

Interview: Judge John Lungstrum

May 2003

Interviewer: **Lahoma Yates Dennis, longtime Dole staff member**

Interviewer: This is Judge Lungstrum from the United States District Court in Kansas City, Kansas, so, Judge, will you please share some of your memoirs?

John Lungstrum: This is John Lungstrum and I first met Bob Dole in the Spring of 1967. I was a senior in college at Yale in New Haven, Connecticut, and my parents lived in Salina, Kansas, at the time. I was born in Kansas, spent my entire life in Kansas, other than being away for college. I knew I wanted to come back to the University of Kansas to go to law school in the fall of 1967 but I wanted to work in Washington that summer before I came home, just because I'd always been interested in politics. I had worked in Bill Avery's campaign for Governor in 1964 in the primary and I had worked for Jim Pearson in the primary in 1966, both of which I would say, as a side note, ironically, showed that Bob Dole was a pretty forgiving guy because he had other candidates in those races that he'd have been for, Huck Boyd in the one and Bob Ellsworth in the other, but unbeknownst to me, in any event, those were the candidates I had worked for. But in the spring of 1967 I sent letters to Jim Pearson and to Bob Dole saying that I was going to be down in Washington and would like to come in and visit with them and see if they might have something I could do to work for the Summer, and Pearson's office didn't have anything and so I went over to Dole's office and he was in, I can't remember now whether it was the Cannon or the Longworth Building, I think it was Cannon, but I --

Interviewer: Think he was in Cannon.

John Lungstrum: I think it was Cannon. And went over there to meet with him and he had just gotten back from a trip to India and he called me in the office and he was very interested in all the politicians he'd met in India, and I don't remember all the names now, but the head of the congress party and all these things. Well, it just so happened I knew a little bit about some of those things and I was able to talk to him about these Indian politicians and who they were and so he and I kind of hit it off and he said, well, look, we don't have a lot of staff here but I need -- I don't have a legislative assistant and would you be

interested in being my legislative assistant and coming down here? And at that time the staff was very small. Bill Kats was the administrative assistant; great guy. And Judy Harbaugh was his personal assistant, who really kind of ran the office. I mean, she was one of the most amazing people.

Interviewer: She could keep more balls in the air than anybody I ever saw.

John Lungstrum: Yeah, because as much as I love Bob Dole, administration wasn't his strength and Judy Harbaugh really made that work. And then Ruth Ann Komarek ran the mailroom.

Interviewer: Ruth Ann's still there with him now in Washington.

John Lungstrum: Is that right?

Interviewer: Just...she just stayed with him and still handling the mail and the faxes and all of that, so if you want to get something to Bob...

John Lungstrum: That is so interesting because, yes, Ruth Ann ran that, and there really wasn't much other permanent staff. He had an ag. expert who was on lend-lease from the Ag. Department, and this was very interesting. Again, this was kind of part of the story of Bob Dole that I want to tell, and that is I don't remember the man's name now but he was a very liberal Democrat from Minnesota or South Dakota or someplace who was part of the Orville Freeman administration of the Ag. Department, and I think he may have been from South Dakota, because Bob Dole and George McGovern were good friends and worked together on Food for Peace and other kind of programs, and Dole, you know, was trying to stretch his dollars for his staff so he got the Ag. Department, I think it was through McGovern's good offices, to sort of give him this guy to come work on ag. issues for him, and that struck me right off the bat as being interesting, because here was a fella who was a Republican from about the most Republican district in the world and in those days he was thought of as being very conservative. Of course, by the end of his career he was thought of as being more to the middle of the road because the Republican party kind

of moved more down the right side, but in those days Bob Dole was considered pretty darn conservative, but yet here he had this fellow on loan from the Ag. Department on his staff and I kind of, I thought that was a very interesting thing.

Well, in any event, I came down there and went to work for him and enjoyed it very much, was impressed by several things. One was how well thought of Bob Dole was by his colleagues, in particular people even across the aisle. I remember, for example, Neil Smith, who was a veteran Democrat from Iowa, and I had the occasion to work a little bit with him on a project for Senator Dole, or for Mr. Dole in those days, and I don't even remember the project now but I remember Congressman Smith being so complimentary of Dole and how he liked to work with Dole and how, you know, it was just so good to have people like that who could get things done and put aside partisanship when it was necessary to solve common problems, and again, that's part of that continuing theme that I saw from being there of him as a problem solver, as a person who had very strong principles but was interested in trying to get things done. One of the lessons, too, that I learned in being there that I thought was so interesting is he had an occasion in a very dramatic fashion to have to put principle up against politics and that was in that summer, as happens fairly frequently, there was a shortage of railroad cars to haul wheat, and of course the First District -- the Big First -- that was the wheat growing district of all wheat growing districts and a lot of Bob Dole's financial support came from big grain people, the Dean Evans' and the Morrisons, and wonderful people but that was their livelihood on the line; and there was a labor dispute that was holding up the availability of the shipping cars and one of the proposals that labor had that they wanted to get this thing resolved was mandatory arbitration and some of Bob Dole's bigger supporters said, you know what, if that's what it takes let's do mandatory arbitration, and on that issue he didn't believe in mandatory arbitration, he thought that just wasn't the American way, it wasn't going to be that way, and as important as that issue was to people who were his strongest financial supporters, he said I just have to vote my principle on this. I mean, he showed me as a young, you know, wet-behind-the-ears man an act of I suppose you'd call it minor political courage. I mean, it wasn't written up in the newspaper or the history books but I thought it was an act of political courage because he was somebody at that

point, as a member of Congress he wasn't a big deal. Nobody knew he was going to go on to be Bob Dole, to be the Senate majority leader, to be the candidate for President. He was at a phase of his career where if people decided they didn't like him, well, they could have turned their back on him and found somebody else and his career might have been over, but yet he felt that the principle of government that you had to go and do what you in the end felt was the right thing to do for the country, even if your strong supporters didn't always agree with it, was important. So that was another one of the most memorable lessons that I drew from that period.

Interviewer: And he was a freshman there, too, more or less?

John Lungstrum: Yeah, he'd been there just a few -- he was elected first, as I remember, in 1960, I think, and this was '67, so -- but he was a junior, definitely a junior member.

Interviewer: In the Senate.

John Lungstrum: No, this was in the House.

Interviewer: Oh, he's still in the House?

John Lungstrum: He's still in the House. This is the summer of '67; he's still in the House.

Interviewer: Okay.

John Lungstrum: And so --

Interviewer: So he had made some name for himself in agriculture?

John Lungstrum: In agriculture he definitely had an in -- you know, the House is such a seniority-oriented system that being there six, seven, eight years isn't that big a deal, except he had made a very good impression on people like Gerald Ford, who were the up

and coming leaders in the Republican party. Ford at that time, as I recall -- I may be wrong, I don't remember whether Ford had yet ousted Charlie Halleck as the Republican leader in the House, but either that had just happened or was about to happen, but Ford was, in those days was kind of the up and coming leader of the Republicans, kind of tossed out the old guard that had been around since the early Eisenhower years and Bob Dole was definitely part of that group. Another one of the interesting memories I have in that connection was one of the fellas who had an office across the hall and was a big buddy of Dole's was Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld was a young congressman from Illinois. Like Dole, he was handsome. All the college girls who were interns around the office, boy, they thought, between Bob Dole and Don Rumsfeld, you know, that was, that was a pretty good place to be working, because they were handsome men, but I remember Rumsfeld being there and just, I certainly wouldn't say I got to know him but I got to meet him by virtue of working for Mr. Dole, and found they kind of had a bantering relationship, as Dole did with a lot of people that he liked, and they teased back and forth, and I found that very interesting to observe the personal side of how that worked. Well, anyway, that actually, Bill Kats was about to retire and Bill came to me and said, you know, I think if you'd be interested in changing your plans and going to law school here in Washington you might be the person that ought to take my position as the AA, and I said, you know, boy, that would just be wonderful but I am so committed to coming back to Kansas, I've been away for four years of college and I just, I want to go home, and I really had in mind maybe I'd want to get involved in politics someday, and I just, I loved Kansas and, you know, I'd gone away to school just to kind of see what it was like but I wanted to come back to Kansas. I thought that's where my life was going to be made and I figured if I stayed anymore in Washington, then you kind of get stuck sometimes and you just kind of get Potomac Fever and you don't ever get away from that, but I was so flattered, and I knew that Bill Kats didn't raise this just on his own -- that I'm sure that he had talked to Mr. Dole about this -- but Bill talked to me about it and I in the end said, you know, I just don't think it's something I can pursue. But I, of course, have thought back and thought, gee, that would have been an interesting thing to have done and the fella who did succeed Bill Kats had kind of a rotten road, fellow named John

Kirschner, who wasn't too successful, but then Bill Wohlford came along and Bill was great and was a wonderful person to --

Interviewer: Bill's in Wichita now, practicing law.

John Lungstrum: Bill's in Wichita. I have contact with Bill every once in awhile. I have had two of his sons as students of mine at the law school at K.U.

Interviewer: Oh, great.

John Lungstrum: So I've kind of kept in touch with Bill a little bit over the years. But so I went back to K.U. to law school, and I don't remember now whether it was Christmas vacation or spring vacation, but sometime that first year when I was in K.U. law school, when I was home in Salina for some reason, and I have in mind that it was for a holiday break but it may not have been, the date could, somebody could figure out what the date was, I got a call at my parents' house and it was Bob Dole and he said, "I'm going to meet you out at the Salina airport. I've got something I want to talk to you about. There's been some interesting news and I want to talk to you." And I, well, of course I was excited. I thought that was going to be fun. I know he and I had talked some, as he had talked to other people, about what his political career was going to do. He didn't want to stay in the House forever. He considered running for Governor in 1968.

The Democrats had the Governor at that time. He considered running for Governor. He was concerned in part that there were other up and comers in the Republican party, Kent Frizell was one who was; I believe he may have been Attorney General at the time.

Interviewer: Yes.

John Lungstrum: And, you know, if you don't move up, why, you know -- so he was concerned about some of that. Again, I say this with the greatest respect to Senator Dole, but Judy Harbaugh and I both questioned whether the administrative aspects of being Governor would be his long suit compared to the -- but I think he always thought back

about the fact that Frank Carlson had been in the House and then Frank Carlson had been Governor and then had gone to the Senate and so maybe he had that in his mind. But in any event, you know, I didn't know whether he'd decided he wasn't going to run for Governor or what he had in mind. Well, I met him out there at the Salina airport and he had the *Omaha World Herald* with him and they had, for some reason or another, an exclusive report in the *Omaha World Herald* that Frank Carlson wasn't going to run again and so therefore that Kansas Senate seat was going to be open in 1968, and I don't remember now how old Senator Carlson was but the speculation had been that he might run again.

Interviewer: Yes.

John Lungstrum: And he was in decent health but --

Interviewer: His wife wanted to come back.

John Lungstrum: -- his wife wanted to come back and so he acceded to her wishes, as good men should, and so anyway, he said, "You're one of the first people I'm telling this to. I want to see if you can help me in the primary campaign this next summer." He talked about some of the other people; he'd have Bob Minor, of course, who was going to coordinate his campaign for him --

Interviewer: Yes, oh yeah, that's right.

John Lungstrum: -- and who was very good at the nuts and bolts of politics, and a number of other people like that and wondered if I would be willing to help him, and of course it didn't take me two seconds to say, "Yes, I would be delighted to do whatever you want me to do." So I signed on as a volunteer to coordinate -- well, back up a second. His strategy, of course, was that -- he figured Bill Avery was going to run, and of course --

Interviewer: Maybe Garner.

John Lungstrum: Maybe, yeah, maybe Garner Shriver, but he realized Avery was going to run, and of course I had been an Avery guy before but I had no problem feeling that at that stage of the game, that, much as I respected Bill Avery, the problems that had caused him to not be able to win reelection, I just thought --

Interviewer: Were going to follow him.

John Lungstrum: Yeah, and that his time had kind of come and gone and I really felt Bob Dole was the right person at that time for Kansas.

Interviewer: Well, I was very flattered. Bob gave me a call, too, and asked if I would support him, and I said, well, you know, I said, well, get in early if you're going to go because some of us have supported, you know, like Garner and always been friends of Garner's and Bill's.

John Lungstrum: Right, right.

Interviewer: So that was the only advice I could give him, was get in early.

John Lungstrum: That was very good advice, get people locked up. Well, his strategy, of course, was to -- he figured the Second District Avery would do pretty well in. He figured that the Third District Ellsworth would be able to give him a lot of help in. Even though Ellsworth was no longer in Congress he really thought Ellsworth would really give him a lot of help in Johnson County and Douglas County and he felt that he could run pretty well there. He thought Wichita was going to be a struggle, that Avery --

Interviewer: Had moved there.

John Lungstrum: Yes. Would do pretty well down there. Fifth District he thought would really be up in the air but Joe Skubitz was going to give him some

help, and of course you couldn't think of anybody better than Joe Skubitz to give you some help down there, but his -- he said, now, you know, the key is I've just got to get every vote out of -- if I get the First District out of the way I think I can do better in the First District than Bill Avery will in the Second and then that will kind of turn the tide.

Interviewer: He didn't have a loss to overcome.

John Lungstrum: Right, exactly right. So my job was to coordinate the county chairs, and there must have been 50 counties, I don't know what there were in the First District.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, oh yeah, (inaudible) 106 and they went over half of them.

John Lungstrum: Yeah. So my job was to go around to every county seat and work with the county chairs.

Interviewer: Chairs, uh-huh.

John Lungstrum: I went to -- the only county I didn't go to was -- oh gosh, what is that that Johnson City is the, in the -- God, right on the corner of the

state, I'm blanking out here.

Interviewer: Liberal? No, you went to Liberal.

John Lungstrum: No, not Liberal. Yeah, went to Liberal, yeah, but Johnson City is the county seat. Is that Stanton County or --

Interviewer: I think.

John Lungstrum: Well, whatever it is, that's the only county I did not get to during that entire time and spend some time with people, you know, Walt Stukemann out at Hodgeman.

Interviewer: Oh yes.

John Lungstrum: You'll just go through the people that you dealt with. But in that, one of the things that I thought was most interesting was that I ran across on the campaign trail Keith Sebelius, who was going to, who was running for Dole's seat, and –

Interviewer: Whom he had defeated in one primary.

John Lungstrum: Exactly, and that's what I thought was so interesting, was that Dole had beaten Sebelius back in 1960 in the primary and, you know, sometimes people are bitter, sometimes people, you know, whatever you want to say, --

Interviewer: Have a grudge.

John Lungstrum: -- and, but I ran across, then he was State Senator Sebelius, several different places and he said to me, said, "Now young man," he said, "I just want to tell you that I think Bob Dole is a wonderful person, he beat me in that primary but he's always treated me well, he's always done a wonderful job representing this district." Said, "I'm doing everything I can in my -- I've got my own race to run here but I'm doing everything I can in my way to help Bob Dole because I just think he's a fine, fine person." And that, too, is consistent with this theme, I guess, of people that, you know, wouldn't necessarily be on the Dole band wagon, you know, doing that, but I was very struck by that conversation with Keith Sebelius on that particular trip. Of course Sebelius went on to win that election, of course. But after awhile he decided that the First District was in pretty good shape and he wanted me to go down to the Fifth District and do some work down there, talk to the people.

Interviewer: Crawford and Bourbon and all of those counties.

John Lungstrum: Exactly. And that worked out pretty well because the girl I was pretty interested in, who's now my wife --

Interviewer: I see.

John Lungstrum: -- happened to be living in Independence, Kansas, so I quickly jumped on that. Thought, well, I think maybe this is a great idea, because I could spend a little more time with Linda and that wouldn't be all bad either, so I got the good fortune of doing some stuff down in the Fifth District, too, and I remember this, it still remains kind of a joke in the family, because in those days she and her family were Democrats, though I converted them along the way.

Interviewer: Good.

John Lungstrum: But I wasn't looking for political affiliation when picking out a girlfriend, of course, you understand, but I did convert them along the way. But I got her and her sister to become dollies for Dole. You know, Dolls for Dole.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, Dolls for Dole.

John Lungstrum: Dolls for Dole.

Interviewer: Does she by any chance have the skirt they wore?

John Lungstrum: I don't think she still does.

Interviewer: You know, we need some for the, for over at the Institute.

John Lungstrum: Oh my gosh.

Interviewer: I think we've found one --

John Lungstrum: I don't think she does, no.

Interviewer: -- or two, I think, but I've been asking everybody that knew anything about Dolls for Dole.

John Lungstrum: Oh yeah, of course, and we served pineapple juice, you know.

Interviewer: Swam in that, didn't they?

John Lungstrum: Oh yeah. And of course we -- and in fact, actually going back to his days in the House, we, I don't know whether he knew this, he probably did, but we always used to kind of call him Mr. Pineapple, because of all the Dole pineapple juice stuff, so we'd call him Mr. Pineapple. But in any event, worked in that primary and of course he won and went on from there. I, at that point in my life I had, well, you know, military obligation and I was getting married, I was getting ready to go off and start a career, things like that, and my involvement in politics decreased for awhile because of all those things. In fact, when I graduated from law school I originally took a job out in Los Angeles with a big law firm. I knew I had a military commitment. I figured I'd want to wind up in Kansas but I thought, you know, let's just kind of see what these great big law firms are like and, you know, learn some stuff from that, no matter what I do.

So my wife and I went out to Los Angeles. I kept in touch a little bit about then, now Senator Dole at that time, and I remember in particular he was kind enough to seek my opinion on whether he should move from the Ag. Committee to the Finance Committee at one point in terms of his primary focus, because of course he was very concerned on the one hand about the Ag. Committee's importance to Kansas and on the other hand felt that he could maybe do more for Kansas if he was in that Finance Committee because of the power that you could get within the Senate itself and not just limit yourself to Ag. issues but maybe have just as much impact on the Ag. side by being the honcho of the Finance Committee. So in any event, it was very interesting to see his thought process and how concerned he was and how, you know, all that. And the other thing that I remember along the line, too, and I don't remember exactly the year but in that same time frame he was kind enough to consult my views on whether I thought he ought to become chairman of the Republican National Committee. Now, I said he shouldn't, which I wasn't -- he didn't follow that advice and turns out he was right and I was wrong, but I was concerned that that position was something that you kind of have to take positions sometimes whether they're positions you want to take or not and therefore you could get

yourself out there with an image or something that maybe isn't the real you and can come back to hurt you, and also, of course, the folks at home sometimes don't understand if you're out running around doing that if they think you're neglecting things in Kansas and I thought it was too risky and that he shouldn't do that, but he did it and he, what's amazing is, of course, he came through an era there, the fall of Nixon and the fall of Agnew and all that and Bob Dole came out of that, of course, squeaky clean and went from there.

Interviewer: I had the privilege of introducing him to the National Federation of Women. There was 5,000 there, and that was the first appearance he made after he became the national chairman. That was kind of thrilling.

John Lungstrum: Yeah, I bet that was. Let me -- can you stop this for a second? I want to show you something.

[Off the record.]

John Lungstrum: He's definitely just one of the smartest people I've ever been around. I mean, you didn't have to say things twice. He, in fact, became impatient with people if they took too much time because he got it the first time.

Interviewer: Yes, right.

John Lungstrum: He was very, very smart. I helped him a little bit in his 1974 campaign in, by the time -- because I had just gotten back to Lawrence at that point and it was 1980. By his 1980 campaign I was Republican county chairman, so of course I was involved in that. My involvement in politics in those years, though, was decreased, because I was supporting a family and doing other kind of things like that, teaching at the law school as well as practicing law in Lawrence and my time for that, I just didn't use as much of my time in politics. And that brings me, then, to probably the, one of the final areas that I want to talk about Senator Dole, because it touches me so very personally by virtue of the fact of the position that I am in now as United States District Judge. In

1988, the one (inaudible) representative of (inaudible) contacted me and said, you know, Dick Rogers is going to be taking senior status. Tom Van Bebber is the heir apparent, Senator Dole and Senator Kassebaum have agreed on that, but they are concerned because during President Reagan's tenure he would have been reluctant to appoint someone who was as old as Tom Van Bebber was at the time, and Tom was 57 at that time, which just happens to be how old I am now, and said, you know, we don't know whether that age issue is going to be a problem and we want to be sure that we get somebody lined up as a backup in case that just doesn't work and then we know there's going to be another vacancy here in a year or two because Dale Saffels is going to go for senior status so, you know, that might give somebody then a leg up for all of that, that other people who have expressed an interest were not quite as enthusiastic, would you have any interest? And my first reaction was, well, I'm not old enough, you know, I'm, you know, at that time I was, I wasn't even 43, I was probably 42, and I thought, well, my golly, I was so flattered but I thought, oh my gosh, that's, you know, that's just not probably, I'm not, probably not interested in that. Well, I thought about it for a few days and I got back in touch and I said, you know, "I've been thinking about that. I think I really would like to do that," I said, "but are you really" -- I said, "It's been awhile since I've really done anything for Senator Dole." I didn't go up to Iowa for the primaries, I didn't, you know -- and a lot of people, I mean --

Interviewer: Lot of Kansans were there, you know, that's right.

John Lungstrum: And I had not done any of that. I said, "I want to be very candid about that." There was a time when I feel like I was pretty close to Senator Dole and there was a time when I think he really, you know, thought very highly of me, but it's been a number of years since I've been as close to him as that and, you know, I -- he --

Interviewer: Never forgets a friend and what you've done.

John Lungstrum: And that is sort of where that story--

[Changed tape]

John Lungstrum: As I say, I *** were there to the person who had contacted me because I wanted to make sure that Senator Dole really, you know, there wasn't somebody else who really had a lot more credits built up, so to speak, that he wouldn't be more comfortable having. And, well, no, word came back, you know, he'd been following your career and thinks you would be good for the job, and so I -- what struck me about that was, of course, being incredibly flattered but thinking, you know, you get the idea about politics sometimes that it's what have you done for me lately and if that had been what it was all about the answer would be not very darn much, because I just hadn't been that involved in politics. I'd been involved in my local community and this and that and the other but I just had not been as involved in Republican politics, and so I was very positively struck by that, and long story short is fortunately Judge Van Bebber passed the muster when George Bush was elected, thank goodness for that. If Dukakis would have been elected neither one of us would have been doing these jobs.

Interviewer: Yes.

John Lungstrum: But George Bush was elected and Judge Van Bebber got appointed and then when Judge Saffels decided to take senior status -- this kind of shows Bob Dole's sense of humor, too. I remember one of those pictures that I was just showing you a minute ago was from a Chamber of Commerce luncheon that he came and spoke at in Lawrence and actually that picture from the Dole Center, too, was about that same time frame. It was in '91, before Judge Saffels had taken senior status, but the, you know, Dole's kind of lining things up to have somebody ready and, you know, I had, guess I'd done okay with the interviews I had gone through back the time before as the alternative candidate in case Judge Van Bebber didn't get there and so he was kind enough to, you know, encourage me to go ahead, and course you didn't know how, you know, until it's over you never really know, and I didn't know yet whether he was going to really give me the blessing or whether somebody else might come along, because nothing's sure, and I'd come to the Dole Center dedication and I'm standing there with a group of friends, he comes up and says, "Well, hello, Judge. How you doing?" Well, that's his typical sense of humor, you know. And also his way of telling me you're going to be the one. And

about a month later he comes and speaks at this Chamber of Commerce function and I am the chairman of the board of the Chamber of Commerce in Lawrence so I'm the big dog.

Interviewer: You're the big honcho, huh?

John Lungstrum: I'm presiding over this thing and so he gets up to give his speech and he says, you know -- there must have been a thousand people in this audience because obviously at this point he is at the height of his --

Interviewer: Glory, yeah.

John Lungstrum: -- glory and he looks out there and he says, "Well, it's always good to come to Lawrence and see my old friend Judge Lungstrum." Well, of course, this set off a flurry, because that was well before any kind of public announcement. So this was, again, his way to sort of, you know, have some fun with it and also, you know, communicate that he was supporting me to do this and that, you know, I just, obviously I probably was floating about 10 feet off the ground there, you know, and just really thought that was, really thought that was great. One of the things we -- two of the things you and I have talked about here, well, in changing tapes that I want to make some comment on. Excuse me, one other thing before I leave the judge issue, because obviously as a judge I'm out of politics, but there are a couple of things I do want to comment on. One was that -- and again, this shows his canniness and his kindness to me, because I came on the court about the time, same time as another person who he didn't know as well and who had sort of been Nancy Kassebaum's pick, perfectly good guy, perfectly good judge, but Dole said, you know what, I'm going to make sure you get confirmed first, because that means you will be the chief judge.

Interviewer: Oh, isn't that -- oh, he's always thinking --

John Lungstrum: Exactly.

Interviewer: -- down the road, not --

John Lungstrum: Exactly, yes, because I became chief judge in 2001. This was 10 years later from the time he's talking to me about it.

Interviewer: Some people are there 20 years and don't get to be.

John Lungstrum: He's thinking down the road and so that, you know, I, you know, being chief judge isn't, I mean, it's not like being the, you know, President of the United States, I don't mean to say it's a big -- but I mean, still --

Interviewer: It's an honor.

John Lungstrum: -- it's his thought that he wanted me to be able to do that, he knew how to make sure that happened, and he accomplished it that way, I mean, just again, as revealing of the kind of person he was. I also, the main contact I had with him in an official capacity as judge was in connection with getting this courthouse built and in connection with providing some additional money for renovations of the Wichita courthouse. He was very desirous of doing what he could to support the courts. He recognized the importance of the courts. He recognized it was important that we had adequate judges, that we had adequate judicial pay, that we had adequate judicial facilities. Some of our politicians recognize that the courts aren't in a position to compete in the public arena. I mean, we are -- I can't go out and give a stump speech to get money, --do all these things. We're at the mercy of Congress and the executive branch and some members of Congress I think use us as whipping posts. They try to score political points on our back and so forth, and Senator Dole was always a strong supporter of the judiciary, recognizing the importance of the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law that is part of what makes the United States different from certainly emerging countries around the world from the old eastern bloc but even a lot of our western countries, that our judicial situation is different and his support for that is something that I think is probably a minor footnote because there are so many wonderful things he supported but from my perspective and as much value as I place on the independence of the judiciary it is something that he definitely should score highly on and I appreciate it a lot. We talked about his perception as a conservative and some of his actions that didn't

necessarily always fit the traditional stereotype of being conservative. He talked about his role in the passage of civil rights bills. I don't think he ever voted against any civil rights bill period and that was a matter of great pride to him that he recognized, and he candidly admitted that he might not have recognized had he not been through the personal experience he had which caused him to have to deal with a disability that made him different from other people and gave him some more challenges than other people, but it caused him to empathize with other people who maybe the disability, and I put that in quotes, is different. Maybe it's a racial or a gender difference that makes the playing field at some point not as equal. He thought, by God, the playing field ought to be equal and he was a great supporter of civil rights, he was a great supporter, obviously, of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Interviewer: He authored that.

John Lungstrum: Authored that, and every time I see a curb cut someplace to allow a wheelchair it makes you feel good, and I know a lot of people wrung their hands and thought, oh my gosh, this will add cost to doing business, but it is just something as a society we needed to do and he had an incredibly important role, obviously, in doing that, as he did with getting the 1991 civil rights, the last major civil rights bill through the Congress. He and Senator Kennedy were sort of co-authors of that major legislation. So he, unfairly and unfortunately he sometimes, I think, got painted in the national punditry, more than the really knowledgeable media, but the people who, the one-liner type political commentators I think pigeonholed him as being a Midwestern conservative person. Now, I'm not saying the word conservative is bad because I don't.

Interviewer: No, no.

John Lungstrum: I consider myself conservative on a lot of things as well -

Interviewer: And liberal on some others.

John Lungstrum: -- and liberal on some other --

Interviewer: We're Kansans. We're Republican Kansans.

John Lungstrum: That's exactly right. But Bob Dole cared about people, and that may have been born from his Depression upbringing, the fact that his family was destitute, I mean, you know, lived from hand to mouth and he realized that that wasn't because they were morally inferior and somehow deserved their fate, like sort of a social Darwinism.

Interviewer: One letter he wrote home to his mother when he was at K.U. he apologized for sending his shirts home for her to do but they cost ten cents to have them done there in Lawrence. Now, isn't that --

John Lungstrum: Yeah, --

Interviewer: Yeah, they found a lot of her letters, you know.

John Lungstrum: That's wonderful.

Interviewer: So I know they're going to be made available to the public.

John Lungstrum: But that side of Bob Dole, I mean, I know President Bush coined that term "compassionate conservative" but if there was ever truly a compassionate conservative it was Bob Dole.

Interviewer: That's great.

John Lungstrum: I mean, he really is a person of compassion. He cares about people and he cares, that's why, in addition to the fact, of course, that Kansas farmers could provide wheat to send for the Food for Peace program but he also cared for the people to be able to benefit from those programs. He cared about things like that and I think that's something that should be a major part of his legacy.

Interviewer: He spoke at the organization here that the U.S.D.A. had a big meeting and we had people from all over, nine different countries that participated in this and one of his main things that day that he said, and he had Elizabeth working on it, was the fact that overseas they give the breakfast to the children for nothing but we have to pay for it here in America and he said why should our kids have to pay the forty cents? If they can't afford it they should be given a breakfast, so he's off on that cause. You know, he never quits.

John Lungstrum: And he's so right. I mean, I'm sure no education expert but everybody I've talked to said that it makes all the difference in the world if kids come to school with a good breakfast and are able to concentrate and are focused and when we think about -- I don't want to, you know -- I'm not in politics, it's none of my business about these things, but I think we sometimes are penny wise and pound foolish about how we can make a better country, but again, my job is not in that sector so I will move on to other things. But the last thing I did want to talk about really was his incredible memory, which also reflects itself not just in that memory as a political tool but in his (inaudible), which I think he really sincerely cares about people, and this was an -- this incident that really sums it up for me was one that's relatively recent but that's why it is, I think, pretty remarkable. In 1997, I believe it was, our daughter Jordan was working as an intern for Senator Kassebaum. Our son Justin worked as an intern for Senator Dole and our daughter thought it would be kind of fun to work for Senator Kassebaum.

Interviewer: Yeah, sure.

John Lungstrum: So she worked for Senator Kassebaum and, who I'd known her for years. Alf Landon and my grandfather were good friends and so we had ties to them and that was a fun thing to do. So in any event, she wasn't working for Senator Dole, she was working in Washington for Senator Kassebaum. He had no idea that my wife was in town, had no idea even probably that, I don't know whether he knew that Jordan was working for Senator Kassebaum, but my wife tells this story. Jordan is taking her on a tour of the Capitol, she's there visiting, and they come around a corner in the Senate and here comes Bob Dole with I mean press entourage, thrusting microphones and pads at

him and interviewing him. He stops dead cold, with all these people, turns around and says, "Well, Linda and Jordan. Nice to see you. How are you? How's the judge?" I mean --

Interviewer: Isn't that wonderful.

John Lungstrum: Unbelievable. Yeah, and how good it made them feel, how good it made me feel, because at this point in time we're not in politics anymore, nothing I can do for Bob Dole. Bob Dole doesn't need John Lungstrum to do anything for him, he's, you know, he's off in a whole 'nother league, you know, at this point in time. He could have walked right on by saying, isn't your husband lucky that I was nice to him, I mean, you know, and some people might have reacted that way. But instead you'd have thought, you know, that this was something that -- and it was something that was very important to him to stop and talk to these two people from Kansas, call them by name, knew who they were and the whole picture, and, you know, that just epitomizes, I think, Bob Dole caring about people and using that gift of memory, but not just for political purposes or just to ingratiate him, you know, with people who can do something for him but because he sincerely cares about people and making people feel good. So anyway, I guess that pretty well wraps this up but it brings my theme kind of around home here from when I first met him and was struck by his interest in that Indian politics, all that sort of going around a part of the world that didn't necessarily seem to have a lot to do with Kansas. It may be a market for wheat but his interest went beyond that. It was -- he was struck by the suffering that he had seen over there in India, the way he was able to work with other people, like the Democrats, the Democrat that worked on his staff and George McGovern and Neil Smith and how he got along with these other young Republican congressman with their bantering style but very personal warmth. Another guy that had his office down the hall was Don Riegle and they had some fallings out later when Riegle became a Democrat. But in those days, you know, he was kind of part of that same sort of bantering group of young Republican congressman, but how that just, that whole caring side of Bob Dole is the part of him that should be remembered, not the Bob Dole who

had that deep gruff voice and came across to some people as so harsh or talked about Democrat wars. That wasn't the real Bob Dole.

Interviewer: No, it wasn't.

John Lungstrum: The real Bob Dole was somebody else.

Interviewer: And that wasn't his thing, I mean that was --

John Lungstrum: Course not.

Interviewer: -- you know, the handlers wanted him to do that, I understand.

John Lungstrum: Exactly, and of course running for vice president, I wasn't very excited about him running for vice president because I was afraid he'd be put in that kind of position and I thought, you know, this is unfortunate for him.

Interviewer: He was put on there to carry the Midwest and hold all of this together.

John Lungstrum: Right.

Interviewer: And he did.

John Lungstrum: He did, and he did.

Interviewer: But lot of people just thought, you know, he was seeking it for his own --

John Lungstrum: Oh no.

Interviewer: That wasn't it at all.

John Lungstrum: And he did just what he was told to do and he played that hatchet man role and that really --

Interviewer: Stayed with him.

John Lungstrum: It did stay with him, unfortunately, because that wasn't the real person.

Interviewer: Oh no.

John Lungstrum: But he was --

Interviewer: So loyal to the Republican party, he was loyal to the people that he was working with.

John Lungstrum: Right, right. That's absolutely right.

Interviewer: And he's always been loyal to Kansas, because he'll say, well, you know, what's good for Kansas.

John Lungstrum: Well, if you look at these offices or anything like that EPA building --

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Isn't that great? That's the only green building in the United States. In the ***. And he's tried so hard here in Wyandotte County to help.

John Lungstrum: I was going to say, if anybody ought to have a big statue of them in Kansas City, Kansas, it's Bob Dole.

Interviewer: That's right.

John Lungstrum: They're obviously the most Democratic county in Kansas. He could have turned his back on this county and said, well, I'm going to make sure Johnson County gets everything, I'm going to do whatever, because that's where the Republican votes are, they aren't over here, and he hasn't. Nobody's done more for Wyandotte County. Yeah. I mean, it's just amazing really, just amazing. So, well, anyway, I could talk forever but you've got things to do and I probably should, too.

Interviewer: Well, thank you.

John Lungstrum: Sure.

[End of interview]