I had close races, finally I worked myself into where I was getting up to 66 percent because I worked so darn hard—but I always had in the back of my mind what I called, “The Metcalf 51 percent rule.” That is, if you get more than 51 percent, it means that you’re not doing any work. Because none of these issues are easy. They’re all hard. If you’re trying to bring the public along and deal with tough issues that are not very palatable to them, it’s hard. One of my favorite things was always seeing if I could get the public to embrace things that I felt were important but they hated and call that “The Metcalf approach.” I felt that the sales tax was one of them. I knew that I could never pass a sales tax without a lot of public support. The amazing thing to me in my close race is that my 49.2 percent was a vote, to me, to at least put up with the idea of discussing a sales tax. The issue wasn’t that I lost; the issue was that I got so far carrying that issue on my
shoulders, totally misrepresented as it was by Marc Racicot. People were still ready to deal with it, and I thought that was the remarkable thing about that election.

BB: And that was your ’92 race for governor?

DB: Yes. I carried the bill two years before in the legislature. I had worked on it. I couldn’t even get the Legislative Council to study it it was so hot. So I put together my study, and we had people from all over the state who would come and work out details. Then I carried that; that was the year I only carried that bill; I didn’t carry 30 other bills. It was huge. It was so hard to stay one step ahead of the next set of questions. You know, “What are you going to tax? How much will the tax be? How do you refund? How do you divide the money?” There are a zillion complicated questions. It was an amazing year and experience. When I was done I thought, “Now, I’m going to run on this. This is not something that you can do without gubernatorial leadership.” So I did.

BB: Didn’t you collaborate with Bruce Crippen on that bill? Was that the one?

DB: I collaborated with everybody in the world, and Bruce was very big in the Senate working on it.

BB: On that ’91 bill?

DB: Yes.

BB: Okay.

DB: Indeed he was, and I’ll have to say that I just loved working with Bruce. He was so great, but one of the dismaying things in the campaign that I had to get over when all was said and done was that he had some pretty fierce negative things to say about my candidacy in favor of Racicot. And I asked him about that when all was over and I’d lost. I said, “I had a hard time with that, Bruce.”

He said, “Oh, Dorothy, it’s just a campaign. It’s different rules you have when it’s a campaign. You know, it’s just all in fun.”

I thought, “Well, Bruce is smart enough to know if you ever, ever want to get in a sales tax in this state that was the window.” It had to be brought forward by a Democrat because the Democrats are the ones that love to hate it. They’re going to beat up any Republican who ever even mentions the word, and I don’t want to say I was disillusioned. I think he’s a great guy and he called the shots as he saw them. But those are the kinds of things that sort of leave you a little tired, a little tired.
BB: Dorothy, as long as we’re here why don’t you...You’ve already discussed some of your thoughts and impressions, and important ones, of your campaign for governor. But let’s just keep going. Let’s just take a few minutes and maybe you can tell what caused you to run for governor. You’ve been a legislator for a number of years. You made this big decision to run for governor, your choice of a running mate, and maybe some of the biggest memories that you have of that race.

DB: Well, let me start with a really early story because it was when we were in special session in the legislature called in the summer. I can’t remember why we were, why were we called in? Did we have to cut the budget? It was some crisis. Anyway, I was supposed to be running against Stephens. I was supposed to be running against Governor Stephens. I always blamed Fred Van Valkenburg. He’s one of my favorite all-time legislators. I thought he was one of the best people for figuring out how we were ever going to get out of there and making a budget that would balance and figuring out how could you line up the votes. He was so astonishing at that, and it’s a real art. But I thought there at the end of the session then, Fred made Governor Stephens so mad he had a mild stroke. Stephens decided at that point to pull out, to not run. Immediately Racicot was put in, and I can remember my heart sinking.

BB: Racicot had been attorney general and stepped into the Republican nomination process. There was the state auditor, Andrea Bennett, I believe. It was also—

DB: She was running.

BB: She’d also challenged Stephens, the incumbent governor. Stephens has this stroke or whatever health episode it was, drops out, and then Racicot goes ahead and triumphs over Andrea Bennett in the Republican primary.

DB: But at this time he’d just gotten in.

BB: Sure.

DB: He was a running as a magic team because he was running with Denny Rehberg.

BB: But when you got in, your impression was that you’d be running against Stephens, who had some popularity problems and you know...So anyway, Fred put a lot of pressure on him in the state Senate and that contributed to his not running again (laughs).

DB: That’s right (laughs). This is how politics is all about the moment, you know. Things just change dramatically. I can remember when Marc Racicot went in, I was thinking, “That is the one person I was really hoping I wouldn’t have to run against.” I’d heard him speak, and while he had lost several races for judge, I thought, “He’s a compelling speaker.” There’s something about everybody getting very quiet and listening to his beautiful words. I thought, “Okay, there you have it. You’re against the toughest they have to offer up.”
So we’re at that summer session and there for a week, and he starts taunting me. “You want to do tax reform, do it now. You know, do it now. You have a whole week, just do it.” It made me so upset. I finally called his office from my little tiny basement office with Jim Gransbery sitting in my office. I was just torqued.

I said, “I will debate you on this issue. I’m tired of your issuing debate calls by press release. You know this can’t be done. Debate me on it day after tomorrow in the rotunda of the Capitol.” He first said no. And then the party went screaming to him and said, “You have to.” So then he said yes.

There we were in the rotunda of the Capitol. The place was so packed they were flowing out over the balconies, sitting on the stairs. Boy, I knew what I was up against. I thought, “Here you go.” It’s actually one of the best things I think I’d ever done, and I wish I could have maintained that ability. But we had a debate, which he brought as quickly to an end as he could because he knew I had that issue on my side. He finally said, “That’s it.”

I thought I should have just said, “No, that’s not it. I’m here for questions.” You know, it taught me a lesson to try to keep a little more control. He wanted us out of there.

But following that debate about an hour later, a lobbyist friend of mine came running back to me and said, “It’s a draw. It’s a draw.”

I said, “What do you mean it’s a draw?”

He said, “I just polled every important person up there, and they said that Racicot won on articulation and you won on sincerity. That makes it a draw.”

I said, “What about the issue?”

This person said, “Who cares about the issue?” (laughs). That’s one of my favorite stories; I just love that story.

But it told me two things. One is people go by emotion, you know, and they’re too...probably have more emotion invested in this than who is on what issue. But it also told me you can’t be Marc Racicot, you can’t be Jim Lucas, you can’t be the silver-tongued orator, but carry it out because what you have is sincerity. That’s evidently your strong point, and that’s how you’re going to have to do this. You know, we had 35 debates and that’s probably how most of them were.

BB: An incredible marathon.
DB: It was about that and all my campaigns. I always loved them. I put everything else in my life aside, don’t have regrets about it; that was the central part of my life. I decided that’s what I wanted to do. Even when I did my House races, I did huge efforts, knocking on doors and having parties and fundraisers and showing up everywhere. So when people ask me now about me getting back in, that’s why I can sincerely say no. I burned my candle at both ends. I really did. And I don’t regret it; I loved it. I loved every minute of it, and I love that campaign. I sometimes felt I could have stepped aside, there was so much interest and enthusiasm. I felt it just would have carried right on without me (laughs). I hope we get a time when we’re back to that, and not these fairly ugly and highly money-driven campaigns that we seem to be into now. I should just say that one of the most interesting parts of that campaign was riding my horse across the middle of the state, which is a little too cutesy, but it was really for me more than anything else. It was for me to get my, to have those three weeks to get really, really steeped into the state that I was campaigning in, to feel like I was right there, right in the heart of it. It did that.

BB: Certainly your advocacy of the sales tax undermined you with some of the Democratic voters. I imagine they were less enthusiastic for your candidacy than they might have been for a more regular Democrat. Your running mate, Mike Halligan, maybe you could talk just briefly about. Mike, too, told me that you made a pretty courageous decision in the campaign involving capital punishment. He said, “Boy, she did what she thought.” But he said he thought that hurt you too. Do remember what he’s talking about?

DB: Yes, and let me first say about Mike. Mike, like you, was one of these people who should have been at the top rung in this state as our leaders. I just somehow can’t figure out why that didn’t happen. He’s just the best person, and I honestly felt—and I say this with tears in my eyes—if something had happened to me, I was so happy to release everything to him. I just would have completely trusted him whatever he did. And that’s the kind of person you want to have, and his family as well, and his incredible children and wife. I mean what a family. They were sort of the all-American Montana family that I was not, as unconventional as I’ve always been. But they don’t make them better.

My capital punishment thing. There’s a couple of issues that Racicot picked on, but I think they’re really more part of my legislative record. He probably taunted me a little into making my position known, and I was simply against capital punishment. I really couldn’t say otherwise.

BB: Well, I think what Mike told me—

DB: But I think I’d already voted on it.

BB: Yes, but what I think what Mike told me, if I remember this correctly, was that you were being interviewed somewhere during the course of the campaign, maybe even fairly close to election day, and the reporter asked you: if this particularly bad guy that was on death row hadn’t been executed by the time you were elected governor and came to you with some kind of appeal or something whether you would, how you would handle that? And you forthrightly
answered something to the effect that you were opposed to capital punishment and, you know, you weren’t sure that you could say that you would allow that execution to go forward. And Mike said he thought that really gave more momentum to the Racicot forces on the campaign. I may have that, some of those wrong.

DB: I think that actually did happen. The very first radio ad that he came out with...I had a couple of friends call me just screaming, mostly at him not at me. They said they almost drove into the borrow pit...was over, I think it was...Let’s see, there were several. One was capital punishment and saying that I would be soft on people who...kidnappers who molested children and then killed them. I think that had been one of my votes, but of course that vote had a lot more complexity than meets the eye when it’s put into a raw radio and TV ads. It didn’t consider mitigating factors, such as one parent kidnapping his one child to take it away from another child and accidentally having the kid die. You know, these things get very complicated. They really smashed me with an ad on that, and I just couldn’t believe it when I heard it. Then there was another one on bestiality. We’d been trying to fix those laws too. It dealt with tests for—oh, I can’t even remember the details—same-gender sex. We wanted people to come forward. Oh, it was the sodomy bill. I was heavily leafleted the day before the campaign and put in church bulletins and leafleted on car windshields all over the state with being in favor of bestiality and sodomy and all these things. That was for former legislative votes, which in fact was the same position as Marc Racicot’s. But since he wasn’t a legislator with a vote on the record, there was no way to say that.

BB: I almost hesitate to say this in your interview, but maybe it’s relevant and probably should be said. I was Racicot’s campaign chairman in Flathead County. When I received those leaflets—I think I got them on Saturday, a great big box of them, and I had volunteers and we were going to distribute things on Saturday and Sunday and that sort of thing—and I looked at those, I called Glen Marx, the guy that [was] Marc’s campaign manager. I said, “This is over the line. This isn’t right.”

“Well,” he said, “we’ve got to do it. We’re close, and we think it’s going to make a difference.”

I said, “Well, don’t count on Flathead County because they’re going to the dump.”

DB: That’s amazing. You know, Bob, I had the same problems. I had some people working on my campaign put together a horrible brochure and they didn’t run it by me. When candidates say you’re in real danger when your campaign gets completely out of your control, it’s true you have to have a manager, and you have to trust them, and you have to be the candidate, and they have to manage. But they printed a brochure, and the first I knew of it was some friends of mine in Great Falls said, “I’m sorry, we’re not putting this out.” They were putting out over Halloween, and it was talking about how, “There’s one real spook.” Just horrible stuff. So depressing. Well, those are what happen. I think, luckily for both Marc Racicot and me, it’s still remembered as a pretty good campaign. Sometimes I don’t think we deserved that reputation, but it seems to have made people pretty pleased that it was an okay campaign. And there were

Dorothy Bradley Interview, OH 396-062, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
some things about it that certainly weren’t model campaign things, but course in today’s world they look pretty darn tame.

BB: They do and when you look back at it, just as the coal moratorium debate between John Hall and Jim Lucas, I think people who saw that consider that to be the greatest debate in the modern history of the Montana Legislature. Likewise, you hear those same kinds of comments, same kinds of comments about your race for governor in 1992. That we probably had the best choice we’ve ever had, at least I’ve heard quite a number of people say that. That’s looking back in the rearview mirror, but that we had, that that was the best, probably the highest level campaigning and maybe the best we had.

DB: Yes. Course they’ll say to me, “Oh, I just couldn’t decide how to vote. I just thought you were both so great.” When you’ve just lost, that’s not exactly what you want to hear (laughs).

BB: I know.

DB: But that’s okay. You know, history will write its own thing. It was a very tough legislature that convened after that. It was sort of the first of the really mean-spirited stuff that was going on up there that was not part of my history. I don’t think he had the easiest time. But I don’t think history will find him particularly great either, and being, as far as being a popular governor and not utilizing it more to solve problems, nor for the deregulation kinds of things that he really could be held responsible for. So—

BB: Well, his role in the deregulation of the electrical industry in Montana, if that’s the way to put it, I don’t think hurt him seriously while he was governor. But I think it continued to after he left office, and I think it really damaged his reputation so that he’s probably—he was probably, I think, still quite popular when he left office in 2000, but by 2005 less so.

DB: Well, it’s an interesting situation because everybody was swept along with the idea of the money and the excitement of it. I mean, the company itself and their smart management. The board of directors, my gosh, they all buckled. The people in the field—the legislature, the governor, all of these people—were snowed by it. But I can’t help but think it could have been otherwise because it was rammed through the legislature very quickly. I keep thinking, “Why weren’t people asking for a second opinion?” But at the very least they should have held it up in careful scrutiny in the legislature, and it never was. Now legislators are responsible for that too, but again, my roots are with the concepts I learned out of the moratorium. Take a little time to figure out what you’re doing, this is so big. We all knew that we had cheap energy because we had so much hydropower. How could’ve we thought that things were going to get better? It’s really a mystery.

BB: I wasn’t there either. I left the legislature in 1996, but I think, as you mentioned, there was a feeling across the country and in many states at that time that deregulation was the way to go. I think that airlines had been deregulated, hadn’t they? Before that?
DB: We were doing telecommunications.

BB: So the idea was that you wouldn’t have to have the same telephone carrier who would provide you with a monopoly. But I don’t think a lot of thought was given to the fact that electrical power comes from location, and it goes through wires. And it’s kind of difficult to get meaningful competition to a system like that.

DB: Particularly in a state, as Conrad Burns says, “Where there’s a lot of dirt between light bulbs.”

BB: Yes, that’s right, and where we had such cheap power anyway. I mean one of the things we had going for us in terms of attracting business to Montana was that we had such cheap electrical power. So you have to wonder too why maybe more serious consideration wasn’t given.


BB: Or what we gained from that. That’s amazing, too. Well look, I want to ask you a few more questions and you may need to say a few more things, and we’ve got about it looks like ten or eleven minutes left in our interview. But you’ve come into contact with or did come in contact during the first of your years in politics with, in addition to legislators, the lobbyists. Are there any lobbyists that particularly stand out in your memory or any anecdotes about them that might be interesting?

DB: Well, I mentioned early about the transformation that the lobby had, which is sort of interesting to think because it was all in your and my lifetime. Truly, in 1971 it was mostly corporate men in dark suits with Dorothy Eck and Daphne Bugbee, and then Don Aldrich and Phil and Robin Tawney were the Wildlife Federation. Now you look and this place is crawling with citizens. I can remember people even being furious with citizens when they were not used to it, saying, “These people are calling me at night. I’m so angry” (laughs). That transformation is just as huge as the people who are in the legislature. I’d say once again, I just liked so many of them. John Lahr—an odd thing in my life right now is I’m now on the board of directors of Northwestern Energy, certainly the most unlikely thing in my lifetime—and I went and took him out for a beer. He’s the Montana Power lobbyist that I got to know when I was campaigning before I was even elected.

BB: Then after deregulation, Montana Power Company split itself in two, and part of it became Pennsylvania Power and Electric.

DB: PP and L.

BB: PP and L, Pennsylvania Power and Light, and I think that’s the—
DB: Generation.

BB: The generation part of it, and the distribution part of it became Northwestern.

DB: Energy.

BB: Energy.

DB: And went bankrupt.

BB: Yes, are they still a—

DB: They pulled out of it.

BB: That’s what I  thought. So now you’re on the board of directors.

DB: Yes.

BB: And when you were the person who had sponsored the coal moratorium bill, the Montana Power Company lobbyists of course were—

DB: Up in arms.

BB: Up in arms to kill the bill.

DB: They never liked me (laughs). But we’re all good friends anyway.

BB: Now you’re on their, what’s left of them...You’re on the board of directors.

DB: Yes. John Lahr used to say to me...I remember one time I was carrying a lifeline. Rate structure. I was trying to redesign the whole rate structures of the power company, sort of like the kinds of things I did then. I kept bringing him out new versions, and I’d say, “Can you go along with this one?”

He finally said, “Dorothy, why are you bringing these to me? I’m just up here to be the friendly one.” (laughs). Then he’d see me after Christmas, and he’d say, “I suppose you didn’t have any Christmas lights on your tree this year because you don’t believe in wasting electricity.”

I said, “John, I didn’t even have a tree” (laughs). So we had, just people like that were very, very good and lifelong friends. Many lobbyists that I knew then said they wouldn’t dream of being legislators.
They said, “You don’t know where the power is, Dorothy. We’re up here for a lifetime; you just serve little terms. We’re where the real power is.” And there’s something to that, particularly now of course with term limits, which I never served under.

BB: That’s interesting and revealing. Do you remember who told you that?

DB: No.

BB: Okay.

DB: I think it was, it couldn’t have been Jerome Anderson, but it was somebody like that.

BB: That’s the name that was in my mind when you said that.

DB: I think that it was, and there’s truth to it. I’ve just liked watching the lobbyists in action, and I frankly like seeing these powerful women like Mona Jamison, who’s known as the pit bull. I think it’s just a whole new day for the lobbyists. And you have as many citizens up there who pay their little 15 bucks or whatever they need to do. I don’t know if they do or not, but boy they’re up there and telling people how they feel. I’m sure it’s exasperating to legislators to be pulled this way and that, but there’s...apathy is gone.

BB: Yes that’s for sure. I’d just be interested in your observations on Governor Judge and Governor Schwinden, Governor Stephens, the governors that were governor when you were in the legislature.

DB: Well you didn’t say, course, Governor Tom Judge.

BB: Yes, I said Judge, Stephens or Judge, Schwinden and Stephens.

DB: I think of all of them, Tom Judge will get the biggest marks, the highest marks in my book. I think that he capitalized on a period of time where things were going well in the legislature, and he took advantage of it. Nevertheless, he was on the crest of that wave, and he did well by it. I do give him credit.

BB: The ‘70s are sometimes described as Montana’s second progressive era. He was governor during that period when a lot of reform legislation passed. What you are saying is, while he might not have been the instigator of some of it or much of it, he enabled it and rode the crest of it.

DB: He did it very well. He was a good governor to be there then. He was young, and there was room in his head for all these new kinds of things. I think he actually took the moratorium and signed all the bills. But I also think he helped pass a Yellowstone moratorium where there was no...there was like a period of time where there was a moratorium on water diversions while
we got the Water Use Act together and put that whole business of conservation, of easements of future uses, and then eventually a little bit later the whole water court together. And I’d give him some credit there, too.

BB: Those things are a matter of the public record. But you obviously were acquainted with him personally. Is there a story or an anecdote or something or other that might kind of help some historian listening to this tape in the future understand something fundamental about his leadership style?

DB: No. I don’t have good stories about these governors. I had one in my head about Schwinden and now it’s vanished. I remember that Tom Judge was very amenable to working with leadership. He’d have breakfasts in his office, and—

BB: That’s when you were whip?

DB: Yes. I actually got in on some of that, and he got irked in the middle of it all because the press wanted to be there and it was supposed to just be a little, nice tete-a-tete with the legislative leaders. But I thought he really put himself out to be part of the process.

BB: And of course he had been a legislator.

DB: And he had been a legislator, yes. I remember the one bad story about Governor Schwinden. Certainly, I thought he was a marvelous human being. I always loved being around him. He’s the kind of person that, as they say, you always want to have a beer with. He brought us into special session, which was probably the worst special session I have ever had anything to do with in my whole life. It was when we had that first insurance crisis. Suddenly interest rates are going way down, and insurance companies can’t pay. Doctors are screaming because malpractice is going up. Without an agenda, he brought us into a week special session. I think it was the worst time we treated each other, it was the worst we treated each other of that era of anything I’ve experienced.

I suddenly was, I guess, sort of being a known liberal. People were coming to me and saying, “You don’t need to amend the Constitution. You don’t need to do these terrible things. You don’t need to take away punitive damages. You don’t need to take away economic damages. You know these things are fundamental to the whole state of law.” So they had my ear. I was listening, and we came in with no agenda. There were some very interesting national spokesmen then going around talking about how the insurance companies had just overdone their deal. They’d invested into things that the bottom had fallen out. Interest rates go down, they can’t pay their bill, and suddenly they’re blaming everybody else for their own bad mistakes. And we had some amazing discussions, and then at the end it was sort of like a draw. We don’t know what to do. Nobody knew what to do. I mean, they wanted to amend the Constitution, they wanted to amend state law, and finally at two in the morning we just came to a screeching halt and absolutely nothing was done. Nothing. And that was a very high

Dorothy Bradley Interview, OH 396-062, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
learning point. I thought, “He didn’t have an agenda for us. He knew something was wrong, and he couldn’t tell us what to do.”

BB: But he was one shrewd customer, too. And he always used to back up special sessions with some kind of a holiday or other, and that one was backed up against Easter weekend.

DB: That’s right.

BB: So we were convened on Monday, and we were supposed to have our work done by Saturday night. Well, the legislature functions best in a special session if it’s called by the governor for a specific purpose, and he basically offers his guidelines for what or how that purpose can be fulfilled. He didn’t in that case, and I’ve wondered if he thought, “Well look, there’s a huge amount of pressure to call this special session and there are some problems, but I’m not entirely sure I know what I want them to do. So if they don’t do anything, I’m not sure that’s bad. But we’ll have a special session and see if they can get it done without too much guidance.”

DB: Well, it may have been with interesting, creative leadership. That’s just not anything I would ever do; I would not bring in a group like that with no agenda and only five or seven days to do it.

BB: It’s not typical of Schwinden, which has made me wonder if it wasn’t done on purpose.

DB: And then another thing I do remember about him, which just caught me so unawares. You know, in the first stint I had, we passed, among other things, the coal tax. And we changed it from BTUs to a percentage and created the Coal Trust and did all those innovative things with the Coal Trust. And we had a 30 percent tax on coal at that point. I remember coming into a session...I’m going to guess it was ’87 because right before the state of the state. Chuck Johnson, our trusted reporter who has more institutional memory probably than anybody in this state, came and said, “So what do you think about the governor’s proposal to lower the tax?”

I said, “Oh, he’d never do that.” This is because for years we’d been paying a Washington firm way up into six figures to make sure Congress didn’t get rid of our tax for us. They wanted to say that it violated Constitutional...the grounds of interstate transportation, and we kept lobbying them, saying this is a state right. I said, “Oh, he wouldn’t do that. Not after all we’ve lobbied.”

He said, “No, that’s not what I’m asking you. He is going to do that, and I wondered what your reaction was.” And he did.

BB: That was the so-called window of opportunity.

Dorothy Bradley Interview, OH 396-062, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
DB: That was the window of opportunity. And I was, I was devastated by that because I felt that it was, Now I’m sure this is really debatable and he honestly came down on a different side, but I felt there were so many things in the state that needed that tax break. Agriculture, various kinds of income tax reform, all kinds of things needed a tax break. I didn’t think the coal companies needed to have their tax cut in half.

BB: Well, the argument that he—

DB: I know he did. He said that we were going to decrease our production.

BB: That Wyoming was getting the new development.

DB: Which it was. Wyoming was getting new development. The rest of thought on the other side: because their coal seams were richer, they were closer to the surface, and they had a much easier transportation route to the utilities. And I thought that he was doing it, and it was just a sop to the industry. But if you were going to give away money, it was really, really needed in other places. And you know he did call us back and have us cut the budget six percent. I can’t remember, it was at a different time, but I felt it just didn’t make sense in view of all the things that were going on with the economy. I know that it might have helped increase the coal production a small bit, but I doubt if it was particularly important. Who will know?

BB: I had a conversation a while back with Jim Mockler, who was the lobbyist who was pushing that window of opportunity the most, and he reminded me that I voted against Schwinden’s proposal. And I hadn’t honestly even remembered about it, but I do remember the argument that the Schwinden people made, just as you had described. You know, that our tax was significantly higher than Wyoming’s, but that Wyoming had these other advantages. And the only way we’d ever sell any more coal was to reduce our tax to help compensate for the other advantages that they had. And, you know, you can make an argument for that. Anyway it prevailed, and I think it started...there was some kind of condition or other that if they met some certain productivity threshold by some date that their tax would drop from 30 percent to 15 percent. And I think ultimately it dropped to 10 percent.

DB: It went way down.

BB: It went way down. So anyway, Stephens.

DB: I remember so little about Stephens. I had high hopes for him because he had been a legislator himself, a really very respectable senator. I thought it was just a weak administration. I thought he was perfectly nice. He and his colleague had been great buddies, reportedly didn’t get along well when they were working together in the same office. That was Allen Kolstad, who I also very much liked. Not many memories. I don’t think it was an imaginative…I think it was just a hold-the-line kind of administration, but no imagination.
BB: As you look back historically over the era in which you served in the legislature, how do you think it will be remembered? And why? Actually I think we’re talking about two different eras, really.

DB: Two very different eras.

BB: Any thoughts about that?

DB: Well, and we’ve covered some of this, but I think that first era will be always called the—either the Golden Age of Environmentalism or Creativity or whatever it is, and constitutional implementation, which was also just fabulous. It will also be known as a time that really was soul (?). But one word on that environmental part. I find people in this day and age, if they look back on it, they just think it was easy. “Oh, you just had all the sentiment with you then.” It was not easy. It was knock-down, drag-out a great deal of that time. It was very difficult. I remember people like Dick Colberg and Herb Hueneakens working into the wee hours of the morning on the details of strip mine reclamation. I mean, it was very hard. I remember the clashing of the giants between Al Stone, a water professor from the law school here in Missoula, and Judge Henry Loble, who was lobbying for corporations. Just clashing on the water issues. And I remember—I do remember some of that—Ted Schwinden just...he was ag and he was Eastern Montana, and I bow to his sentiments. It’s just that I disagreed with him, and all the advances that we made at that time were not easy. But they will really be remembered. And to me, I remember them and will say this again and again—because I do to a certain extent feel it’s the first time Montana chose to think ahead in terms of generations and the future instead of the budget and two years and what’s going to be going on in two years—is that we really looked into what kind of place we wanted to be for 30 and 40 years. And you know, here we are 40 years in the future. Good thing that we did. It’s a reminder that you can’t, you don’t have the luxury in this business of just going from year to year.

I would hope that in later years we were being creative and that we were looked at as problem-solving. I seem to remember a lot of bills that came from interim studies, working on things like we had a terrible imbalance in the workers’ comp. And we had a lot of issues like that that were just sort of hanging over there and waiting to be solved, and they were very difficult and usually required some money: and the state investments, and the venture capital fund, and retirement.

BB: In the ‘70s, too, because we had pretty good income in the state government we had the liberty, maybe, to think about some of these greater issues. I think, especially during the Schwinden years and during the Stephens years when we had governors who were adamantly opposed to raising taxes and who were going to make the budget work come hell or high water, our focus necessarily seemed to be on these, kind of these doling money issues. And we didn’t really have the luxury of thinking much beyond them. We were just having to do what was necessary instead of what was important.

Dorothy Bradley Interview, OH 396-062, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
DB: We were just pounding out the tough problems and the things that were sitting there waiting to be resolved...There’s nothing more discouraging than working an administration whose primary interest is getting re-elected.

BB: (Laughs) Yes, right.

DB: “But will we have the majority next time?” How often did we hear that in the legislature? “Let’s do this.” I don’t know. “We’ve got to worry about the majority next time.”

BB: And what do you do with the majority?

DB: Then you worry about the majority next time.

BB: Yes, you can’t do anything if you’re not in the majority. Well, why don’t we do something? Because if we do, then we won’t have the majority.

DB: You know, you and I know the pendulum’s going to swing anyway.

BB: It swings anyway.

DB: You’re going to be out of favor at some point, so you’ve got to take it and run while you’ve got it.

BB: Okay, well Dorothy, thanks so much for your public service, and greatly enjoyed the interview and wish you well.

DB: Wish you well, Bob. My pleasure and most flattering. Thank you.

[End of Interview]