

Rex Buchanan: The date is November 15th, 2019. I'm Rex Buchanan, former director of the Kansas Geological Survey. With me is former Representative David Heinemann who is our videographer. We're at the Kansas Geological Survey in Lawrence to conduct an interview that is part of the Kansas Oral History Project series examining the development of water policy during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. In these interviews, we'll learn about policy development through the eyes of legislators, administrators, environmentalists, and others who are involved during those decades.

The Kansas Oral History Project is a nonprofit corporation created for the purpose of collecting oral histories of Kansans who were involved in shaping and implementing public policy during the last half of the 20th century. Recordings and transcripts of these oral history interviews are accessible to researchers and educators through the Kansas State Historical Society and the Kansas State Library.

Today I'll interview Joyce Wolf who was active in environmental organizations even before moving to Kansas in 1982. In 1985, she helped form the Kansas Clean Air Coalition, and in 1988, began representing the Kansas Audubon Council in Topeka. Among the issues before the Kansas legislature during Joyce's time at the Statehouse was funding of the state water plan and obtaining sufficient water for the Cheyenne Bottoms wetland area.

During her time as a lobbyist, Joyce and the Audubon Society were members of a coalition of organizations with similar environmental goals. Her time as a registered lobbyist ended in the year 2000. Joyce has continued to provide education to the public regarding the State Water Plan and the importance of adequate funding for the plan. Joyce, welcome to the Geological Survey, and thank you for agreeing to do this today.

Joyce Wolf: Thank you.

RB: Let's talk just a little bit, I know you came to Kansas from Minnesota, as it says, in 1982. What brought you then to get engaged in Kansas issues when you first got here?

JW: Well, I was involved in Minnesota with Audubon. We joined in 1974, and the reason that we were able to be active is that particular chapter had concurrent sessions for parents and students at the same

time, which for us, because we had a lot of little kids at the time, was the difference between being able to be engaged or not. That made a big difference.

The other thing was there were a lot of folks in that chapter in Minnesota, it was the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Club, and they were successful eventually in establishing the [Minnesota Valley] National Wildlife Refuge along the [Minnesota] river. One of the other things that they got involved in was work on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, to protect it from oil and gas interests. So, it was a really active chapter in terms of legislative-type stuff. There were birders, too, but of the three chapters in the metro area of Minneapolis-St. Paul, it was probably the most active issue-wise. The others were more birding organizations.

RB: We'll come back to Minnesota towards the end.

JW: Sure.

RB: So, when you came to Kansas, did you just sort of naturally be inclined towards Audubon here in Lawrence? Is that how you got engaged?

JW: What happened, and I didn't even know it had happened until we came here, is the person that was in charge of that region up there got in contact with the folks here, with Ron [Klataske] and Ed Pembleton to let them know we were coming.

RB: Ron Klataske.

JW: Yes, Ron Klataske. So, it just seemed like a natural extension to what we were already involved in up there.

RB: So, when you came down here, you just didn't get involved with the Jayhawk Audubon or the Lawrence chapter. You got involved with the statewide organization, such as it was.

JW: Eventually, yes. At that point, it was the Kansas Audubon Council, which was made up of representatives of all the chapters in the state.

RB: If you moved here in 1982, and by 1985, you're already involved sort of at the state level, you must have moved into that role pretty quickly.

JW: I guess I did.

RB: How come?

JW: Well, I was asked to go to what they called a "bootcamp." National Audubon put it on in Washington, DC. It was working on the Clean Air Act and trying to get the different energy companies to adopt things like installing scrubbers and whatnot. After that week in Washington, I came back. The American Lung Association had a Kansas chapter. So, we worked with them, and I think the Sierra Club, they were just other groups that were interested in the ultimate goal to have these energy companies operating much more efficiently and cleanly.

So that was what came out of that. Prior to that bootcamp that I went to, I'm not so sure that I was fully aware of the whole legislative process and how it worked but got familiar with that pretty quickly.

RB: In terms of issues that you quickly got engaged with when you come down here, were clean air issues a big deal at that time in Kansas?

JW: Yes, this was before the Clean Air Act was passed. That was one of the things that ultimately came from that. I'm not claiming that I had that much to do with it. It was just a coalition of folks that worked on it. Of course, at that point, we were not doing state-type things, but more federal.

RB: Regional and national.

JW: Right.

RB: So how did you get engaged in water issues in this process then?

JW: You can't lobby in Kansas and not know something about water and agriculture. It's a huge issue. I mean, it just—I'm not sure how. One thing that I was aware of was my degree was in bacteriology, and one of my first jobs was water quality for the U.S. Public Health Service in Cincinnati, which I'm old enough that this was before EPA [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency], and it was eventually then changed to EPA. So, I had some background in water issues, water quality in particular.

RB: What were the water issues—and I agree wholeheartedly with what you just said. I don't think you can understand anything about this state without understanding water. What were the water issues that you were engaged in when you started this?

JW: The big one was recovering the rights of Cheyenne Bottoms. I helped kind of peripherally with that. Jan Garton was the person who really was the mover and shaker and made sure that everything went perfectly well. I think it's another really interesting lesson is they had this—somehow Jan got a hold of orange fabric, and they made cushions. I don't know if you remember seeing them. They said, "Save our Bottoms," and each legislator got a cushion that said, "Save our Bottoms."

RB: Roughly what year are we talking about this connection that you made with her?

JW: Late-'80s.

RB: Had you been engaged in other specific water-related issues prior to that for Audubon or not?

JW: Not that I can recall.

RB: How did you meet her?

JW: She was president of the Kansas Audubon Council. She ran those meetings. I didn't take part in the discussions that this cushion thing came out of, but it was interesting the way that happened. Another

thing that was related to it was I think this was around the time that Joan Finney was governor, perhaps?

RB: Didn't she beat [Governor] Mike Hayden in 1988? That's what I'm thinking, '88 or '92, '92 maybe.

JW: During the campaign, she met with a coalition of nonprofits, environmental nonprofits. Unfortunately, during that meeting, she acknowledged that she didn't have a lot of background on environmental issues and used the term "blank slate." I don't know if you remember, but she had a reputation for being a little quirky.

RB: I remember her pretty well, sure.

JW: One of the lobbyists went out and went to the press and said, "Joan Finney said she's a blank slate." That went over like a lead balloon. She was elected, and then during the funding mechanism, Cheyenne Bottoms, there was money that was going to be dedicated—

RB: Let's back up a little bit here. Basically, Cheyenne Bottoms is a big wildlife refuge, north of Great Bend, that historically has been very important on the flyway for birds, migrating waterfowl, especially shorebirds. Everybody goes out there to see them.

JW: Right.

RB: Historically, it dries up once in a while, but beginning in probably the '70s and '80s, it dried up more and more because of lack of stream flow from Walnut Creek, and historically some flow from the Ark[ansas] River, but by now, the Ark[ansas River] is dry. There's reduced stream flow in Walnut Creek. So that's the setting. So now people are concerned.

Pre-settlement days, there were a lot of wetlands all over the place that birds could use. When people come out and alter the environment, now suddenly places like Cheyenne Bottoms and Quivira become very important because there are not many of them around. So, you can't just stand aside while it's drying up. That was the problem that Jan set out to solve. Is that a fair statement of it?

JW: Absolutely. You know, First-in-Time, First-in-Right. They had the senior water right.

RB: Cheyenne Bottoms did?

JW: Right. For whatever reason, the Division of Water Resources didn't take action on it. So, it meant that somebody was going to have to sue.

RB: In effect, Cheyenne Bottoms Fish or Wildlife and Parks, what is today [Kansas Department of] Wildlife and Parks had the water rights to Cheyenne Bottoms. In effect, it was the State arguing with itself over enforcement of state laws. But unless Cheyenne Bottoms asked for—said that their water rights are being impaired, the State is not going to do anything.

JW: Right.

RB: I know it's a complicated situation, but in effect, [Kansas Department of] Wildlife [and Parks] folks have to ask for that water to be delivered, and then [Kansas Department of Agriculture,] Division of Water Resources [(DWR)] has to make sure it's delivered, and that wasn't happening.

JW: Right, exactly. And Jan [Garton] was really good about bringing in a coalition of different organizations that agreed with the ultimate goal that they really needed to have their water rights recognized, and the impairments stopped.

RB: And there was also money involved for work on levees and—

JW: Right. That was one of the things that I think was kind of a collective agreement that it would help to be able to move water around at different times. So, there were control structures put in place as part of it.

RB: If Jan [Garton] were still alive, we'd be having a conversation with Jan, but she's not. As we've talked about, she does strike me as a terrific example of one person deciding they're going to change what they see as a problem and be successful doing it.

JW: Absolutely.

RB: What was she like? She doesn't come naturally to this role based on what little that I know about her background.

JW: My understanding is that she had a degree in English. She was a terrific writer. She had a wonderful sense of humor, which is the story of "Save your Bottoms," I think. She was determined in a really good kind of way. I mean, I don't know that anyone took offense at the things that she did because she did it in a way that just laid the facts out, and it met state standards. It met the law. So, it made sense.

But the best thing I think that happened during that period, I got a chance to go to some of the hearings that David Pope [then, Chief Engineer, DWR] conducted. There were numerous professional organizations that had come up with data that they all agreed. I've read the report [*Availability of Water in Walnut Creek, its Tributaries, their Valley Alluviums, and Hydraulically Connected Aquifers*, September 1989]. It's very lengthy. It took a while to digest all this, but then he came up with the recommendations for the Intensive Groundwater Use Control Area on the Wet Walnut, and it made all the difference in the world.

RB: I do want to go back to her [Jan Garton] again because she wasn't a lobbyist per se.

JW: No. She was just an ordinary citizen but interested in things.

RB: I would agree with you. When I was around her and saw her in action at those hearings, her heart was clearly in the right place.

JW: Oh, absolutely.

RB: It was impossible to view her as anything other than being dedicated to the good of Cheyenne Bottoms and the birds there.

JW: Right.

RB: But she does come across as somebody who's decided she's going to stay on this problem until they get it resolved and then went out and built coalitions to make that happen.

JW: I think because there were so many groups—at that point in time, I was lobbying. I mean, it was Audubon and the League of Women Voters and the Rural Center and KNRC and the Sierra Club and more. I can't remember the other one. We would meet every month, or not every month, but every Friday or thereabout. We had this working arrangement of cooperativeness. So, to move to the next level of advocacy for the Bottoms was pretty natural. That part of it went well.

RB: I would guess that you would probably agree with what I'm about to say, Kansas political process does not strike me as being flush with people representing the environmental side. Do you think that's a fair statement?

JW: I haven't kept track more recently. I think that's absolutely true, but part of it relates to having come here from Minnesota and understanding that a lot of their economy is natural resource based, recreation, the 10,000 lakes that everybody goes to. It's just such a different outlook here.

RB: And we'll come back to that at the end. I want to sort of finish with that. But basically, the environmental groups that were active there in the mid-'80s were pooling their resources to try to be more powerful together than we are individually.

JW: One of the things that happened, most of the environmental lobbyists were women. I remember one particular issue that we had all gone in on was pesticide drift. It was the minority leader of the Senate, and he asked Marge Ahrens, who was lobbying for the Sierra Club at the time, to define "drift." She said, "Oh, Senator, you're really not going to make me do that, are you?"



I don't recall exactly what his response was, but at the end, he said, "Ladies, come up." So, we all went up, and he said, "I'm going to take you out to lunch," which turned out to be a really great thing, but totally different from the way most—I mean, the lobbyists take the legislators out, and here was the legislator taking us out. It was wonderful. It was really an opportunity to get to interact with him.

One of the issues that was going on at that same time was low-level radioactive waste in a siting of the [inaudible]. I don't know if Audubon was particularly involved in that, but again, the leadership from that came from Laura McClure, who eventually got elected to the legislature. That was an example of another grassroots woman that felt strongly about an issue and pushed it.

Why do you think it was women that were so engaged in that process?

JW: Well, for one thing, it's not a high-paying job. I don't know that anybody could maintain a family on—when I first started out, I had a net negative income because of going back and forth.

RB: Driving back and forth.

JW: I'm sure that's a huge issue because you just can't raise a family with that kind of income.

RB: It's clearly also a labor of love for that group of folks. You could tell that by just walking into the room. Eventually Cheyenne Bottoms, the Chief Engineer creates an IGUCA, an Intensive Groundwater Use Control Area. There's a cutback in various levels of irrigation along the Wet Walnut [Creek], and the result is eventually more water in Cheyenne Bottoms. Was it a success? From your perspective, did it do what your folks were hoping to do?

JW: Yes. Another interesting story is we went out and visited the [Cheyenne] Bottoms several years ago and drove around and saw the dry Ark[ansas River]. The person who was the manager of Cheyenne Bottoms at the time, we stopped and visited with him. He said that a couple of different farmers who were irrigators had made the comment that they used to just be farmers, but now they consider themselves businessmen because they're much more attuned to what the inputs cost and what they can gather [harvest]. They were running a profitable operation with less water.

RB: At the end of the day, from a distance, it looks like a success story because they're making about as much money as they were before, but they're using less water, and water is going to the place with the senior water right.

When you go out and drive around Cheyenne Bottoms, do you feel a sense of satisfaction that you somehow, from being involved with that?

JW: Oh, yes, absolutely, especially the Education Center because I remember going with Jan to visit with some of the folks from [the Kansas Department of] Wildlife and Parks, and we said, "You've got to have an Education Center." "No, no, no. That will never work." "Well, why not?" "Well, because if it's open and people will come in and trash the building." He had all these reasons of why it was not going to work.

Well, it did. They did have it, and the students, I think, from Fort Hays State [University (Fort Hays)] are there. I'm particularly pleased that the video they show highlights Jan's role in everything. The fact that you can go there, even in relatively dry weather, they've got enough water to maintain the species that come through. I can't remember the guy's name, the one big data collection center on the East Coast, and he came out and visited and said that, as far as he was concerned, Cheyenne Bottoms was the most important wetland in the United States, which really feels good that you're part of that recovery process.

RB: That Education Center, you're right, before it was there, it was hard for sort of a casual person to go out to the Bottoms and figure out what to make of it. There was a driving route, and there were brochures, but if you weren't fairly well equipped to know what to look for, you just kind of were lost. Now, that education center, that grew out of the funding that you all went through that process, is there on [State Highway] 156. It's a great facility.

JW: Exactly.

RB: You're right. Fort Hays basically manages, operates the things. It feels like it gives the place a focus that it never, ever had before.

JW: I don't know if that was part of the—it probably came later.

RB: I think it came later. It hasn't been open all that long. I think it wasn't part of that initial money that was going for all the levees and all that kind of stuff.

JW: I think it was in 1992. It's just a really good feeling to go out there and visit.

RB: Before we shift gears back to more water-focused things as opposed to Cheyenne Bottoms itself, are you a birdwatcher?

JW: Oh, yes.

RB: I know there are a lot of Audubon members like me that are not particular—I like birds, don't get me wrong, but I don't claim to know a whole lot, but you are.

JW: Not as much as my husband is, and if you don't mind another funny story, in the spring of the year, we were at the University of Cincinnati. The windows were open, and a bird was singing outside. He said, "Do you hear that bird?" I said, "You mean that cardinal?" He said, "How did you know what that was?" I laughed and said, "Because my mother was a birdwatcher." He said, "Why are you laughing? I am, too."

RB: Were you married at this time?

JW: No. He picked me up at 7:00 on Saturday morning afterwards, and we went to one of the best places in Cincinnati to birdwatch, which is Spring Grove Cemetery because 1) there's not a lot of traffic.

RB: He's a romantic son-of-a-gun. Let's go birdwatching in the cemetery. You're still married.

JW: Absolutely.

RB: I'm not judging. I'm impressed. Let's go back then. What other water issues—Cheyenne Bottoms is a monumental accomplishment. I don't know that we'll talk about it anymore, but I do want to say, as the State has continued to grapple with surface water issues over time, more and more, Cheyenne Bottoms looks to me like that model that's out there for one way to solve an ongoing important contentious issue. I assume you would agree with that. Wouldn't you?

JW: Right.

RB: What other water issues did you get engaged in in that process then?

JW: Well, one of the things that I thought was really well done was with Governor [Mike] Hayden and the State Water Plan and dedicated funding because there's so much infrastructure and so many things that are important. One of the things that comes to mind is the sedimentation that we're experiencing in our reservoirs. If we would have money to be able to say to the farmers, "Either put a conservation easement along the rivers or do whatever." I mean, Ron [Wolf] and I actually pulled off of I-80 one time in Iowa to take pictures of their grass strips, their filter strips.

RB: Buffer strips.

JW: I thought, "Why can't they do this in Kansas?" It would mean that so many extra acres, they're not producing corn or whatever, but the positive part of it is they're protecting their own land from being washed away, and eventually silting in reservoirs someplace else.

RB: Did the environmental groups like Audubon play a role in the passage of that funding for the State Water Plan in the Hayden administration?

JW: I don't recall when it happened, if it was when Hayden was governor or later on when he was secretary of Wildlife and Parks.

RB: It was when he was governor. Were you guys engaged in that process?

JW: I'm sure that was part of something that we said was important. I had a whole list of folks across the state that I would say, "This is what you need to do. Call your representative or senator."

RB: To try to support it.

JW: Yes. Have them sign on to that whole process.

RB: Any other issues come to mind, water-related in this time? Those are two big ones that everybody talks about. Today we're dealing with some similar issues in terms of Quivira [National Wildlife Refuge].

JW: Right. To me, one that I have a hard time understanding is the reservoir north of Manhattan, and I'm blanking out the name.

RB: Tuttle Creek?

JW: Tuttle Creek. Of all the ones that I've seen the data for, it's the most silted in, and it's supposed to be surrounded mostly by prairie. That makes no sense to me of why that one is worse than some of the others.

RB: I don't know if that's the worst one. John Redmond is the one where they've done some dredging.

JW: Oh, yes. That one was the top of the list.

RB: You're right. The reservoir itself is surrounded by mostly native grass, but there's an awful lot of cultivation as you get up in the end of the watershed that has silted that thing in. So that siltation of reservoirs has been something that Audubon of Kansas or you have been engaged in?

JW: I've been asked to do programs. I usually talk about that when I talk about it. It's enormously expensive. John Redmond was 25 million dollars, if I remember right.

RB: Twenty-five million that was almost a demonstration project, not really a solution.

JW: And it was adamant that that be taken care of because it was a cooling pond.

RB: Wolf Creek. What about water level declines in the Ogallala [Aquifer] out west? I don't get the sense that most of the environmental groups have been real active along those lines. Am I wrong there?

Clearly, they're aware of it.

JW: It's such an enormous problem. I don't know that it's going to be solved anytime soon. There was the lawsuit, *Kansas v. Colorado*.

RB: On the Ark[ansas] River.

JW: Right. I think one of the biggest misperceptions in general is the interchange between groundwater and surface water.

RB: That people are not aware of that connection.

JW: Right. I usually always include a cross-section when I do these different programs. "Oh, I never realized that before."

RB: Does it help to have a husband who's a geologist/hydrologist?

JW: Oh, yes. He's my local resident expert.

RB: I can imagine. But that is one that by and large, the Ogallala issue doesn't relate so directly to wildlife as, say, surface water issues at Cheyenne Bottoms might.

JW: Except, as I was preparing for this, I came across an article that Ron Klataske had written about the effects that so many of our surface water streams in the western part of the state are dried up. They don't run. So, there is a wildlife aspect to that.

RB: Absolutely. That's mostly irrigation out of alluvial aquifers as opposed to the Ogallala. This is one that I agree with Ron wholeheartedly that rivers like the Ark[ansas] are dry today from Garden City to Great Bend, but an awful lot of other tributaries out there are dry as well, and I don't hear much out of the environmental community about that, and that's always been a frustration to me.

JW: Except for the Kansas River, there doesn't seem to be a lot of focus of interest in recreation. Part of that could be because we've only got a few navigable rivers in the state, which I was just amazed that—what is it? The Ark[ansas] and the Kansas?

RB: The Ark[ansas], the Missouri, and the Kansas. We basically only have three.

JW: We've got all these other streams that could be used for recreational purposes, but you don't have access to it if you don't own it.

RB: Unless you get permission to go out and go on.

JW: Right.

RB: Do you think that's part of the reason for the environmental attitudes in Kansas as opposed to other places is lack of access to publicly accessible natural areas?

JW: Right. Yes, I really do think that that plays a big role. Like I said, it was so natural in Minnesota to have this deep feeling of appreciation for all these lakes. I think Kansas is kind of almost at the bottom of the list in terms of public areas.

RB: It is.

JW: If you don't have access to it, you don't really appreciate it.

RB: That lack of access leads to a lack of awareness, which leads to a lack of action, probably in a lot of ways.

JW: The other thing that I find a little bit strange, and I really need to do more research on it is that it's my understanding that some of these wooded areas or whatnot area considered a wasteland for tax purposes.

RB: I don't know. Now you're on to something I'm unfamiliar with.

JW: I think I've read that. I wouldn't want them to have to pay more taxes, but to call it wasteland when that's—I mean, wooded areas, wetlands, prairies. That's prime wildlife habitat. So, I would never think about calling it wasteland.

RB: That's one of the reasons that Ark[ansas] River issue bothers me so much. If you drive out there today, all you see is dead cottonwoods. A strip of cottonwoods along either side of the Ark[ansas] River may not seem like that big a deal, but again, when you've lost so much ecological area, then you get rid of the riparian area that's so important to birds and fish and everything else, it's devastating. I think you're right. Lack of awareness is why people have tended not to worry about it.

One of the things that I admire about you is your ability to go to water-related meetings year after year after year and sit there and listen to people. Clearly that's what it takes though, right, is to master those details, and you can't do it any other way. Is that a fair statement?

JW: I think so. And to try to stay up with what's happening. I went through many, many meetings of the 50 Year Vision thing, not certain what usefulness came out of all of that, but yes. Water is just—you can't live without it. Wildlife can't live without it. It's just part of what's important in every little piece of life.

RB: Is that what motivates you to go to all of those meetings that go on forever?



JW: Probably partly that plus, I don't know, it's interesting. People that go there, I know a lot of them, and they're nice folks, and I enjoy having the opportunity to visit with them.

RB: So, you've developed a relationship with a lot of those folks. In some sense, I would say in the water community, partly the reason you're here today is if you were to say to the folks in the water community, point to somebody from the environmental community that they respect and know and who shows up, they'd be hard pressed to identify many people, but they would know who you are from having done that.

JW: Thank you.

RB: So, having watched this process and most of the interviews that we have done focused on really as people recognized a lot of the machinery they have to put in place to deal with water issues, mostly in the '70s, and then you show up in the '80s, how successful has all of that machinery been? How well is all the effort that we've made to deal with water issues were, do you think?

JW: Clearly Cheyenne Bottoms was enormously successful. I'm hoping that the example of that will carry over for Quivira [National Wildlife Refuge]. Cheyenne Bottoms is a shining example of what can be done without negatively impacting the irrigators. They can continue to farm profitably.

RB: Why do you think that has worked for Cheyenne Bottoms, and it hasn't worked so far in Quivira and didn't show any signs of wanting to work in Quivira from what I can see?

JW: I don't know. Well, nobody's stepped forward so far to actually bring a lawsuit. That's part of it. And it's, you know, on their part, it's much easier to say, "Well, we'll take care of that later," you know? I think that's exactly what's happened. It's continued to kick the can down the road, so to speak. It's going to take basically the same kind of process.

RB: Do you think that process is achievable today? This is a much more contentious time in all sorts of ways—politically, environmentally, and lots of ways -- than it was during the '80s and Cheyenne Bottoms. Is that part of the problem, too, do you think?

JW: One would hope that, at the federal level, that they would recognize the fact that the water law is the same today as it was twenty years ago, thirty years ago. That hasn't changed. It's going to take somebody to 1) to sue for the water right, and then I'm hoping that Mr. Barfield [current Chief Engineer, DWR] will understand, and that there'll be—similar to Cheyenne Bottoms, that there will be data developed and presented that makes the case that it's possible to do this.

RB: I think it's pretty clear that Dave [Barfield] was right on the verge of administering water rights, or said he was, as of January 1 of this year [2020]. I believe that. I think that he was ready to pull the trigger, and then at that point, [U.S.] Fish and Wildlife Service backed off, and so we go on down the road. But it does feel to me like we are in a time where it's much harder to achieve consensus and compromise than it might have been in the 1980s.

JW: That reminds me of another thing that happened when I was lobbying. I was standing out in front of the cage elevator at the State House, and I was visiting with one of the gals who was lobbying for the pesticide folks, and one of the other environmental lobbyists passed, came back, and said, "How can you be so damn nice to her?" I said, "Well, she's a person. She's pregnant. It looks like she's due any minute." I mean, what do you accomplish by making enemies of the people you disagree with?

I guess that's one of the things that I've felt strongly about for years is that we may disagree, but we can sit down and talk about our disagreement and perhaps come to some kind of resolution.

RB: Historically, people in Kansas have had that sort of niceness or whatever you want to call it, that they're willing to do that, but I was just down to a Kansas Rural Center meeting in Wichita last weekend in which environmentalists sort of formed a circular firing squad over wind farms. Some of them hate them, and some of them love them. There aren't that many environmentalists in this state, and then they split themselves in half and make themselves less effective as a result.

JW: Yes, I heard about that meeting. It bothered me because I know the people on both sides of the issue.

RB: They're well-meaning people who feel strongly.

JW: Exactly. I don't think the folk from the Climate and Energy Project take wildlife into consideration, and clearly wind farms can be enormously helpful if you're trying to do green energy, but I've also seen the data that they take out thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of birds on the migratory corridors. I think that it makes sense to have siting standards.

RB: But probably one of the big lessons from talking to you is that ability to not just reach across the aisle or reach across to legislators that may or may not agree with you, but also develop relationships with fellow environmentalists who ought to be on your own side to begin with.

JW: Right. I don't know. I guess I've always felt that you can't be successful making enemies out of potential friends. Why not try to have a frank discussion about what your different positions are and see if you can't come up with something that both can agree on?

RB: It feels to me like, just watching again from a distance, you've been successful in doing that. Again, as I watch folks, watch you interact and watch folks. I know from the various awards that you've won and recognition you've got, it's obviously that's not just what I think, but a lot of people think.

Let's sort of end with going back. Would you say that the difference between Kansas and Minnesota and the other places that you've gone in this process is a function of a more conservative climate politically, agriculture, lack of awareness? Are those the things you think are different here?

JW: Well, at least superficially. I'm not sure when you get down to the basics. I mean, clearly there's a lot of agriculture that goes on in Minnesota, but they don't reign supreme. I don't know—I haven't looked at the data. But I do know that a lot of money is generated through recreation, based on natural resources there compared to here. And part of that I think is that, for whatever reason, we don't have

very many open spaces, public spaces. If you can't go out and enjoy it, and take your kids or your grandkids or whatever, how are they going to—

RB: Sure. I've said this over and over. Kansas likes to think of itself as a rural state, but it's really more and more an urban place all the time, which makes that more and more important all the time. I think we both agreed on that a long time—clearly, Cheyenne Bottoms is a shining example. I think we've made that clear. If you could change something in this State in terms of how it approaches natural resource issues, water maybe especially, but across the board, what do you wish was different here?

JW: I guess it would be a combination of things, that there would be more open space available to people for education and just recreation and enjoyment, and I don't know if it's even a practical idea, but one of the things that our local chapter [of the Audubon Society] does is our education program chair has come up with a wonderful program that is done in conjunction with KU [University of Kansas], and Bob Hagen who works for the [Kansas] Biological Survey, and they take students out, I think, seventh grade maybe, a couple of times a year. Over the past several years, they've taken 10,000 students out to the [Baker] Wetlands or to Clinton Lake or to natural areas and explained why they're special and what they can learn.

That's, I think, the one thing that I wish every student had that kind of opportunity. I still think of my own experience growing up as a kid. My parents had a friend who had a farm. It would have been not what conventional agriculture is considered now. He had a small dairy herd. And I was on my own, and I could paddle and do all of this. I had the chance to experience nature, asking myself questions, "Why is this or this?" I wish everyone would have that kind of opportunity.

RB: Was that in Ohio?

JW: Yes.

RB: People ask me this question all the time. So, I'm going to ask you: What's your favorite place in the State?

JW: I love to go to Council Grove and then come back on Highway 4, I think it is.

RB: It is, yes.

JW: Through the Flint Hills. That's such a gorgeous drive. It really and truly is, that drive along there. It's not conducive to much, but [Interstate] 70 through the Flint Hills. All of that is just really amazing. I think Kansas has a really bad rap in terms of everybody thinks it's boring and flat, and I think if you really look around, it's not flat. Flat is southern Illinois, southern Indiana.

RB: Florida. I thought maybe you were going to give me a water-related answer there somehow, some place like Cheyenne Bottoms or the wetlands out here.

JW: That, too. We're so lucky here to have a place like the Baker Wetlands.

RB: Again, there's an education facility out there. So clearly one of your big points as we talk today is the importance of that sort of awareness in education in terms of appreciation in dealing with problems.

JW: Yes. I wish everybody could have the same kind of growing up that I had.

RB: It's a different world today. Those opportunities are out there, but they're harder than they used to be. The world is different in a lot of ways. I know what you're saying. I appreciate you coming in to talk about these things. You clearly are a role model for an awful lot of people, and the State is a better place because of the work you've done, whether everybody knows that or not.

JW: When I saw the list of everybody else that you had already interviewed, I thought, "Why me?"

RB: I think it's pretty obvious. I think some of the other people on that list might do well to read what you had to say or listen to what you had to say. I appreciate it.

JW: Thank you. That's very nice.

Interview of Joyce Wolf by Rex Buchanan, November 15, 2019

RB: Thank you.

[End of File]