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ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with

DR. BILL ROY

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Interviewer

Brien R. Williams

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

Williams: This is an oral history interview with Dr. Bill Roy for the Robert J. Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas. We're in Dr. Roy's home in Topeka, Kansas. Today is Wednesday, April 18, 2007, and I'm Brien Williams.

Dr. Roy, start giving a little family background.

Roy: Okay. I'm not a native Kansan. There was a billboard in western Kansas, said "Bill Roy is an interloper" and so forth, announcing I wasn't a native Kansan. I'm from Illinois and grew up in Central Illinois, went to a small Methodist college, Illinois Wesleyan, and then went to Northwestern [University] to medical school and did all those things rather quickly. I graduated from medical school when I was twenty-two.

I grew up on a farm the first ten years of my life. One sister who's four years younger. My dad died at the age of forty-two in 1941, when I was fifteen. We had some cows to milk and so forth at that time, but I knew very well I didn't want to work hard as a farmer works, so I had already planned—essentially at that time began to plan to go to medical school.

The family background, the Roy name is French Huguenot, goes back to the original emigrant of 1710 or so, and my grandmother also came from a family that had been in the United States a long, long time, going back to 1684. They were sort of very important people in a little town, if you know what I mean. They had the biggest of the stones out at the cemetery and that kind of thing.

So anyway, I came here, as I said, in the United States Air Force. I'd finished my residency in obstetrics and gynecology at City of Detroit Receiving Hospital. I finished my internship prior to that time at Evanston Hospital, and as I say, I went to Northwestern Medical School.

I knew I was going to go in the service because I hadn't served during World War II. I had missed that due to the fact I had four operations over a three-year period when I was in high school immediately thereafter, so they kept flunking me on my draft exam. So it finally worked out, as you probably know, all physicians in my generation, in essence, were in the service at one time or another, so I knew I was going to go during the Korean Conflict, so I enlisted in the Air Force.

I got married early in life; I was twenty-one, a junior in medical school when I got married. We waited a little while to start a family, two to three years, and then we began

to have children, essentially it seemed like every year—1949, 1951, 1952, 1954, '55, and '59, so six children. We had three children when we moved to Topeka to take up my duties at Forbes. The man who was my consultant out at the base was a very busy obstetrician/gynecologist in town. So one afternoon Jane and I were sitting down having a cup of coffee, about August of 1954, and saying, "Sometime in the next year we're going to have to decide where I'm going to practice." This sounds like a story, but it is a true story. The phone rang and it was Dan Davin [phonetic], and Dan says, "Bill, I've got more than I can do in this town. Would you consider going into practice with me?"

I had originally thought about going back to Bloomington, Illinois, which is a beautiful area, as you probably know, if you like farms in Central Illinois, and State Farm Mutual and schools and so forth. But then I decided to stay here and practice with Dan. I tell people that I had too many children and not enough money to make any other decision. So we practiced together until 1964, when a third physician joined the practice. The story from there is one of several things.

Williams: Tell me briefly where did you serve during the Korean Conflict.

Roy: Just here. See, I was sent to Forbes Air Force Base, which was a Strategic Air Command base, a SAC base.

Williams: What were your duties?

Roy: Physician. I did obstetrics and gynecology, had two young men helping me, and we had lots of people to take care of. I think we had probably thirty deliveries a month or so, and a fair amount of surgery. So it was a very good experience because I had finished a charity residency, where I had literally seen everything. In other words, we had so many sick patients, but it was a good time to put it into practice, so to speak, as being the responsible person on the base.

The base commander called me in when I first got there and said, "You and the pediatrician are the two most important people on the base, because if we can keep the wives happy, we've got a lot better chance of keeping the airmen happy." [laughs] So that's what my duties were, so to speak.

Williams: And a lot of the men, they were flying out to—

Roy: They were flying out. We had a bomber wing which brought in B-47s, the first jet bombers that year, and then we had a reconnaissance wing which was—I don't know quite what the plane was, a four-engine plane, and it was mapping the world. One plane got shot down near Murmansk in Russia; another one got shot down over the China Sea, because I don't think there was any question, they were places where they shouldn't have been, and the Chinese and the Russians didn't like it very well. So I do remember with some sadness, knowing the wives of the airmen who were involved in these particular actions.

Williams: It's interesting, because, of course, you're a doctor serving during the Korean War and you naturally think of *M*A*S*H* as a unit. So it was very different.

Roy: Yes and no. You see, the City of Detroit Receiving Hospital was like a MASH unit, because that was about a four-hundred-bed hospital and they had all the emergencies from about two million people, so we had four full-time residents in the emergency room and eight full-time interns. So it was like *M*A*S*H* at its busiest twenty-four hours a day. So I've always enjoyed *M*A*S*H*. I still watch it occasionally, and I understand the irreverent humor that is sort of a safety valve, so to speak, for people who are working with those kinds of circumstances.

Williams: Where did the law degree come in?

Roy: In 1964 I said to Janie, "I think I'll go to law school." Now, Washburn at that time would let you take one course, two courses, three courses. Now you have to go full-time. So we took a single course in personal property, a friend, and they were taught it. Jane said, "If you're going, I'm going." So we went. Fortunately, we lived about a mile and a half from the law school, and the law school was about a mile and a half or two miles from my office and the hospitals where I practiced. So anyway, for the next six years we

took about six, seven, eight, nine hours; in other words, about a half-load. Those represented the number of hours in class. Jane took magnificent notes.

We did not have, of course, cell phones, but I managed to have my office call me out about ten minutes into each class so I could get back and go to work, so to speak. But they took attendance, and you had to have either 80 or 90 percent attendance to get credit in a course, so I showed up at the beginning of the class, got called out. Jane took wonderful notes. We studied together for about a week for final examinations, and both managed to get our law degrees.

Incidentally, for what it's worth, to show the passage of time, Jane took the bar in 1970, and only four women took the bar that year. Of course, this has changed greatly. Now there are more women at Washburn Law School than there are men. I always tell people Jane finished in the top three among the women who took the bar that year, because one failed. [laughs] So we know she finished in the top three.

But anyway, it's an idiotic thing to do, retrospectively, because we had all these kids. You see, 1964, they were ages five to fifteen. But Jane's mother was here in town, and even though she was a leading real estate salesperson, she was an immense amount of help as far as little things that needed to be done, and then in addition, we had some household help, but minimal, one or two days a week. So we were able to go through that way. She had had this disease, Myasthenia Gravis, but it had a long period of remission, and she did very well.

I never practiced law. She then practiced later, after we came back from Congress, as working for the courts as far as enforcing child support laws, and she enjoyed doing that. Then she was, I say with pride, the first woman to serve on the Kansas Corporation Commission, which is our public utility commission, which is a three-person board. So that's a highly responsible position.

Williams: Were you looking for the law degree to be a kind of ticket somewhere else?

Roy: I didn't think so at the time, although I've always had a very great interest in politics. A friend of mine who was almost as quiet as anyone could be in a class, and I finally got talking to him forty, fifty years later, he says, "I can remember the first time I met you. You had a Win With Willkie button." In other words, I came from a

Republican background. I came from Central Illinois, where everybody except Adlai Stevenson, who was from Bloomington, which was fifteen miles or so from where we farmed, were Republicans, or at least it seemed that way. But I was also very interested in international affairs, and later Willkie wrote *One World*, and Willkie was definitely a person with a very large vision as far as the entirety of the world was concerned. So I was enthusiastic about it as a freshman in high school at that time.

Williams: I was going to ask you about your family political background.

Roy: Not much politics talked at home. I remember they wanted my dad to run for the school board, but he just didn't quite think he wanted to do that. That was as close as we came to elective politics.

Williams: You said your father died when you were fifteen.

Roy: Yes, he died when I was fifteen years of age.

Williams: Was there someone who served as a kind of mentor for you in terms of the future, what you did?

Roy: My best friend's dad certainly treated me like a son. He had one son only, only one child. He was born in Alsace Lorraine, and, of course, French background, got married shortly after World War I, and came to the United States. So he meant a lot to me.

I worked at the local Piggly-Wiggly, groceries, so forth, and the man who ran that was always pretty darn good to me, as far as that goes. So I had a couple of male figures when I was a teenager, I guess one would say, after my dad died.

Williams: I'm correct that Bob Dole was also a graduate of the law school at Washburn, correct?

Roy: Yes, that's right.

Williams: Was he considered a major alumnus at the time you were there?

Roy: I never thought of it or heard of it so much in that aspect of the thing. Washburn is what you'd call a regional or local law school, as you probably know. It happens to be located in the capital city, which gives it some advantages. Then we have the University of Kansas. They've always been rivals, as far as the governor is the Washburn graduate or a Kansas University graduate, and so forth. But I don't remember that so much.

In the 1960s, I was Republican. I was busy with the medical society for some reason because law school, I guess, didn't take up enough of my time. I remember in 1968 giving Bob Dole a check for $2,000 from the Political Action Committee of the Kansas Medical Society, so, you see, I had no anticipation I was going to be running against him six years later.

But as far as interest in society generally, international affairs, I've always had that. As I mentioned earlier, before we were on camera, Jane and I have traveled pretty close to a hundred days a year for the last sixteen, seventeen years since I retired in 1989. So we've always had that interest, and our kids have that interest. My one granddaughter is getting back from six weeks in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. So we've always had a rather broad perspective. We also had a lot of exchange students. We had four from Mexico, who were siblings. We had a Japanese woman who was one of the most magnificent people I've ever known in my life, who will be visiting us next month, who visits us every couple of years. She was with us in '65-'66. And we had a German student whose parents were busily helping people get out of East Germany when he was there in '68, and whose parents were told that he had been in a severe automobile accident and might be dying. They called us, and apparently it was one of these political things that people were angry at the parents and wanted to punish them, and knew he was in the United States. But that just gives you an idea that we were interested in those things.

Williams: So what motivated your shift to becoming a Democrat?

Roy: Civil rights, I think would be the almost complete answer, and Vietnam, too, to some degree. I did not run as an anti-war candidate in the sense that I was lighting

candles and marching and standing on lots of platforms, making lots of exclamatory remarks when I ran for the Congress, but I did say, "I'm not the anti-war candidate, because everybody is anti-war, but, but, but, but we'd better get ourselves out of there pretty soon" approach.

But the people that I had that really supported me greatly and made my congressional race the greatest upset in the House in 1970 were people primarily from the civil rights movement. We had a so-called executive committee, which maybe only met twice or something, but ten Democrats and ten Republicans, including the brothers Menninger from the psychiatric institute here, included at least five people who were worth at least ten million dollars, including the man who founded Payless Shoe Stores, and so forth. So we had quite a variety of supporters, and it helped. In the first race, I beat a three-term incumbent who had 68 percent of the vote in '68, which was two years before, and I was the second Democrat elected in this congressional district if one generalizes a congressional district as being Topeka, because Topeka has always been the primary center of population in whatever congressional district was enumerated.

Williams: So what were the circumstances that committed you to running for the House?

Roy: I said civil rights, but I was in a town in Kansas, I'm not sure what town, for the Kansas Medical Society's annual meeting, and I don't talk very well about this. I darn near choke up. I went back to the room and there was a newspaper on the bureau, which Jane had put there, that said "Four Kids Killed at Kent State." I told Jane that evening, "This has to stop." So that's what moved me to run for Congress.

And I told her and I told my partner, "You don't have to worry about it, because I won't get elected. Our life's not going to change. Instead of taking my summer vacation, I'll take the vacation in the fall." And I didn't campaign until October. We just had a marvelous group of people, and I won pretty big. But my two associates and I had delivered 20,000 babies among the three of us, and this was eighteen counties in that district, but I could go anywhere and somebody would walk up and say, "I am Joe C. Smith's mother, and you delivered my grandson," and so forth. So we had a network in that respect. We had a church network. I'd given two lay sermons, one of which was on reconciliation and the war. Excuse me—reconciliation, civil rights. I ended it with

James Baldwin's end of the quote from *The Fire Next Time*, which isn't a very friendly quote. It was given over the local station which goes to the entire state, WIBW, and it was also given at four churches. So I'd done that kind of thing. I couldn't sit still, I guess.

Williams: What about picking up the skills required of a candidate?

Roy: [laughs] I think one either has them or doesn't have them, in a sense. I remember we were going to go someplace. I picked up a very talented politician by the name of Paul Pendergast, no relation, he'd want you to know--he's now deceased—to the Pendergasts of Kansas City, but a good Irishman with eight Irish great-grandparents. All eight of his great-grandparents were either from Ireland or were born in Ireland. But anyway, he was a great politician, and we were going someplace, the two of us, and we stopped to get some gasoline and he says, "Bill, get out of the car. You've got to talk to that man. You've got to talk to everybody that's in that little store in the gas station and so forth and tell them who you are and what you're doing." So that's what one had to do.

We used a couple little things that worked well. We put a small ad in the weekly newspapers. Again, I'm from a rural background in a small town. "Dr. Bill Roy Speaks." Had probably two hundred words on one subject or another every week. Of course, those things get handed over and over and over. So those helped.

But I suppose the thing maybe that helped most, although I would like to think it wasn't, perhaps, the thing that really made the opening, though, is Chet Nyce [phonetic], who I beat, nice man, was in the midst of a miserable divorce, and I don't' think he had the stomach for campaigning, and he virtually didn't campaign. Of course, we've had this same thing happen in this district this time, as you probably know. Not the Jim Ryun going through a divorce, but Jim Ryun, a five-term Republican congressman who nobody thought could lose, was defeated because he didn't campaign. He just didn't see fit to do so. I don't know about other states, but in Kansas you at least have to show up. You have to show the flag.

Williams: So you say you really didn't start campaigning until October for November election.

Roy: That's right. I took the month of October off. There was an exception to that. We had something, over sixty coffees in Topeka in places like this house, where as many as two people showed up and as many as thirty or forty people showed up. Again, I'm practicing medicine, so we took the hour from eleven to twelve or something for an "Invite your neighbors in for coffee" and so forth. So we saw an awful lot of people that way. I had a coffee committee that had a couple of Junior Leaguers and a couple of people from the church and two black women.

Williams: Did you run in a primary?

Roy: As a Democrat in Kansas in the Second District, where you've had two years of representation, you don't have to have a primary. I entered the race without anybody knowing it except my partners and my wife and the district chair, in a sense, and I changed registration the day before I filed. Like I say, nobody anticipated anything was going to come of it.

What I was going to say, Paul Pendergast was in a law school class with me. He formerly worked for Governor [Robert B.] Docking, who'd been a very successful four-term governor, a Democrat. So I said, "Paul, let's go out to the country club and have lunch sometime."

And we did after a day or two. We talked about politics. He said, "You want to run for Congress?"

I said, "I've been thinking about it." [laughs]

He said, "Okay." He said, "We were just talking the other day. We'd like to find some sucker with maybe as much as $20,000 so we could at least print some bumper stickers and have him run in the Second District because we've got Jim (James H.) DeCoursey, the lieutenant governor, who's running in the Third District, and we're going to put all our money and all of our manpower, womanpower, into the Third District."

So I went into it with my eyes wide open in that respect. But it was great fun. You can tell how effusive, in a sense, I am in talking about it now, how well it went and what a thrill it was.

Williams: At what point did you begin to think, "Hey, I might win"?

Roy: One week before election. We had nobody come in. We didn't go to Washington for a dime. There's nobody give you a dime when you're running against the guy that's had 68 percent, led the Republican ticket two years before. But Birch Bayh came in to talk in the Third District, and they said, "Well, we'll have him over for lunch in the Second District." Again, the lunch sold out, two hundred and fifty people in twenty-four hours or something. I remember saying at home, putting on some cufflinks and saying, "Janie, you know we're going to win this thing." One week before is when I realized that.

Williams: Excuse me for not remembering this. You were running against a Republican incumbent?

Roy: Yes, a three-term incumbent who had 68 percent of the vote two years before. So there's no sense in trying to get money outside the district. We spent $84,000; 20,000 was mine, 20,000 was Bob Brock's, 20,000 was some of these other people I mentioned, mostly in thousand dollar—we had many small gifts until late when we began to sell pins and things. Anyway, that's about where it came from.

Williams: So when you arrived in the House, you were a celebrity before you ever got there, in a sense.

Roy: Yes. I think it was Jack Germond and Nelson of the *Los Angeles Times*. We had one of those parties, you know, where there are several hundred people and everybody's having a drink. They called me over and said, "Who in the hell are you and how did you get here? Because you weren't on any of the lists," where the congressmen might change.

So, yeah, and it worked out very nicely, because I wanted to be on the Commerce Committee, I found out. I didn't know this. I was like Robert Redford in *The Senator*, "What do we do next?" But I knew that I had another campaign, which was the fifteen members of Ways and Means, which at that time determined what committee each

Democrat sat on. I went in and talked to each of them. Martha Griffiths was in Congress at that time, who was a well-known woman when we didn't have very many women. She was on Ways and Means.

I didn't hear and I didn't hear. I knew Jim Corman and felt like I could talk to him, from California, who was on Ways and Means. I called Jim up, I said, "What's going on?"

He says, "Martha Griffiths says you should get this assignment, and when Martha Griffiths says somebody should get something and sets her heels, somebody's going to get something." So anyway, I guess it was she who thought that because I was a physician and because I had a Health Subcommittee, which today deals with Medicare but also dealt with National Institutes of Health and items of that kind, that I should be on that committee. And it turned out to be an absolutely great committee, because Paul Rogers, who was a Floridian, pretty conservative Democrat, was the chairman and he worked committees the way committees should work. In other words, when we turned out legislation from nine, ten, or eleven of us, however many were in subcommittee, everybody had a little ownership, and when it went to the full committee, we spoke more or less with one voice. Same way as far as the rest of the full House was concerned. So it was a nice experience.

Williams: So can you summarize for me your three terms in the House?

Roy: Only two.

Williams: Sorry. Two.

Roy: They worked very well. I did not necessarily have any great will to leave. I figured I might serve twenty years in the House and that would be a nice career. As I said, we had an excellent subcommittee, and Jim [James] Symington was on it, Richardson Pryor was on it, Jack Heinz was on it on the Republican side. We had lots of good guys. No gals, I guess. And a pretty good full committee. Commerce, as you know, handles something like 40 percent of all the legislation in the House, if you look over a period of time. Anything that moves. So it had been a very good experience.

I happened to pick up a young man who I met over at K.U., who had finished medical school, and he turned out to be an absolutely brilliant legislative assistant. He right now is acting as chief counsel on the Subcommittee on Health of the Ways and Means Committee with Pete Stark, for example. He was also in that position with [Caspar] Weinberger in the past. He worked with [Edward.] Kennedy. He's been executive vice president of the Commonwealth Fund, etc., and chairman of the Department of Health Policy at George Washington University. So he's had a distinguished career. But he went in with me and he immediately learned who the players were in healthcare, and it became sort of a process of him bringing people through—deans of medical schools, presidents of associations, people from the Institute of Medicine and so forth and so on. So we were looking at a lot of things.

In 1971, Medicare and Medicaid was about five to six years old, and we were anticipating we would have universal health insurance. It was just a question was it going to be next year or maybe would we have to wait as long as 1980. So we were looking at the entire healthcare system. Rural healthcare, how do we get doctors and other health professionals into rural areas? How do we get them into the inner city? Do we have enough of x, y, and z? What can we do to stimulate the medical schools to turn out more family physicians, etc., or primary care physicians? So we really were the center on that particular thing as far as Congress was concerned, I think almost instantly, including Kennedy.

Paul Ellwood, who was the guru behind health maintenance organizations, was immediately in our office, and we wrote the Health Maintenance Organization Act, which was a great act, but you can't stop things that happen like the [Ronald W.] Reagan revolution when they essentially gutted it and turned it over to insurance companies. But anyway, the bill was written almost word for word, and I wanted to put it in. I went to Paul Rogers and I said, "Paul, I'd like to have you put this in," as the chair of the subcommittee.

He says, "Let's put it in with your name first and my name second." So that was very nice of him. It doesn't have my name on it because it took a while and went over to the Senate and they made it Senate Bill One, but Mr. Kennedy is lead author, which is neither here nor there, but we had the satisfaction of being able to do that kind of thing.

As you know, Richard [M.] Nixon was our last progressive president, and he had talked about HMOs. Ellwood had talked to him. He had talked about universal health insurance, Comprehensive Health Insurance Program, CHIP, as he called it, and he had the National Cancer Act. He said, "We're going to be like Kennedy. We're going to say in 1971 we're going to get rid of cancer by 1980 and it will all be gone, just like sending somebody to the moon."

So anyway, we worked closely with what was then [Department of] Health, Education and Welfare, because the people who were over there weren't trying to stop everything; they were trying to help pass legislation that might be helpful in the area of health. So it was a good four years.

Williams: As a Democrat, but just barely a Democrat, where were you on the spectrum, did you feel, during those two years?

Roy: About 70/30. I always thought that I should vote my district as long as there was no superceding interest; in other words, such as state or national interest. So when you vote your district, you vote a farm district, in a sense, and so forth, and you end up with votes that are frequently considered conservative, a few of them here and there.

I was very much against the war in Vietnam, and in August of 1973 we voted to tell the Department of Defense, "You can't bomb North Vietnam anymore." That was a very exciting moment. It came about, which is neither here nor there, because the veterans--and 80 to 90 percent of the people in Congress then were veterans, but the real distinguished veterans like Captain Bill [William] Anderson, who ran the *Nautilus* under the icecap of the North Pole and so forth, Spark [M.] Matsunaga, and so forth, who said, "This is enough." So once the distinguished veterans were on board, two or three Republicans, it passed heavily. It was really the beginning of the end. Recently somebody said, "You're the one who's responsible for the three million people who died in Vietnam after we got out." I guess maybe so, but, you know, it had to come to an end somewhere along the line.

Williams: Tell me how you got involved in running for the Senate.

Roy: I didn't have any plans to run for the Senate. We had a four-term, as I said, Democratic governor, Bob Docking, who smoked three packs, maybe four packs, maybe five packs of cigarettes a day, about the same age I am—was at the time—about the same age Bob was. We thought he'd make a wonderful candidate for the Senate, and he would have beaten Senator Dole because he'd never done an abortion, definitely would have beaten Dole, but he decided not to run. I got to know his wife pretty well through the years. She wasn't anxious to go. He died of emphysema three years, four years later. He didn't live to be very old; I'm not sure he lived to be sixty. So that took him out of the race.

We wanted a decision, knowing that we probably—"we" being my staff and me—knowing I would probably run, as soon as possible, and we got a reasonably early decision. I think he decided in March and announced he wouldn't run, so we had some start on the thing. It would have been nice to have known a little bit earlier. But I think if you ask ten people familiar with Kansas politics at that time how a Docking-Dole race would have come out, Docking would have won. He was a more conservative Democrat than I, which is better in Kansas.

Williams: So you started a campaign.

Roy: Started a campaign. I don't know how much I can tell you about it that's really as clear as it should be. We, of course, raised money. We had some Washington consultants which probably we could have done just as well without, although we probably might have been better off if we'd had a Washington media consultant. We perhaps could have done better on media. Not to jump too far ahead, but I'm still of the opinion that if we'd had one ad that Gary Hart had against Pete [Peter H.] Dominick in Colorado, we would have won. That was a very simple ad of Pete Dominick and Nixon holding hands up here, you know, and it said "Pete Dominick's had his chance. Give Gary Hart his." And Gary Hart beat him, and five Republican senators lost that year. It was following Nixon's resignation in August of '74 and so forth.

So anyway, we did the things people usually do. One thing we didn't do, and it absolutely, totally perplexes me to this day, we never had anybody run around after Dole, you know, like the "Macaca" that Senator [George] Allen had in Virginia and so forth. I

did not know until after the election, when Johnny [R.W.] Apple [Jr.] was on one of the programs, the *New York Times* guy who died recently, he'd followed Dole, and he said about two months later, he said on the air, he said, "Senator Dole, when I was with you, we were going to Catholic high schools and you had been saying to the classes, just before you left the stage, 'Go home and ask your mother how many abortions Bill Roy's done.'" We didn't know that was going on. We could have done something to counter it; maybe not much, but something to counter that.

So Dole sort of chuckled and said, "Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time." Of course it was. It's an excellent idea.

But otherwise, the campaign, both of us were in Washington. We didn't make too many joint appearances. I may overemphasize abortion. I don't think I overemphasize it as far as the Dole-Roy campaign is concerned. In other words, there's no question in my mind I would have beat him by 50,000 votes without that. I think maybe the only day in 1974 I could have lost was Tuesday November the whatever it was, that particular day, because on the Sunday before, the conservative churches and the Catholic Church had been leafleting on "Bill Roy's abortions." My friends, my Catholic friends said, "You know, Joanne and Jim down the block came up on Tuesday afternoon and said, 'You know, we voted for Bob Dole and now we feel horrible.'" [laughs] It was just that kind of a phenomenon. It was out. So I emphasize it pretty heavily, as I said, regarding the campaign.

I emphasize it more heavily as far as what the Republican Party is today. In other words, I think it is not too much of a stretch to go from that campaign to Iraq, because the Republican Party adopted the Christian Right, and I think Iraq is a product of George W. Bush, who is the Christian Right. I don't think many of our Republicans up to that time were truly that. Some were, such as senators from Oklahoma and so on, but they'd already had that position. So that's my contention.

Williams: Just for the record, over your professional life as a doctor, how many abortions did you perform and how many deliveries did you make?

Roy: I had over eight thousand deliveries. I may have had as many as twenty abortions. And I wouldn't have had any because abortion was illegal in Kansas until six months

before I was elected. In other words, Kansas passed a so-called permissive or liberal abortion law in 1969, which became effective July 1st, 1970. So from July 1st, not counting the month I was campaigning and so forth, we were doing abortions in the hospital, and essentially everybody on the OB/GYN staff was doing abortions. I think there's only one that wasn't. The law required two consultants other than the operating surgeon. So these things came to us, so to speak, certified and stamped that this person should have an abortion. Now, it's unfortunate in many senses because Topeka is the Center for Mental Health, and many of them were mental health, and that gets sort of wobbly as far as determinations are concerned, but anyway, that was about the number that I had done. So I couldn't say I'd never done a legal abortion; I certainly had never done an illegal abortion.

I had had something to do with the passage of the Kansas law. I was in law school. I wrote a *Law Journal* article which I happen to think—I've just been reading it recently—I happen to think is better than I even thought it was before, because I rather anticipated *Roe v. Wade*; in other words, the removal of the criminal law during a certain period of gestation. So I was guilty, I guess, in that sense also.

I don't think Bob really caught a hold of this thing early. I think he was constantly uncomfortable with it, and some things have developed since that time that say why he might have been uncomfortable with it, which I'm not going to get into because I have no personal knowledge of why he may have been uncomfortable. But he would more or less say, "I'm for a Human Rights Amendment," and then he'd run. In other words, he almost never answered a follow-up question.

We did have somebody at the Right to Life convention in Hayes, Kansas, and I think it was August of that year, and Bob addressed them. He said, "You know," according to the person that was there, who was in New York and I talked to him the last year, he said Bob said, "You know, I really wasn't very clear about where I was on abortion and human life, fetus or embryo being a human life and so forth, but I was lying in the Holiday Inn last night and there was sort of a flash of light, and I began to think about it and my mind went on and on, and I know now that I would support a Human Life Amendment." So that came along then.

It had been mentioned earlier in the campaign when he and I appeared before the Chamber of Commerce—I think it was the Chamber—in Wyandotte County, the only

heavily Democratic county in the state, relatively heavily Catholic, and the impact this has had on the Catholic Democratic vote is tremendous. As you probably know, Bush had either 54 or 56 percent of the Catholic vote last time as part of this whole curve that's been constantly rising as far as Catholics being identified as Republicans, when for years they were overwhelmingly Democratic. Anyhow, it came up there. Somebody in the audience asked the question. I thought it may have been a planted question. It didn't seem to amount to much. There was no follow-up question and so on. Somebody said, "Do you support abortion on demand?" or something of that kind. I said, "No, I don't support abortion on demand, but I think there are times when--." I answered as straight as I could.

Then, of course, came the infamous, or famous, agriculture debate at the State Fair, something around September 24, 1974, which we were doing on Dole's terms. He wanted it very badly because he was behind in the polls, and we were supposed to discuss farm policy, and we did. It was a short debate, thirty minutes. But in the twenty-ninth or thirtieth minute, he says, "Bill Roy, tell people how many abortions you've done," or something to that effect. It's transcribed.

And I got up and I said, "I think abortion comes about as a result of failure, and abortion is a tragedy, and so forth and so on, but--," and after I said the but, which was to the effect that there are times that it should be done legally, he then shouted more or less at the audience, "You heard him. He's for abortion on demand."

And the following week, we were on *Face the Nation*. It didn't come up. Then it was *sub rosa*, it seemed like, during October. Now, we were handicapped. We were handicapped because about half of our people with whom we worked were Roman Catholics, and they were pretty well paralyzed by the issue, and I was pretty well paralyzed by the issue because my only answer could be, "Yes, I have done legal abortions." And that didn't seem to be a satisfactory answer to those who were going to change their vote on that basis. So the things sort of moved along.

Then, of course, we got into the immediate two or three days before election. That appeared in some newspapers. Other newspapers refused it, God bless them. Then the "babies in garbage cans" and the text that went with it, which is a fairly accurate text, because it's a *Law Journal* article. I say fairly accurate because there are also some glaring misstatements in it. That went on the Sunday before, on the conservative

Protestant churches, but mostly on Catholic churches. What the result was I can tell you very, very easily, and I can probably generalize it this way. Paxico's out here west of town, was in my congressional district. I carried it about two to one. Let's say two hundred to one hundred. And Democrat Bob Docking carried it two to one, so forth and so on. It was just a pretty solid Democratic vote. They voted at a Catholic church just north of Paxico. In 1974, Dole actually got a slight majority, and the Democratic gubernatorial got the same heavy Democratic vote, and the woman who was running to succeed me in Congress, who ran successfully, got the same Democratic vote. So I lost thirty or forty votes in that one precinct. We have over three thousand precincts, and I lost this election by less than two votes a precinct. Atchison County is the same story. Those two I've offered as illustrations, because Atchison County was the home base for the guy I beat in 1970, and I ran slightly ahead of him there, ran heavily ahead in 1972, and lost it pretty substantially in 1974. So I can't prove it, but I think most people would agree, including some of the press people who you've been interviewing, that I would have won that race about fifty thousand votes if it had gone the other way. We lost it by about thirteen.

Williams: I read somewhere that at the end of that farm debate, Dole was booed. Is that correct?

Roy: He was booed. That was a raucous debate, in a sense. Things were getting pretty hot. By the way, they ran one of these nonscientific polls there, and I was leading Dole overwhelmingly with the farmers, of all things, of western Kansas. But anyway, they booed him when he made that statement, but there was cheering and booing going back and forth, and the crowd was fairly well split between the two of us, you know, with the hats and the balloons and all the paraphernalia of elections.

Williams: How did you and he part on that occasion?

Roy: I think he walked off in one direction and I walked off in another. I don't have any great personal dislike for Bob Dole. I won't tell you abortion is not a legitimate political issue. It is a legitimate political issue. I don't think I knew it in the months before

election, though, as much as I know it now, but as I said, abortion equals the Christian Right equals the Republican Party equals whatever else you don't happen to like about George W. Bush. It's a continuum. It's a great misfortune.

Williams: The AWOL charge.

Roy: Yes, that was miserable. I don't have that. It was one of these tabloids that you put out, a piece of paper, it said, "The only military term Bill Roy knows is AWOL." And then it had a little asterisk. I don't know whether it was at the bottom or whether it was on the next page, it said, "Bill Roy missed six votes on veterans' benefits." Most of those were Friday afternoon votes that passed three hundred to zero because the other hundred and fifty weren't there and so forth. But the way it was put together, it made quite an impact. Our offices around the state got call after call after call. "What is this?" And again, see, 1974 is not 2007. People were veterans then. That's the only thing that I would say that was well below the belt. This is a despicable way of discussing an issue, because those aren't aborted fetuses; those are stillborns.

And there's no question about Dole's fingerprints were all over this thing. He says, "Oh, that just sort of ran along. I didn't know much about it." Bill Taggart, who was his guy in Agriculture, called many of my friends. Some of them he wanted a signature for Dole on the *Diocese* newspaper and things of that kind. So I know Taggart was big stuff in it totally. I think he was doing it full-time. So, that I would find—if he were sitting here and said that, I'd say, "Bob, that's not true."

Williams: Who was running Bob Dole's campaign?

Roy: I'm not sure I can tell you right now. He had also one very good ad that came up in October, about the time he began to get back in the race, so to speak. Whether it was coincidental or not, the ad was running when he was getting some ground. It was a mudslinging ad that came out of New York and by a group that had done that ad before. "Plop! Bill Roy Says He's Against [unclear] People." "Plop! He's this, he's that." Then they pull it off and here's this smiling countenance, and so on. That was a very effective ad. I can't say anything beyond that, I don't think, about that ad. But as far as

that tabloid he had out, I hate to think that he actually looked at it and said, "Yeah, let's go with this." I didn't get shot, but I was in the service.

Williams: What was election night like and the day after for you?

Roy: Pretty sad. In 1970, when I left the House, they said, "We have scattered returns in from two rural counties north of here, and Mize has 640 and Bill Roy has 640." I said, "Well, we won." That's sort of a poll, so to speak, in a very Republican area, and we carried the town. We were of the opinion we had to carry Shawnee County by 10,000 votes because we would lose the other seventeen counties. We carried the other counties also.

But anyway, in 1974 the votes came in, and Bob was ahead, sort of, 51 to 49, and it sort of stayed that way all night. I was never ahead. There was never any place that I knew we could get votes from that would probably change the outcome. I carried three of the five congressional districts. I lost fairly heavily in his old First District, and I lost very heavily in Johnson County, which is almost impossible to reach, in a sense. We had a focus group in Johnson County two or three weeks before election, and were talking to these matrons and so forth, people that are college graduates, probably, most of them and so forth. They would say, "Who's Whitey Herzog?" "Oh, he's the manager of the Royals." "Who's Bob Dole?" "Oh, he's been a senator." "Who's Bill Roy?" "I think he ran for governor once," or something like that. We just did not penetrate Johnson County, and we lost it by 15,000 votes. So if you want to knock out Johnson County, we carried the state by two. But Johnson County is still two-to-one Republican, sort of a strange phenomenon because a lot of them are from Missouri and are people who were born Democrats till they got rich and moved to Johnson County. [laughs]

Williams: So you had to come downstairs to give a concession speech?

Roy: Give everybody a hug and a kiss and say, "Thank you for everything," and that's the way the cookie crumbles. We had tremendous emotional support. There's never been a Senate race like it in Kansas. There hasn't been anything even touched it. The first time when I won in 1970, we had done something that maybe others—Mize's

campaign would say, "This is a little marginal." We sent out about 300,000 invitations to come to our victory party. [laughs] And we had it in the hotel downtown. We actually had a traffic jam for three or four blocks around there. The one great joke is, a friend of mine who was the vice chair of the Republican Party in this district, an obstetrician's wife from Manhattan, tells the story that she took this nice old lady to the polls, who she always takes to the polls because she always voted Republican, "But when she got done voting she says to me, 'May I go down to the bus station? I'm going to go over to Bill Roy's victory party.'" [laughs] Anyway, I don't think it made a difference in the campaign, in the outcome. I don't think anybody would tell you it did, but they thought, "That's not a very nice thing to ask everybody." But we wanted everybody to come.

Williams: So you then did what for the intervening four years till you ran again?

Roy: You want irony? I'll give you irony. Within the week I got two phone calls from two Catholic hospitals asking me to go on their staff, one in Wichita, and St. Francis Hospital in Topeka. I did then go on St. Francis staff and did some medical education and so forth over at St. Francis for two years, '75 and '76. No, four years I was getting my paycheck from St. Francis, and most of my pension. I don't have a congressional pension; you have to be there six years. It isn't like Rush Limbaugh says. You don't get the same pay all the rest of your life. Most of my pension comes from the years I spent at St. Francis.

And then after I lost to Nancy [L.] Kassebaum, and that was decisive--I wouldn't say it was overwhelming, but it was decisive. You can't be Al [Alfred M.] Landon's daughter in this state when two things are going on, the country's turning conservative in 1978, and the women's movement will make an exception. [laughs] So anyway, I lost that.

So then I began practicing again, and I practiced from '79 to '89. I built up a five-person practice and saved St. Francis' OB department. Whether I should have or not is another thing, but, of course, maybe it makes sense to have only one in a community this size. But Catholic hospitals are family oriented, and they didn't want to lose obstetrics. So I went to work for them as a hospital employee, which made possible my retirement, to be very honest with you.

Williams: When you went on their staff, what was their position on you performing abortions?

Roy: Well, you don't perform in Catholic hospitals. It was moot, so to speak. But that shows you that I was not disrespected by people who know healthcare and medicine in this state, even in Wichita, which is a ways away, 127 miles. It was quite ironic, I would say.

Williams: Was there anything about the Kassebaum contest that you—

Roy: The thing with the Kassebaum contest is they had a primary and she got 28 percent of the vote, but that was enough to win because there were five or six people in the primary. I'd liked to have run against any of the others, and one or two of them in particular, including maybe the less desirable one would have been Wayne Angel, who has been a very good friend of Dole's and been on the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve Board, quite a smart guy who's done very well.

Williams: Let me ask you just a few questions I picked up from various interviews. You said at one point that Dole wanted to eliminate the Agriculture Department.

Roy: Yes, he definitely wanted to eliminate, because he was a slave to Nixon, and Nixon had a guy by the name of [John F.] Connelly, a brilliant politician, for the most part, from Texas, and they decided they should have four super departments—Department of Human Resources, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Defense. What was the fourth one? Doesn't make any difference. The Agriculture Department, Department of Interior, etc., etc., were to be combined as the Department of Natural Resources, and Dole supported that. Of course, it would have wiped the Agriculture Department out because it would have been just a piece of a much bigger department. I brought that up at the beginning of the debate, and Bob never gained his stride. I'm not a great debater and I have had no background in debating, but I think we had him six ways to Sunday and he was grasping for a straw.

Williams: And you have made the comment that politics has been his life.

Roy: Yes. Oh yeah. In a sense, it's nice that he won, from a human—what am I trying to say?--sympathetic perspective in that sense. Of course, as far as who I am or who I'm not, that's depended on Bob Dole; it hasn't depended on me being in Congress for four years and losing the Senate race. In other words, to this day I didn't go over—Fritz [Walter] Fritz Mondale was over here, for example. I am no friend of Fritz Mondale, but Fritz and I have talked on things in the past, such as how do you debate Bob Dole, when they had their 1976 debate. Actually, I didn't talk to him; I talked to Tom [Thomas] Eagleton on behalf of him. I remember the '76 Dole-Mondale debate, when Dole didn't do very well.

Williams: That's right, and his undoing there was a little bit like what you have described as being a very acid situation, sitting next to him on the platform.

Roy: Right.

Williams: What was that like?

Roy: It wasn't bad in the agriculture debate, because, as I said, I had the upper hand, I did not well--I've looked at the tape--I don't know how badly on *Face the Nation*, because Bob, he'd sit there and just sprinkle little drops of acid on you. "I understand you made $250,000 as a practicing physician, Bill. How come you're for socialized medicine when you made $250,000?" You can't answer all those questions. There's no way to answer all those questions when you're debating on his grounds the entire time. Other things of that kind. I was off stride for that period of time.

Williams: You were not at that point an experienced national political figure, and he'd already been there.

Roy: Yes.

Williams: How important was Watergate in all of this?

Roy: The only reason I could have beaten Bob was because of Watergate. As I said, I think if we'd had one ad of him with Nixon, it would have been enough to overcome. See, this race actually ended up 49.2 to 50.8, so you're talking about changing one vote in a hundred. So, no, Bob handled it pretty well. We probably didn't hit it as hard as we should have. I suppose we were of two minds on something like that, in the sense that Nixon had carried this state overwhelmingly in both elections, and there was some sympathy for him. It was one of those things we felt we could overplay.

Williams: Your knowing your position on abortion and explaining it as best you could, where does your faith in the American voter come up here? And in the AWOL thing too. I mean, anyone could really look at it and say, "Hey, wait a minute."

Williams: Yeah. I guess on the abortion thing, I have great respect for Catholics, and many, many Catholic friends, and you know, that was a real tough issue for them, but anybody who'd done a single abortion. And I got to be a good friend with Bob Drinan in Congress and so forth, and as I said, I'd read his—one of the reasons I came down where I did, I'd read his writings, and John Courtney Murray's. I'm a damn fool because I listened to those two Jesuits, in a sense, both of whom said abortion's wrong, Catholics shouldn't have abortions, but you can't have laws against abortion and not have them obeyed, or you destroy—both of them were attorneys—respect for the law. The majesty of the law is gone and you're in a bad position. So that's a little complicated, isn't it. And that's one of the things I wrote in my *Law Journal* article. Like I say, I can hardly blame Catholics. It's hard for them. See, the interesting thing is, Bob Dole will support a human life, amendment. I don't know how many of them were put in the hopper in the Senate, but he never co-sponsored one, to my knowledge. So, you know, as I said—and I felt picked upon in the sense that I thought I had done a lot of good work in the area of abortion law. But it's something you live with. You are who you are.

Williams: Have you had a reconciliation with Bob Dole?

Roy: You'd have to ask him that, I guess, in a sense. Yeah, in a sense I have, I think. In about 1983—I don't remember the date, and that may be way off, about '83, had to be, '84, Keith Sebelius died, our congressman from western Kansas, father-in-law of our Democratic governor, and I went to the funeral and Bob was there. I said to Bob, "I appreciate the work you've done on the Finance Committee." He was chairman at that time and had come back and torn up some of this terribly irresponsible tax cuts that [David] Stockman and Reagan and so forth had put through the first year of the Reagan administration.

And Bob said something that is different. He said, "Well, Bill, I think that the fact that I ran against you sort of saved me." He didn't put it that way. He said, "It changed me as far as the Senate was concerned. I figured out that I had to have friends," or something to that effect. My feeling on that, you know, the old Bob Dole would have said, "Well, if you think what I'm doing is right, it must be I'm doing something terribly wrong." But that wasn't his response. His response was, "I learned from the '74 election." I knew some of the senators, of course. Bill [William Dodd] Hathaway was a friend of mine, senator from Maine. Bill said Bob Dole came back the most chasten man you've ever seen in your life, and it was a totally different Bob Dole. So I think probably having come close to losing his professional life, after having come close to losing his physical life, was another reawakening, in a sense.

We rode back to Washington on a plane together once, and I don't remember the gist of the conversation, but it wasn't unfriendly. I also appreciate the fact that what they say about the '74 campaign in the window in the Dole Center is more or less accurate. It says abortion played a role. I don't remember exactly what it says, but it doesn't ignore it.

Williams: You made an interesting comment. You felt more strongly about your defeat in 1996, when you were interviewed, than you did in 1974. You felt more in 1996 than 1975 about your defeat. Do you recall that statement?

Roy: No, I don't recall that statement. I'm sorry.

Williams: We're at the end of this tape. Let's stop.

Roy: That's enough anyway, I think, isn't it?

[End file 1; Begin file 2]

Williams: All right. You were telling us in the break here about another meeting that you did have with Senator Dole about healthcare.

Roy: I've always been interested in universal healthcare, and probably if I'd stayed in Congress that would have been my primary push. It was during the short time I was there. In about 1993, when everybody was talking about healthcare and [William Jefferson] Clinton was talking about healthcare, folks in Kansas put together what was called a Kansas Employers Coalition for Health, and put together a universal health program done by a staff and so forth that was very well done, was published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. They recognized it was a good plan. So I thought I'd like to take it back to Washington to our congressmen. Of course, it was easy to do with the two Democrats, Jim [James C.] Slattery and Dan Glickman, and it was easy to do with Kassebaum because she's always talked easily with me and I've talked easily with her, and she had tendencies in that direction, if nothing more. But I wasn't at all sure I'd get to talk to Bob, so I did call over and say I'd like to at least see Sheila Burke, whom I didn't know.

So I went over to the Minority Leader's office, came in, and I sat down for that long, and a couple people came in and Bob came out to greet them. He shook hands with them and then they were being escorted into the office. He said to me, "You're going to go see Sheila?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "I'll be in very quickly. I have to see these people."

So he came in ten minutes later, five minutes later, fifteen minutes later, and we talked probably for the better part of an hour about this health program and about universal healthcare. I've always thought Bob had at least some tendencies in that way because essentially all of his healthcare, which he earned, all of his life, of course, has

been in government hospitals. So I felt good about the talk. As I recall, we talked about 1996 and the fact that as a Republican he might be hard put to support universal healthcare and so on, but, of course, he was noncommittal. Sheila is well known in the health community, of course, of Washington, D.C.

A couple of other things that might be of interest that we've touched upon slightly. I did, of course, have opportunities in Washington when I was defeated. Arent Fox, the law firm, talked to me about starting a division of healthcare law in their law firm, which was big, big, big. I don't know how big then, but hundreds. Then also the device manufacturers, people who make medical devices, were starting their association, and they wanted to know if I was interested. I talked to some folks in Chicago and some folks in New Jersey and so forth about that. I couldn't see myself jetting around the world, so to speak, and going to Hawaii to attend a convention and being responsible for it and so forth, so I wasn't interested in that.

I decided I'd come home and do the things I knew best, and, of course, big family and wanting to be with that family also had some influence on it. So would things have happened differently if I'd been in Washington? I have no idea. They would have happened differently if Bob Dole had not been in Washington. [laughs] So any notoriety I have, of course, has been as a result of his success, and I don't feel unfriendly toward Bob. I suspect I've lost less sleep than anybody who's ever lost a Senate race that closely. It really has never kept me awake nights thinking about it, because what's done is what's done. As I said, I don't really know whether I really know Bob very well. As many public people, he's become somewhat of an enigma for various reasons, but certainly he's had a distinguished career and done some good things. Of course, food stamps came very naturally because we've got to get rid of the wheat. Then, of course, the disability work he did was pretty good work. But he was pretty much a no vote. It's amazing how conservative his voting record was through the years.

Williams: I just want to go back to the meeting that you had with him about healthcare. The matter of the '74 election never came up in that?

Roy: No, and I don't think we ever discussed the '74 election. "Why did you do this in Hutchinson?" or, "Why did you publish that?" It would probably have inevitably been confrontational.

Williams: As you were running for the Senate, did you have a vision of what you might want to do in the Senate?

Roy: As I said, universal health insurance, really. You know, it's hard to quantify the misery that we have in this country because 47 million people don't have health insurance or people don't go to the doctor because they don't want to have to pay for it and they know they can't pay that and pay the rent too. I don't think there's any domestic stride forward that can be greater than passing universal health insurance. I did have the opportunity—I was made a member of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, so I sat on a number of their committees. In fact, I was on their council, primarily because I was not from the East Coast or the West Coast, as most of them are. They needed somebody from the Middle West. But it was work that I enjoyed it immensely. So opportunities came my way, but—

Williams: There's another thing you haven't mentioned, and that is your service on the Kansas Board of Regents.

Roy: Yes, and that was an honor and something I enjoyed doing very much. I'm on the Board of Regents of Washburn, too, so I've had lots of opportunities. Like I say, it's been a good life. We've got six children, all six of them still married to their original spouse, and we're talking about anywhere from thirteen to thirty years. And we've got ten grandchildren and two great-children, good health, and lots of good luck. So I'm not sad in any sense. One of these times I'll hit the wall, I know that, but for now everything's fine.

Williams: Shall we end on that note?

Roy: Yes.

Williams: It's a good note. Thank you.

[End of interview]

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