

[Ten oral history interviews of Kansas legislators in 2015 by Dr. Burdett Loomis were done under the auspices of the University of Kansas and the Shawnee County Historical Society with funding from the Kansas Humanities Council. This set of interviews became the foundation for the Kansas Oral History Project with its incorporation.]

[Transcriber's note: The recording is somewhat hissy, and there is background noise (traffic, birds, or maybe a pet bird, a weedwhacker or a leaf blower), as the interview seems to have conducted outdoors.]

LOOMIS: I got to say, you're looking pretty good.

SKOOG: I have difficulty finding names and occasionally words.

LOOMIS: So, let's start kind of at the beginning. How did you initially come to run for the Legislature?

SKOOG: Well, I'm not sure. I think Sam Mellinger had been going around, trying to promote people to run in '60. And he was a lawyer down at Emporia.

SKOOG: I didn't know him, but, you know, I think I was [at a] meeting or two where he was promoting me for it. I'd had a substantial interest a long time in government.

SKOOG: I don't know. My family wasn't—didn't talk politics much. My sister got involved, while she was a freshman out at Washburn [University], in [Andrew Frank] "Andy" Schoeppel's campaign.

SKOOG: And some way or another, why, he won, and she went back to D.C. with him— for about a year, a little more.

SKOOG: And then she came back with Bill [Turntey] to set up his Kansas office after about a year.

SKOOG: I was still at K-State. I was up there five years.

SKOOG: I remember I had mononucleosis in '49, and so while I was home, disabled with mononucleosis—she had arranged to have the Congressional Record sent to us every day.

SKOOG: So, I spent most of that period while I was down, reading the arguments because they were dealing with the [Brannon? 3:18] Plan in—

LOOMIS: Right, right. The agriculture. Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: Anyhow, I don't know. I graduated Manhattan with a B.S. in geology and one in civil engineering. And went in the service. And I met my wife back at—I was stationed at Fort Belvoir. And she lived in Falls Church, and so we came out. And having been raised during [World] War II—one—as a general rule I think, we had a lot of interest in government and in government going the right direction, one thing another.

SKOOG: And so, I don't know, when I came back from overseas, I went to work for Howard-Needles [-Tammen & Bergendoff], who was the general consultant for the Turnpike, and I was in charge of soils and geology and all of those kinds of things at the Turnpike.

LOOMIS: Did you know Dan Watkins' father?

SKOOG: Oh, yeah.

LOOMIS: Dan Watkins lives across the street from me, and so—

SKOOG: Well, I had an experience with him. It was my job to—we had the highway department doing a bunch of the geology stuff that designers needed to finish their road things, and Dan was in charge of that group in Kansas City—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —that was doing this.

SKOOG: And one day, Joe [Sorkin? 5:19] called me in, and he said, "Dan Watkins isn't [loud noise; unintelligible; 5:26] finish his stuff, and he says it's [loud noise; unintelligible; 5:31] geology.

LOOMIS: Yeah. [Loud noise.]

SKOOG: And I said—I told him—I said [loud noise; unintelligible; 5:36] office and look at my records, and I said [noise; unintelligible; 5:41] if he went to [Kraft? 5:42], he's had them for six weeks or eight weeks—

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: —or some such thing. And I said, "I don't appreciate it, him telling you that. And I'm gonna go give Dan a call."

LOOMIS: Uh-huh.

SKOOG: And he said, "Well, let me listen in." I said, "You just stay out of it."

SKOOG: So, of course, I was young and brash—

SKOOG: —and [crosstalk; unintelligible; 6:03]. Called him up and chewed him out good. I wasn't really acquainted with him—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —but chewed him out good. And he retracted his—

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: [unintelligible; 6:20]. That's about all I know about Dan, but he was—back then. And I know he had a whole passel of kids.

LOOMIS: Fourteen kids.

SKOOG: Yeah.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: So, it wasn't hard to understand why he had to work hard.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: Anyhow, after—about the time that we were finishing the turnpike in the fall of '56, why, I looked around and saw I had some leftover credits from my Army service, and I had friends that were taking flying lessons and one thing another to use up their—that. I had a brother going out to law school, so one Friday night in September, I decided that I would go to law school. So, I went up and talked to him on a Friday and started law school on Monday.

LOOMIS: No kidding! At Washburn [University School of Law]?

SKOOG: At Washburn.

SKOOG: And, of course, we had—our offices were at 10th and MacVicar. And so, when it comes to going, to taking the classes, why, I just—if I had a class, why, I'd get in the car and run down the street.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: I'd go to law school and come back, and so I didn't eat lunch, and I went to work about six o'clock, and I'd arranged with my boss, who thought it was silly—Joe [Sorkin? 8:05]—but he said, "Well, I could understand if you wanted to go get a master's in ancient languages or something to help us write better reports."

SKOOG: "But if you want to go to law school and you can do it, why, you can keep running the squad here." And I did. So, I graduated from law school in January of '59.

SKOOG: And they moved out of town. They closed this office, Howard-Needles did, in April, so—I just became acquainted with the fact that [Tim Murrow? 8:54] was not going to run, and I had, the year or two before, worked to get involved with the Young Republicans in some kind of a thing.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: —running John [Holt? Hoke? 9:07] for mayor, I think. So, I decided that—give it a whack.

LOOMIS: Where—yeah, you were in Topeka. That's where you were living.

SKOOG: I was living here, about two blocks from here.

SKOOG: There were three legislative districts in Shawnee County that year.

SKOOG: And so, we had a vigorous primary, and I won by seventy-five votes, and then I got elected, served, and—

SKOOG: —two years later, why, there were four seats in Shawnee County.

LOOMIS: And then a little later on, after redistricting, there were—

SKOOG: Well, then the next time, in '64, I was really full of myself, so I ran for Congress.

SKOOG: And that wasn't very successful. And so, I figured I was done with it, because at that time we were getting two dollars a day—plus five dollars expenses.

SKOOG: And with a wife and three little kids and so forth, even with generous and thoughtful law partners—that was not any way to get rich—

SKOOG: —or to feed a family. But in '66 they came back, and they came around, and they had eight and a half seats—

SKOOG: —to fill out, and there were only going to be 17,000 people in the district, —

SKOOG: —and wanted me to run to hold that office, so I did one more time. Then I got out, of course.

LOOMIS: Okay. So then—what? So, you served from—

SKOOG: I was elected in '60, '62 and '66.

LOOMIS: Okay. One term [when you ran for Congress.

SKOOG: Then, I got out—as you probably know, it's difficult to get out of elective office and retain the respect of your friends. You got to do it one way or the other. Either you got to get beat, which is the discouraging way to do it, or, in my case, why, I took on the chore of being state chairman for John [W.] Crutcher, who was running for Governor.

SKOOG: That gave me an excuse not to run for the state Senate, which—I had a lot of people wanted me to do at that time. Thank goodness that didn't happen.

SKOOG: How I got in, I don't know. I just found the idea of public service important, and I found an [act?] that would satisfy [me?].

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah. So, in that first primary, seventy-five votes—that's pretty close.

SKOOG: Yeah, there were four of us in—

LOOMIS: Oh, so it was highly sought after.

SKOOG: I guess so.

LOOMIS: Yeah. I can look it up, but just out of cu- —do you remember how many votes you needed to win a four-way, five-way primary?

SKOOG: No.

LOOMIS: Must not have been that much—all that many.

SKOOG: Well, that's true, but I think we had fifty or fifty-five thousand people we were representing.

LOOMIS: Before redistricting, right, right. So that would—yeah, that would certainly change [after the court case on reapportionment?].

SKOOG: It was a lot different than it was the third time, when there were only 17,000.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right. Yeah, I've written a little bit about that, and that whole era, which I do want to talk a little bit about—

SKOOG: But anyhow, I got into it without—

LOOMIS: And just really quickly: From then on, did you just practice law after '68?

SKOOG: After '68 I did, yeah. Back in '60, I had organized a consulting engineering
And I sold my interest in that in '64 and put it in my campaign for Congress.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: But when Johnny Murray put in a quarter section of his land and I don't know what [Charles D.] "Chuck" McAtee put in, but [Chet Mize?] had—he had the Golden [unintelligible; 14:00].

SKOOG: I think he drank more whiskey than the rest of us maybe put together.

LOOMIS: That's very possible.

What was your district like when you first ran? Especially that larger district.

SKOOG: Well, I had all of the county north of the river—

SKOOG: —and down to about, oh, Mission Township, everything west Gage down to about 21st Street, I think. And I think the district boundaries came up 10th Street to Kansas Avenue, so it was that end of town. And my brother-in-law had—he was working for the planning commission, and he had just succeeded in finishing one of these reports that planning commissions do under a grant and so forth, and it was analyzing who the people were in the town, —

LOOMIS: Oh, is that right?

SKOOG: —you know, their origins and their incomes, their—all of that kind of thing, which I found fascinating because I always operated on the theory that if you were an elected representative, you were supposed to represent the people that voted for you, not some nebulous other outfit that thought they were supposed to tell you what to do.

SKOOG: And so, it was fascinating to find that out. Plus, I knocked on a lot of doors.

LOOMIS: What was it like to represent, at the state level, a district where you were essentially at home?

SKOOG: What I found fascinating about it was that I had always assumed that there were a bunch of people around that were all involved and interested in all these subjects, and I never found anybody

that knew anything about anything except maybe the teachers' union people and, you know, a few groups.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: They'd all be involved in one action or another, but other than that, it was a lot different than I later learned in being a city commissioner, a councilman or county commissioner or something. There wasn't any of this business calling up at night about potholes and this and that.

SKOOG: Or being excited about anything very much.

LOOMIS: What about state employees? Were they a group that—

SKOOG: Well, they were a substantial group, and, of course, I had been raised—my father was an engineer with the state highway commission, and so I had grown up with an interest in that. And it was fascinating because my first term was when KPERS [State of Kansas Retirement System for Public Employees] was passed. And I felt good about that because my folks were going to get the benefit from it.

LOOMIS: Right, right. So as of 1960, '61, there was no—

SKOOG: Sixty-one is the first time we had—that we had KPERS or anything like it.

And as a result, we had a lot of eighty-year-olds down at the state capitol in various things because people wouldn't fire or let people go that were secretaries and this, that and the other thing because they didn't have anything to live on.

SKOOG: So, it was making it possible for them to be respectable and retire.

LOOMIS: So, I've never really thought about this before, or not much, at least, but when you passed that in 1961, did it apply simply to—to start then, or did people who had been working for some time—did they get something?

SKOOG: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, they got about—we carried them in at the same level that other people would. Otherwise—the same standards applied to existing people as it did to [crosstalk; unintelligible; 18:44].

LOOMIS: Uh-huh. So, you could retire in—

SKOOG: I mean, if you'd worked there for thirty years—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —you'd retire as if they'd had—

LOOMIS: You'd been putting it in for—

LOOMIS: I just hadn't thought much about that, because I knew roughly when KPERS came in, but I didn't—and, of course, that would have meant that a lot of those people who were hanging on would then retire, I assume.

SKOOG: They would be able to retire—

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: —and did. Yeah.

LOOMIS: So, once you got elected, you know, how did you approach, you know, going to the Legislature—you know, becoming a legislator that first year that you were there?

SKOOG: Well, the Speaker that year was Bill Mitchell from Hutchinson.

SKOOG: And Bill assigned me—of course, all the lawyers at that time—all lawyers were on the Judiciary Committee.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And I got Roads and Highways because, of course, that was my profession—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —or had been. And I think we had some—and I don't know what—I don't remember what they called it, but it would have been involved with water and all the things, because we were filling all the dams and all of that stuff [crosstalk; unintelligible; 20:18].

SKOOG: And, of course, I went there with the idea that I'd keep my mouth shut until I found out what was going on and so forth, and as most people who know me recognize, that was a virtual impossibility.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: Didn't seem as bad as it actually turned out.

SKOOG: My first meeting of the Roads and Highways Committee—Ed [Beamon? 20:45] from up in Hoyt was chairman. And we sat down, and everybody introduced themselves, and the first thing out of Ed's mouth was that he wanted to have the committee introduce the Governor's DWI bill, or DUI bill, which was going to require ten days' incarceration if you were found DWI. And being a young lawyer recognizing that you didn't have mandatory jail sentence for murder, it seemed peculiar to me.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And so, I erupted, and I never did learn how to keep my mouth shut.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: As a matter of fact, they always accused me of being the individual that caused them to develop their [seatbelt] award for people who spent too much time down at the mic.

SKOOG: And I guess that was fair.

LOOMIS: On your committee, could you use your expertise as an engineer? Was it relevant to most of your work?

SKOOG: I mean, I knew [what] we were talking about, —

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —on most issues. Some people thought they did, and I probably thought I knew a lot more than I did.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: You know, I was full of myself, like young people are.

LOOMIS: Yeah. But did that help you on that committee?

SKOOG: Oh, did very well on it. They relied on me.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: Fact of the matter, I think I was—well, now, maybe Jim Davis was on it, but I think I was the only lawyer on the committee, so they—that also got me, what I had to say, some respect, whether it was worth it or not.

LOOMIS: Uh-huh.

SKOOG: Whether it was justified or not, I can't tell you.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

What kind of relations did you have with the legislative leadership?

SKOOG: Oh, I didn't have any difficulty at all. At that time and for some period—well, during that period that I was in the Legislature, I think essentially through the '60s, the leadership didn't call a caucus until about two or three weeks to go. And then it would be where they would set everybody down and they'd get out their little charts, and they'd say, "Now, you folks all want to vote for all these good things. We want to show you how much money we have and what you're going to have to do if you want to pay for all these things you think are so wonderful." So, it wasn't really—we didn't really have much in the way of conflicts except the ones that naturally go with that.

LOOMIS: Yeah. Sure.

SKOOG: I always did well. In my second term, I missed being elected majority leader by one vote. Lost to Bill Fribley, which was a good idea, because you probably knew of Bill, and he'd been here a long time, and my first term, he wasn't on the leadership side of things before they got to be leadership, so he wasn't given a committee or anything.

LOOMIS: Oh, no kidding!

SKOOG: And he was ornery—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —because he'd been there twenty years and nobody else had been there over five or six.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: And so, he was very capable of getting things riled up, and he would do that from time to time.

So, the next time, when [Charles S.] "Charlie" Arthur was the Speaker, [unintelligible; 25:16]—they thought if Fribley wanted to be Majority Leader, that was better than having—messing things up.

LOOMIS: I'll be darned. That's an interesting perspective.

SKOOG: And I think they were correct.

LOOMIS: Yeah, when I was talking to Jim Maag today, he—I think at some point Fribley was the Ways and Means chair, and Jim said that, you know, he didn't give—you know, he was Fribley—you know, was he very helpful? And he said, "Not in particular. Other people were very helpful, but Fribley was not particularly helpful."

SKOOG: Well, I think Bill stayed there until he got that job with—oh, that federal job with that Ozark region.

LOOMIS: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

SKOOG: And he became the executive or he was running that shop for the feds.

LOOMIS: But that was pretty unusual in those days, in any time, really, to have very long-serving members—

SKOOG: Yeah.

LOOMIS: People generally didn't serve—

SKOOG: Oh, no, —

LOOMIS: —that long.

SKOOG: —we didn't—no, that's right. It wasn't like it is today. I mean, you look around today, why, if you haven't been there four or five terms, nobody ever considers you for a chairmanship.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: I don't think that Bill Mitchell had been there, and this may have been his third term.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: And my [shirttail? 26:43] cousin, John [Conard? 26:45], was chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, and it was his second term.

LOOMIS: Is that right? I got to know John quite—well, you know, reasonably well.

SKOOG: Well, he lived over close to you.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah. I know it.

SKOOG: And then he represented the university all those years.

LOOMIS: Right, right. Yeah.

SKOOG: He was a lovely man.

LOOMIS: Oh, just a really good guy. Absolutely.

So, when you got there, what surprised you? If you recall, what surprised you about the Legislature once you became a member? Anything in particular?

SKOOG: Oh, I don't recall being surprised. I noticed that those of us who lived at home—we lived kind of the normal life.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And the rest of— [out-of-county? 27:58] boys—they—most of them lived together here, and they got to thinking an awful lot of things were important that they were doing, —

LOOMIS: Uh-huh.

SKOOG: —as if it was a big deal when there wasn't anybody outside of a hundred yards away from them that cared a bit about it.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: And so, you had maybe a little different perspective, but I didn't find it surprise- —now, I do remember that the first thing I did when I got down there was to ask somebody—and I can't remember who it was—and that is: "What is there here that's really important that we ought to be doing and we're not doing?" And I remember him saying, "Well, we've got some problems at the penitentiary. And Paul [R.] Wunsch [28:50] is trying to do something about it, and we're not having very much luck because there aren't any votes for people in the penitentiary."

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: "And they ought to have some training, and they ought to have some—this, that and the other thing." And so, we had—at least we had them making license plates and mixing up paint for the highway department—

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: —and a few other things, but—and we had there—they made shoes, and there were a few things that they did, but that was—that was what—the only thing anybody ever told me—that "this is

one thing we ought to pay attention to and ought to do something about,” but unfortunately, a lot of people want the money, and there isn’t anybody who wants it for them except those of us that are responsible for it.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm. Yeah, not a bunch of active constituents—

SKOOG: Not exactly.

LOOMIS: —in penitentiary.

SKOOG: At that time, they didn’t get out with their civil rights. They couldn’t vote.

LOOMIS: Right, right. So, tell me a little bit about—you mentioned it was different for you to be home than for the legislators who were living at the [Hotel] Jayhawk or wherever.

SKOOG: Right.

LOOMIS: So, could you continue kind of, pretty a normal life?

SKOOG: Well, I was home with my kids. I had to worry about [unintelligible; 30:22]. My wife didn’t have to carry on alone.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And I could go down to the office and do some things.

LOOMIS: Right. So, were you able to keep your law practice up even in session?

SKOOG: Not really very successfully, but at least you could go down there and check mail—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —and talk with people—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —and remain conscious of what was going on, where the other guys—they would—the privileged ones would go up to the telephone company’s suite at the Jayhawk, and they had a little room off to the side, and there were a number of fellows that would go in there and make their free long distance calls home or to the office and try to keep up over the phone.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: And there were two or three fellows who would—lawyers that would be some abstracts back and would read abstracts—

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: —and make reports on them during the week, but there wasn’t much you could do.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And because your mind wasn’t there.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah. So, did you—most people who came up in that era would talk about going up to the lobbyists' rooms in the Jayhawk or—

SKOOG: I went to some. I'd go up there occasionally, yeah. But I didn't have to live there.

LOOMIS: [Chuckles.] Right, right, right.

SKOOG: And I wasn't like—of course, that first term or the first two terms, why, we had all these old duffers up here, and you'd read a book about what they did and they were all farmer-stockmen, you know? And it took some while before you realized that this little boy who was a farmer-stockman—he owned all of the grain elevators on the Rock Island [unintelligible; 32:34] line.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: I think [it was? 32:36] Colorado. And the other one—he had all the elevators on the Union Pacific from here to [crosstalk; unintelligible; 32:43].

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And this one and that one had other interests—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —other than being a farmer-stockman, —

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —which is what they lived on.

LOOMIS: One of the things that's really interesting to me, because I've spent some time working on this, is the whole question of reapportionment in that whole period between the—

SKOOG: The *Baker v. Carr* came out of '63.

LOOMIS: Yeah, '62. Right, right. And you also had the Kansas cases that were, you know, being cited at the same time.

SKOOG: Oh yeah. Well, we were having special sessions.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: I think we had three or four special sessions there that first couple of years.

LOOMIS: Right, right. If you can think back—again, that first term, when all 105 counties had their—

SKOOG: Well, they had their second term, too.

LOOMIS: No, I know, right, right, right. So, you know, how was the Legislature different with that kind of representation?

SKOOG: I think most people were more respectful of each other.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: Of course, I've often believed, still believe that as a general rule, that legislators are nice people and that they—you know, they're gregarious, and they have a bona fide interest in public service.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: There may be an issue or two that they're personally concerned about, but as a general rule—but that began to decay when we had the other—the other thing, of course, —I mean, later it did. Of course, the rural boys—this was before the home rule, and so you had all your local bills that you had to get passed.

LOOMIS: Oh, uh-huh.

SKOOG: And the rural boys stopped at—and [unintelligible; 35:22]—because we had one woman.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And they always thought they were generous with us and so forth.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: But, of course, that's because they took care of themselves first.

LOOMIS: Sure, sure.

SKOOG: Yeah. And so that began to change.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: And it's gotten now so that the rural people really feel put upon that nobody at the Legislature, or very few at the Legislature understand them or are concerned about their interests.

LOOMIS: So, did you get to know Jess Taylor [unintelligible; 36:10]?

SKOOG: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah, he had been Speaker the term before.

LOOMIS: Right, he had. Right, exactly. And now people when they become Speaker—

SKOOG: Now they think they are supposed to stay there forever, until somebody beats them or runs them off.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: But in my time, why, you were Speaker one term, and then you didn't seek to be Speaker so somebody else—you didn't try to. Jess was—well, you couldn't call him a giant, but he was—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —a gentle giant in his way.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: And a lovely guy to get along with. I never heard any conflicts with him or knew anybody that did.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: Now, it was, of course, —the big talk was that he represented 625 people—

LOOMIS: [Chuckles.]

SKOOG: —in Greeley County—

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: —and that that wasn't fair.

LOOMIS: Uh-huh. But he was the head of State and Fed [Committee on Federal and State Affairs] during that time when reapportionment came in.

SKOOG: Well, I had my good friend, when *Baker v. Carr* came [wandering along? 37:35], which, of course, precipitated—

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: I remember my friend, Ross [O.] Doyen came up—I had a seat on the aisle then, and he came up and squatted down there, and he was trying to talk me into not supporting this whole idea, which was the law, that we people in the cities actually ought to have some votes, too.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right, right.

SKOOG: It was discouraging to Ross that I'd think that way.

LOOMIS: Clearly, there was a lot of resistance to the *Baker v. Carr* ruling.

SKOOG: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. They were distressed. Of course, they would be. Why wouldn't they be?

LOOMIS: No, no, exactly.

SKOOG: I mean, they would look around and they'd say, "Well, the whole country is based on the "great compromise" of the Senate. And now they're saying we can't have a compromise in the House."

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And "Where's that come from?" We'd say, "Well, it came from them. We didn't decide it."

LOOMIS: Right,

SKOOG: "We're just trying to implement it."

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: They had had some terrible—our first shots at that in special session had some terrible results. I thought at least that I was a pretty good friend of George Haley's, and George was a state senator from Wyandotte County.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: And, of course, when the court—when the federal court redrew the lines and said that what we had done was unconstitutional, their answer was to say, “Well, you had”—I don’t know— “three state senators or something that you had authorized to have in Wyandotte County, so you’re all going to have to run county wide.”

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And, of course, George couldn’t win that because, being black, why, that wasn’t quite what it took.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And that was a great tragedy, I thought, because he was, I thought, [unintelligible; 40:05].

LOOMIS: So, did they run an election?

SKOOG: They had an election, but you had to run county wide.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: In that county. Now, that varied in various places, what they [could dabble in? 40:21], but—

LOOMIS: I somehow missed that, so that was the rules for—what?

SKOOG: That was what the federal court said.

LOOMIS: Uh-huh.

SKOOG: Because it was so late that—

LOOMIS: Right. Okay, I do remember that, yeah, yeah, yeah. And that was for—so all the representatives—

SKOOG: That was the state Senate.

LOOMIS: Okay, that was the state Senate.

SKOOG: Yeah. And I don’t recall what kind of redrawing was done by others—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —particularly, but—

LOOMIS: But then when you came back in 19- —

SKOOG: Well, we’d already had two years of the new—

LOOMIS: You’d had the new—yeah, the new district, so you had all the eight and a half seats in Shawnee, —

SKOOG: Right.

LOOMIS: —in Shawnee County.

SKOOG: However, they were organized.

LOOMIS: Was it easier to represent that 17,000 than your bigger district earlier on?

SKOOG: I don't think it made it easier, because, of course, historically if you had local bills that your county or city or fire district or somebody else need, why, the Legislature wouldn't listen to you unless all the representatives of that county or whatever it was were on board.

LOOMIS: I see.

SKOOG: And if you had people that weren't on board, why, they wouldn't pay any attention to you. And so, after we got to having a lot more representatives, why, then you didn't have unity in your county at all. Nobody did.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And that made it difficult. And it may have had something to do with bringing about the idea of home rule.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah. That makes—so before home rule began, you really had to pass all these local [crosstalk; unintelligible; 42:43].

SKOOG: Oh, sure. And you had to get pretty fancy on how you word it—you know, “in a city of more than so-and-so and less than such-and-such” or a city with some unique kind of thing.”

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: I remember we always had a time with Johnson County because we were— Shawnee County and Johnson County were about the same total population, so I think then we got into the situation— well, in a county where—I think we used the term “a county with not more than a hundred and thirty or a hundred and forty thousand people and not less than so-and-so,”—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: — “with twenty or more incorporated cities.” That would be Johnson County.

LOOMIS: Uh-huh. Right, right.

SKOOG: We leave out the incorporated cities, why, then we had to find another—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —unique attribute of Shawnee County—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —that Johnson County didn't have.

LOOMIS: So, you're trying to write very— specific legislation, but you had to use general language.

SKOOG: Oh, yeah, because every law had to be statewide.

LOOMIS: You served—the last two years, you would have served with Gov. [Robert B.] Docking.

SKOOG: Yes, I did.

LOOMIS: So, did you have any relationships with the Governor—as a representative, with the Governors of that era?

SKOOG: Not much. Of course, the nature of the beast that the Governor's got one agenda, and everybody else in the Legislature has a different agenda.

SKOOG: Certainly, doesn't have the same agenda, —although they tend to try to make you think you did.

SKOOG: But—well, the only thing I can recall is that we passed—the Legislature passed some bill. It wasn't a workers' comp bill. I don't recall what it was but having to do with procedure and people's rights. And John E. Shamberg from over in Kansas City came over and was trying to get somebody to go with him to the Governor to ask the Governor to veto the bill. And he couldn't find—all his great friends all at once ran the other way.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: I did go up with him, with John E. and his little delegation. But it didn't make much difference because, of course, that wasn't going to happen.

SKOOG: The only other thing that I had to do with that was—well, I guess the other matter was after I had left the Legislature and I was lobbying. And I represented some—a group. I think it was regular common carriers. They were having a hard time with the telephone company because they had the paging services at that time.

SKOOG: And so, they decided that, why, that if the [Kansas] Corporation Commission wouldn't listen to them, that maybe they ought to be under the jurisdiction of the Corporation Commission and then maybe they would listen to them. And so, I got passed for them a thing to put them under the jurisdiction of the Corporation Commission. Was it Paul? I think Paul [V.] Dugan—wasn't he the Lieutenant Governor?

LOOMIS: yeah.

SKOOG: And Paul had served in the Legislature with me.

And he was the lieutenant Governor. So that was the first year that they had the veto session—you know, where they took a fifteen-day hiatus [which he pronounced hi-EAT-us]—and came back. And so, Paul got the Governor to veto that, and I got the Legislature to override the veto.

LOOMIS: Aha.

SKOOG: The first one. And that was discouraging. I didn't have anything to do with the Governor, although I will say that Bobby Docking more than anybody, I ever knew enjoyed being Governor.

LOOMIS: Yeah, so I understand.

SKOOG: It was just something. He was just full of it. Gosh, I remember one time somebody telling me that they'd been up at [Midway Airport in Kansas City? 48:08—Verify.] And he had flown in.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: Yeah, he came out of the door of the airplane like he was Richard [M.] Nixon, and there wasn't anybody there.

LOOMIS: That's funny.

SKOOG: But he did. He did enjoy it. He really did. And, of course, he got a lot of support. He lasted a long time.

LOOMIS: He did last a long time. Absolutely. Yeah. And in a very interesting time, of great chance—in Kansas.

SKOOG: Yeah. I was going to say: Although it wasn't until the last few weeks, when they'd been reminding us on TV of the '60s, that I became conscious again of what a tumultuous time it was that I was serving in the Legislature. [Chuckles.]

LOOMIS: Oh, yeah, absolutely.

SKOOG: Because I was always—my friend, [Samuel C.] Jackson, was always coming to me and one thing, another. And I was always trying to take care of the civil rights issues and so forth, and there was a lot of noise and activity about that. You weren't always popular when you tried to get those things passed.

LOOMIS: And in those days, I mean, it was a very Republican Legislature.

SKOOG: Yeah, but you got to remember, in those days, it was still the Republicans who the minorities identified with who had got them—

LOOMIS: Right. No, I understand that, yeah.

SKOOG: —who had got them going, and they still had [John, C. Stennis] and Bill [Boe? 50:12], and all of that bunch were still—still running things, and the southern fellows in the Congress were committee chairmen, and—it wasn't like it is today.

LOOMIS: No, no. Oh, absolutely not. No, no. But I was just thinking that—no, it was Republicans who were carrying the water in Kansas. I mean, —

SKOOG: Although we had some—you know, we worked together. I remember being down at the mic with [Thomas M.] Van Cleave [Jr.] on workers' comp cases—matters and so forth, and we'd be down there writing amendments with a pencil on pads and getting them passed sometimes, and one thing another. When I went in in '60, all three of us in the House were new from Shawnee.

LOOMIS: Oh, is that right?

SKOOG: [Ernest] "Ernie" Underwood, who only served the one term—he was a contractor.

SKOOG: And [Robert C.] "Bob" Harder and I remained lifelong friends after that.

LOOMIS: Yeah. One of my great regrets is we didn't start this project a few months earlier—

SKOOG: Yeah.

LOOMIS: —so we could have—

SKOOG: It would have been good to get Bob—

LOOMIS: —could have got Bob.

SKOOG: —because he was—he had about as long and deep an association with public service as anybody in here.

LOOMIS: Right. And, in fact, what was it like to be his colleague in the Legislature?

SKOOG: Well, you know, you never had arguments.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And there were occasions when there were partisan issues, I guess.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: And, you know, [unintelligible; 52:32] would raise his [unintelligible; 52:34]. Maybe they vote one way and he'd vote the other way.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right. Yeah.

SKOOG: Nobody cared. I mean, I don't think anybody was very upset about it [crosstalk; unintelligible; 52:42].

LOOMIS: Oh, no. And you could work with—that whole delegation could work well for Shawnee County, for Topeka.

SKOOG: We all—oh, yeah. Well, and we didn't have very many conflicts. We didn't have very many conflicts in committees.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: They were respectable. They were just like us, you know. Sure, they'd be a little bit more—maybe a little bit more in love with government.

LOOMIS: Yeah, right.

SKOOG: But not a lot.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: Not a lot. I mean, I remember I was out at Bob's house, my wife and I, when Nixon gave his last inauguration speech in '73, and I was out at Bob's that evening, and we both kind of found that interesting. And then through all these years, why, [William R.] "Bill" Roy has always referred to Nixon as the last liberal Republican president, you know?

LOOMIS: Right. Yeah. So, you go back and look at the things he endorsed, and—yeah, very much so.

So, when you left the Legislature, did you—you mentioned lobbying. Did you do much lobbying?

SKOOG: I didn't do a lot, but I did some. I represented, I think, those regular common carriers for a little while, and then I represented the cable industry—

LOOMIS: Oh, really?

SKOOG: —for about twenty-five years.

LOOMIS: Huh!

SKOOG: Uh-huh.

LOOMIS: So, as you lobbied particularly for the cable industry, did you see the Legislature in any different light than when you'd been serving in it?

SKOOG: Well, only the kinds of things that everybody noted, and that is that individuals were feeling like it was life's work instead of public service.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: But they were still people who were eager to do right, whatever that was, and they couldn't tell for sure—

LOOMIS: [Chuckles.]

SKOOG: —what was good. Fact of the matter, I always—I concluded later, after serving in the Legislature, that while I went to it thinking that there were a half a dozen or so principles I believed, that every time some important vote came along, half my principles would require me to vote one way, and half the other, and you still had to decide.

LOOMIS: Sure, sure.

SKOOG: And so that wasn't much difference.

LOOMIS: So, when you had to make that kind of a decision, did you just pretty much rely on your own values?

SKOOG: I don't think, after maybe the way I behaved or something—but there was only one time in all my time in the Legislature that anybody ever came up to me and tried to tell me how to vote.

LOOMIS: Is that right?

SKOOG: And that had to do with the local matter of—that had to do with the Wichita State [University] matter.

LOOMIS: Bringing Wichita State into the—

SKOOG: Right, because—

LOOMIS: —system?

SKOOG: Because Washburn—this was a fellow was on the—a good friend of mine who was on the board at Washburn, and he was concerned that if we didn't support bringing Wichita State into the state system, that it would be injurious to Washburn.

LOOMIS: Hmm. How so? I'm not sure how I understand how it would have been injurious.

SKOOG: I was of the opinion, myself, at the time that if we're going to give Wichita State the equivalent of six to sixteen million dollars a year, it might not hurt to give something to Washburn.

LOOMIS: Right. Which eventually did happen, of course.

SKOOG: And so that year Paul Wunsch, who was the leader of the Wichita State thing and was disappointed when Wichita turned the back on him a year later, but he told me that there wasn't going to be anything for Wichita if we didn't vote right—or for Washburn if we didn't vote right.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And so, I took it on myself, successfully—we only wanted, I don't know, eighty thousand, a hundred twenty thousand. We had [unintelligible; 57:57]—

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: [crosstalk; unintelligible; 57:59] for Washburn.

SKOOG: But, you know, that was real money then.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: It isn't today, but it was then. And so, Paul and his Education Committee chair had some favorite bills they wanted to get through, and every time they would come over, I'd go down and talk to the House, and we would tack on my amendment putting Washburn's money in. And so, his favorite bills didn't get passed, and we did get our money.

LOOMIS: [Chuckles.]

SKOOG: But that's the only occasion I recall.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: That was just a little local government operation.

LOOMIS: Right, right. Well, you know, what was it that precipitated Wichita coming into the—

SKOOG: The state system?

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: They were struggling.

LOOMIS: Yeah, they were just financially—

SKOOG: They were struggling.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: And it was important—you know, they were a rather large part of our state, and there weren't any state operations down there, you know.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: You could make this case that, well, here's Washburn's just twenty miles from KU [University of Kansas] and fifty from Manhattan, —

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: —and so forth, and not too far from Emporia, so there are places we're providing an education—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —locally for these people.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: But in Wichita, their claim was that there wasn't any. I suppose there's some merit to that.

LOOMIS: No, no, I—yeah.

SKOOG: Even then, they tried to hang it on to having KU running Wichita State. Wichita State, when it started off, couldn't have any new programs unless they were authorized by KU.

LOOMIS: Is that right? I was unaware of that.

SKOOG: Oh, yeah.

LOOMIS: I mean, I can see—I've done a little r- —I'm writing a chapter—I've just finished a chapter on a book for KU's 150th anniversary, and my chapter is on government and KU, and I know that there were a lot of politicking about med school stuff—

SKOOG: Oh, yeah.

LOOMIS: —in Wichita and in Kansas City and lots of deals that were [crosstalk; unintelligible; 1:00:51].

SKOOG: Worked on.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: [crosstalk; unintelligible; 1:00:54]. Yeah, well, my old friend and later seatmate, Blake Williamson, the Speaker who never spoke—Blake was awfully involved with the Med Center back there and was the source of the first rural—you remember: Who was the guy who had been head of the Med Center and developed the rural something?

LOOMIS: I think it was probably—was it [W. Clark] Wescoe?

SKOOG: No, before that.

LOOMIS: Franklin [D.] Murphy.

SKOOG: Yeah, I think it was.

LOOMIS: Yeah. Both of them—first Murphy and then Wescoe—both had been head of the Med Center.

SKOOG: Right.

LOOMIS: But very young men first.

SKOOG: It was while he was there that Blake always claimed, anyhow, that he was the source of the first deal when Murphy was promoting the Med Center and so forth by the fact that they were going [crosstalk; unintelligible; 1:02:00]—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —doctors out there—

LOOMIS: Right, exactly.

SKOOG: — [crosstalk; unintelligible; 1:02:02].

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: And it was a fairly useful [crosstalk; unintelligible; 1:02:05].

LOOMIS: Yeah. That was a long-term proposition—

SKOOG: Oh, yeah.

LOOMIS: —that many chancellors went back to.

You mentioned “the Speaker who never spoke.”

SKOOG: Yeah. Blake Williamson.

LOOMIS: Explain that.

SKOOG: Blake Williamson.

LOOMIS: And he was the Speaker?

SKOOG: He was a lawyer over in Kansas City, —

LOOMIS: Uh-huh.

SKOOG: —and he was in the Legislature, and he had gone around—in '48 he'd gone around and got himself all organized so that he was going to be Speaker. And there wasn't any question but that he had the votes to become Speaker.

LOOMIS: Uh-huh.

SKOOG: But that was the year that Wyandotte County flipped from being an almost all Republican officeholders to all Democrats in '48, and Blake didn't—he didn't get—he was ready—he had the votes to get elected Speaker, but he didn't have the votes to come to the Legislature.

LOOMIS: Ah! Hah!

SKOOG: So, he didn't come back from '48 till '68, or '66.

LOOMIS: Is that right?

SKOOG: And then he came to the Legislature. He was a seatmate of mine.

LOOMIS: I'll be darned. I hadn't heard that. I hadn't heard—that name isn't familiar to me at all. So, when you first came into the Legislature, —

SKOOG: Well, after that—after that he was on the [county] Board of Social Welfare. It was a three-man board, and he was that.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And he was the one that got in a tiff with [Governor] Fred [L.] Hall, and I remember his picture being in the paper, pointing down “that something little man,” where he was having quite a tiff with Fred.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: So, he went on to provide public service—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —and be a very successful lawyer.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

So, when you first came to the Legislature, who was your seatmate?

SKOOG: Well, I had two. Wayne [D.] Angell [pronounced as if spelled angel] was on one side—

LOOMIS: Oh, really!

SKOOG: —and Wayne was from—he was a little economics professor from Ottawa U.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: And I had family in Ottawa, and my people had come from Ottawa on one side of my family, and so I got fairly close to Wayne. And on the other side was John [D.] Bower, and John was from [Jefferson] “Jeff” County, and the next term he was chairman of the Education Committee. I always thought it was interesting that—you may recall that when we passed the unified school district bill that year, that the standard was that it took at least 400 students to qualify to be a school district. And that came from the fact that John Bower had to have four districts in his county.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: And so, 400 became the number. It’s always interesting to know where numbers come from.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: That was the number that came from there.

LOOMIS: I’ll be darned.

SKOOG: I mean, it came from John.

LOOMIS: Were you in the Legislature when they did this school consolidation?

SKOOG: Oh, yes. I always thought it was one of the more fascinating things that happened. And the best story I ever knew of having to do with politics—I think his last name was Orr, Jack Orr. Anyhow, he was from Leoti, and he was in the House at the time with me. He later became a state senator, and I think he spent his later years, —after Bobby Docking passed, he and Meredith [Docking] and Jack were together for many years. But that year, they were talking about doing the unified school district business, —

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: —and then Jack was running for reelection, and I was giving him a ride. We’d been to some political deal down in Wichita, and he and I were riding back up to Topeka. And he said, “Well, let me tell ya a little story.” He said, “Last week I was driving around the county, trying to do a little electioneering, and I saw this one old guy on his tractor, pulling into his house and so forth.” And I don’t remember his name. Johnson or something. And he said, “So I drove up, and I stopped and talked with him, and I asked him, ‘Well, you folks gonna be able to support me this year?’ and so forth. And he said, ‘Well, Jack, of course, I know—I don’t know any reason why not.’ He said, ‘We always supported your dad.’” His father had been a Democrat county commissioner in that county, Wichita County.

And he said Jack said, “Is there anything that you’re particularly concerned about?” “Well,” he said, “one thing I’ve heard that kind of bothers me is that they’re talking about this school business.” He said, “I wouldn’t want you to vote for anything that would make me send my kids all that way out six or eight miles into Leoti and teach them city ways.”

LOOMIS: [Laughs.] Oh, that's good.

SKOOG: And I've always thought, "Going into Leoti to learn city ways" was—that showed how difficult politics can be.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah. And what one's definition of "city ways" is. Oh, that's—that's good. That's—

So how did it come about that consolidation passed?

SKOOG: Well, there were some things that looked desirable for a lot of people. Of course, it made sense in the first place.

LOOMIS: Yeah, policy sense, yeah.

SKOOG: Political, whatever. But, you know, one of its major effects was that it tied town school district boundaries. For instance, in Topeka—there are a lot of people down here in central Topeka—

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: —that were a little irritated that all the new school buildings were being built within a few blocks of the city limits, all around town, —

LOOMIS: Sure.

SKOOG: —in Landon and Jardine and Eisenhower and all of them around the outside. They just didn't seem to have any money to build any schools for the people in the—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —middle of town.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And, of course, the immediate effect of that bill and that law was to hold those lines firm, so now the city of Topeka, for instance, I think about—a very substantial number of children that live in the city of Topeka go to Washburn Rural [High School] and other school districts—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —because they're outside of the city limits of Topeka in 1963.

LOOMIS: Oh, no kidding! Yeah, that's an interesting—

SKOOG: Well, I think you'll probably find that true in a number of places.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: So, to the people who were concerned about the new buildings being built by a bunch of Johnny-come-latelies, instead of taking care of their own, —

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: —why, they thought that was just fine.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: But it was the thing to do because we were continuing to lose population.

LOOMIS: Right, right, right.

SKOOG: And we were all involved with the secondary effects of Sputnik and all of that thing.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And “Maybe we ought to really teach these kids something instead of just babysitting them.”

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: There was a lot of variety.

LOOMIS: Is there any movement, ever been any movement in Topeka subsequent to that? You still have several school districts in Shawnee—

SKOOG: We’ve got five in the county.

LOOMIS: Five, yeah. Has there ever been a move to consolidate—

SKOOG: Never been any moves. There’s been an occasional conversation, but never been anybody proposing—

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: —actually propose it, you know.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

When you look back—you know, clearly you have a sense of public service. How did you contribute to the Legislature, do you think? When you look back, what do you feel good about in your time in the Legislature?

SKOOG: Well, I think there are probably quite a few things that didn’t pass because of me.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: You know? And there are a lot of things that they get into that are silly and momentary. Some momentary thing comes along, and they’re all going to solve it.

LOOMIS: Right. Sort of give an example of something like—

SKOOG: No, I don’t think so.

LOOMIS: Okay. [Chuckles.] But, you know, —yeah, I think that’s still probably true today, —

SKOOG: Oh, of course it is.

LOOMIS: —a lot of stopping things is an important part.

SKOOG: I mean, I thought I was—I mean, I’m proud of being there when we began to take care of minorities.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: I know last term, why, Bob Harder wasn't in the Legislature, and he was running a local EEOC [sic; local agency under the federal Economic Opportunity Act] or whatever they called that activity, —

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —up from the bottom—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —instead of down from the top kind of stuff.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: And he got quite an interesting bunch. I remember standing out there, back-to-back, with some people and trying to carry on. Made progress. I don't know as we whipped it, but we made progress.

LOOMIS: Oh, sure.

SKOOG: And I had always been—I had been concerned for a long time. In junior high, I had a good friend—I considered him a good friend—whose father was the principal of Buchanan [Elementary] School, which was the Negro school, one of the two Negro schools here in town. And [Naddy? Neddie? Neddy? 1:14:23] was a good friend. Lived two or three blocks down, down the street from me, and we were pretty good—we spent a lot of time together, playing football and this and that and the other together.

And then we went to high school, and in high school he found himself—and he tried to explain it to me—that he found himself in the predicament that if he didn't stay with his people and spend his time with them, they would ostracize him. And so, he had to pull away from his other friends.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: That hurt me because that was in '46, '45, and we'd just fought this war against a bunch of bastards—

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: —who wouldn't put up with some other people that they thought were different from them.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And I didn't think that was a very good idea. And so, I was—that was the way it was. That was important.

LOOMIS: So, was there an African-American, a Negro high school?

SKOOG: No. No, they joined us in junior high school.

LOOMIS: Is that right?

SKOOG: Yeah.

LOOMIS: That's fascinating— and I didn't know that! I did not know that. So, *Brown v. Board of Education* is an elementary school decision.

SKOOG: I think so. Well, to the extent that—yeah. Of course, by the time it was tried, we'd already done away with segregation in the grade schools. But, of course, it had its difficulties. We had a lot of Negro teachers that the school board didn't find places for them, and so they were without employment.

LOOMIS: Huh!

SKOOG: You know?

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: But they were still fighting—still intellectually fighting that problem.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: And it was quite a few years before they ever actually put concrete and so forth into and finished the swimming pool under the gymnasium down here at Topeka High School.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: The excavation had been made for it when they built the school in '31, but they never finished the pool because they were concerned that they were going to have to share.

LOOMIS: I didn't know that.

SKOOG: Well, they—

LOOMIS: That's a good story.

SKOOG: It's the way it was.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: They still only sit in the balcony in the Jayhawk Theatre, and a few things [crosstalk; unintelligible; 1:17:21].

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: So that was—that was a bad time, and we still haven't got—we've still got a long way to go while everybody is off on—oh, the next—quote, "the next problem." I don't know. We've got almost 50 percent of the young black boys in our town that don't finish high school.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

SKOOG: Now, that's—no society can handle that very long.

LOOMIS: No.

SKOOG: And so, we still have a lot of problems.

LOOMIS: Yeah, and a lot to be—

SKOOG: It's probably not true that government is the place to fix them, but it has to be involved.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah.

Now, you did—one of the things that happened was that you were leaving office just as the federal government was expanding so many programs, whether it was—

SKOOG: I suppose. Yeah, they've been at it. But I don't know as how many of those actually concerned me. I certainly didn't have any objections to the War on Poverty. I knew it was wasteful.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.] Yeah.

SKOOG: But I believed at the time that we can afford—we probably could afford to put some money, to waste some money if we were going to provide some bona fide leadership among that group that needed leaders.

LOOMIS: Mm-hm.

SKOOG: Now, we ended up with some. We also ended up with a—you know, you know what we ended up with.

LOOMIS: Sure, sure.

SKOOG: But we did end up with some leaders. We did end up with some quite a few pretty successful black people.

LOOMIS: Oh, yeah. But you still have the big problem—

SKOOG: In spite of the fact that a lot of people won't admit it. They have to work about half again as hard as anybody else.

LOOMIS: Sure, sure.

Is there anything I've missed? I mean, I've [sic] been very generous with your time.

SKOOG: I don't know what you were seeking.

LOOMIS: I'm seeking—well, I'm seeking you to talk about—but, you know, it's been very interesting, but I think most of the people I've known—I started—the Dave Heinemanns and the Jim Maags and—

SKOOG: The next generation.

LOOMIS: Yeah.

SKOOG: I knew them all because, of course, I was hanging around a little bit.

LOOMIS: Sure.

SKOOG: But in the twenty-five years or so that I spent lobbying, I never bought a cup of coffee for anybody.

LOOMIS: Well, I just lec- —I didn't lecture; I talked to a bunch of utility lobbyists—

SKOOG: Mm-hm.

LOOMIS: —in Kansas City, and I started out by saying, "I'm a big fan of lobbyists. You know, it's constitutionally protected. You provide information that is crucial." So, I had them on my side [chuckles] to begin with.

SKOOG: And now there are a whole lot of them—there are a whole lot of them that get big with their pants and big with the money they claim they can funnel, and sometimes do. And [unintelligible; 1:20:55] they're good [unintelligible; 1:20:57] and some that are good at threatening and one thing another. As a general rule, I don't know how we'd do without any source of the information.

LOOMIS: When I came here—I came here in '79 and started doing stuff in Topeka, writing about state politics some probably ten years later—I've done an internship program over there for many, many years. I mean, among the most generous people with his time and insights—of course, they were his insights—was [Duane S.] "Pete" McGill. He was always—I mean, he was a great friend to—

SKOOG: Pete was in my—he was in the Legislature in my first term, and I think it was the second term, but he wasn't there. He got beat.

LOOMIS: He got beat. He got beat, yeah.

SKOOG: And then Pete was back by the time I was there again.

LOOMIS: Right, right.

SKOOG: Pete was—he was smarter than he looked.

LOOMIS: Yeah, yeah. But not smarter than he thought. He knew he was smart. [Laughs.] Maybe not quite as smart as—

SKOOG: Maybe he wasn't as smart as he thought he was, either.

LOOMIS: Right.

SKOOG: We all have a tendency to get full of ourselves.

LOOMIS: Yeah. But I remember I was writing a book about the legislative session that passed the highway bill and prisons, in 1989, and at the end, Pete and [Patrick] "Pat" Hurley, who I was going to write this—I was writing this book, and so I think they decided that they had done Economic Lifelines and all of that stuff, so they—I had asked for an interview, and so we went over to their office. I think they bought pizza, and we talked for about three hours about the highway plan. I think they figured if I was going to write about the highway plan, —

SKOOG: They would hope you knew what the heck people were intended to do.

LOOMIS: Right, and they want their version to be [chuckles]—and which was, I think, about the right version, too. It was—but, you know, I just have such great respect for the legislators of the '60s, '70s, into the '80s. I mean, I really do think that, as a whole, it was a very good time for the Kansas Legislature.

SKOOG: It was.

LOOMIS: And I despair somewhat more recently.

SKOOG: You have company.

LOOMIS: [Laughs.]

SKOOG: As you probably know.

LOOMIS: Yes, I'm sure.

Well, Mr. Skoog, it's been really—it's been a great pleasure. I've really enjoyed it very much. I've learned a lot.

SKOOG: I noticed in the paper this morning a comment or two by [unintelligible; 1:23:55].

LOOMIS: That is my son.

SKOOG: Your son?

LOOMIS: My son is the commu- —my son went to NY—he went to Carleton—I don't know if you know Carleton College in Minnesota, a very nice little college. Yeah. And—

SKOOG: [unintelligible; 1:24:10] just graduated from St. Olaf's [St. Olaf College] [crosstalk; unintelligible]; 1:24:13].

LOOMIS: My wife graduated from St. Olaf.

[End of interview.]