

Interview with Dan Williams

I am Lee Bahrych coordinator of the Colorado Legislative Oral History Library. With me today is Dan Williams who served four terms in the House of Representatives, beginning in January 1985. This interview is being conducted on July 21, 1995 at the State Capitol in Denver.

L.B. Thank you for being here today. I like to start the interview with asking about your family history and your education.

D.W. Ok. I was born in 1947 in Denver. At that time my family, my Dad and Mom owned a ranch in Fountain, Colorado, as well as in Edwards Colorado. The reason I was born in Denver is because my Mom was at the Fountain ranch and we were moving sheep in the spring of that year back and forth up to the Edwards Ranch and she decided she didn't want to get caught somewhere on a truck moving sheep so she came to Denver about the time I was going to be born. So I was actually born in Denver but I resided my entire life in Edwards, Colorado, and still do. In fact, I live on a piece of property where there have been three generations of Williams's living. My son who's 22 now will soon, I hope, get that property and there will be four generations of Williams's. The family goes back a long ways. My Granddad on my Dad's side actually came to Colorado before it was a state. So Williams's have been around a long time it seems like, and we still live on the ranch in Edwards.

L.B. Where did you go to school?

D.W. I graduated from high school, the Eagle Valley High School in Gypsum which is west of Edwards about 25 miles.

L.B. Rode the bus?

D.W. Rode the bus. Yes, rode the bus. Then after graduation from high school I stayed out of school for a year and just helped my Dad on the ranch and then the following fall I went to school at the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, where I went for, I think, about a year and a half. Came home one spring and my Dad said, he said, you know, I'm getting pretty tired of this and I'm getting older so he said we need to do one of two things. He said you can come home and take over the ranch or he said, we'll sell the ranch and I'll finish putting you through college. I was probably 22, 21 22 in those days, I had to make a fairly quick decision and I decided I would drop out of school and come back and take over the ranch and he and I then were partners on the ranch until probably 1976 when he was no longer a partner and I ran the ranch entirely by myself. Looking back, I was a music student at the University of Northern Colorado and wanted desperately to be in musical theater or in an orchestra and I was a tuba major and had played the tuba all through middle school and high school and realized I probably didn't have the God given talent to be in musical theater. So it was kind of looking at yourself very deeply to wonder if you have the talent to do what you really desperately want to do. It's not like being an accountant where maybe you can make do with other talents, you just have to have God given talent to be in musical theater.

I decided I didn't have it and that I wouldn't be unhappy being on the ranch and looking back I'm not unhappy that I made that decision. I'm glad that I was on the ranch and it afforded me other opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise.

L.B. Now you served in other elected offices before you came to the House. Weren't you a county commissioner?

D.W. I did in 1976. Charlynn and I, who is my, Charlynn is my wife, we were married in 1970, I think, we were entirely in the sheep business at that point and we wintered the sheep down on the eastern plains generally speaking from about Ft Morgan to Watkins. We would unload the sheep in the very northern part on beet tops and corn stubble and by spring they would have migrated to Watkins on wheat stubble and then we would ship them home and lamb them and they'd spend the summer in the mountains and then the same in the fall they'd come back down there. We had a young son born to us in 1973 and decided it was very difficult to be that migrant and by '76 we decided we'd would sell the sheep and get entirely into the cattle business and then stay home year around and put up hay in the summer and feed out in the winter. By '76 I was talking to a neighbor about how kind of disappointed I was with the then county commissioners making some decisions and he said well if your so damn smart then why don't you run for office, which shut me up pretty well. He didn't let go of it that easy. Actually he encouraged me and talked to some other people who encouraged me and in '76 I ran for county commissioner and beat an incumbent Democrat and served there from '76 until I ran for office in 1984, so I served there eight years.

L.B. What made you decide to run for the House?

D.W. At the end of my commissioner term, I decided I would not run again that I would go back and keep ranching until the money was all gone. Dave Wattenberg had been elected to the House of Representatives in 1982 and in the election year of 1984, Ray Kogovsek had announced that he wouldn't seek his congressional term again and Dick Soash who was then in the Senate from that Senate District decided he would run for that congressional seat leaving that Senate seat open, Wattenberg then decided he would run for that Senate seat unopposed and that left his House seat open. He and some others called me and encouraged me to run and Charlynn and I, again in February of 1984, had to make a very quick decision on whether or not we would run and we chose to run and I ended up in a five-way Republican primary, won that primary and then went on to defeat a very talented Democratic candidate and began office here in 1985.

L.B. How did you feel when you won? How did your family feel?

D.W. Well we were surprised and elated with each election. We were kind of unknown. The district in 1984 comprised five major counties, Moffat, Routt, Grand, Jackson and part of Eagle County and I had just simply been a county commissioner in Eagle County so I was very well-known in my own county but not at all known in the other counties other than with my fellow county commissioners, so we worked diligently every day campaigning. My wife is a wonderful campaigner and enjoys it and so we spent every day until the primary election campaigning and funded our campaign well. Apparently did all the right things and went

on to win the election. We were kind of surprised because the other candidates were also very talented people, one from each county. So each county had their home town person. So we were surprised but we were happy and scared.

L.B. When you came down to be sworn in that first day of session your family must have come with you?

D.W. They did and I remember the very first time I was in the Capitol. It was after the election in '84 and my Dad was with me and we had to come down to leadership election. I was shocked, I was scared, I felt that I probably didn't have the credentials to be here and so it was really kind of scary.

L.B. May I tell a story about you right here. I remember that we were having orientation in the House chamber before the session took off and you told me later that you walked in the double doors of the chamber and you looked up to that, you know it's five stories high in here and you said to yourself Danny boy what the hell are you doing here.

D.W. I did. Well I got to tell you a story, this is after awhile, it was just awe-inspiring, every time you'd walk into the chamber it was awe-inspiring and you'd look around the Capitol and get lost and be inspired. I did get lost on more than one occasion, let me tell you. I remember Wattenberg, this was a famous Wattenberg story, when he first got elected to the House and he came home and he was giving a speech in front of some of us so he was telling about his first weeks in the Capitol and he said he would walk into the chamber every day and he would just be awe-struck. He would wonder how a little ole cowboy like him from Walden, Colorado, got elected to a place like this. Then he said he listened to some of his urban colleagues talk after a few weeks and he wondered how the hell they got elected to a place like this. So that's kind of how I was. (Laughter)

L.B. Well, how was your family effected by your service.

D.W. It was difficult because again my kids were fairly young. Danna was I think you know, five or six years old when I first got elected and Jeff was four years older than that. So they were very young. We immediately made a decision when I got to the House to change our ranching operations so that Charlynn wouldn't be saddled with quite as much management decisions as we were previously. We sold the cows and changed from a cow calf operation to just running yearlings in the summer. Which I was generally speaking, home in the summer, at least part time and that helped a lot so we grazed a lot of stuff off. We didn't put up near as much hay as we used to, kind of enough to get us through spring or fall and feed the horses and grazed almost everything off. Leased some ground out. So that helped a lot. But still it was very difficult for Charlynn with the kids five days a week through the session and me here. I can remember times when she would call in the morning and maybe get me off the floor of the House and say our sewer's plugged up and I would say well I'm not magic. I'm here you're there and there's really nothing I can do, you'll just have to do the best you can and call a plumber or I can call a plumber, but I can't fix it I'm here and couldn't leave. So it was very difficult for her to manage not only the property but to manage the family and it made me often-times feel like I probably wasn't being the best father that I

could have cause I was here.

L.B. There's sometimes a real division there of loyalties, you know, where you need to be and you need to have your vote on the floor and yet you feel you need to be home. Dan, what was the first bill you introduced? What happened to it? Do you remember?

D.W. Oh, wow, I think this is kind of an interesting story. It may not have been my very first bill but it was I think in the very first year and one of the bills I carried. Speaker Bledsoe had come to me real early and had said if you're not full up I'd very much like for you to introduce a bill. Course I was just elated. I thought how nice of him to ask me to do this. He said it's a fairly simple bill. It deals with community colleges and I have one out in my district and they'd kind of like for this to happen. As I recall, it was a fairly simple kind of a do nothing thing. At least it wasn't earth shattering. It wasn't going to bring the walls of the Capitol down. So I said I'd be glad to and I carried the bill and got the bill out of committee. It didn't seem like too much of an issue and I got it to the floor of the House and quickly realized that Ron Strahle, who was the Majority Leader, didn't like the bill. He was of course from Ft Collins and anything that dealt with higher education, he was deeply involved in. I didn't realize that this was quite as controversial as it was. We were on Second Reading and as I recall at that point the Majority Leader Ron was busy doing a number of other things and perhaps planning for some other stuff and couldn't participate on Second Reading and probably didn't feel that he needed to. He had the ability to kill the bill later on anyway, so we got the bill passed on Second Reading and the next day it came to Third Reading. It was such a simple bill there weren't a lot of people lobbying it. It was just kind of everybody was going to vote their conscience and let it go up or down. So I went up and as I recall, he had to move the bill and I didn't choose to move the bill, he moved the bill, no I'll take that back. I did move the bill. I realized at that point that it was controversial enough that I moved the bill. Then the Majority Leader came up and asked me a question and, of course, I didn't have the answer and I was red faced and embarrassed. He must have thought I've got this little bald-headed young guy now. He asked me another question and I didn't have a clue and he thought I've got this guy now. About that time then he got ready to really put the sword in my heart and the Speaker put the gavel down and he said Mr. Majority Leader, you're only allowed to speak twice on Third Reading and you already have. (Laughter) He didn't get then to finally put the sword in my heart and the Speaker says we're going to vote and I got the bill passed. Ron was so disappointed. If he simply would have just moved and killed the bill, the first thing that came out of his mouth, I'm sure he would have got the job done. I learned a lot that first year of course. Learning how the rules operate is ultimately important.

L.B. Well now what happened to this bill did it finally go to the Governor?

D.W. It went on and became law.

L.B. Is that right, So that was the first bill that you had signed off on.

D.W. At least the first one that I can remember that was an interesting story.

L.B. What were the major issues that you were involved in?

D.W. It was interesting because the Speaker had put me that first term on both Transportation and Agriculture. It was an oversight on the part of Leadership. They had simply done that and not realized that the two committees overlapped from time to time. Normally you can't, at least in those days, you couldn't sit on Transportation and Ag which were two committees I really wanted to be on. I was tickled to be on them, and it just turned out that after that, they straightened that out so that you couldn't do that. I was involved with Transportation and then had sat on interim committee, so now we're talking about the following year. In the interim committee, course I was so fresh and green I didn't know. You couldn't have burnt me with a torch, I was so green. But I sat on the interim committee and I remember when we got ready to report the bills out all these other legislators were raising their hands to sponsor this or raising their hands to sponsor that and of course I sat there on my hands and didn't say anything. Senator Meiklejohn was chairing the committee so when we got all done there was a massive bill called SB 36 that was an omnibus bill that was going to try to cure everything in Transportation in Colorado. A very broad title concerning transportation in Colorado. He said well here's a bill that isn't going to go anywhere so he says I'll sponsor this bill, and he says, Dan you haven't sponsored anything yet so he says we'll put you on this bill cause it will never get to you. This will be easy. I said Ok that sounds good, so I did. That was the year when raising gas taxes, raising and improving highways was a very significant issue in Colorado. Lamm was still Governor and all the bills as it turned out by mid session had died for one reason or another. They either didn't suit Lamm or they were too expensive for the legislature. A wide variety of reasons. So every bill dealing with raising gas taxes had died. Yet the leadership in both Houses were adamant that we were going to get something passed and so that broad title became the vehicle and Senator Meiklejohn got it out of the Senate. The next thing I know here it is shipped to the House. Bud Hover was chairman of Transportation. So he took me under his wing but we couldn't get me off the bill. I was still stuck with the bill but Bud and I became a very close team and we ushered that bill through the House and got it passed. It did raise some significant new dollars for Colorado's highways. Lamm was incensed and wouldn't sign it because it didn't have enough diesel differential in it. He wanted truckers to pay more. He wanted truckers to pay a substantial amount of money more than they historically had and this bill simply just uniformly raised diesel and gas taxes. So to make a long story short we went to conference committee and Bud Hover was a conferee, I was a conferee and Bob Shoemaker was a conferee and daily we would spend almost all day, every day, either with Senators or back with leadership in the House and back to the Governor's office, trying to find compromises to get that bill passed. We finally did and it was to my knowledge the most massive tax increase that Colorado had passed for its highways.

L.B. Is that right.

D.W. and I got stuck with it. Went home and of course the conservatives in my district weren't real crazy about me, but I'm glad we did it. As it's turned out we were able to track those dollars and they made a lot of sense.

L.B. Did the public support this issue?

D.W. They did because the leadership in both Houses had put together such a strong coalition of industry, of Chambers of Commerce, of a wide variety of people, that the public wasn't opposed. You know there were some very conservative people who felt that it was probably inappropriate. And as it turned out years later, we massaged some of it. We were able to do away with part of the diesel differential and as a few years passed, we were no longer the highest gas tax in the nation, but for a short while we were.

L.B. Did you find that your work as a county commissioner helped when you were working on this bill?

D.W. It did tremendously in part because I knew how the governmental process worked although I was still green as it related to House rules. But I understood how coalitions of people worked, how government processes worked. I'd been familiar with the local portion of state funding of highways and why that was so important and it was. The local portion is a constituent of people that's very hard to take candy away from, so we had to work within that, and because I was county commissioner you know, I was able to communicate with people there. So, yeah, it helped a lot but thank God for Bledsoe and Strahle and Hover.

L.B. What issues were you involved with that continue to strongly affect Colorado today? Of course transportation would be one.

D.W. Transportation was one, natural resources was probably another. My district represented a third of the skier day visits in this state, in those counties that I mentioned. With resorts like Vail, Beaver Creek, Steamboat Springs, Winter Park and others, it represented a majority or nearly 80 per cent of the water that's delivered to the east slope front range was diverted from my district.

L.B. You mean through the Big Thompson?

D.W. Through the Big Thompson and other projects. So water development obviously was very important to the district as well as to the state. It represented a significant influence in the development of energy in the Craig Steamboat Springs area. So coal and the development of energy was vitally important to the district. So those were issues that I followed closely and, of course, transportation because of the remoteness of that district, my district started at the top of the Berthoud Pass and ran to Utah and then ran along the Wyoming border and south to Vail, so it was a big chunk of ground and transportation was important to all those industries I mentioned. So, as I continued involvement with transportation, Senator Wattenberg and I at one point in time ended up, I was chairman of Transportation for two years and he was the chairman of Transportation during the same period of time in the Senate. Some of the things we did there was that we repealed the Ten Mile tax and replaced it with equitable across the board registration for motor vehicles. We went on to create a Highway Legislative Review Committee. We dealt diligently with a metro component of transportation needs.

L.B. That Highway Review Committee, is that a statutory committee, it is isn't it?

D.W. It is, it is and it was. It's still extremely important as a form and a focus to at least fundamentally bring people together and begin to talk about the kinds of efforts we need to make to cure some of Colorado's transportation problems on a statewide basis. So it still has a fundamentally good purpose. It's made of not only legislators but of industry and public members so it's a good idea. Then in the natural resource arena Senator Wattenberg and I carried a bill to reduce the severance tax on coal so that the coal industry could be competitive not only nationally but internationally. That made a tremendous difference to the Colorado's coal industry.

L.B. Is the coal industry really, the majority of the coal industry is still at the northwest of Colorado. Not south anymore?

D.W. The major production for Colorado's coal still comes out of Moffat and Routt County and it's because by and large it's either a long wall process or it's a strip-mining process. So the quantities of coal that they can get out of the ground there just surpasses underground coal mining to any degree. Colorado's coal is an incredibly clean product, low sulfur, high energy content. Therefore, it will play and does play a significant part of the national clean air agenda and so it's important that we make sure that it can compete. Again part of that inability to compete is its remoteness. Transportation costs are higher than our neighbor state, Wyoming. The coal in Colorado is of higher quality content than the Wyoming coal, but the Wyoming coal sells easier just because of its transportation ability into the Midwest and marketplaces. But that was an important issue that Senator Wattenberg and I did, in fact it's still on the books, we'll see if it can survive amendment I.. Needless to say it really did allow Colorado to compete in the marketplace and there's a lot of high paying jobs that rely on that so it's important to our district.

L.B. Well you were chairman of Transportation committee for two assemblies, two general assemblies.

D.W. That may be right.

L.B. Can you tell me how your committee was handled. Did you have staff assigned to you, tell me about how the committee was handled when you were chairman?

D.W. Well, the unsung heroes in the General Assembly are the staff people. I don't know how Colorado is so lucky to have the talented people that we have in Legislative Council and Legislative Drafting. All the way from the front desk to the assignables, it's just absolutely the most heart-warming experience that I have of the whole general assembly are the staff people. It isn't the legislators who make big headlines or go on to do other great things. Really by and large what makes Colorado's legislative system tick is the incredible dedicated competent staff people. So each time I was chairperson, I was chairman of Transportation and chairman of House Ag in my last term and I was always just amazed how talented these people were. The staff people that help with the committee are so helpful and so gracious and help the public to interact with us. Always there to answer questions and to encourage people to testify and how to testify and feel comfortable in doing so. Legislative Council is invaluable in terms of resources to all legislators but particularly helpful to committee

chairmen who may if their diligent chairman realize that there may be additional information that's necessary, it may not have been asked yet, some other legislator may not have seen the void or some public member or even some lobbyist may not have seen the void, oftentimes a diligent chairman will ask council or their staff person to seek that information so it can either raise the awareness or cause someone to think a little differently about what's being presented. So they're just invaluable.

I guess one of the things that I look back on is the realization that legislators serve here as a citizen's part-time legislator and I applaud that. I'm glad that we're not a full time professional legislature. I don't think that the public appreciates that when a legislator comes here he's kind of, he or she is a one-person band. They have their office and they answer their phones and write their own responses to letters that they receive and serve without a staff. They have access to Legislative Council but they can't abuse that. They need to make sure that it's part and parcel of something before them so they can't just go charging down and ask council to just do all the research in the world. There's some limits to that. So in terms of running their office and doing their own research and following the 700 or more bills that can be in process at any given time, it's a tremendous challenge to do single handedly. One of the things that I had looked at was trying to bridge the gap between being a full-time professional legislature where you might have full-time professional staff, to the other side of that coin which is just a citizen's part-time legislature with absolutely no staff. Maybe we were more ignorant then. We need to be able to find some process in which we could either utilize part-time or share part-time staff persons to help us keep up with the workload. People have no idea. That's another thing I learned, it's probably best not to write your own legislation. There's probably people who have thought of it before and there's probably some people out in the lobby with five or six hundred registered lobbyists who probably have a greater knowledge of an issue than a legislator does. We introduced a bill one time that would have put a registration fee on bicycles and that money would have gone to build bicycle paths across the state and it went further to say that wherever there was a bicycle path that the bicyclist wouldn't be allowed on certain state or other public roads and they would have to use bicycle paths. Well this raised, Boulder County just came unglued, and I was getting literally sometimes hundreds of phone calls. Even from my own district, and my district again represents places like Vail and Winter Park, and of course, a lot of bicycle enthusiasts up there. They thought this was a crazy horrible idea and I was called every name in the book. Nonetheless, my point is, there are times when issues get introduced in which the response from the public is overwhelming and a legislator, I think all legislators down here feel responsibility to communicate back with that public either if they're writing or if it's phone calls or whatever. Sometimes just managing the office can be an incredible challenge to say nothing of them trying to keep up with other bills of interest to that legislator. So it's a big job.

L.B. Did you have a feeling that perhaps chairman of committees should at least have one staff?

D.W. Oh yeah, because once you become a chairman, and certainly I can appreciate this with leadership, but once you become a chairman your no longer here as a selfish legislator who can just simply be here to represent his district and vote for the good of the state. All of a sudden you have a fiduciary to the other members of the committee. You have fiduciary to

leadership to act timely and make sure that what's coming through your committee is attempting to be in concert with their plans. So it just doubles, I should say more than doubles, it adds a great deal to the workload and to the responsibility of that legislator to communicate with his members.

L.B. Dan, what changes do you see in state government since you served and do you think these changes are good or bad?

D.W. Well I think I see a lot of change. I see, I think, a lot of change in the future. I think some will be good and some will be bad. I see change. I think the most dominate change I see right now, is a philosophy that's coming to the forefront of voters attention and I'm not suggesting that the public necessarily is forwarding this themselves, but I think there are interests in the state of Colorado that are forwarding and continuing to forward to the public attention, viva vie initiatives and referendums, ballot issues, state wide ballot issues. That begins to erode representative government. I think that that's fundamentally dangerous. I think we have a nation and a state. A nation that's been here more than 200 years and a state that's been here more than a hundred years, that was founded on a concept of representative government. Allowing the people to represent, to elect their representatives and come down and try to make informed decisions to the best of their ability. There's lots of checks and balances in that system and I think it's a dangerous concept that we throw that out and attempt to replace it with just simply allowing the public to vote on every issue. It's very difficult for the public to be as well-informed, as deeply and well informed as it is that representative form of government. So that's probably one of the scariest changes I see coming. I don't see it going away. I think in part it gets supported by the public because of their frustration with government in general. I think that that frustration by and large is probably aimed toward congress and yet I think it trickles down to all levels whether it's state or local government. I don't think that any, well first of all, I applaud all of our congress persons, each and every one of them. I think they're loyal and I think they want our federal system to work efficiently but that probably isn't true of all the congress persons from all the states. Each state has a different agenda and each state has a different set of circumstances and constituency so it's pretty hard for congress really to make changes quickly as maybe they need to do to get that public support.

But nonetheless, back to the state and local governments. My view of state and local government is Colorado's so squeaky clean, this system is a, the legislators are so dedicated, so honest and so caring the staff people, the lobbyists, everybody that's involved with legislative process, there is just nothing else like it on earth. I think by and large the same is true of local government whether it's city council or board of county commissioners. I think they're dedicated caring people and sometimes we all make mistakes but we do the best we can with the information we have. So I would encourage people to not make that change, I would encourage people to get more involved instead of destroying a process. I would encourage them to get more involved with the process we have and make it work more efficiently and maybe at least to the best of their ability to make it work for them better.

L.B. How do you feel about the term limitations as passed a couple of years ago?

D.W. Well, I wasn't supportive of term limitations then nor am I now. This comes I suppose a little bit from a selfish point of view. But coming from a rural part of the state of Colorado part of the effectiveness of rural legislators is their ability to be here, stay here, become familiar with the process and gain the confidence from other legislators and other interested persons in the process to where they have significant influence. Just for the sheer fact that they have been here too long, term limitations is not a reason to lose them. Once term limitations takes complete effect it will greatly interfere I think with the ability of the rural area to adequately represent itself in the construction of the distribution of seats. So that's my selfish reasons. But fundamentally I don't agree with it. Simply I think that the public should always have the right to elect whomever they want and when ever they want.

L.B. It's always been said that the Speaker of the House had powers in the state government second only to the Governor. Do you think term limitations is going to change this and transfer some of the power that the House usually has had to the Senate, mainly because they will have the institutional memory and they will have served in the House for three to four terms and moved to the Senate, more knowledge of the state institution. How do you feel about that?

D.W. Well first I have to tell you that when I served with Bev Bledsoe I jealously thought, and still believe, that Bev Bledsoe had more power than the Governor and wore it well. At least Lamm's last term, Bev was a very, very powerful person. It wasn't any power that any of us had bestowed upon him. It was power that he had gained through his effectiveness, knowledge of the process, his relationships he had built over the years. So it wasn't any kind of power that the rules or anybody else bestowed on him. It was just simply his own abilities that had gotten that kind of power. He was a tremendous leader. He was unquestionably a leader and I liked that. There was never any question in my mind when I didn't know what the general theme was, where we were headed, where the road was going. I may not agree with it, but I sure as hell knew where it was going. I really liked that, although we're all chastised because of his Machiavellian ways supposedly and he was very strong there's no question about that. That was back at the point in time before gavel and stuff like that where he did have quite a bit of control. What I think will happen now with some of the constraints that are in place is once term limits fully take effect that we will see that transfer of power. I think it can cause abuses of the process. I think that time will be of the essence. I think it could cause abuses through coalitions that will get built to put certain people in power instead of them gaining the respect that will be forced upon them and supported for various reasons. Leadership isn't built that way. True leadership is a gift that probably is given by God and a person has, and it is so evident that others want to follow. That's kind of human nature to want to follow. We're all that way, some sort of blind faith that we want to follow somebody. The best way is to allow that to mature on it's own and I think that with term limits we'll see shifts and where that power goes from time to time and it will probably be for reasons less than just sheer leadership as it normally should mature.

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

D.W. Wow, just one, there's so many. If I could change any one given thing, probably at this

point, the one thing I would probably change that I think is going to have the most detrimental effect on Colorado's future is Amendment I. The concept and theory behind which the public voted it in, I think was probably laudable, but the detail of the measure and its limit on Colorado's representative government to effect the changes in a timely manner to meet Colorado's needs are just simply inhibited by that amendment. I think it will take some time because of its complexities to develop, to make those changes in Amendment I. It's constitutional. It's a very, very difficult measure. Colorado has historically been a state that ebbs and tides in all issues, whether it's fiscal issues, whether there boom and bust cycles, a wide variety of things and that's true generally of western states. As we change, our elected officials need to be able to change with that. It wasn't so many years ago when I was a kid, agriculture was king in this state. When I was a kid working for the railroad was a good job. Nobody knew what a pair of skis were when I was a kid hardly and now you know 30 short years after that a railroad job is kind of unthinkable, a high tech job is what's good. Agriculture is a dying industry by and large. There will be parts of the state where agriculture will always be successful and always be there but the growth and development changes throughout the state are causing agriculture to have a very tough time to compete nationally or internationally. Skiing and recreation are important economic factors so we see Colorado changing. We see the economic climate changing. Case in point is our present Governor who spent the first several terms planting flags and crying to the world, Colorado was open for business and here for economic development and growth. Now today he's probably out somewhere decrying that we need to have smart growth and limit growth and so things change. My concern is that Amendment I hampers the ability of not only the legislature but probably the public in effecting the kinds of changes necessary to meet the changing needs of Colorado. If we're going to have growth we have to have infrastructure. If we're going to stop growth, we have to pick up the pieces, so we need a strong representative form of government and I think that inhibits it.

L.B. I agree with you Dan about the change in the state because when I first came down here this was an agricultural legislature or General Assembly. I gradually saw a change to be urban and suburban. How do you feel about that?

D.W. Well it's inevitable, obviously I don't like it and again I guess that's why I'm so proud that, first of all, I'm proud that all Colorado sends such sincere and wonderful people to the legislature, but when you look at the rural members, it's incredible that we send the kind of talent from rural Colorado to this general assembly that we do. In a part I don't think it happens because of magic or luck, it happens by and large because the members who run in those large rural districts go through a process of, through that elective process, of understanding so dramatically the major issues and the major industries that make Colorado tick. I've said so many times that Colorado's wealth isn't created on 17th street, it may manifest itself on 17th Street but it's created out of the ground in rural Colorado. Whether it's coal and energy or whether it's water or whether it's wheat or cattle or mining all variety of interests. So when you take a district that was like mine that was five counties that represented those major industries, by the time you've gone through the elective process dealing with all those people, whether they're water developers or developers or coal miners or whatever they are, they have taught you an inkling at least of what makes those industries tick. So when you get here you're better able to interact with those issues than the unlucky

legislator who was elected from a suburban district or urban district that may have been several blocks wide and maybe a couple miles long and didn't even have the biggest industry and it was a Seven Eleven store. The issues that are of interest to those legislators that have a central theme through that district may have been education, may have been neighborhood planning, may have been those kinds of things, but they didn't have the privilege and opportunity to have been in that elective process, exposed to those wide variety of transportation issues out in rural Colorado or water development out in rural Colorado all those kinds of things. So one of the reasons that the rural members surface to the top like cream on milk is that they have that great opportunity to be exposed to a wide variety of issues even just in the elective process, and as they serve here, continue to deal with them.

L.B. Dan I want to ask you about the Capitol itself. What's your favorite spot in the Capitol? Some people say it's around the big table down in the cafeteria other people say on the House floor, what's your favorite spot in the Capitol and why?

D.W. Well thanks to Martha Krutz, my favorite spot right now is probably the smoking room in the basement of the Capitol. But the House chamber, obviously having served there, the House Chamber and the Speaker's chairs, the central theme there so it's probably my favorite spot.

L.B. You served as chairman of the Committee of the Whole many times, did you enjoy that?

D.W. Well, no because I liked when we were on Second Reading. I liked particularly to do one of several things. I always kept a big container of popcorn on my desk and usually another container of Red Vines or red licorice and kept it there because I liked them but more importantly because almost everybody in the House would sooner or later come by to graze and I'd have a chance to visit with them. When they're taking something from me like my red licorice or my popcorn I felt it was very appropriate to ask them something like would you vote for my bill. (Laughter)

L.B. I love it, so that's why you kept the popcorn.

D.W. So then I like to be free to move around and talk with my friends like Faye Fleming and Bob Shoemaker and Lew Entz and some of those people. The other thing I used to like to do, because I was a smoker, is if I was in the chair I couldn't smoke or didn't feel comfortable smoking so that was kind of difficult. I would prefer to be on the floor where I could go out and make my phone calls and go out and have a cigarette and visit with friends and then when you're in the chair, you have to pay very close attention because you may be called on to make a decision, you need to make sure you're running it quickly and making sure that everybody is not being redundant and so you couldn't think about other things. You had to be really be on top of it. So I wasn't real crazy about it.

L.B. Dan, people seem to be more pessimistic and skeptical and even cynical about government and politics and politicians than they used to be. Do you think that's a true perception or do you think we're looking at the past through rose colored glasses?

D.W. Well, I think that people are cynical. I think that even I was, and realized it was time to leave. I came to the legislature because it was an opportunity I did want to serve, I wanted to make a contribution if I could and after eight years I really felt it was time for me to leave and willingly left. I was excited about my replacement, Jack Taylor and hoped that he'd get elected and he did and I'm so excited that he's here but I didn't want to become a professional politician. When I look backwards I realize that I'd spent eight years as a county commissioner and eight years at the legislature and that was sixteen years and my God I was a professional politician. So it was time to leave. But I think people by and large look at government as sort of the enemy now. They think that, I think a lot of them feel that politicians are all crooks and in it for selfish reasons. I suppose that it's easy to sit on your sofa and have a beer and think that way.

I think the other problem that's inherent right now is, you have to remember that only about 50 per cent of the people in this state are registered to vote and on a good election you might have 50 per cent voter turn out. So that means only 25 per cent of the people in this state are participating. Making the decisions, who's being here, who's being elected, what's going on in the state of Colorado. Of that quarter of the population, it's influenced by the activists in both parties that's true. That as you move through a nominating process and caucuses and other processes, it is the activists that participate especially with elected officials and so when those elected officials get here their view point sometimes can be tainted by who brought them. It takes a little period of time I guess, to realize that there may be three quarters of the population out there that you haven't talked to. So one of the things that works so well in Colorado is that we go home. We go home to our districts for eight months out of the year and we have that opportunity to talk to the guy on the street, to be in a café and have the guy stop and tell us what's wrong with the government and have the opportunity to hear from a wider variety of folks than just that central focus of sometimes those who brought you. So I think that that's kind of the salvation of our legislative process. That we are home and we do get to hear that and I think that the only thing that we can do in the future, is for all of us to be involved in government, and now I'm a lobbyist so I'm still involved but all we can do at this point is make a more concerted effort to try to communicate with the public because it's still their government. It's not ours and instead of kicking specifically a legislator or kicking certain politicians or making general negative comments about the government it's their responsibility to change it if they don't like it. They've got every tool at hand so we need to let them know it is their government, if they don't like what's going on, they need to get involved cause they have every ability to change it. They can do it specifically or generally, however they want to do it. There's lots of tools at hand and I think that by and large the new congress is making such dramatic and sweeping changes they're so interested in making these changes happen quickly that I think it will restore people's faith. I know that the Colorado legislature works so diligently at taking interim committees out in the state. They do everything in their power to get out and reach and touch those people who might not otherwise had a chance to participate. So all those things put together I still have great, great faith in the future and know that it's still the best system on earth and that cynicism doesn't last forever, it ebbs and tides too.

L.B. Dan, do you have any stories about the Capitol that you'd like to leave for us?

D.W. Well none that we couldn't lock up until after all of our deaths. (Laughs)

L.B. Or do you know anything that happened that would be amusing to people listening to these tapes in twenty-five years?

D.W. Oh, I don't think so, it was such a grand place to be and so many things happened you know. Probably one of the more fun things that happened, when I first got here there were no term limits, pardon me, there were no day limits, we didn't have the 120-day imposition yet and so the first few years I was here, depending on where, how tough the budget was to put together, we could be here a long, long time. In fact, I think one time we were 200 and some days before we finally adjourned sine die. That doesn't mean we were here every day but we would take a recess, come back, take a recess, come back, tough, tough issues and I still think that that's a good idea for the legislature to bring itself back, take recess and I'm not even very crazy about the 120 -ay session. I don't think our legislature ever abused time or money before. Anyway this is back when the House had passed the long bill and it had gone over to the Senate. The Senate is literally known as the cave of the winds, a very windy outfit over there. So they were busy talking, listening to themselves talk and they had gone on 30 some days. 30 working days and more than that calendar days, but 30 working days and had not even closed a section of the long bill yet. There was no end in sight and in the meantime of course the House had concluded all its work. We had nothing to do, we'd come and meet role call, try to do as much, find something to do. You'd usually take most of the day off although they wouldn't turn us completely loose cause there was always the hope that the Senate might do something and we could come back. So we couldn't leave the Capitol. So Bob Shoemaker and I decided that we would get together and fund a joke. So we hired this girl scantily clad to pop into the Senate Republican caucus and sing Slow Poke. We did and she was a hit.

L.B. You had her come right into the committee room where they were having a meeting?

D.W. We did. Kind of unannounced. Ted was in there, they just couldn't get organized, they couldn't even organize to throw the poor girl out let alone pass the long bill. So there was a lot of practical jokes. Scott McGinnis was a great practical joke player, Dave Wattenberg was a great practical joke player, and so there was so much competition that I didn't have to play any. I just had to sit back and watch and I enjoyed it all.

L.B. And the speakers you served under then would have been Bledsoe and Berry. You served one general assembly under Chuck Berry.

D.W. Yep.

L.B. I beat you Dan, I served under six plus the President of the Senate.

D.W. That's great.

L.B. Well Dan, is there anything else you want to tell us?

D.W. I just want to thank you for the opportunity to do this and wish you the best with it. I think it will be invaluable and if I was coming to the legislature I would want to come in and listen to some of these tapes before I announced for sure that I was going to run. Maybe if I did get elected I would want to come in and listen and see if I could learn something before I had to take the oath.

L.B. Well Dan, I want to thank you for coming today, I appreciate your meeting me here this morning.

D.W. Good to see you, Lee.