

ROBERT J. DOLE  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

DAVE OWEN

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Interviewer

Brien R. Williams

Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics  
2350 Petefish Drive  
Lawrence, KS 66045  
Phone: (785) 864-4900  
Fax: (785) 864-1414

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[Dave Owen reviewed this transcript for accuracy of names and dates. Because no changes of substance were made, it is an accurate rendition of the original recording.]

Williams: This is an oral history interview with Dave Owen for the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas. We're in Dave's office at ICOP Digital Ink in Lenexa, Kansas. Today is Friday, April 20, 2007, and I'm Brien Williams.

Dave, let's start with a little bit of your family background, maybe when you all arrived in Kansas and so forth, and take it from there.

Owen: My family's from South Arkansas, and we moved to Kansas when I was in about the third grade. We moved first to Galena, Kansas, which is down in the southeast corner of the state, a lead-mining community. My father worked for the Internal Revenue Service at the time, in the Alcohol, Tobacco and Tax unit. He supervised manufacturing of whiskey, as a matter of fact, at one of the distilleries down there. He was transferred to Kansas City, and I started the fifth grade here, and we have lived here in this community ever since.

Williams: Tell me a little bit about your family's background politically.

Owen: Overland Park was the community we moved to, and my family wasn't particularly active politically up until Overland Park decided to become a city, and that was—I'm trying to remember back when that occurred, but it had to be in the 1950s, and Overland Park decided to incorporate and elect a mayor and city council. My father ran in the first race for mayor of Overland Park. He was unsuccessful, but that was my first experience of observing my family getting active in the political arena.

Williams: Was that a partisan position he ran for?

Owen: No, it was not, although he was a Republican, and he was beaten by a gentleman who was very active in the Democrat Party at that time, but as I recall, it was a nonpartisan election.

Williams: In terms of your own educational background—

Owen: I grew up here. I went to high school in Johnson County, Kansas. At the time there was only one high school. There are many now. But Shawnee Mission High School was the high school that everyone in Johnson County went to.

After I graduated from there, I went to Ottawa University at Ottawa, Kansas, and that's where I really began to get my political feet and connections, for a couple of reasons. One of my professors, my business law professor, his name was Bob Anderson. He was an attorney in Ottawa, Kansas. He was also a member of the Kansas legislature as a state representative. We would talk politics with him in our classroom, and I got my first taste of it there. Then I had another professor, Dr. Wayne Angell [phonetic]. Wayne was from western Kansas, had gone to Ottawa University and K.U. [Kansas University], and was the economics professor at Ottawa, which was my major. Wayne ran for the state legislature and took Bob Anderson's place in the state legislature, and again there was a lot of political discussion in classrooms with him.

As I got to my senior year at Ottawa University, Bob Anderson was very active in politics, and there was a race for governor between Huck Boyd from Phillipsburg, Kansas, and John Anderson, attorney from Johnson County, Kansas, and Bob Anderson was supporting Huck Boyd and he got me involved in Huck Boyd's campaign. That was really kind of my first entry into politics, and also we formed a Young Republicans Club at Ottawa University, and I was the president of that.

Wayne Angell went on to become, as I got out of college, more interested in moving up, so after I graduated, Wayne ran for the U.S. Congress from the Third Congressional District here that covered Johnson County and Franklin County, where Ottawa was located, and he asked me to help. I became the Johnson County chairman for Wayne Angell for Congress. That's really where I built my political base, was working for him in that race. He was unsuccessful, but I had done a good enough job that the opponents in that race all came to me to see if I could join them, and the eventual winner, Larry Wynn, who served in Congress for many years, I worked on his campaign in the general election.

After that happened, there was a redistricting going on in the Kansas legislature because of reapportionment population, and Johnson County picked up one State Senate

seat. I was interested enough at that point. It just occurred to me one day, “I can do this.” So I looked at the political landscape and I saw that there were three incumbents in the State Senate in one new spot, so I just arbitrarily said, “Okay, those guys get spot one, two, three,” and I went to the courthouse and filed for position number four. I began to systematically use what I’d done with Wayne Angell’s campaign and my activities in the county, and I put together a very, very strong organization right down to the block level in every city in Johnson County.

Once we had the organization in place, I held a big party down at what used to be *the* place to do this, at the Glenwood Manor Hotel, and I invited everybody I knew in politics plus my campaign committee, and all we did that night was bring my campaign committee across the stage and introduce them, so people would get up and say, “I’m Dave Owen’s campaign chairman in Leewood, Kansas, Ward 3, Block 3,” or whatever it was.

After that was over, an interesting thing happened. There were something like eighteen people running for the State Senate, but they all chose to run against the incumbents and I didn’t even have a competitor. So we really won the primary the night of that party. So I go into the general election with virtually no competition. There was a guy filed against me, but it was not serious competition.

About that time, my wife’s mother had grown up in Russell, Kansas, home of Bob Dole, and she agreed to have a little fundraising coffee at her home, and that’s the first time I ever met Bob Dole. We both came to that event and we both spoke to her friends, and we became acquainted, he running for the U.S. Senate at the time, because after Senator Carlson retired, Bob ran for the United States Senate the same year I ran for the State Senate. His opponent was former Governor [William H.] Bill Avery, who was considered a very tough opponent.

As things progressed, I had a tremendous organization and nothing to do, so Bob and I talked, and I basically just became his de facto campaign chairman in Johnson County, and my campaign organization worked on his behalf in his primary for the U.S. Senate. He was successful, he beat Bill Avery, and went on to win the election handily. So that’s where our relationship started.

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Williams: At the same time you were becoming politically active, were you pursuing any other professional life?

Owen: Yes. At the time all of this was going on, I was working for a local bank in Johnson County, the Overland Park State Bank, and there was a very powerful political business figure in Kansas City who owned that bank, R. Crosby Kemper, Sr. So to do what I did in running for the State Senate, I had to get his permission, and he was very supportive and allowed me to do that, or I never would have been able to get into the political arena at that stage of my life at all, but I was very young, in my mid-twenties when all of this occurred. So I worked at the bank for the first couple of years I was in the State Senate, and then I left that bank and started my own bank. I applied for a federal bank charter and received it, and started the first of the banks I had ownership of.

Williams: Located where?

Owen: That was located in Fairway, Kansas, which again is in Johnson County.

Williams: Did you get a degree in business administration or something?

Owen: Yes, my degree at Ottawa was in business administration and economics, and as I said, my professor, Dr. Wayne Angell, was the guy I had most of my classes with, who had a political interest, but interestingly enough, he went on to become a member of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors appointed by Ronald Reagan, and then later in life became the chief economist for Bear Stern. So again I was very fortunate at Ottawa University to get someone with that kind of business acumen as an instructor.

Williams: How many terms did you serve in the State Senate?

Owen: I served one term in the State Senate, from 1968 to 1972, and then the opportunity came up to run for lieutenant governor. Again I just took a look at the landscape and decided that I could do this, so I filed for lieutenant governor. I gave up my State Senate seat, which I could have won handily probably for as long as I wanted to

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stay there. My opponent in that race, or at least the main opponent, was again a strong political figure, Calvin Strowig from Abilene, Kansas, who was Speaker of the House of Representatives at the time. Again I just went about very systematically organizing my campaign in every county in the state, and using the connections that I'd developed in the state legislature at that point, and I won that race very handily. In that race it was the last time that the governor and lieutenant governor ran separately, so I ran on my own. I was not running with the governor.

Bob [Robert] Docking, a very strong political name in Kansas history, was the governor at the time and was elected governor again, so he was the governor, I was the lieutenant governor. But he and I had a very good relationship and worked very well together.

Williams: Was he running for the first time in '68 too, or were you joining him sort of in progress?

Owen: As I recall, that was his second term.

Williams: You may have said this—excuse me if you did—did you defeat a standing candidate or a current lieutenant governor or not?

Owen: No, honestly I can't remember quite what the lay of the land was on the other side, but my primary opponent, the one I had to beat to win the office was Calvin Strowig, and I did that in the primary.

Williams: Was it a big change for you, going from a Senate district to statewide? How did that work?

Owen: Well, I enjoyed it, actually. My primary responsibility at the time was to preside over the Kansas Senate and to head up the Kansas Economic Development Commission, and they were things that I was interested in, so I adjusted to that very well. At the time I did that, of course, I was young and ambitious and thought perhaps I would run for governor, but back to the business side of things, I had also applied for that federal bank

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charter along in there, and I really felt like I had to make a decision. Am I going to be a businessman here or am I going to be a politician? I had gotten that charter, had an opportunity to build that bank and provide some real financial security, so I didn't choose to run for reelection as lieutenant governor after that term expired or run for governor, which I could have done. So that was where my association with Bob Dole took another turn.

Williams: Maybe that's our next topic, right?

Owen: Well, what happened at that point was, Bob and I had worked together over that period of time he as a U.S. senator and, of course, I was lieutenant governor, and I was the top Republican officeholder in the state, and of course he was the junior senator from Kansas at that point, because [Sen.] James Pearson was the senior senator. But we remained in contact.

When I decided not to run for lieutenant governor again or for governor, Bob called one day and said that he would like for me to come to Washington, he'd like for me to take over his campaign for reelection to the Senate. That was a very difficult time, because this is 1974, Watergate had happened, Bob had gotten a divorce, Bill Roy was a very aggressive campaigner, and Bob's campaign was pretty much in disarray. So I went to Washington, we agreed that I would take over, and I got some pretty tough responsibilities right out of the chute to kind of straighten things out.

Williams: In Washington?

Owen: Well, we were meeting in Washington. I had to come back to Kansas and implement the strategy. One of the problems was that he had hired, at the recommendation of [Sen. John] Jack Danforth, a fellow by the name of Herb Williams to be his campaign chairman, and Herb was not a very good people person. He had the campaign in pretty much disarray, out of money, and it was well on its way to going down the tube. At that point in time I think the Dole campaign was thirteen points behind Bill Roy.

So the first thing I had to do was figure out a way to get Herb Williams to resign and get out of the way without causing a lot of disruption, so I met with Herb and told him that, in my opinion, the campaign was going down to defeat if we didn't do some things, and clearly I didn't think he was up to the task, and convinced him to resign. Well, he did resign, but in resigning said he was about to write a book about Bob Dole, so Bob quickly got him a job at the Republican National Committee, and that ended that squabble.

So I took over the campaign. I went to Topeka, I sat down in the campaign office and began to look at what was there, and I quickly discovered that all we had was a mountain of bills and no cash. So I called Clint Engstrand [phonetic] in Wichita, Kansas, an oil man there, just a fine gentleman, strong supporter of Bob Dole, and I told him what the dilemma was and asked if he could put some kind of a fundraiser together to at least get us out of the hole so we had a fighting chance. Clint called a fundraising meeting at the Petroleum Club in Wichita. I went down, I told them what the situation was, and I walked out with a little over \$100,000 in checks, which was a lot of money in those days. We got our bills paid up, we got the campaign back on track. Again I kind of brought my campaign organization into the Dole campaign because there wasn't a strong organization at that point. So with my campaign organization coming in, that's what built the platform organizationally to take it from there. And we're talking late July, early August, and of course the election is November, so we didn't have a lot of time.

So we began to very systematically aggressively go after things we needed to do to shore the campaign up, and one of the first things I discovered as I sorted through those papers on the desk, I ran across an article that was either in the *Reader's Digest* or some kind of magazine like that, that was a history of Bob Dole's career in the military, which most people had never really focused on in any kind of detail that I knew about. It was a very compelling story about a young man who was a great athlete at Kansas University, came from the right kind of background in Russell, Kansas, a handsome guy, physically fit, goes to the Po Valley in Italy, and a grenade or something goes off and he spends three years in the hospital and comes back and fights his way back to where we all know he ended up. Well, I looked at that and I said, "Man, this is powerful stuff," so I put a flyer together, and the words at the top of that flyer were just the word "Guts" in big black letters. I organized, with the help of a lot of other people, I want to hasten to say, a



lot of other people got involved in all of this, but it was my job to kind of orchestrate it, and we put a statewide whistle-stop tour together and we went to every little community in Kansas and motor homes and whatever we could scrounge up, and we just went up and down Main Street passing out these “Guts” handouts. I think that is the first time that Kansans ever came to grips with what Bob Dole had gone through to get where he was in the world today. So that was the start.

Then we had a PR firm from Boston, Hill Holiday—Jack Connors was the head of that. He’s become a very distinguished businessman, very successful businessman in Boston. I just talked to him the other day for the first time in several years, but he’s still around. Jack had produced a lot of commercials for Bob. Most of them were kind of the typical sort of campaign commercials that you would see, two old people talking about their Social Security check, or the typical kinds of political ads, and we were just getting pounded.

Bob Docking had had a guy in Kansas who did his political advertisements in years past, and they were just very simple but straightforward. I cannot remember the guy’s name that did these, but all it was was a guy sitting on a stool with a cigarette, smoking a cigarette, and he would just take the hide off of Bob Docking’s opponents. It was very, very effective. Well, we just kept going down in the polls, so I called Jack and I said, “Jack, if you don’t come up with something that’s more hard-hitting, I’m going to make one of those Docking-type commercials down at Channel 4, and we’re going to put them on the air and get rid of this stuff that we’re showing.”

I actually did that. I went down to Channel 4 in Kansas City, Missouri. I got my own version of Bob Docking’s man, I sat him on a stool, and we began to make commercials to just take the hide off of Bill Roy. While we were there filming those, Jack Connors called me and he said, “Would you give me twenty-four hours to come up with an alternative?”

And I said, “Okay.” So I held off putting those commercials on the air, although we eventually did put them on a time or two, but the next day I get a package in the mail from Boston, and I open it up and put the tape in the machine, and it’s political ads that have gone down in political history, one called “Mudslinger” and one called “Graffiti.” And all in the world they were was a poster of Bob Dole on a wall. Jack and his cohorts had mixed up a big barrel of mud over on the other end with the camera going, and they

would say things. The announcer would say things like, “Bill Roy says Bob Dole was against the farmers because he voted against,” such and such and such and such. And a big splat of mud would just hit that poster in the face, and it was very compelling. It would rock you back in your seat when you saw it on TV. At the end of the commercial was “But the truth is, Bob Dole voted very differently,” whatever it had to say, and just reversed the camera and the mud came off. The tagline was “All of which makes Bob Dole look pretty good and makes Bill Roy look like a liar.”

Well, I saw that. I thought, man, this is the kind of stuff I’m looking for. I’m not sure “liar” is the right thing to say. So I had them make another version that said “All of which makes Bill Roy look like just another old politician.” Well, when I had that ready, I called Bob Dole. I got him on the floor of the Senate. He went in the cloakroom and I said, “We got a commercial, and I want to read you what it says.” I gave him the “liar” version first, and the phone went dead silent. [laughs] But eventually just pretty much left it up to me, and we went with “Bill Roy looks like just another old politician.”

Well, when we put those commercials on the air, the campaign started to take a turn, and every time they were on we’d start climbing in the polls a little bit, and when we had them off, it would either stall out or drop a little bit. They were so compelling and so confusing that some people thought they were Bob Dole’s commercials, and some people thought they were Roy’s, and some people weren’t sure, but Bob was getting a lot of people calling him, saying, “You’ve got to get that stuff off the air,” because nothing like that had ever been on the air in Kansas politics before. That’s just too tough. But Roy was getting a lot of calls from his constituents, saying, “What in the world are you doing throwing mud at Bob Dole’s poster?” [laughs] So that was pretty funny. But Bob would never call me.

He would call Huck Boyd, who was a national committeeman then, and Huck would call and say, “Dave, are you sure that’s the right thing to do to keep those on?” It was pretty clear to me, so I just kept putting them on the air and paying the money, and we stayed the course with those commercials. Frankly, the way it turned out, we won by, I think, 13,000 votes statewide in that race, so everything we did had to be right or he never would have won that. He had a lot of baggage, as I said, Watergate, divorce right in the middle of the campaign, all of the things that you would not want to have happening when you’re running for reelection.

Another incident, I would have to say I made a major mistake, was I thought that Bob Dole could debate Bill Roy at the Kansas State Fair in an agricultural arena about things that the people in Hutchinson, Kansas, and all over the state from the agricultural community would like, so I agreed to holding this debate, even encouraged having this debate against Bill Roy at the State Fair in Hutch. It just turned into a disaster. As they went through it, Bob has a tendency to just get more strident and strident sometimes in a situation like that, and finally he just turned to Bill Roy and asked him something to the effect, “Tell the people how many abortions you’ve done.” Of course, that was a very, very touchy subject then and now, and it just became a watershed political event in Kansas history because both the right and the left then came to the forefront, had a lot to do with the outcome of that campaign. The pro-abortion, anti-abortion forces coalesced, and Dole did not come off looking good in that debate, which plays into another scenario further down the line in his career that we can perhaps talk about later. But in any event, all the stars lined up and Bob Dole won.

But even on election night, we were at the Ramada Inn in Topeka, and it was so close, Bob and I were the only ones up in his room, and I kept thinking we were going to win the race. It looked like it to me from what I could see. He wasn’t convinced, and he had us get on the phone and call every single county clerk in the State of Kansas to make sure that we weren’t making a mistake before he would even go downstairs and speak to people. But finally we did all that calling and confirmed that, yes, it looks like we’ve got it won, he went down and won that race by a very, very narrow margin.

Williams: Let’s backtrack just a little bit. You obviously were running the show pretty much here in the state, but he must have come in fairly often to campaign. How was he as a campaigner in ’74?

Owen: He is unbeatable as a campaigner. That’s his strength, when he gets out in the communities one-on-one, meeting people on the street, talking to people. One of the first things that attracted me to him was not only what I’ve said earlier, he and I both come from a sports background, I was attracted to that, he was a handsome guy, but he was also just really witty. He would just have people rolling in the aisles, just with his witticisms that he perfected over the years. The combination of that personality, the ability, and

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some people have it and some don't, just to be very effective one-on-one, he's the master of it. When he walks in a room, he takes the room over. So he was extremely effective.

Williams: Did he spend a lot of time in the fall of '74 in the state?

Owen: Yes, he was here a lot, and I was with him most all of the time that he was here. It was a tough, tough race, and I know it had to be extremely draining on him, because I think there were lots of times he thought he was going to lose that race, and trying to figure out "What am I going to do?" because being in politics was pretty much all he had done after he came back from the war so severely injured.

Williams: When you two were alone, at least on the campaign trail, how did you interact? What was that like?

Owen: We just talked mostly politics. We were focused. I mean, we talked about who's going to meet us here, what's the lay of the land politically, who's for us, who's against us, what do we need to do to get this county. It was that kind of thing.

Williams: How do you imagine he became aware of Dr. Roy's abortion activities?

Owen: I think it was pretty common knowledge, frankly. I don't think it was due to any great political research or anything like that. I think people kind of knew that. But up to that point, it probably wasn't something that would have been brought up in a campaign, but it just became a watershed event in that '74 race that has really impacted Kansas politics ever since.

Williams: Do you think he had any inkling of its potency?

Owen: I'm not sure. Honestly, I don't think so. I just think he probably thought that it was a touchy issue. He knew he wasn't involved. It was a defining factor between the two men, and I just felt he thought it was fair game to bring it up.

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Williams: There were a lot of people booing when that debate ended.

Owen: Yes, there were. I mean, it was a nasty ending. It got very acrimonious.

Williams: When he came off the stage, or the next day, did you say to him, “Don’t do that again, Bob”?

Owen: No, I didn’t. I don’t remember that day toward the end of it much. I don’t think we were then together after that for a day or two, but it was clearly—nobody had to tell him. He knew that that was a mistake.

Williams: So for the rest of the campaign, he didn’t go there again, is that right?

Owen: Pretty much. I don’t remember him doing much along that line after that, but the anti-abortion forces really kind of picked that up from that point forward, and for the most part, at least to my knowledge, they independently began a very active campaign against Bill Roy, using handouts and so on and so forth, emphasizing that issue.

Williams: And that was kind of new, too, on the American political landscape.

Owen: Yes, it was. Now, there may have been others involved in that, but it certainly wasn’t me and it certainly wasn’t Bob Dole. It just seemed to me like, as an observer of that, that it kind of began and got its own legs.

Williams: Some people have said, of course, that Dole’s repudiation of it never happened.

Owen: I don’t remember him repudiating that necessarily. I just think he just—after that Hutch debate, I don’t think he spoke about it much at all one way or the other.

Williams: Though he must have seen or sensed, or you must have, that it was trending well in your direction.

Owen: Well, it was so close, it was hard to tell what was having the impact. My own view, and the only thing I can track for sure was the political ads, the “Mudslinger” ads and the “Graffiti” ads that we had on the air, and I was tracking that on a daily basis and I could tell pretty clearly that they were having a positive impact in our favor, but it’s so difficult to measure independent activity in a campaign. You don’t really know what’s working and what’s not.

Williams: What about the charge that Bill Roy was AWOL in terms of support of the veterans?

Owen: Well, we even put out a flyer about that, and one of the reasons, some of the charges that Bill Roy made against Bob in the campaign were just ludicrous. Two that come to mind were, some of the things he was saying was pointing out that Dole voted against the veterans. Well, it was ridiculous. If ever there was a champion, it was him. Roy would pick out an isolated vote, where Dole voted one way, but wouldn’t point out that he came back and put an amendment on it and voted on something that passed. Same thing with the agriculture votes. So we felt that in light of that, that was fair game. We went after him and put out flyers. We used big tabloids that focused in on many of these issues, like the veterans issues and agricultural issues. Again, we put people out on the road all over Kansas, handing these things out to anybody that would take one.

Williams: How did attack Roy on the farm issue?

Owen: It was pretty much, again, about his lack of knowledge on the issues and his absenteeism on voting on some things that were critical to the State of Kansas.

Williams: Was that a common political technique before then, do you think, you comb through a sitting member of Congress’ record and find some time when they supposedly voted against something?

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Owen: It was the first time I'd ever seen it. It may have been going on around the country. I don't know. But it was the first time I had personally had any connection with it. I do know that those "Mudslinger" and "Graffiti" ads got people's attention, because I got calls from all over the country. I remember [Sen.] John Tower calling me from Texas when he was in a tough race, wanting to know if I could put him on to who could make a "Mudslinger" ad for him. [laughs]

Williams: So you hadn't copyrighted mud.

Owen: No. [laughs]

Williams: Was there more than one, quote, "Graffiti" ad?

Owen: The "Graffiti" ad was different from the "Mudslinger" ad. The "Graffiti" ad showed a guy—the dialogue was the same, but instead of the mud hitting the poster, it had a guy with a black marker putting a mustache on Bob Dole, and a goatee and horns and things like that. Of course, they would then reverse when you told the truth. But there were really only two ads, "Mudslinger" and "Graffiti."

Williams: When all was said and done, did the senator come to you and say, "Thanks for a good campaign"?

Owen: Well, he did, the morning after that election was won we were on national television with the "Today Show." I can't remember who it was, but out in front of the Ramada Inn there, and one of the first things he said is, "I want to thank Dave Owen for managing this campaign for me to victory." I've seen that since, that clip. Somebody put it together. I think Ted Koppel put that clip in a piece a few years ago, but I don't have it or haven't seen it. But, yes, he did.

Williams: So what was your next service with Senator Dole?

Owen: Well, the next thing that happened was, of course, I had decided not to run for reelection, and the next thing that happened, of course, was the presidential race. He suggested to me that he was going to be for Gerald [R.] Ford, and asked if I wanted to be a part of that campaign, so I liked the action of a political campaign and I said yes. So in the primary I was the midwest regional chairman for the President Ford campaign at the suggestion and request of Bob Dole. I had several states here in the Midwest—Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, I think. That was when I first got involved in presidential politics, and I managed that part of the campaign through the primary process, and at the same time I was elected a delegate to the national convention, which was held in Kansas City, and that was the first time that the moderate conservative factions in Kansas came head to head in an important race, because there was a large contingent of the Kansas Republicans for Ronald Reagan, and the moderate part of the party, which included Dole, myself, and most of our organization, were for Gerald Ford. A lot of that was because Bob Dole was for Gerald Ford.

We went to the Kansas convention and it was very, very tight. I think that really came down again to the organization that we had in place. The Reagan forces were very vocal and out in force, but we were much, much better organized through that state convention process, and we prevailed. So we came out of that convention with, I believe, if memory serves me, thirty-two of thirty-four votes for Ford and we managed to let the Reagan forces win only two. I may have my numbers a little off; it's been a long time. But it was pretty much like that.

So having served as Ford's midwest regional chairman and then as a delegate to the convention myself—I was elected at that state convention—we went to the national convention here in Kansas City. Again, Bob got me kind of into a good spot in the convention. [Sen.] Bob Griffin from Michigan was the floor manager for the Ford campaign, and the Kansas delegation had the front-row seat at that convention. We were right in the front row right under the podium. So Bob arranged for me to be Bob Griffin's assistant in the floor manager in that convention, so Bob Griffin and I sat right on the front row of the Kansas delegation so he could keep an eye on the floor and see what was going on, and also be there so he could be very close to the podium if needed.

In that position, it afforded me the opportunity to really be on the inside of what was going on in the Ford campaign when it came to picking the vice presidential



candidate, because I went to some of those meetings with Bob and Senator Griffin and heard some of the conversations, and after a time or two it became clear to me that nobody really had made up their mind who ought to be the vice president. I mean, [Sen.] Howard [H.] Baker [Jr.] was being talked about, John Connelly was being talked about, other names which are escaping me at the moment, but there was no clear consensus.

So I went back to the Kansas delegation and I said, “We don’t have anything else to do here. Let’s do something that’s fun. Why don’t we see if we can help move Bob Dole’s case along to be potential vice presidential candidate.” So our strategy was pretty simple. We split the whole country up, the states up, to different people, in that thirty-two people that were the Ford people, and in twos we would go to the delegations of these other states and people we knew, and we’d say, “Hey, we know you’re for John Connelly, but if Connelly doesn’t win it on the first ballot, would you be for Dole? Or if Baker isn’t on it, would you be for Dole?” Richard Kleindist, I think, maybe was another one. So that was our strategy, and we just did that systematically, and we would get their commitment, “Yeah, if Connelly doesn’t get it, we’ll vote for Dole.” It was just that easy.

So as it got down to the end, I could tell that we were making some progress because when the Ford people would run the traps in these various states, they were getting the feedback that I had hoped would happen, and that was, “Well, we’re for Baker, but we also kind of like Dole,” and Dole’s name was always getting mentioned. When it really got down to it, I think Dole, in his own mind, thinks that he tried to stay real tight with Lyn [Franklin C.] Nofziger in the Reagan campaign, and probably thinks that it was the Reagan campaign that made the suggestion. In the final analysis, who knows, but I know that what we did sure didn’t hurt anything, because President Ford even mentioned to me, after the fact, that he was surprised at how many people were talking about Bob Dole when they were polling those states. So in any event, when it all came out in the wash, Bob Dole got selected.

Williams: What do you think was the Reagan strategy there?

Owen: I think the Reagan folks, going into it, thought they were going to win that nomination. I think they thought just the power of Ronald Reagan’s personality was

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going to save the day, as opposed to Ford, and that the pardon of [Richard M.] Nixon would be the tripping block that would make it happen, and it just didn't.

Williams: But their supporting Dole as the VP nominee, what was behind that, do you think?

Owen: I don't think there was anything. I don't think they had any strategy on that subject at all. It was more Dole trying to get Nofziger to tell Reagan, "If Ford ever asks you who you would select, would you mention my name?" I think it was that simple.

Williams: So then were you involved in the campaign?

Owen: Well, as it happened, after the night that Dole was selected to be vice president, there was a doorway under the podium that went right back under the podium, and after he won, I was sitting on the front, and Senator Griffin and I just walked through that doorway back there and talked to Dole then. I had known Stu Spencer going back years before when he was involved in a state governor's campaign here in Kansas for a Republican candidate, Rick Harmon, and it turns out that Stu Spencer, who had worked on Reagan's governor campaign but at this point was running President Ford's campaign, he then became aware of how close I was to Dole, the fact I'd worked on Ford's campaign in the primary.

I went back to Washington shortly after the race and walked into Dole's office, and Stu Spencer came in and we just all three went into Dole's office, and it was almost—well, Spencer kind of went through a scenario like this, "Well, we've got to get this campaign started. Somebody's got to run your end of it. Dave here knows you, he's worked on the Ford campaign. Why don't we make him the chairman of the vice presidential campaign." Now, whether Dole really wanted to do that or not, I don't know, but that's how it came out, so I took over his end of the campaign in the general election of the '76 race.

Williams: Big responsibility.

Owen: It was a big responsibility, and the very first thing that happened was Ford went with Dole to Russell, and then Dole went from there on to Seattle, I believe it was, to speak to the American Legion or the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars], I can't remember, as his first official act of the campaign, and President Ford went to Vail [Colorado] for strategy meetings, and I went to Vail to represent Dole in those initial strategy meetings.

Somewhere I've got some notes of those meetings, and the one I remember so vividly, we were in President Ford's condominium there in Vail, and the other people in attendance, in addition to me, were John Connelly, Nelson [A.] Rockefeller, Alan Greenspan, Dick [Richard B.] Cheney, and I think Don [Donald H.] Rumsfeld, but I can't remember for sure. But it was at that meeting that the strategy began for how the campaign was going to be run.

I remember one interesting thing. I even made notes of it at the time. Nelson Rockefeller turned to President Ford and he said, "Mr. President, I would highly suggest that you start building up America's oil reserves, because the Shah of Iran is not going to last long, and we depend on that for so much of our oil supplies." And little did anybody know how all of that would unfold over the years, but he was right on.

So Dole then arrived in Vail, and there was a press conference. President Ford was answering questions and the subject got off on the potential debates. President Ford said, yes, he intended to debate Ronald Reagan. And somebody in the audience asked Dole, says, "Do you intend to debate Walter [F.] Mondale?"

And Dole just said, "I'll debate him anytime, anywhere," or something. And all of a sudden he was in it, whether he wanted to be or not.

So I just immediately went to Stu Spencer and I said, "Stu, if we let this happen, this is a disaster. He is not going to do well in these kind of debates, and I want to get you the proof." And I got a can of film of that Hutch debate and I gave it to Stu, and I said, "Watch this. You don't want this to happen."

So eventually the campaign went on, and I became the point man to negotiate the debates rules with Walter Mondale. My two compadres in that were Senator Jacob [K.] Javits and [Sen.] Ted Stevens. So we set out to establish the ground rules of the debate between the two. Dick Moe, as I recall, was on the other side of that; he was Mondale's chief of staff, I think, and a guy who ended up being a big pollster in the Democrat Party, whose name escapes me right now, were on the other side, but I finally convinced Ted

Stevens and Jacob Javits that this wasn't a good idea and we ought to try to get this torpedoed if we could. So we became very difficult to deal with. We would agree to things and change our mind, do whatever we could do.

But eventually the debate took place, and it took place in Houston. It will go down in history, I suppose, in that election, that as they got toward the end of the debate, Dole made a comment about that the Democrats had started all the wars or something to that effect. I can't remember the exact language. And it became another big, big issue just like the abortion issue became in the Kansas Senate campaign.

The campaign itself was pretty chaotic on the Dole side, because Dole was still trying to stay close to Reagan, so here's Reagan defeated by Ford, and all of a sudden all of these guys started coming on our campaign, the Bob Dole for Vice President campaign, from the Reagan camp. So I had Larry [M.] Speakes, who had come over from the White House to be the head of our communications. We had advance guys from the White House on our staff, and then we had all of these Reagan people that came in, like Lyn Nofziger and Charlie [Charles] Black, Paul [A.] Russo, and I can't remember them all, but it was not a good situation in terms of people mixing together and working for a common cause. So there was a lot of dissension, and I would have to say that one of Dole's weaknesses is he's always looking for another angle. He will never give people the kind of support they need to really run something effectively. So Lyn Nofziger was always trying to undermine me in the running of the campaign, and Dole wouldn't take a position. It just got to be a mess, frankly. But we got through it, got to the end of it, and on election day if there had been a few more votes in Ohio and Hawaii, Ford would have been elected.

Williams: What was your position relative to Stu Spencer?

Owen: Well, Stu, of course, and I had met each other back in probably 1968 in Kansas—excuse me, before that, like '64, '66, maybe, when he was working on Rick Harmon's campaign in Kansas, but it was really Stu that I worked with when I was working as the regional chairman for the Ford campaign in the primary. He was in charge. He was the guy I reported to. So that's why he was so quick to suggest that I be the guy, because I was one of the few people in captivity that knew Dole that well and had been working on

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the Ford campaign. So he was the one who suggested that I take that role and supported me in that.

Williams: So he stayed with the Ford side.

Owen: He stayed with the Ford campaign. Correct.

Williams: Did Dole ever express to you regrets for having made the “Democrat war” comment?

Owen: Nope. Never heard him say that.

Williams: This is fascinating stuff. You’re a real eye-witness to history here, or a player, of course. So let’s move on then to the next campaign, I guess.

Owen: Well, after that campaign was over, it was almost just very shortly thereafter that I was in Washington and we went over to Dole’s apartment, and he was talking about, “What do I do next?” So he recognized that he had some fence-mending to do, I think.

So that the next thing that really happened campaign-wise was, I guess, his 1980 race for president. In that race, I was really busy with my business and I didn’t get immediately involved in that race. What I did do, however, was while Dole was running for president, I put his reelection campaign together for the U.S. Senate and really kind of did it just using the people that we’d worked with in the past and put a very strong organization together statewide, began raising money for him and collected a war chest to run a Senate race.

As that race kind of unfolded, I went up to Iowa when the Iowa caucuses were going on, and helped with that, and I was one of the speakers for Dole at some of the various caucus sites. I can’t remember the town we were in, but it was Barbara Bush that was speaking for President [George H.W.] Bush that night. I remember [Rep.] Phil [Philip M.] Crane being there at that particular caucus and a few other people, but I spoke on Dole’s behalf and helped through that process, because Iowa had been one of my states in the Ford campaign process.

Then Dole asked me to go to New Hampshire and just make an assessment of what I thought that was all about. Well, when I went to New Hampshire, it was pretty clear that had he really focused in, he could have done pretty well in New Hampshire. There were a lot of people up there that wanted to be for him, but at that point in time he was really staying pretty close to the Senate. He wouldn't go up to New Hampshire very often, and it was just clear that the race just wasn't going to go anywhere, and I told him so. I thought, you know, "You would have had a chance, but the way you've run it, I don't think this is going anywhere, and you need to decide if you're running for reelection to the U.S. Senate."

It was at that point he asked me, because Kansas had voted to have a primary that year. They don't always do it; you voted one way or the other. And that year there was going to be a primary, and he was afraid that he was going to get embarrassed in the Kansas primary potentially, and, of course, that was important because if he didn't do well there, he was going to run for reelection or at least—although I think he was really thinking about not running. I truly do. I think he was thinking about not running for reelection. But in any event, he asked me to call all the other presidential campaigns and ask them not to enter the Kansas primary. So I called Phil Crane, I remember distinctly I called the Bush campaign and I ended up speaking with George [W. Bush] Junior, now President Bush, trying to convince him that his father shouldn't enter the Kansas race. I called Jack Ranson on behalf of John Connelly's campaign. I have to say none of them were very cooperative in that request. [laughs] But in any event, before that all came about, Dole dropped out of the race and ran for reelection, and, frankly, because the organization and the money were in place, he had a pretty easy time of it and no real competitor. So that was that.

Williams: I've got to change tape here, so I'll stop for just a moment.

[Begin Tape 2.]

Williams: So that was 1980.

Owen: That was the 1980 race. One thing that happened before that, that didn't have anything to do with Dole's race, but in 1978 [Sen.] Jim Pearson retired from the U.S. Senate, so there was a Kansas Senate seat open at that time. I had thought for a long time I might be interested in that, but again I was just too involved in my business and had too much financially at stake to do that, but everyone who was running, of course, approached me to be helpful to them. My friend Wayne Angell was in that primary. Sam Hardage [phonetic] from Wichita was in it. Then, of course, Nancy [L.] Kassebaum. So I tried to stay kind of out of it, because I sure didn't want to take sides against my friends in that race if I could avoid it, so I just kind of sat it out.

Then after Nancy Kassebaum won the primary, she came to me, she and her sister-in-law, I believe it was, and asked if I would help. So I became the co-chairman of the Kassebaum for Senate race in 1978. I'll never forget this, one of the interesting things, when we first got involved in it, the first thing she had to do was debate Bill Roy at KAKE [TV] in Wichita. So when we went down to the race, I told her, "Don't tell anybody that I'm with you. Let's just walk into the studio." So we did. We went down, and Bill Roy had his same cadre of people together that had run against us in the '74 race. I don't know if they'll admit it to this day, but when I walked in with Nancy Kassebaum, I think they sucked a lot of air, because they knew the race was on. Then I worked on her campaign and helped put together commercials and an advisor, and of course she won the campaign very handily and served in the Senate for many years.

Then after that, in 1984 I finally kind of had my business together, so I decided to run for governor of Kansas, and I put together again, just like I'd always done, a very, very extensive campaign organized all over the state, and felt like I had an excellent chance of winning that race.

At the very last minute, the incumbent governor at that time was a Democrat, John [W.] Carlin, who went on to become the head of, I believe, the National Archives or something in Washington, and as we got toward the end of that race, he made a very smart political move in the primary. He got a guy from my home county here, Johnson County, who was a political figure himself, Wendell [E.] Lady, who had been Speaker of the House, he got Wendell Lady to enter the Kansas primary because I think he saw the same polls I did, that I could beat John Carlin. Wendell got into the race and the payoff was that if John Carlin won reelection, Wendell got appointed to the Kansas Board of

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Regents, and that is exactly what transpired. He took enough votes away from me in Johnson County that I narrowly lost the primary, and then Sam Hardage from Wichita won the race and John Carlin just beat the socks off of him, and it was no contest, and Wendell got appointed to the State Board of Regents. So I congratulate John Carlin on a great political move. If I had thought of it, I would have done the same thing. [laughs] But in any event, that was my last time to run for anything myself.

Then, of course, Dole comes up again in 1986 for reelection to the Senate, and again I was very active. I think at that point we let Kim Wells be the chairman of the campaign and I was the finance chairman. Again, we just put the organization together and everything together for Dole, and he won very handily. So that was the end of that race.

Williams: Did Dole ever express any exasperation with you having worked on the Kassebaum campaign?

Owen: No, not at all.

Williams: That was not an issue.

Owen: It was not an issue at all.

Williams: This brings us, then, to '88, I guess.

Owen: 1988, of course, Dole was running for president at that time and had kind of gotten the thing kicked off, and the first event I went to was in Washington when he had one fairly large fundraiser. I went up to that. I had been helping Barbara Norris and some others who were involved with the fundraising aspect of his campaign up to that point, and decided that I would do whatever I could do to help in that race. So I eventually became the national finance chairman for the Dole for President Committee, and began to function in that capacity, setting up fundraisers for him all over the country and doing my part to try to make that campaign a success.



At the same time, Elizabeth [H. Dole] was the head of the Department of Transportation. Kind of an interesting sidelight that really ties into all of this, one day I went to visit Elizabeth at her office at the Department of Transportation, and I went in really just to stop by and say hello. I, of course, had first met her in 1974, because she came into Dole's life at that point and they got married shortly after that. So she was around in the '76 race, but not nearly as much as she was going to be in the '88 race. So I went by and said hello, and I just offhandedly asked her if there was anything I could do for her that would be helpful, and she said, "Well, you know, I need somebody to look after my finances."

Well, I'm a banker by trade, so I guess that was a natural question for her to bring up with me. I said, "Well, whatever I can do to help."

She said, "If you'll come back tomorrow, I'll have some stuff and I'll give it to you."

I went back the next day and stopped in, thinking I would go in and we would sit down and go over—I didn't know what the issue was, but was there to help. Her secretary came out and said, "Elizabeth's tied up, but she wanted me to give you these." And she gave me two big brown grocery sacks. I thought maybe I got a bunch of unbalanced checkbook statements. I didn't know what I had in there, but I was on my way to the airport, so I stuffed them in my suitcase, I got on the airplane, I flew back to Kansas City, I got back to the bank and back home and opened them up, and lo and behold, here were life insurance policies, stock certificates, bank accounts, everything that she had in the way of finances, and a note asking me to kind of get this organized and take care of it for her.

So I took over managing her affairs, you know. I was on her checking accounts and managed her business as far as her investments were concerned. That was when they bought the property down in Florida that they still own. She had quite a number of mutual fund investments, and I began to make some changes in some of those.

Then there was a fellow by the name of Mark McConaghy, who was Dole's staff guy on the Senate Finance Committee, and he had left and gone to work for PriceWaterhouse. The Doles asked Mark to set up a blind trust for Elizabeth, for her activities, and so he set that up, and I think one of the monumental mistakes in history was that he set this blind trust up and named it the Elizabeth Dole Blind Trust. Well,

now, how in the world is it going to be blind if it's called the Elizabeth Dole Blind Trust? Well, that plays a very important role in the rest of the story. So Mark and I worked together and we transferred all these assets into the Dole trust, and again he was the advisor, but I was the guy that wrote the checks and made the decisions with his advice and counsel, of course.

That went on for quite a long period of time, and one of the most crucial times came in October of 1987. There was one day in the presidential campaign where we started the day, or at least the day before, I think, and I was with Dole on Wall Street in New York City. We went in and there was a meeting, I think, at Morgan Stanley. They had investment bankers from all over the place in that room talking about the economy, so I paid close attention to what they were saying about the future of the stock market.

We left there, and then Elizabeth and I went to Dallas for a fundraiser that I'd set up there with Bob [Robert L.] Crandall, the chairman of American Airlines, so we had that lunch, sat at his table and kind of hearing his perspective of what was going on. Then we went over and met with [H.] Ross Perot at his office, and his son, who was trying to build an airport out there in Dallas, and of course we again paid close attention because this is one of America's leading businessmen. Then we fly to California and we went by and had a meeting with President Ford at his home, then had dinner with Stu Spencer and his girlfriend. Well, all of that kind of gave me the inclination that there was a lot going on in the market that I wasn't quite sure how to read the tea leaves. The other person that was in the picture here was Alan Greenspan. He was at one of those events as well.

So as I was getting on the plane, I just decided, "This is a little bit unstable," and I called the broker at Merrill Lynch and I just sold everything she had. This was like October 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> of 1987. I believe whatever the date was in October, the stock market just took a huge crash, and we totally avoided that crash and had her in cash and was able then after that to come back and take advantage of the market as it began to recover. So that was a crucial investment decision at that point on her behalf that saved her a lot of money.

Williams: She was privy to this decision or not?

Owen: No, she was not. I'd never discussed any of that with her. It was my job to make the decisions, and part of it was, it was a blind trust and she wasn't supposed to know, so she didn't.

Williams: Had you been handling other people's money?

Owen: No, other than just as president of the bank and that sort of thing. The reason I say all this is because this all comes into play as it goes on down the line, because Elizabeth then asked me if I would help her. She wanted to go out on the road on her own and raise some money for the campaign, so I set up a whole series of fundraisers for Elizabeth, and it was just she and I going out on the campaign trail to raise this capital. I think we raised a million and a half dollars in probably sixty days, just her going out and speaking. The tagline in those races, I would always get up in my introduction and say, "We've got two Doles here that could be President of the United States. Elizabeth is a very capable person on her own part. Of course, we're running the campaign for Bob Dole." But it was that kind of spin that I always put on it, and she liked it. [laughs] But Elizabeth and I always got along extremely well.

The turning point for me in that campaign, really a turning point in my life, was in—I want to say it was the first part of November, I got a call from the Harris newspapers in Hutchinson, Kansas, who had been an adversary of Dole's his whole political career, and they had put a research reporter on the Dole campaign, and they were doing an investigation of me. The reason they were doing that is because I was the person that everybody in Kansas knew was the closest guy to Bob Dole, and of course he was just getting ready to go into the Iowa caucuses against George Bush. So they were scrambling around for anything they could come up with that would cause Dole damage going into the Iowa caucuses.

At Dole's request back in—I guess it would have been in '86, a fellow by the name of Mike [John Michael] Hayden was running for governor of Kansas and needed some help, and I raised some money for Mike and donated it to his campaign, and a lot of it coming from my own personal businesses and activities. I had taken every entity that I had control of and made a donation to Mike's campaign and presented him with checks

totaling about \$36,000 one day up in Topeka at the airport, right in the midst of a very tough campaign for him, which he eventually won.

Well, when the attack came in the presidential race when Dole was running in '88 against Bush, Lee Atwater was the campaign chairman for President Bush, and he implemented this attack or approach against me that he was feeding to the *Hutchinson Daily News*, and they began to investigate those campaign contributions that I had made to Mike Hayden in '86, and it launched an investigation by the Kansas Public Disclosure Commission on whether or not those contributions were illegal. So we ended up having to really deal with that just constantly. I was supposed to go down and meet with Dole in Florida with a fundraiser that I'd set up with the guy that owns the Carnival Cruise Line, and I had to call him and tell him, "I won't be able to come down there. I've got to deal with this issue." Of course, I didn't feel I had done anything wrong, but the newspapers were after me. This was a big, big deal. Dole was going into the Iowa caucuses.

To make a long story short, it just became an event that took its own legs and never quit for years. So I resigned from the campaign as being the campaign finance chairman, thinking that would help, if I was gone they'd leave Dole alone, but of course that didn't happen. So he went into the Iowa caucuses and he won. But my departure from the campaign, I don't know for sure, but I think it had an impact on the people there.

**Error! Bookmark not defined.**Dole's position on that was from the day that first came up, after all those years, he never spoke to me again from that point forward, thinking that I had caused him great damage in the campaign. So I began about a ten-year stint in my life of fending myself off from all of these investigations, which led to at one point eight different federal entities investigating my life and my activities, that eventually led to, first of all, a settlement with the Kansas Public Disclosure Commission, in which after all of the allegations were made, I reached an agreement, paid a \$500 fine, and admitted guilt to a Class C misdemeanor, which was the equivalent of nailing a campaign poster on a telephone pole, and thought that it was over with, but there were a lot of people in Kansas—and this again goes back to the Ford-Reagan conflict—who carried a lot of animosity toward Dole and toward me over the way that '76 convention turned out.

So the guy who was the Kansas Attorney General at that point took upon himself—his name is Bob [Robert] Stephan—to appoint a special prosecutor after I went through the Kansas Public Disclosure Commission and then they brought all these charges, we went to court, the judge, Judge [Joseph] Pierron here in Johnson County, reviewed all these charges and dismissed them all, saying there was no foundation for any of them. But that's when the politics came back in again, and Bob Stephan appointed a special prosecutor. They came back on a federal charge and charged me basically with all the same stuff again. All of this drug on for ten years, probably.

Finally, after I'd gone through all the appropriate channels and the district court over here in Kansas City, Kansas, I was found guilty of filing a false tax return, for not paying \$4,000 in taxes in a year when I'd voluntarily paid \$150,000. So it wasn't about justice or right and wrong; it was just about "We're going to get this guy." Then I spent six months in federal prison and was released from federal prison in late 1994, so I missed Dole's run for president again.

When I got out, I immediately began pursuing a presidential pardon, and what would have been 2000 as President [William J.] Clinton walked out of the door of the White House, he signed the presidential pardon and pardoned me of all of those because it had been thoroughly reviewed by the Justice Department, so I have a complete pardon for all those activities. That covers a lot of ground in a short period of time, but it was a miserable time in my life.

Williams: Any subsequent contact with Senator Dole?

Owen: A couple three years ago, I was sitting in my office and the phone rings, and it was Bob, and he said, "Dave, this is Bob Dole. I think we need to bury the hatchet or settle old differences and get back together." He said, "It's not right for you and I to be acrimonious toward each other." And since that time we talk regularly. I've been to see him. We have a good relationship.

Williams: And you're comfortable with that?

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Owen: I'm comfortable with that. It doesn't do me any good to hold grudges about things like that. I've got too many great things going on in my life to let that drag it down. But it was a terrible time in my life.

Williams: So your handling of Elizabeth Dole's finances was not the issue; it was your contributions to Hayden's campaign?

Owen: No, it became my handling of Elizabeth Dole's—and this is why I mentioned the fact that it was so ridiculous to have the Elizabeth Dole blind trust called the Elizabeth Dole Blind Trust, because one of the things I had done was buy some real estate for her, so in the search of the records, they found the paper trail, of course, of the real estate investments because Elizabeth Dole's name was all over it. So that's when they made the tie between the fact that I was close to Bob Dole, involved in his campaign, handling Elizabeth Dole's blind trust, and so there must be something wrong with all this.

Williams: But that issue became part of the court case?

Owen: Yes, it did.

Williams: As a side issue?

Owen: As a side issue. What the charges against me ended up being was the way I reported some of my income and the way that I moved money from one of the entities that I owned 100 percent to another and made political contributions to Hayden's campaign. It became a very, very complicated court case, and when I went to court I don't believe there was a single person on my jury who had anything other than a high school education, so it was just over their heads, and very easy to get a conviction.

Williams: So where did the dog track issue come into all this?

Owen: That all came into it as well, because Paul Bryant, again, was a friend of mine, and I had taken him to Washington and he had donated considerable money to the Dole

campaign. So I was helping Paul, when the issue of awarding licenses in Kansas came up, to help him get the track license for Kansas City, Kansas, a Wyandotte County license. Paul had paid me, I believe it was \$100,000 and I had recorded that in income the way my accountant had instructed me to report it and my tax lawyer had instructed me to report it. My taxes were paid. That was not the issue. The way they brought that into it was that I didn't pay the tax in the right year; it was not that I hadn't paid my taxes. But that became an important cog in the conviction as well.

Williams: Was that oversight on your part?

Owen: No, I thought I did just exactly what I was supposed to do. I did it under instruction by my tax counsel.

Williams: So sort of all of these things—

Owen: Yes, it was just one of those things where there were so many things that all just came to focus at the same time, and it was so confusing and so complicated, I'm not sure if I'd been on the other side of it I could have figured it out. So it was a tough, tough deal.

Williams: Be specific, if you can, who do you think was pushing this?

Owen: Well, I know that at every turn, of course, the people in Kansas were all close to Bob Dole. Now, whether they thought they were doing him a favor by taking the actions they were taking, I don't know, but you go from the Attorney General to the judge who heard my case, to the guy who was on the Prison Parole Board, they were all Kansans, all close to Dole, and I guess all thinking they were doing him some big favor by taking the action that they did.

Williams: And then speak a little bit about your treatment in prison.

Owen: Well, prison was—that was an experience. When you go into a prison environment—I happened to go to Yankton Prison in South Dakota, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and it's the most astonishing thing, because my wife drove me up there, we went over and had lunch just like you'd normally do on an everyday kind of a basis, and then you walk over to that prison, you turn yourself in, they slam the door behind you, and your life changes totally. There was a lot of effort to humiliate me. They gave me clothes that had holes in them, clothes that didn't fit.

I went over to report in to the first cell that I was supposed to report to, a room, and the guard there knew my name, said, "We knew you were coming, Owen. You're in this room over here, 100," or whatever it was. "There are three Black Muslims in there, they hate white people, and I'm sure they're not going to like you. Welcome to Yankton." So I was obviously concerned and frightened. As it turned out, I spent probably about a week in that particular room. I was eventually able to make friends with those guys and it didn't go on, but they definitely didn't like me and didn't want me there, and I was able to get transferred to another room.

I began immediately then to try to get a parole to get out as quickly as I could. The judge in the case that had sentenced me sentenced me to a year and a day intentionally because when they do that to you, you can't get the record expunged. The only way you can get an injustice changed in that situation is a presidential pardon. So I was sentenced for a year and a day. I had hoped that I could be eligible for parole and get out, so I began immediately trying to do that.

Prison itself is a very demeaning situation and it serves little or no purpose in rehabilitating anybody. It's kind of like you start over in life. You have to go hustle around and find yourself a job, which I eventually did as a clerk in the electrical shop.

I eventually did get transferred to Leavenworth Prison to have a parole hearing, and this was the most bizarre thing of the whole experience. Here I'm under constant guard. They even had special guards on me because my life had been threatened when I was there, so I was what they called a special case. When they told me I was going to be transferred down here to Leavenworth for a parole hearing, I was astounded to hear that the way that worked was they released me at the front gate, somebody drove me to the airport, and I was on my own. I was supposed to go get on an airplane, fly to Kansas City, and drive to Leavenworth Prison and turn myself in again.



In the Dole presidential campaigns, one of the guys I had met was Senator Larry Pressler from South Dakota, So I get released from Yankton Prison, they drive me to the airport, dump me out on the curb, I at least have civilian clothes on, and I walk into the airport and who do I run into but Larry Pressler. He said, “Dave, how you doing? What are you doing?” [laughs]

I said, “I’ve just been down spending some time in your local prison here.” He was just baffled. He didn’t know what to say.

I got on the airplane, I flew to Kansas City, my wife drove me over to Leavenworth, and then the scary part of the trip really began, because when you check into Leavenworth Prison, even though you go to the minimum security prison, you check in at the Big House, and when you walk in there and they slam those doors behind you, it is a scary, scary experience. So again, they do everything they can to humiliate you at every step of the way, but I got through that okay.

I had the parole hearing, and there were mountains of material in support of my parole. We went to the parole hearing, and, again, this is where the Kansan who was on the Prison Parole Board in Washington, D.C., comes into play. I walk into the parole hearing. I had my attorney, my accountant, everybody there, my wife to speak on this. We had submitted mountains of material for this parole hearing. The guy opens his folder and we begin to talk about the things that were in the file, and he said, “I don’t have anything in here. There’s nothing in your file about all of this material you’ve presented, so I guess I have no choice but to deny your parole.” And it was again a set-up deal to hopefully, if I didn’t get the parole, then I would have to serve the full one year and one day.

Well, immediately after that occurred, my wife got an attorney here in Kansas City and we filed a *habeas corpus* motion before the Federal District Court. And to make a long story short, when we finally got before Judge Richard Rogers in Topeka at the Federal Court, he was so incensed about what he saw and what had occurred to me through this whole thing, he ordered the federal marshals to go immediately to Leavenworth Prison and release me. And also ordered that the Bureau of Prisons have no further control over my life whatsoever from that point forward, which was totally abnormal, because usually you have to stay under their jurisdiction for a period of time.

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So I walked out of Leavenworth Prison that day with federal marshals there to make sure it happened, because in phone calls to the prison they were still trying to jerk me around, and even though we had a federal judge's order, they weren't going to let me leave. The federal marshals went down and I got out. It was again surreal, because you walk out of there, I drove right from there to my office, went down, sat down at my desk, and began doing business all over again.

Williams: So you left South Dakota, you came down here for a hearing.

Owen: For a parole hearing.

Williams: The hearing occurred, and then how long did you stay in Leavenworth?

Owen: I think I was there for about three months in Leavenworth Prison from the time I had the parole hearing until the time that we could get the *habeas corpus* motion through the courts and get a ruling.

Williams: So all told, how much time did you spend there?

Owen: I spent from February to October in prison. And again another kind of bizarre thing that happened was in September of that year, my father died. So I asked for special dispensation, not thinking I would get it, but they let me out of prison for one day to come to my father's funeral. Again, I was just on my own. Here's I'm this dangerous guy that they've got to have under constant lock and key and guard, and they let me out one day and I go to my father's funeral and go back and report back in. Of course, I guess they would do some pretty bad things to you if you didn't show up, but it just seemed totally bizarre to me.

Williams: And you were unescorted?

Owen: Unescorted.

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Williams: Do you know what the common practice is in Kansas with white-collar crime where people go to serve their time?

Owen: Not really. I don't know.

Williams: Because you read all the time about people who get to these kind of country club prisons.

Owen: Yes.

Williams: But that wasn't for you.

Owen: Well, the people would say that that would be the case, but I think anytime you're in a prison setting where you're at a maximum security prison attached to it, it's a lot tougher because you have the same guards. They just rotate. The Leavenworth facility up here is pretty run down, so it's not a pleasant place to be.

Williams: I want to go back to a few things that you've told me, but just to complete the narrative here, so what have you done since that time?

Owen: Well, there are always good parts to the story. I was working at the time I finally had to decide I was not going to fight this anymore and go to prison. I was working for Jack Stephens, the president of Stephens, Inc. in Little Rock, Arkansas. It's a huge investment banking firm. I had gotten him involved in Dole's campaign for president. He had been a big financial supporter. So I was running the Kansas City office for Stephens, Inc., when it just became obvious they were never going to let me go, they were going to stay after me forever until they got me. So I went down to Little Rock and I told Jack, I said, "I'm basically out of money." I was a wealthy man when this all started, and when it was over I hardly had two cents to rub together rather than my monthly paycheck. So I could tell, after I went to the appeal hearing at the Court of Appeals in Denver, that this was never going to be over until they got their pound of

flesh. So I went down and told Jack, “I can’t afford to keep fighting this. I’m just going to give up and let them—I’ll serve the time.”

And he said, “I totally agree with that. You’ve got my support. I know you didn’t do anything wrong.” So I had their total blessing.

So that’s when I quit fighting it and said, “Here I am. Come get me.”

Jack Stephens hired my wife to run my office for me, kept my office open the whole time I was in prison. When I got out, it was the Stephens, Inc. office that I walked back into and picked up just like the day I left, thanks to Jack Stephens. Jack is just a wonderful gentleman. He, by the way, was the chairman of Augusta National and the Masters Golf Tournament, a very powerful figure in the South, and just a wonderful gentleman who’s now deceased.

Then I began just trying to build my financial activities back up. My wife was wonderful, supportive through the whole thing. I made personal investments over a period of time and then this company we’re in right now is really kind of another testament to perseverance, because I had made an investment in this company early on, then it became obvious that someone needed to take over the leadership of it. So I did that. I became the chairman and CEO of ICOP Digital, Inc. We’re a surveillance technology company supplying surveillance equipment for law enforcement. In the process of doing that, we became a public company, so we had to go through the approval process with the NASD, with Nasdaq, with the SEC, with the American Stock Exchange, and so you can imagine the hoops I had to jump through to explain what had happened and to get the approval of these federal agencies to permit me to be the CEO of a public company. And I am proud to say that we got that accomplished. This company is one of the fastest growing little companies in the Nasdaq stock market. We are very successful, and I think the future is very bright for ICOP Digital.

Williams: And for Dave Owen.

Owen: And for Dave Owen.

Williams: What about your family life? How did that pan out?

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Owen: I was married before my present wife, and I would have to say that all of that back in 1988 really led to the divorce. My first wife, she's a wonderful person. It was just too much, so we ended up getting a divorce. Then I remarried after that to my present wife, Laura, and it's Laura who helped me through all of the legal machinations and the *habeas corpus* motion and stood by me through all of that to where we are today, and she's the president of ICOP Digital and I'm the chairman.

Williams: Just for the record, when did the divorce occur? What year was that?

Owen: It occurred in 1992, I believe it was.

Williams: Did you cover the appeal process? Did you speak about the Denver appeal?

Owen: No, I don't believe so.

Williams: Do you want to just cover that?

Owen: Sure. It was the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals. Again, at every turn I kept running into people who had been appointed by Dole in some form or fashion had a connection to Dole, and I'm not saying that he had anything to do with it; I'm saying that in every step of the way through this whole thing the people on the other side of the table were his appointees or people that he had gotten in office one way or the other. So when I went to the Court of Appeals, I really blame the attorney that I had more than anything else. You have a very short period of time in a Court of Appeals hearing to state your case; it's something like twenty minutes to tell them what the basis of your case is. My attorney, after fighting all of that, decided he had more important things to do than go to that appeal hearing with me, so he sent an assistant who did a terrible job. After a period of time the Tenth Circuit denied my appeal. It was at that point that my only choice was to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court, and I just felt it was fruitless and useless, and "Here I am. Come get me."

Williams: Who did you vote for in 1996?

Owen: In 1996 I think I voted for Bill Clinton. [laughs]

Williams: An unfair question to ask, but I'm glad you answered it.

Owen: Interestingly enough, I was born and grew up in South Arkansas in a little town that's just a hop, skip, and a jump from Hope, Arkansas, where President Clinton comes from, and when I watch him, see him, and the experiences he's had in life, it's so easy for me to relate, because we came from the same part of the country, with the same kind of people, and the same things go on, it's just so easy for me, when I read his book, it was really interesting to me because it's the same kind of stuff I grew up with.

Williams: If I were talking to you with a different history since 1988, I'd be asking you questions like what do you think of Dole as a legislator, for example. What would your comment be?

Owen: Well, first of all, let me say I've put any unkind thoughts behind me as far as all of that's concerned, and I think I can be pretty even-handed in the assessment. He's a master at reaching a compromise position. I found that he had very little in terms of his programs, his ideas, and that sort of thing, but when it came to reaching a consensus of opinion on issues and bills that came before him that were hard to decide, he was as good as there is at helping other people wade through that and get to the bottom line and take a position. Whether it helped or hurt, I don't know—I think it probably helped—he doesn't come to a decision quickly. He'll just keep waiting and waiting and waiting, thinking that there's going to be a better idea here or something else is going to come up. So when he finally does come to a decision, he doesn't ever show his cards up front. It's always at the last minute.

Williams: Is he a patient or an impatient man?

Owen: I would say very impatient. He has very little patience for the people that work around him, very insulting, frankly, to a lot of people who work around him. But he

generates intense loyalty, having said all that. People who have worked for him, if he wanted them to, they'd come back again.

Williams: How do you account for that?

Owen: I think they admire him for what he has overcome in his life.

Williams: How do you see World War II experiences playing out in his life since then?

Owen: I think it had a great deal to do with the decisions he made in his life, because up to the point he was wounded on that battlefield, he was an athlete, and that's where he thought his future was, you know. He said he intended to go to medical school at that point, but I'm not sure that's necessarily the case. But he definitely never envisioned himself having to make his way in the world the way he's made it, but the experience of recovering from that wound, first of all, it speaks to his intestinal fortitude that he did it, because most—a lot of people, at least, would never be able to overcome something like that. But the strength of character that he showed in rehabilitating his body, in particular, same kinds of intensity and drive that have made him successful in politics, he's really indefatigable when it comes to campaigning. I mean, I know what the man goes through just to get ready to go somewhere in the morning, because I've been in the room when that's going on. You take what we do and add another couple of hours on each end of it to just get ready to go out the door.

Williams: Describe that process.

Owen: Well, of course, he has limited use of his arm, so just little things, like the hand that he holds the pen in really has more feeling than the hand he shakes hands with. He shakes hands with the hand that I don't think he has much feeling in at all. The getting ready in the morning, just like buttoning his shirt, he had kind of like a buttonhook thing that he would have to use to get around a button and get his shirt buttoned, and things like that. It's just a difficult regimen that he had to develop on his own that takes a lot of time just to get dressed. He's always dressed immaculately.

Williams: I can't imagine tying a tie with one hand.

Owen: No. He definitely can do it. It takes a lot of time.

Williams: What about getting into a coat? How does he get his right arm into a coat?

Owen: He's got that figured out pretty easily. He can get into a coat. He's just very immaculate, and he'll never get into a car without taking his coat off. He takes it off and lays it over his lap so when he gets out his coat's not wrinkled. It's a study in perseverance. It's really something.

Williams: Other little mannerisms that you picked up on?

Owen: Well, he, of course, has a hard time with meals too. That's what developed really one of his campaign styles. The fact that he can't sit down to a meal and cut a steak up or so something like that kind of led him to get into the mode of he would eat something before he got there or eat something after he left, but he would spend the time when everybody else is eating to walk around the room and shake hands. On the few occasions—and of course, like a lot of people with a handicap like that, he doesn't like it to be obvious that other people are helping him do things, but I certainly cut up a lot of steaks for him over the years so that when we had a situation where we had to eat, it's a difficult thing for him to do. He's always trying to have food that he can just eat with one hand or something like that.

Williams: What was the high point of your association with him? What was the best time?

Owen: Oh, I think it was the night we won that U.S. Senate race in 1974. That was really something, because it was a tough race, probably shouldn't have won it, and we had spent every ounce of energy that we had in us to get to the end game, and we won.



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Williams: I don't want to come back to the troubles that you had, but it strikes me that as you describe what happened to you, the incessant nature of the obstacles that were put in your path or going after you so incessantly, if you were reading this as a mystery novel, you'd say, "Oh, it's got to be someone now. Who is it?"

Owen: Yes. Well, I think so, too, and I wish that I knew. I'm totally convinced in my own mind that it didn't happen by accident. Too many things lined up against me at too many turns when they could have gone either way. So there was a method to a lot of it, maybe not all of it, but certainly a lot of it.

Williams: I read somewhere you were described as a little bit of a hard-nosed Republican figure in the state of Kansas. Do you think there was a lot of animosity within the state?

Owen: I think it came from that '76 state convention. I'm not a hard-nosed—I mean, I'm an easy guy to get along with, and I think most people would tell you that. But that was just gut-level politics at its best, and that was when the moderate and conservative forces came head to head for really the first time in Kansas. The Reagan people were very intense, and so were we. I made some decisions in that process that enabled us to win those thirty-two votes out of thirty-four. We played hardball with people to get them to vote our way, and I think a lot of it stems from that, because that's not my nature.

Williams: I thank you for this interview.

Owen: Okay. You're welcome.

[End of interview]

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