

# Interview With Senator Dottie Wham

This is Lee Bahrych, coordinator of the Colorado Legislative Oral History Library. The date is August 21, 2001 and with me today is former Senator and former Representative Dottie Wham. This interview is being conducted at my home in Denver, Colorado.

L.B. Senator Wham, the first thing I want to ask you about is your family history and your education. You grew up and went to school in Illinois and now here you are in Colorado.

D.W. That's right, I was born in Centralia, Illinois, and went to grade school and high school there and then went to college at McMurry College in Jacksonville, Illinois, where I got a Bachelors degree and then went to the University of Illinois where I got a Masters degree.

L.B. You moved?

D.W. Moved here in 1950. Our oldest daughter was six months old and we moved to Montrose where we had spent a summer after Bob's graduation from law school. He had worked for a man who had been a football classmate, football player, in Illinois with his Dad. His name was Johnny Monnahan and he was a great legend in the Umcompahgre Valley. A fine attorney and was a partner with Lee Knous, who became Governor. He was a partner with him early on. We spent a summer out there and Bob kind of clerked and goffered in the office for a summer. We knew that's where we wanted to come back, so that's what we did in 1950. After he graduated from Law School, we came back to Montrose where he went into practice with George Kemp who later became a district judge over there. We were there from '50 to '53.

L.B. When did you move to Denver?

D.W. We moved to Denver in 1953. Bob came over to be an Assistant Attorney General with Duke Dunbar. Duke Dunbar had needed somebody from the western slope and that was the way we got to Denver.

L.B. Now you were always active in southeast politics. I remember you were active in getting the school out here. Jessie Hamilton or Hamilton Junior High.

D.W. Yes, Hamilton Junior High. I became interested in politics in Montrose, in the Eisenhower election. That was my first experience in precinct politics. I can remember collecting money. In the part of Montrose where we lived, it was not terribly affluent, and lots of people gave me change. I did collect money for Eisenhower, which was to the great distress of our family back in Illinois, who were very conservative Republicans and for Taft in that primary. We did, both of us, worked in that election. That was my first experience in politics. Then when we moved to Denver, well actually we moved to Englewood, I was not active in politics out there. I had been very active in the TB and Health Association on the western slope because I found that in Montrose County, there was still Diphtheria and

Typhoid, in the west end of Montrose County. There was no required immunization at all. Children were having diseases which they should not, in my opinion, have been having. So I worked with that health association to get an immunization program in there. Then I worked on the health issues of the three counties, Montrose, Delta, and Grand Junction. So when I came to Denver, that was still an interest of mine and we had a young child so I was not active in politics out there, to any great extent. We did do some work for Bill Armstrong though, who was our Senator, I guess in the State Legislature.

L.B. He was a Representative one term and then moved to the Senate and then he went on to Congress.

D.W. Right. We were active in that campaign when he had a primary against Ranger Rogers. Ranger was an old family, descendant of a family that had been in Arapahoe County for a long time. Bill beat him in that primary and he went on to Congress.

L.B. So that then got you moved into Denver. You got involved in Southeast politics

D.W. Then we moved into Denver. Bob then went to work for the city attorney or became the Assistant City Attorney. We felt that we should live in Denver if he was going to be City Attorney. There was no residency requirements at that point but it just seemed that as long as he was working as a City Attorney in Denver it seemed only right to us that we live in Denver. So we moved just barely into Denver and just kind of across the line into southeast Denver. I became active in politics both basically because of Joe Shoemaker who was at that time working with Bob Lee who was the Republican County Chairman. They were getting people into every precinct so that they would be able to have a very good chance at electing a Republican mayor in this Democrat city. It was a Democrat city even then. Though we had many more Republicans in the state legislature, we were still electing some Republicans in Denver. Bob Lee really built up the county organization. Joe was one of his so-called Lieutenants and he recruited me to be a precinct committee person in that precinct in southeast Denver. So I've been active ever since, except for the ten years when I was "hatched" as a Federal employee. I was not able to be active in that because at that point, even more than today I think, people who were working for the Federal Government were very closely watched to see if they were active in politics.

L.B. What made you decide to run for office?

D.W. Well, I had worked with the Action Agency, that was a volunteer agency of the Federal Government for ten years in Colorado and Wyoming, and absolutely loved the work. I had volunteers in a lot of places in both states. Worked with both Governors, that was Governor Hathaway at that time in Wyoming. Then when Nixon decided to cut the size of the Federal Government, a lot of those cuts came in his people in the different regions in states. I thought that was a real shame, because he had decentralized the Federal Government a whole lot. We had a lot of authority even at the state level to run programs that would help the people of the state. When the cutback in the size of government came, I was low man on the totem pole so, I was pushed out of my federal job and decided that was ok. I came home and thought I could stay home and do all the things that I hadn't been doing in those ten years

because I was working full-time. I cleaned all the closets and got terribly bored with being at home and decided I would run for office because our district was represented by a Democrat of the Legislative district. I was thinking he wasn't very good so I decided to run for that office. I had done a lot of work in the PTA's in SE Denver and had worked on getting Hamilton Junior High built. We had double sessions at TJ (Thomas Jefferson) and some of us had kids in two sessions of that split session school, so we worked on getting another junior high out there, so we didn't have that situation. I was fairly well-known throughout the district because of that and because of other work that both Bob and I had done in the community. Because this was a race against an incumbent, the men who might have run if it had been an open seat weren't very interested in taking that on, so I didn't have a lot of objection to my running. So I ran for the state legislature and beat Charlie Brown, who was the incumbent representative at that time. You, Lee, became my treasurer shortly after that.

L.B. Dottie, what was your first impression when you knew you'd won?

D.W. Well first of all, I barely won. So the first impression was just relief that I won and actually relief that it was over. It had been a fairly difficult campaign. A very active campaign. Wondering what in the world, how in the world I would really do a good job at this. A lot of people asked me why are you doing this, what particular thing do you want to do? I didn't really have anything like that in mind. I mean people do, I know, go in and say I'm going to fix this or that, but I didn't. I just really liked government and government problems and dealing with them, which I had done in my work with Action, in both Colorado and Wyoming. I had been very much involved in governmental kinds of problems, so I just wanted to be in the legislature.

L.B. What were your feelings when you'd won? That was not your first visit to the State Capitol.

D.W. No, no because Bob had been there for four years as a Senator. I was really very familiar with the Capitol. I had volunteers in the Governor's office and I worked with Governor Lamm, at that time. I had volunteers in Human Services, that's not what it was called at the time, I guess it was called Social Services. Because that was the time we were emptying out our mental facilities and putting people on the street. Supposedly along with that was to come services in the community. Well they didn't really provide the money to provide those services so those people were there sleeping under the bridges and getting along the best they could. The Director of Social Services, whose name escapes me at the moment, came to Action and said could he have Vista volunteers to help develop those services. I had a huge number, I think there must have been thirty volunteers throughout the state, working on trying to develop housing, transportation, medical services, all kinds of things for those people. So I was very familiar with that aspect of the problems of government at that time.

L.B. You would carry that over in your work in the House of Representatives.

D.W. That's right and in fact, Lee, throughout my sixteen years, I got into lots of battles, one of the first ones I got into was with Bonnie Allison, who to this day is a very close friend of mine.

She was carrying a bill for the developmentally disabled. I thought it was all wrong. I was going to oppose her on the bill and try to rewrite it. She had been very much influenced by Jefferson County who had their own idea about how the developmentally disabled money should be spent and how the services should be provided. Bonnie, to her credit, and the reason she was so successful a legislator, I went to her and said I will have to oppose your bill because I think it's all wrong. She came to me and said instead of doing that why don't we get together and rewrite it? Which is what we did. I think to this day, it has been a good basis for the way we deal with the developmentally disabled.

L.B. Senator Wham, what were the major issues you were involved in? Did they change over the years you were in the House and your years in the Senate?

D.W. I think probably they did, Lee, though actually I always had been interested in those issues that dealt with the developmentally disabled and the mentally ill, because that was my educational background. I think what happened, and I was involved in a lot of those and the children's issues and the education issues, but as I became more and more involved with the judicial issues, that became a bigger part of what I did. Though when Jim Hale, who was my staff member for so long, did just a whole scan of everything I had carried and then did a pie chart, actually I carried almost as many health care bills as I carried judicial bills. I think as I got farther into the issues of the legislature, the health care issues became major as one of the first major battles was with the AIDS issues. I've been trying to remember that because I was still in the House when that happened. I was in the House for three years. A man named Dale Erickson, do you remember him Lee? He was an Adams County legislator and he was kind of a renegade.

L.B. Oh yes, I remember him.

D.W. He had started to carry, this was in 1985, maybe in 1986, but very early in the understanding that we had a real problem with this disease that was showing up that we eventually called AIDS. At that point much of what was happening in the country was to be very punitive about this. This was a disease largely in the male homosexual community and people were looking at putting these people in prison and treating them as though they had committed crimes, to get them out of the social structure. There was a lot of that going on in other states, and Dale carried this bill. One of the things that I learned in the House, and basically from Ron Strahle, was how you behaved as a legislator. There were certain rules that were unwritten but that you didn't do. I learned that on this bill of Dale Erickson's because I knew he was wrong about how he was doing this. He was reciting all of the awful things about the beginnings of AIDS, and they were awful. The sexual practices were things that most of us could not tolerate. There was much promiscuity in the community and this was spreading the AIDS virus, as was drug use, but at that point he was really zeroed in on the sexual practices of homosexuals, which, of course, made good press, but was not going to help us deal with this disease as it went through the community. We changed his bill in committee and he went to the podium and talked about the bill on how it had been changed and asked to have it killed. Well, I did not know that you were not suppose to challenge that if the bill sponsor asked to have the thing killed, so I challenged it and we almost beat him on the floor. Then it was Ron Strahle afterwards who took me aside and said uh uh uh, that's

not what you do. If a sponsor wants to kill his own bill, you go along with that. Strahle was the one that I had great respect for. As a person who felt deeply about the traditions of the legislature.

L.B. Custom and usage.

D.W. Traditions that made it possible for us to work together. He was a tiger when it came to that. He expected you to observe all of those traditions whether you knew them or not, you were somehow supposed to know them and get with it. I remember seeing him chase photographers back across an imaginary line which he had in that House that no reporter crossed. The reporters knew it, and if one of them didn't know it and got too far on to the House floor, they were quickly told about the fact that they didn't do that. He told me that we did not fight with the sponsor who wanted to kill a bill. So that was one of my first battles. Then I told the health department director, Tom, who's last name escapes me at the moment, that I would carry a bill the next year and that we would do it right. Out of that came Colorado's way of handling the AIDS concerns and we were one of the few states that required testing but it was totally anonymous. We did not allow people to come in and be tested and not keep a record of that, but we drew the privacy so tight around it that I don't think anybody ever found those results that weren't supposed to have them. In fact, later we got ourselves into trouble. We had drawn them so tightly, that when we needed to break them, that it was hard to do it. We had people tested, their names were known in the health department and bless those health department workers who went out on the street to find these people and to find their sexual partners to get them to be tested. I think it worked very well for Colorado.

L.B. Was the public aware of what was being done? Did they support this in general?

D.W. No. Well you know you don't know what the public is. The homosexual community did not like it. They wanted people to be able to go and be tested and never have any record made. Never have any follow up. They wanted it to be completely anonymous. Tom felt and so did his health department people, that we had a responsibility to tell people who had been exposed, if they had sexual relations with someone who was HIV positive. They needed to know it. One of the reasons I was so interested in that was most of those people were women. Many of them wives of men who, as they say, swung both ways, and had been into the homosexual community and had sex. Those women were at risk if that man had HIV tested positive. So we were very careful to balance the privacy rights of the person who had the disease and the people who needed to know about it, so that no one knew who didn't have to know. That's the way the law was written, so that people could not go into that registry and find out if somebody had been tested, just because they might like to know. It was a difficult bill to write. In fact, I think it was the longest running conference committee that anybody ever had. We met every morning at 7:30 for some weeks before we worked out all of the problems that were in that bill, and between the House and the Senate versions. To get the support insofar as we could of the homosexual community. Some of them did support it but mostly they did not because they were so afraid. It was a time when if people thought you might have AIDS, you could not get a job, you could not get housing. It was just a terrible time for those people. People who were totally innocent of having any relation

to anybody who had AIDS were suspect. So we were very careful to try to balance that. We finally did get the bill through and got it signed. That was one of the first of my many battles in the health care field.

L.B. You spent three years in the House and then you were appointed to the Senate to fill a vacancy over there. It was unusual for you to be named chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Are you the first non-lawyer that was a Chairman of Judiciary?

D.W. No, I think Martha Ezzard. Well now she was an attorney. I may have been. I was the Vice-chair under Ralph Cole. Bob, my husband had been Vice-chair under Ralph Cole, so that's probably an unusual situation. Ralph to me was the absolutely perfect chairman. He was so gentlemanly, he was so courteous to everybody who came in to testify, except lobbyists. He didn't have a lot of use for lobbyists. He allowed them to have their say, but if it were a citizen that came before the committee, they were treated in a very courtly, courteous manner. He ran a committee that totally allowed for both sides to be heard. He was always anxious to have that happen. He was the best chairman that I ever served under. I guess I tried to be that kind of a chairman. I thought that, first of all, I've always felt that if people think enough about the process to come in and tell you what they think, that you listen to them. You pay attention.

L.B. Most of the time they are nervous. It's the first time they have been down to the Capitol, the first time they have ever been before a committee, and you set them at ease.

D.W. I had that experience, too, because I was Chair of the Civil Rights Commission and had to go over and appear before, I think it was a House committee, it had to be a House committee because I remember who the chair was, and she was not nice to people who came in. It's very frightening, no matter how much you think you're able to do it. I have seen people, attorneys, who appear before Judges, all kinds of folks who shouldn't be nervous in that situation, who are. It's an intimidating process down there.

L.B. Dottie, some issues are never resolved, but are ongoing. What issues were you involved with that continued through your sixteen years and still continue today?

D.W. Oh, Lee, I think they are the same issues. Certainly, how do you deal with kids in the judicial system? That has been an ongoing problem for years and this state has a history of judges who really did a whole lot to provide for the juvenile system, but we still have problems today. Today as a retired Senator, I'm chairing a task force for the Supreme Court, looking at whether we should have a family court to deal with those same issues. We see it in the paper today. One of the things that did happen through the years on Judiciary, and I guess I was chair for twelve years, because after Ralph didn't run, as you may remember, Bill Owens decided to run against him, and Ralph decided not to run again. One of the things that happened in those twelve years, was an increasing amount of time of the committee taken up by family issues, and by that I mean divorce, support, child custody, and children in trouble with the law and children with no one to take care of them or children who were being abused. More and more of Judiciary became involved with that. You might think that would have been true in HEWI, and it was, but so many of them became legal

issues that we were just inundated with those problems. Problems with adoption also. I think the whole question of what do you do about children in this society who have needs that aren't being met by parents, just became more and more an issue, during those twelve years and certainly is as enormous an issue today. We see for instance, we don't know what to do with the children who are sex offenders. We had to fight. We could not find a place, as you remember, one of the big battles was where were we going to put a juvenile facility in Denver. We could not find a place. We eventually decided not to put one here. Most juveniles that were overflowing Gilliam, which was our only locked facility, we only put the worst of the worst in there now and put the others in community in some way so that they're tracked and treated. It has worked very well in Denver, but for about five or six years it was just an ongoing problem because Gilliam was so overloaded with kids, as Judges continued to send them there. Then we had a law suit come in and say you can only put seventy, I believe, in there, so we had to find other things to do with them. So they went into the community, in very secure places, but not locked. It has worked well, but it was an ongoing problem. As we see now, in Jefferson County, they are having a terrible problem with what to do with juvenile sex offenders. As the communities have said we're not going to have them in the community and they can't find a place to build a facility. So, I think the whole ongoing problems of family issues, which just seem to grow every year in Judiciary, now are at a point where I think people don't know what to do about it.

L.B. They've become more acute.

D.W. They've become more acute and there seem to be more of them. We don't have the facilities at Ft. Logan and Pueblo, that we used to send children. Most of these children, in fact, I have heard figures as high as eighty to ninety percent of the juveniles in corrections, have mental health problems. We are not treating them to the extent that we should be. That's an ongoing issue that I think has to be met. I don't know how it's going to be.

L.B. Do you think a lot of this is due to the increase in population in this front-range area?

D.W. Well part of it is. Part of it is the change in family structure. I mean I think the fact that more women are working and not being at home, children have more of an opportunity to get into trouble. Now whether that has anything to do with their mental health problems is another thing. I do think that we're just seeing more and more need for better mental health treatment and less, and less, and less money put into it. That's the other thing that's happening as we've capitulated all the mental health care. So those issues are enormous and I think are continuing. I think the whole problem as we saw it develop and didn't recognize it, of growth, I mean that's been there all along, as to how we deal with increasing numbers in the population and in many cases increasing numbers in homelessness. I think the whole question of how we develop enough housing for people that they can afford. I think that has been a problem that increased during those years and is still there. Of course, we all know about the transportation problems. Those have gotten much worse, especially in our rural areas, as our airlines don't any longer serve the small communities as they once did because the government doesn't subsidize them. When that happened, many of those airlines went out of business, were not able to serve the small communities, because it's just not economic to do so. Those are problems that were there, and continue to be there. Health care, of

course, is the biggie.

L.B. It's always there.

D.W. It has been there and as we have seen the insurance situations change, now we've gotten ourselves into the situation where we're dependent on managed care and have dismantled the system that was working. I don't know what happens now. It's going to hit the wall one of these days.

L.B. Dottie, you're talking about the ongoing problems but we have term limitations. How do you get the historic background of a problem or issue, how do you educate the new people coming in that are only going to serve, for possibly eight years in the House, maybe not that long, how do you get them up to speed on the issues?

D.W. Well, Lee, I have talked with a lot of people about this. I talked to Sally Hopper at lunch the other day. We were going back over some of the things we did. I don't think people can get up to speed in that length of time. I'm not sure that the people who are being elected are necessarily interested in those questions. You know it used to be that there would be a sprinkling of doctors in the legislature, not many because they couldn't do it, but there would be some. There would be some nurses, there would be people who have hands-on experience with health care. There would be many people who had experience in that field, whether they were physicians or not. I don't think you do get them up top speed. Just learning the difference between Medicaid and Medicare takes awhile. To learn something about what those requirements are and how those systems work, takes many years. I think it is a problem. Term limits are a hideous innovation in this state. They have caused enormous problems and they will continue to do so. I think we did not realize, I mean I worked against term limits when what's his name from Arapahoe County was pushing them. I thought they were wrong. We have never had people who stayed in the legislature too long. We've had individuals who did but basically people did not. The people who stayed were usually rural, which is interesting, but I think it's a part of our history. They got the crops in and then we had the legislature. That's why the legislature starts in the middle of winter. So that those rural people could come in to work on the problems of the state.

L.B. Til spring, when the grass got green.

D.W. That's right. They stayed many years. I know Bev Bledsoe said that's why they had so much power, because they had so much knowledge. They knew the history of issues. We don't have that now. You would be surprised how many reporters who are on my phone saying, "Dottie, when did this happen, why did this happen?" There's no one left down there who knows those things.

L.B. To me as an ex-staff member, it's the custom and usage of the rules of the General Assembly, are long forgotten. How they're used.

D.W. I think the important thing about that, Lee, is not just that the rules are there but the rules are there and the traditions are there that have grown up that make it possible to do good



judgments about issues. Those, when they're forgotten, and when people don't treat their fellows with the respect that used to be there, then things just don't happen well. One thing I did not think about actually, when I was fighting term limits, I did think about the fact that you need institutional memory, and you need people who have been there long enough to know the issues around an issue. Like what are the issues around workers comp? What are the issues around the death penalty? What are the issues that people have dealt with through the years? That's no longer there. I think it's a great loss, but the thing I did not think about was leadership. When you have a Speaker who has had six years of experience. Six years to get to know the ropes. Six years to get to know something about the issues, but usually only the issues he's interested in. Not the generalized issues because they are so many. He has been there six years and he has not developed the strong network that a leader needs in order to lead. Whether or not people agree with him, he needs that network. He needs to be able to go to a person and talk with him and feel him out and see whether he can get help there on issues. That isn't there when you've only been there six years. The other thing is he isn't going to be there after two years. Frankly, I think you need to be able to say, I do need your help. This is the way this needs to go. A leader needs to be able to lead by saying this is where I'm going, I would like you to be with me, if you're not with me this session, I'd like you to be with me next session. He isn't going to be there next session. So that makes a great deal of difference in how he approaches people and issues. I think that leadership issue is one that we don't really recognize as being so hurtful in term limits.

I think we've seen two things this year that make it very clear. I don't think that, while there's always been hanky panky in the legislature, I don't want to suggest there hasn't because we know there has. I dealt with some when I was in the House and there were some House members who were hitting on some staff members. The staff members came to me and said Dottie we need some help with this and I went to the Speaker and said either you fix it or I'll fix it. It'll go public. Well it never went public. That's what a leader can do in knowing who his people are and how to deal with them. I think we would not have had a Doug Dean situation in another time. He would have been looking to know whether he wanted to be Speaker in the next session, the session after that, whether he was going to be able to lead. He would not have gotten into that mess that became public, because it does affect his ability to lead. That would have been important to him. I don't think it's that important if you're going to be there for two years. I don't think you would have had a Senate President drawing a line in the sand. That's a dumb thing to do if you want to be a leader in the Legislature. You don't draw lines in the sand. You're going to get it kicked in your face, is what's going to happen. There are too many dynamics around an issue that make that not a good thing to do. I think that the leadership that's developed over years doesn't act that way because it won't result in good leadership. So I think that's one aspect of term limits that I never anticipated. I did know that the reason term limits passed so easily in the state, was that people wanted rid of Pat Schroeder. They thought this was going to do it. She was the poster girl that was held up as being there too long. For all of those who didn't like her, it was a good way to get then to work for term limitation. Well it didn't effect Pat Schroeder because it can't.

- L.B. In the House, we usually, out of 65 members, we had an average of about 24 to 26 turnovers every two years. So you're right. When Senator Considine brought that up in the Senate, it

was a referred measure, SCR. I don't think that they understood it and I think you're right, they thought they were really getting rid of somebody in Washington DC.

D.W. Right. I think it has hurt the legislature a great deal.

L.B. Yes, I think it has. Staff and lobbyists have carried the institutional memory and it really has not worked out as well as people had hoped that it would.

D.W. No, but I talked with lobbyist, good lobbyists, who depended on people having understanding of their issues. That's not there now. So they don't have any way to go to someone and have them really understand what their issue is in a bill. There's nobody there. There's nobody for the new people to go to, to get understanding. I always used to go to certain people. Al Meiklejohn was my constitutional (mentor), I always asked him about the constitutional ramifications of things, if I were concerned about them. Ralph Cole before him. Ron Strahle in the House. There were those people that you could depend upon, not to give you a Republican or a Democrat answer, but an answer as to what the real issue was. The whole worker's comp thing. I hated worker's comp. I never liked to get into worker's comp. You have to, you have to vote on those issues. You have lobbyists coming to you saying one thing and other lobbyists saying another. There were people you could go to who really understood worker's comp and understood if you voted on a certain bill and it passed, what did that mean in the whole system. That's a very complicated issue. There are not a lot of people there who understand that.

L.B. It's an ongoing issue. It's a never ending one.

D.W. That's right.

L.B. Dottie, I wanted to ask you to tell us some of the history of your bill on the trauma care throughout the state. I know you worked seven years on that.

D.W. Well, actually it was a little longer than that. I think that's one of the things about term limits. Ralph Cole worked what, fourteen years on seatbelts. Well if you're only there for eight, you're not going to work fourteen years on anything. The trauma bill was an interesting one in that there were a couple of lobbyists actually, Eddie Tomlinson and oh, I've forgotten the other man's name, who came to me and said, we have this trauma institute and we need to make it a real statewide trauma system. Would you carry the bill? Well it sounded good to me so I said yes. It started out with this bill. In the first committee I realized that nobody had done the work that had to be done on this bill because the hospital's people were coming unglued at the thought that somebody was going to say what was a trauma hospital and what was not. So I withdrew the bill and went back to the people in the trauma institute and said look, I'd like to talk to you about grassroots organizing. Nobody had gone around the state. Nobody had tried to talk with the rural hospitals about why this was important. So they saw it as a Denver thing. Denver just wanted to take their business. So we had to start all over and go out and try to have hospitals understand that, first of all, trauma was different from emergency rooms. Trauma is that terrible physical injury that has to have immediate and specialized care, or the person will die. It's not the broken arm, it's

not the broken leg. That was not what the trauma institute was interested in. Nobody had gone around and done that so when I carried the bill again, and it went to the first committee, and the hospitals came in and said it's going to cost me so many millions of dollars to have a trauma center and I can't afford it, but I have to have a trauma center. No matter how many times I said no you don't and that's not what we want you to do, it took all the years of working with those people to have them understand that what we were doing was only setting up a system of communication, basically. So that when the person was scraped up on LaVeta Pass after an automobile accident, he would get just as fast and good a care as the person who was scraped up off of Sixth Avenue in Denver. Now what that took was developing a whole internet of information among these people. It involved the people in the emergency services, the ambulance people. It involved the hospital where the person was first going to be taken, so that person knew that he would stabilize that patient as best he could and then he would know which hospital in Denver that was the best for that patient to go to. That there would be an ambulance or helicopter to get that person there in the "golden two hours." Those are the two hours that are critical if a person is to be saved. If he has a broken spleen, if he has a head injury of certain types, whatever, he has to get to the right place in those two hours. So what we did was create two more trauma system categories. It used to be just one, two, and three. Well we knew that in Colorado the most important person was the person who first saw that patient. If you remember the young woman who died, named Sanford, in the San Luis Valley, she was in an automobile accident and the emergency people came and they took her to a hospital in Pueblo where her doctor was, and he was a good doctor. He recognized there was something going on here that he couldn't handle. It was a heart situation. Well, he knew one heart doctor in Denver. So he sent the girl to, I forget the hospital, it's just as well, to this doctor. She was taken to this hospital in Denver. She should have been ok but this was not a trauma center. They did not have a trauma doc on call who would have recognized that she had a ruptured aorta. So she was put to bed. She was taken care of. Put to bed nicely in the hospital. Nobody checked on her and she bled to death during the night. Now you know that doctor in the San Luis Valley or wherever he was when she was first taken, did the right thing. He sent her to Denver and he thought the doctor would be there who would be able to take care of her. What we know is a Trauma One Center, which is the highest level of care, has everybody either there or on call within minutes. They know in the receiving emergency room, trauma docs know to check all the things that need to be checked so that doesn't happen. Those people from the San Luis Valley, her family, were just critical in getting this done. They came to every meeting we had and they were not interested in the politics of it. They were not interested in the economics of these hospitals. They only were interested that not another young woman, and she was just a graduate of high school, a very good student, all of the things were great with her life ahead of her, that if there's a way to be saved, that those people be saved. That was how this whole system began to develop. Doctors from around the state, some of them spent enormous time. Emergency room people, the Chief of the fire department out in Castlewood. I remember he came. They would work together to figure out, how do we get the communication going, how do we get the cooperation of everybody so that we don't take a person who needs to be at DGH, "the knife and gun club" as it's called, taken to someplace where they don't know how to handle it.

L.B. How many Trauma One Centers do we have? Colorado Springs, Denver?

D.W. No, there is no Trauma One in Colorado Springs. They're Trauma Two's. The Trauma Two's are practically the same as Trauma One's. Trauma One's are usually teaching Hospitals so that they have Residents there. They have people always there. We have two left. St Anthony's and DGH. Colorado General decided they would not continue to be a Trauma One. They would send their people to DGH or St. A's. Then we have one, Children's. Children's is a regional. We created a special category for the regional children's trauma center because as a matter of fact, most children throughout the region who really need that kind of care had been going to Children's anyway. So they upgraded their emergency care so that they became a regional trauma center for children. Then in Colorado Springs, we have two level two's and they do a wonderful job. Colorado Springs Hospitals have been great. St Mary's in Grand Junction is such a fine trauma center. It's a level two but they have people within thirty minutes always. All the specialists they need and they're trained in trauma. One of the things that St Mary's has done which has been so great, has been, basically, a doctor there who has headed it, they now have all of the western slope hospitals tied into St Mary's and they go and they train their emergency room people. They train their emergency staff who are picking up people in their accidents. So on the western slope now there's really a great deal of hope that anybody who has a desperate accident will be saved because they'll go to St Mary's. In certain instances St Mary's will send them over to DG or St A's, but usually they can handle it and they handle a lot of Utah accidents as well.

L.B. Is that right?

D.W. So, it's really a great hospital and they've done a lot of work.

L.B. It took you how many years to get this through the legislature?

D.W. Well, you know, I think it was eight actually, from the time I withdrew the first bill. It's still not done, Lee. These people are working now on the councils for both the emergency room, and remember, the one thing we shouldn't forget, it was Claire Traylor, who years before I started on this, had put a dollar surcharge on licence plates (or registrations) and those dollars have gone to the emergency medical people throughout the state. When you see those little white and orange ambulances running around, that are new and newly equipped, those have been bought with that money.

L.B. I didn't know that.

D.W. Those ambulances are just critical. Some of them are equipped with the very latest trauma care. They have CAT scans, they have all kinds of things on them, so that once they pick up people, those ambulances are equipped to save people until they can get them to a hospital. That was Claire. We had that emergency money and we didn't have any trauma money so now all of that is together and those people work together. We didn't think they ever would. It took a long time to make everybody understand that this was not a turf thing. Nobody was trying to take away. We were trying just to get people working together and getting people to the right place. It cost very little money, practically none. It has been using the systems that were in place but using them differently.

L.B. Of course, the Columbine tragedy, those trauma centers were here, ready. Without them there would have been more lives lost.

D.W. That's true. None of the children who got to the hospital died. Now there were two of them killed on site but there was no chance for them, but any one of those students that was picked up and gotten to a trauma center, and they were gotten to the right trauma center, none of those children died. Some of them were terribly injured. If you remember right after that we had the bus accident right outside of Walsenberg. The bus that rolled off. None of those children died. None of those people died. They were picked up and gotten to the right place. So both of those were very gratifying to the people who had worked so hard. There were doctors who have just put incredible hours into making this work. So it's there now.

L.B. Well Dottie, you've got to feel a lot of satisfaction that it was in place.

D.W. I did. That was the first thing I thought of the next morning after Columbine. Was seeing that all of those kids had gotten to the right place. Some of them had horrendous injury in the hospitals. One of the things we had to insure the hospitals other than the trauma centers, was that once the person was able to go back to that local hospital, was that the trauma centers wouldn't hold them any longer than they needed to be there. Because hospitals are having a hard time staying afloat these days and they needed that revenue. So we did that and I think it has worked well.

L.B. I think it has too. I think now if it were to start right now with the history that you have, it wouldn't take seven or eight years to get it through.

Dottie, if you could change one thing back to the way it used to be. Repeal a law or relocate an office or bring back a particular elected official, what would you change?

D.W. I would get rid of term limits. Without any question. Second, I would get rid of TABOR.

L.B. Ok. That was the one passed by Bruce. That was passed, what, about eight years ago, six years ago? Longer than that.

D.W. I guess it has been longer than that now.

L.B. Now I want to ask you a personal question. What's your favorite place in the Capitol and what memories do you associate with that place?

D.W. What's my favorite place in the Capitol?

L.B. Since you worked in both the House and Senate, I know it's difficult. You know where my heart is.

D.W. I know where your heart is, Lee. I suspect though it is the House Chamber. Maybe not for the reason you think. But for the fact that around the walls are those marvelous paintings and the memory of how that came about.

L.B. Yes, and you helped on that committee. You served on that committee.

D.W. I think that the House Chamber is probably the place that most people think of as kind of being the heart of the Capitol. Partly because that's where joint sessions are held. That's where the big speeches are made. State of the State speeches and just most of the ceremonial things. I think we think of the House Chamber rather than the Senate because of its size.

L.B. Do you remember the first time you walked to the well of the House and were recognized by the Speaker.

D.W. Yes.

L.B. You do?

D.W. And I remember the last time.

L.B. Ok. When you got the appointment and went over to the Senate.

D.W. I think people who serve there remember that down the middle aisle is only yours.

L.B. That's right and nobody else can walk down the center aisle. I remember when I interviewed Don Mares, he remembers that he was running for Auditor. He said he made a deliberate time to walk down the center aisle because he knew if he won the election to be auditor, he would never again be allowed to walk down the center aisle when they were in session.

D.W. I think people don't recognize that as much as they used to. I don't walk down the center of the aisle even when I'm there and there's nobody there.

L.B. I think that custom is slowly disappearing. I think you're right.

D.W. It's not for former Representatives, it's for present, elected officials.

L.B. Senator Wham is there anything else you want to talk about. Put on the tape. Any bill that you carried that you'd like a memory of?

D.W. Well I guess those are the ones that stand out. Also, I think, the effort to save the Capitol has been one that I would like to talk about. I think that there's not the understanding of the people who are there now of the fragile nature of the Capitol. It is a fragile nature. If we do not do it right, we can destroy what's great about it. It's historical. I think we need to restore and renovate, renovate and restore it. One of these days that needs to happen and it shouldn't happen after a fire. Or it shouldn't happen after we've burned up some children.

L.B. Ten years ago you carried the bill to set up the Advisory Committee of the Capitol and that has been in force. The Advisory Committee works under CDC and you know a lot of work in CDC.

D.W. Right. I think that until we get a Governor who cares about the Capitol, really cares about it in terms of restoring it and fixing it so that it will always be there, and always be a working capitol, I don't think it can happen. Unless the people of the state would become interested enough to do an initiative that would force the legislature to do it, I don't think it will happen.

L.B. Now with term limitations, the people there think the Capitol looks beautiful.

D.W. And it does.

L.B. Underneath, it is in very, very extreme need of repair.

D.W. Well, I think we need to think about the safety of the people who visit. You know and I know we used to worry terribly about when there were lots of children on the second floor and the third floor, knowing that the only way out was the middle stairs and knowing the danger of smoke killing kids. So I think until we get some added staircases, and I hope it doesn't have to be a tragedy, it has been in many Capitols. So many states are renovating capitols and know the value of the capitols. It's symbolic value if nothing else. Our Capitol is of such a size, that if it's cared for and if the electronics are put into it that are needed to be into it, it can be a working capitol and not be turned into a museum as some states have had to do because of the size. Ours is a big enough capitol if properly done, it can serve for another century as the seat of government. But I do think it will take either the Governor who wants to take the lead on it or an initiative or both to get the capitol done.

L.B. I think there would be support among voters, when they understand what needs to be done to support an initiative.

D.W. Well I think there would be too, Lee, I just don't know how to make it happen. I'm just afraid that it's going to take a tragedy.

L.B. Well I know you've been concerned about it and done as much as you could. CDC, the Capital Development Committee has worked on these issues.

D.W. That's right, but I think people don't understand how much it costs to renovate. If they've ever renovated an old house they know a little bit about what it costs. The Capitol, when we knew the roof was leaking down the walls, and nobody was paying any attention. The water was running down inside walls, it was just incredible that we had let it get to that point. I know that you've been concerned about fire as I have. When I look at that great ceiling that's all wood underneath that gold, I really get concerned. We just have not been able to get the support to do what needs to be done. Now something's being done to it now, I guess. I don't know how that's coming along, but it's not a renovation that we wanted to do. So the whole Capital Development Committee thing was a joy to me in many ways. It gave me the opportunity to travel the state to help get our state buildings in repair which they weren't. To get all those flat roofs off all those buildings. To have a lot to do with rebuilding the campuses of our colleges. That was just wonderful. I worry about it now as to whether or not we're going to continue and have the money to continue to put into the physical plants of our campuses and our state buildings. Because with the TABOR amendment we may not.

There may not be people who are really as dedicated as they have been in the past.

L.B. When it started, didn't Capital Development make some kind of program of continuing maintenance on these buildings?

D.W. We do have the Capital Construction Maintenance trust fund which provides some money but not enough. Now, of course, we have the wonderful opportunity at Fitzsimons and that incredible campus that's going up out there. While much of that's private money, it will have to be maintained. As we put more and more emphasis on that, it takes more and more money. The Capital Development Committee was also instrumental in keeping the pressure on to do the Fitzsimons move.

L.B. That's a wonderful project.

D.W. It's an incredible opportunity for this state and for the nation. I think it will be preeminent in the nation.

L.B. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity. It is beautiful out there.

D.W. There's so much in the way of private money going into the research buildings around the campus that it's going to be world famous. It will do much for the state. So some of those things are really gratifying to see happen.

L.B. They should be. You know I'm always sorry that you were term limited out because I would continue to serve on your committee.

D.W. It was time, Lee. I would not have run again even if I had not have been term limited. I think the stressing thing to many of us is the fact that there is no continuing, with term limits you just don't have enough time to learn how to do things and what the issues are around the issues. The issues may not change, the basic issue may not, but the dynamics around them do as the state changes. Unless you have people who have some interest in history in going through that, I think it's hard to make good judgments about what we need in the state. I think that's what we should be about down there.

L.B. Well, Senator Wham, I want to thank you for serving my district for 16 years and for meeting with me today. If you want to meet with me again, I'll be pleased to meet with you.

D.W. Okay.

L.B. Thanks again.