



Jenna Dorn Oral History Interview, September 17, 2013

Title

“From Corvallis to D.C.: A Proud Career in Public Service”

Date

September 17, 2013

Location

Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Dorn recounts her childhood in eastern Oregon, her adolescence in Corvallis and her undergraduate experience at Oregon State University, including her time writing for the *Daily Barometer* and interning at the *Corvallis Gazette-Times*. She then details her lengthy career in Washington, D.C., sharing memories of important mentors including Mark Hatfield and Elizabeth Dole, and major events including her participation in Robert Dole's 1996 Presidential campaign and her response, as head of the Federal Transit Administration, to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In her recollections, Dorn also details the numerous positions that she has held both in government and in the private sector, comments on her battles against sexism, shares her philosophies of leadership and effective administration, and reflects on changes in the culture of politics within the United States.

Interviewee

Jenna Dorn

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/dorn/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: All right. So if you could please introduce yourself by giving us your name, and today's date, and our location.

Jenna Dorn: Sure. Jennifer Lynn Dorn. I go by Jenna. I'm in Corvallis, Oregon, Oregon State University, at the library, on the 17th of September, in the year of our Lord 2013.

CP: Very good. So let's start. Where were you born?

JD: I was born in Grand Island, Nebraska.

CP: Did you grow up there?

JD: Spent a few years in Nebraska, and at a very young age, I think it was five or six, moved across the country to a little town in Oregon called La Grande, where my father was a professor at what was then Eastern Oregon College. And so we made the big trek across the country in our turquoise-and-ivory station wagon, four on the floor, fifth under the seat, as my dad used to say, and landed in La Grande, a really small town, smaller than Corvallis, 9,000 people, and a wonderful campus of young, about-to-be educators who went to school there.

CP: And that's where you grew up?

JD: That's where I grew up until I moved to Corvallis. My father was offered an assistant professorship in the Department of Journalism when I was—let's see, I was going into the 9th grade. So I tearfully left my home in La Grande to go to the metropolis, what I thought was the metropolis, of Corvallis, and started high school at the junior high school in Corvallis.

CP: What were your parents' backgrounds?

JD: My father, an educator by training, first in high school, and then in college. He was also very—he played football for the University of Nebraska during their historically only losing season, and then he got his master's degree there in English, and became a journalism professor. He was also very active as the director of sports information, and when he came here to OSU he was very active in that as well. My mother was a Registered Nurse, and she was a supervising nurse at a Catholic hospital in La Grande, and then she came here and just became a part of the university community, and embraced it as a faculty wife. And she also became a school nurse, an employee of the Corvallis school system.

CP: So your father was a faculty member in the Department of Journalism, but also affiliated with sports information?

JD: Yes, but I think that that was—the sports information piece was primarily at Eastern Oregon College. But he was very active in advising the alumni publications, and of course, the *Daily Barometer* as well, and often in the sports arena, in helping his students do a better job of covering sporting events, so.

CP: Did he have an official connection to the *Barometer*, or was this more to do—?

JD: Well, all the Department of Journalism professors took some role, official or unofficial. My father's famous sorts of contributions that all of the students know—knew him for, to put it down grammatically, was to take a red pen every day, and edit their work. And I know this because I was the managing editor at one point for the *Barometer*, [laughs] and I wasn't always the most popular person as the daughter of the professor who, you know, who edited their work. But I know that they appreciated it, at least I did, because it allowed them to be a better journalist, so.

CP: Did your family have any connection with the Ingalls family, Robert Ingalls?

JD: Well, you know, it's interesting you ask. Yes, because, when I was a junior at Oregon State, Robert Ingalls started the Robert C. Ingalls Internship, and I was the lucky recipient of the first internship, which allowed me to work in every department of the *Gazette-Times* during the summer, between, I think it was, my sophomore and my junior year. So he was one of my early mentors, he and Wanda McAllister. Wanda McAllister was the managing editor at the Corvallis *Gazette-Times*. [0:04:59] And I just developed a really wonderful appreciation for the rigors of daily news work, and also

understood a lot about the business side as well. So it was a wonderful opportunity for a student to get some practical experience. And in those days, [laughs] in the dark years, the kind of practical experience that he offered wasn't always available. You know, these years of having a practical internship, you know, I think has been more emphasized than in the early 1970s, when I was in journalism school.

CP: Mm-hm. Do you have any siblings?

JD: Yes. I have one sister. She's younger, and she is also in the educational field. She has her PhD in Nursing and in Psychiatry, and she's a researcher at Penn State University, in State College, Pennsylvania. So she followed more in my father's footsteps in the educational community.

CP: So, you spent some time in Nebraska. You spent some time in La Grande, and you spent some time in Corvallis. What were some of the things you were interested in as a young person?

JD: Well, it seemed in retrospect that I was interested in running things, and [laughs] I wasn't always great at running things, but I always assumed that I might be able to kind of corral the troops to do something, as a team, that would have a better result. So whether that was Girls' League in high school, or, you know, being the head cheerleader in junior high, or organizing some fundraiser, I loved to do that. And so I was probably a pain in the neck to some of my friends, [laughs] but I really enjoyed that.

And I had a fabulous growing up experience educationally, because at Eastern Oregon College they had a laboratory school. And that laboratory school, on campus, was the opportunity for all of those students to be—who were in college to major in education. So they would do their practice teaching in the laboratory school. So we had some of the best teachers, who were teaching the student interns, and it gave me a love of education and knowledge. And I was right—and we lived right on campus, in La Grande. And so it seemed like all of the freshmen, sophomore, juniors, and seniors were kind of my mentors, or my idols, and we would always go to campus events. So we were in an ivory tower, sort of, growing up, but what made it great is that we were in a community. The La Grande community is just a fabulous community, where everyone is your neighbor. They can be the local rancher who didn't go to college, or the veterinarian who did, or the professor, and they all seemed to be good friends, and very supportive. So I was so lucky in my growing up experience!

CP: Yeah. What was Corvallis like for you to grow up in?

JD: I guess everyone has a different perspective looking back than going through it, but even going through it, I was very happy here. I thought it was a wonderful environment in which to grow up. It wasn't until later that I realized that it is a college campus, and maybe even in those days, particularly Oregon State University, was an ivory tower. Not always did I see or was I interested in the outside world, but it allowed me an opportunity to—without those pressures of feeling worried whether something's going to happen to me on the way to school. You know, you could just—you could learn, you could have fun, you could enjoy your friends, and you know, and be wonderfully naive about the world's problems. That isn't to say that that was anyone's fault in the university for not allowing me to see it. It's just that when you live in an environment that is seemingly kind of bereft of big, hairy urban problems, it's really helpful, because it allows you to focus on things that are important. It also was important to me to be able to leave, and experience something different, because it allowed me to appreciate even more what Corvallis and the university had to offer.

CP: Mm-hm. So the years before you started in college, where did the family live in Corvallis?

JD: Oh, okay. Well, this is kind of interesting. [0:09:58] Our first house was on the corner of 34th—no, 35th and Harrison, and it was at the end of—no, 53rd. I'm sorry, yeah, 53rd and Harrison. Okay. So it was at the end of 53rd Street, and our house just jutted out. Okay, so one of the first few weeks after we got here, my sister and I were up on the second floor, and we heard this horrendous crash, and I couldn't figure out what it was. We ran downstairs only to see that we ran into my parents' bedroom, the whole wall of their bedroom was completely gone. My father was running out, chasing, and saying, "Stop, stop, stop." He had to climb over a whole series of bushes. And my mother was backed up against a closet. Someone who had been to the local bar, who was a neighbor, and had, it was reported in the paper later, 13 gin and tonics, had overshot his house. He had run into our house, and for some reason he had just backed out, and then was able to find his own home the next day.

So we woke up—and fortunately, both of my parents were okay. My mother had a serious neck injury, but she was fine. And the next day, the *Gazette-Times* had a picture of this cavernous house on the front page, and the father of the son who had driven the car looked at the picture, looked at the grill of his son's car, and saw all of these bushes, and reported him. Now what's even more interesting is, two days before this happened, my mother, who sewed all of our clothes, she decided there wasn't enough light where she had the sewing machine, so she decided to move the sewing machine in front of the window and move the bed behind, on the other wall. Had she not done that, they both would have been killed. So, welcome to Corvallis, you know?

CP: [Laughs] That's an amazing story!

JD: Yeah! [Laughs]

CP: How was school for you in high school, junior high, and high school in Corvallis?

JD: It was terrific. I had some pretty terrific teachers, and built a group of friends that I still keep in touch with. And in fact, one of the reasons I'm in Oregon is, every year, ten of my high school classmates meet in a different city, and just have a wonderful time together of three or four days, catching up on our lives. So it was those kinds of friendships we were able to build, and I'm really grateful I still have them. It was an era of, and maybe it still is this era, but of a lot of activism amongst students, and I don't mean that in the political sense, but I mean that in the organizational sense, whether it's organizing for the football game, or a service project, or whatever. So I learned a lot about those sorts of leadership opportunities and what it took to excel. And I think my parents certainly encouraged me to do my best, you know, so I did my best. [Laughs]

CP: Was there anything in particular that you focused on as far as that's concerned, in high school?

JD: You know, I don't know that I focused. But whatever I got involved in, I poured my heart and soul in. And so it was one of those times of rich exploration of what would interest me. I think I really enjoyed the opportunity to lead something that I felt strongly about. So, whether it was leading what we called then the Girls' League, or being involved, you know, athletically on a team. And there weren't that many opportunities for girls in the 1960s, you know, for that. But I kept very busy with extracurricular activities. And I certainly wasn't the smartest kid in the classroom, but I think I might have been among the hardest workers, so.

CP: What was the Girls' League?

JD: The Girls' League is a service organization. Every girl in high school belonged to it, and you could choose your agenda, about whether it was service to the community, or making the school better. So it was, in effect, a student council for girls. I'm sure they don't have it any more, and that's a good thing, only because, why just girls? You know? But we also had student council, etcetera, and there were just plenty of opportunities for students to be involved in whatever they wanted to be involved in. [0:15:02] So we would bring in, for example, outside speakers from the metropolis of Portland, who could come down and talk to the girls about, you know, professionalism, or manners, or for anything from the sublime to something really important.

CP: Hm.

JD: So it was fun; I enjoyed it.

CP: Yeah. Were there any important teachers or mentors from this time?

JD: Yes. There was an English professor named James Baldwin, and he was wicked smart. And he had us read some very important works, as every good English teacher does, but pressed us to really discover the deep meaning. And he was so smart, and his standards were so high, that that made a real difference for me, and an impact on my desire to communicate well in writing. And I wasn't particularly good, and he was particularly hard on me. And it set a standard that was important for me.

CP: Yeah. Was there any opportunity for student journalism in high school, or did that come in college?

JD: That came, for me, later. I really liked to write reports and things, but I wasn't involved in the—I think I might have been involved in the yearbook, but I certainly wasn't involved journalistically until I came to Oregon State.

CP: Mm-hm. Well, so you made the transition to OSU. Was that just a no-brainer, because you were associated with the area and you wanted to stay, or?

JD: No, actually, my real desire was to spread my wings and to go someplace else. And so I was able to—that happened to a lot of us who, you know, you grow up in Corvallis; well okay, why would you go to Oregon State when it's an opportunity to see the world, you know? So there was a woman, a counselor, who came to Corvallis High to recruit for a school in the Midwest called, it was then called Christian College, a small liberal arts college, just a two-year college for women. And I really thought, I really want to go here, but my family couldn't afford it. It was the outrageous price of, I think it was 3,000 dollars per year for board and room, and you know, and tuition. And so anyway, I was fortunate enough to get a scholarship to pay for the entire amount. And so I headed off to Columbia, Missouri, and spent the first year alternately studying my heart out and crying my eyes out, because I really missed—I missed Oregon; I missed Corvallis. I missed my family. I missed my boyfriend. You know, and my parents. And I was determined that I was going to come home at Christmas and not go back. Well my parents—and they're wonderful, wonderful people, both now deceased, unfortunately—but just, they insisted they were not going to hear of it. I needed to stay the full year, and then at the end of the year, if I wanted to return, I could do that. And I was just heartbroken, because I was convinced I wouldn't have to go back after the Christmas break. Sure enough, I did. By the end of the year, I was in total angst, because I couldn't decide whether to stay or to return.

I did come back to Oregon State, and I had developed an interest in journalism. And I knew that there was a great department that my father happened to be a part of, and I wanted to join a sorority. So I just, I did the whole thing, went through rush as a sophomore, and built a community, and found a community of Pi Beta Phi, and was very active in that, and started the predictor of my—what I thought would be a journalistic career.

CP: Hm. What is Christian College? Is that still around?

JD: Yes, it's called Columbia College. It's a thriving four-year college. It was a great opportunity for me. It was [laughs] populated then with many, many women, for some reason, from Texas, great young women, many of whom, I would say, had a greater interest, perhaps—and this was the tenor of the times—of getting their MRS degree, and not necessarily their BA degree. And so they wanted to go to school for two years, and then they would find the man of their dreams. [0:19:59] And I just realized—they had, many of them were quite wealthy, and it was just a whole new take on life. I learned a lot by being there, and built some nice, wonderful friendships. There were some very good teachers there, but my heart was in the northwest. Missouri, eh. I mean, yeah. It's flat, not too many wonders of the outdoor world, like there are in Corvallis. [Laughs]

CP: Different climate, too.

JD: Yes, exactly. Exactly.

CP: So, I'm interested in your sense of OSU from having grown up in Corvallis, and then actually being a student there. I'm sure it was a different perspective that you had on the institution?

JD: Well, yes, perhaps so, although, you know, where you stand depends upon where you sit. I mean, I deeply entrenched myself in everything OSU. And I also had the added advantage of being able to pop up and visit my dad at the Journalism Department in Waldo Hall, and go home occasionally on weekends, or see them at a football game. But I was really very active in being a part of OSU, and so I didn't—I just viewed it as a benefit. And I was very happy to be at OSU, because I knew that it was a great place to be. I don't know that I would have known that in year one, because I needed to go away, so.

CP: Hm-hm. What was your father's name?

JD: Harold, Harold Dorn, yeah. My mother was Ethel Dorn.

CP: Okay. So, you said you helped to found your sorority?

JD: No, no. No, I went through rush, and I was president of the sorority in my senior year, but I joined an existing sorority. It was really—it was very fun.

CP: Okay. I misunderstood you there. Well, tell me a little bit more about the sorority life for you.

JD: Well, let's see. It allowed me to build important friendships with women who were different than I am, and the same as I am. So it was just—there were 56 young women from all over Oregon, mostly Oregon at that time, and there was quite a lot of organization in terms of what we did, whether it was preparing for parents weekend, or doing a service project. It was a lot of group sort of activity, and a fair number of keggers on the weekend, and [laughs] I didn't drink beer, but I loved to go to the parties. So, you know, so I really enjoyed it. My boyfriend at the time was also from Corvallis, and he was in another fraternity, so we would often have activities where there would be lots of young men and lots of young women, and we would go to the beach for, you know, a house dance, or whatever. It was a lot of group stuff, you know, that was really, was really fun. And of course, because we were in such a wonderful part of the northwest, there was a lot of outdoor, whether it's going to the beach, or to the mountains, or you know, so it was an idyllic sort of experience, from my perspective.

CP: Yeah. Did you have any hangouts outside of the house, in Corvallis?

JD: Well, I don't think it was the library. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs]

JD: I know that's the best answer, but [laughs]. I did go to the library a few times, but I was famous for being in my sorority room, and waking up at 3:00 am and doing my studies at 3:00 am. And I also worked at the *Gazette-Times* at the time. I was always kind of a work-study student, so I would do either secretarial work for the Department of Education, or, after my internship at the *Gazette-Times*, I was also employed as a tour guide for the new *GT*—well now, it's the old *GT*—but when they went to, I started to say animation, not animation, but automation—

CP: Automation.

JD: —from the big printing press. So this is a big deal in Corvallis, that we have this fancy, up-to-date publishing ability, and to use the new printing press instead of the Gutenberg printing press, or whatever it was.

And so we would give school tours, and other individuals would get tours of this new facility. And then also in the early morning of Monday morning, when we would take the ticker tape down from the United Press International—I sound like I'm just, like, born in the dark ages here—but what you would do was you would get the news stories over the ticker tape, then I'd have to roll up the ticker tape and hang it up. Nobody on the professional staff of the *GT* wanted to do that on early Monday morning, so they hired an OSU student. [0:25:06] And so I would get up at 3:00 in the morning, and from 4:00 until 7:00 I would organize these ticker tapes, so they would have all of the hot news when they came in to put it out in the paper. And so it was kind of—so I was always—I was pretty busy in college, between having this need to organize everything, and having a job, and having a boyfriend, and lots of friends. So it was a multi-dimensional life, which is what every student, hopefully, has in their experience. And so I feel really lucky about that.

CP: Yeah. Tell me a little bit more about your academic evolution here at OSU, in the Journalism Department.

JD: Well, I did everything I could, as did my colleagues in journalism school, or in the department, to get practical experience. And you know, it has paid off incredibly in my career. I mean, the fact that I—you know, I'm not necessarily a creative, nor would I say I'm a talented writer. I'm a skilled writer, and I'm a skilled writer because I had fabulous professors, my father included, as well as Bob Birdsall, and Zwahlen, Professor Zwahlen, and Ted Carlson. They were so interested in their students getting practical experience. And because I always worked for the *Barometer*, you interviewed—I had the opportunity to interview these fabulous people that were recruited to come give a speech! And so I developed that ability to get inside peoples' heads, and then have to summarize it. Well, I'm telling you, every job I've had since then, I have used that. And so I feel really fortunate to have had that kind of experience, and it was just something I really wanted to—I wanted to do. And it was my full intention to become a journalist after I left Oregon State. So, we'll get to that in a minute, because that didn't happen, but some other interesting things happen along the way.

CP: What was it like having your dad for a teacher?

JD: Well, first of all, he had a fabulous sense of humor. He was pretty funny. A lot of people didn't get his sense of humor—I mean, some did. So I loved it, and I was used to his humor. And he was a very—I thought he was a very good teacher. And other students just knew how much he cared about their wellbeing, and so it made me proud to be—to be known to be his daughter, you know?

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: And a couple of times when, it was, I think, a lot of pressure on him and on me that I really needed to produce, and he really needed to be overly fair.

CP: Yeah.

JD: [Laughs] You know, so it wasn't without its challenges, but I feel really lucky about it.

CP: Uh-huh. What roles did you fill at the *Barometer*?

JD: I was a reporter for a couple of years, because I came as a sophomore and I didn't know anything, so I was taking Introduction to Journalism, so I worked in the summer as a reporter. And then I was, right before my senior year, I was managing editor, so I wrote many of the editorials. That was very hard for me; I don't think I did a very good job, but I certainly learned a lot. And then during my internship at the *Gazette-Times* in the summers, I was given some really interesting and difficult assignments—you know, some in-depth reporting that challenged me. And I could always go to the professors at Oregon State, and say, "This is really challenging. How could I describe this?" Or, "What would be your angle at that?" So, I utilized my journalistic training to try it out while I was still here, so.

CP: I'm interested in getting sort of a sense of the environment, or what it was like working at the *Barometer* at the time, putting out a paper, a student paper, in the early '70s.

JD: Right. Okay. Well first of all, we were in that top floor of the old MU building, and it was—where the windows are half circles. And the typewriters were just banging away, the old typewriters. No computers, you know. And I think it was an era where—and this is just my reflection; it may be not accurate—but an era where there wasn't as much, at least on OSU's campus, as much actual autonomy from this sort of parental sort of view, "Well, this is a practice paper." [0:30:00]

And so I remember one experience where I was interviewed—I was interviewing the head of a department about a particular aspect of his work, and the organization. And it was a fairly political topic. And so it was hard to get him to agree to be interviewed, but I did. And then, I was very careful about taking notes, and writing the article. And then I got this really outraged phone call from him later, the next day after he'd read it. He said, "You should have sent me that article to approve before you wrote the article." And you know, I felt awful, because I just thought, "Oh, I've really failed." And then I got a little perspective, and said, "First of all, the quotes were accurate. And second of all, that sort of attitude, that the professor could control the press?" It was like, wait a minute. [Laughs] So it was kind of interesting.

But on the other hand, some of the activities that I was involved in had to do with a university—a student-faculty conference. Every year, in April or May, the president at the time, MacVicar, President MacVicar, would organize a student-faculty conference, or would allow us to have one. And so the students and the faculty, as a small team, put together an agenda, so that we could improve the relationships, the curricula, the grading policies, etcetera. So I was reading about them in preparation for this interview, and I noticed there was—there was an article in the *Gazette-Times* about this student-faculty conference, and we'd met at the beach, and the professors and the students had walked along the beach and talking about various things, and. And I was impressed with the fact that that was an annual event, it was very important, you know, that sort of student-faculty collaboration.

And I was also impressed that in that time there was maybe more time, because the co-chairman and I, a fellow student, each received a clearly individualized letter from the president of the university thanking us for specific contributions, and how important it was. And those were the days, you know, when you didn't just jot off an e-mail. This was a on-letterhead, you know, "Dear Jenna," and describing, and now, after having run a few organizations, I recognize how admirable that sort of thing is, and how, in this environment, that president, and I'm sure future OSU presidents, would go

the extra mile to help instill in students that kind of professionalism and appreciation, and I don't know, it just surprised me.

First of all, I was just surprised I saved all of this stuff. [Laughs] And second of all, I was just surprised at the attention to that sort of thing, and it's something that I really admire about people who go into higher education. You know, they care about the students and their growth—their professional, and their character development, you know?

CP: Mm-hm. So the *GT* internship, that was your senior year, you said?

JD: You know, I believe it was the year before my senior year.

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: Or no, before my junior year.

CP: Okay.

JD: And then I believe I had a reporting job the following summer, as well.

CP: With the *GT*?

JD: With the *GT*. I would have to check that; I can't quite recall.

CP: All right.

JD: But I remained very active in the *GT*, the *Gazette-Times* community, and it was a really great experience.

CP: Yeah, so you had a pretty broad journalistic background by the time you finished at Oregon State?

JD: Yes. Yeah, I did, uh-huh. I did. I mean, as far as three years of classes and experience. I mean, I thought I was, "Wow, I'm really highly trained to go out into the world!" [Laughs] And I think I was in many ways.

CP: Were there any particularly memorable stories that you were able to report on, or events that stand out, from your time at OSU?

JD: I remember—I can't recall the names of a couple of the scientists that I interviewed, but very renowned scientists who did very complicated things. And I'm not scientifically, shall we say, inclined. [0:34:57] So, to understand what was their research, listen to their speech, and then translate both to a lay audience, and audience not unlike myself—those were really challenging. But they developed in me an ability to probe for important things. And I think in the profession I ultimately pursued, which was leading organizations, non-profit and government organizations, that ability was just really important. And I wouldn't have had that, had I not just tried to distill the essence, which you have to do in a news story. You know, you have to not only do the what, when, where, why, and how, in the beginning; you have to capture your audience. You have to get the essence of what has been happening. And that requires a sense of analysis and listening carefully. So I loved doing that.

I did a couple of in-depth sort of investigative stories about local community happenings for the *GT* about, you know, there was some big controversy I recall about whether they should build a new hospital, and all of the ins and outs, of who said what to whom, and how they got to the yes vote, and all of that. And I thought, oh, wow! I'm on to something." [Laughs] You know? I can't even recall if the story was well written or anything, but I thought I was in the midst of, you know, the New York Times expose! [Laughs]

CP: And they did build that new hospital.

JD: They did, and the community is better for it. [Laughs] And now that I've been in politics for a while, I understand how those things happen. And sometimes they need to happen, you know, to get to yes. [Laughs]

CP: Well, is there anything else about your OSU days that we haven't talked about that stand out?

JD: Well, let me see. No, I think not. I think not. All in all, I'd give it an A+ experience, even though that I didn't always get A+ grades. You know, I am very grateful for having gone here.

CP: Yeah, and you mentioned this a bit already, but I was going to ask you about how OSU prepared you for your future? But you talked about that a fair amount.

JD: Yes, it was—yeah, right. I think, not only academically, but practically, and leadership, and character development—all of those things. It was—yeah, it was important.

CP: So you finished up in Corvallis, and at some point, well, you said you thought you might be a journalist, but you changed; you changed your track at some point?

JD: Well, yes, okay. And it was not necessarily out of what I desired to do, but just happened, and I'm not sorry about it. But I moved to New Haven, Connecticut, and I sought to get a job at the newspaper there, and wow, it was just an eye-opening experience, just, you know, moving from my college experience to a large urban center with a daily newspaper that is just fast-paced. It was very different. I couldn't get a job there.

So instead, what I did was I was able to get an associate's job in an advertising agency, so instead of being news stories, it was copywriting. So I thought, well, this would be an interesting aspect. And so it was writing advertisements for mostly print medium, and brochures, and newsletters, and all of that sort of thing. Well, what I quickly discovered, just after a few months there, that was the world was a lot different than what it was in Corvallis.

Okay, so first of all, very—in New Haven, there was a different ethnicity in every neighborhood, in addition to the fact—and so, a very heated political environment. So in this era, they would often have, "Okay, it's the Irish's turn to be mayor. Okay, now it's the Greek turn. Now it's the Jewish turn," you know, so it was like—and they were always, you know, fighting about ethnicity. Well, in Corvallis at the time, when I grew up in high school, I think we had one or two African American families, and maybe one or two Jewish families, so I wasn't exposed to that. So it was a big shock when ethnicity played a central role in many decisions. [0:39:59]

That, combined with, in the early 1970s, I mean, sexism was just rampant! I mean, we haven't really conquered that completely, but it was just amazing. So in the advertising world, I saw sex discrimination first hand, and it just shocked me, because I had grown up in an ivory tower community, where what you learned, and what you contributed, was more important than your gender or your ethnicity; that wasn't even relevant. And part of it was because it wasn't very diverse, but also in an academic environment, those things, I didn't perceive that there was any kind of sexist—sex discrimination. So I was just shocked at this. It really bothered me. So I became a real activist. I joined the National Organization for Women, and campaigning for the Equal Rights Amendment, and the extension, and all this sort of thing. And then I thought, you know what? It's not enough to simply write about things. I need to be in government and help change what's going on here!

So then I was accepted in graduate school at the University of Connecticut, with a major in public administration, because I knew that I needed to understand a lot more about government if I ever wanted to be in the government. So I spent two years there pursuing a master's degree. I had some phenomenal professors, some of whom had served in the federal government. And as a result, I decided I need to go to Washington.

So in 1977, I took a job as a legislative assistant to Senator Mark Hatfield. And that was just a phenomenal opportunity for me. I mean, it was just like such a blessing, because he represented the state that I loved, and it was in government, and he was just one of those fabulous mentors that I was very lucky to work with him. And I was so green! I mean, smart enough, really hard worker, had some pretty good people skills, but what did I know about being a legislative assistant? And in those days—what I found out later was he was very concerned that they had a male-dominated staff. He knew that wasn't right, and so he wanted to be on the cutting edge, so he wanted to hire a woman. Well, he found one, and I, you know, was fine. I could be one of those examples. So I had the lucky opportunity to represent him in areas that related to the timber industry, to agriculture, to higher education, and to women's issues.

So it was a real opportunity for me to work with him, and several other staffs of other senators, to put together legislation that would try to remedy the inequities that we had in our laws, including—this is amazing [laughs]—including the pretty

broad discrimination, in terms of pay, for women who worked on the Hill. So at the time I was chair of something called the Capitol Hill Women's Political Caucus, and it was our view that it is about time that—you know, how can Congress demand that every other aspect, or every other sector, comply with non-discrimination laws, and exempt itself? And so there was a reason—Congress at the time was labeled "the last plantation," and indeed it was.

And I remember particularly a story when we were able to solicit—I mean in a good way—a contribution, an anonymous contribution, to do research about the pay practices in various offices on the hill, and to do a study. So we did this study. Nights, weekends, we just evaluated the statistics of how much women were paid compared to men, and it was I think 57 cents on the dollar at that time. And then for positions that were relatively the same, it was even—it was even less. And many more times men having those positions than women, so it was not a good situation. Senator Hatfield's office was fine, but you know, I was so green. I went in to the senator, and we had finished the study, because I had just happened to think that I should let him know that the next day, our organization that I led was going to have a press conference, in which we were going to announce the results of this study, and I wanted him to know that some of his colleagues, particularly those running for reelection, might be upset. But I just wanted to let him know about this.

And, you know, he looked me in the eye, and he said, "Jenna, do you believe you've done a thorough and fair job in your analysis?" [0:45:02] I said, "Yes, Senator, we've been very careful. We want to get it right." And he said, "Jenna, if you think it's the right thing to do, I am very proud of you to do it." It's like, oh, my gosh! Well, you know, I learned how naïve I was to just think that that would be okay, and yet I guess I had the initiative to say, because I had learned from many of my professors here, you need to stand up for what is right, you know. So anyway, it turned out fine. And yes, there were a few members who were upset at us, but yes, but a few years later we did get many laws enacted so that Congress is no longer exempt from the laws that it perpetrates on others. So we may have played a small role in that. I like to think I'm a little more politically savvy about how I would have dealt with my boss, but it turned out all right, because he was such a fine leader.

CP: Yeah, tell us more about Hatfield as a person.

JD: Oh, okay. He was just the most genuine, authentic, savvy, person of integrity. I feel so lucky that he was my first boss, you know, in the real world. And he had a fabulous sense of humor. His north star was always pointed towards doing the right thing, which made it hard for him sometimes, but he had a keen ability to forge consensus. He was a risk taker in a lot of ways, including when he hired people like me and others, who were green. But I think we served him as well as we could, and he was just a—I think he was a phenomenal leader for Oregon, and he was that leader for 50 years, so.

CP: Yeah.

JD: And I kept in touch with him after I left, because of my gratitude for all he did for me. And we had a very nice relationship.

CP: Yeah. What was Washington, D.C., like for you, your first sort of settling in?

JD: Well, it's a good question, because I'm the kind of person who learns by seeing, or by doing, and so Capitol Hill was really a microcosm of the world. You know, you could just suck it up, in terms of learning all that it had to offer. And because I was given responsibilities of trying to forge consensus on things like the Wilderness Bill, for example, you know, being forced into situations where the senator would say, "I want you and others to whom I've given responsibility to go, I want you to go to the Multnomah National—sorry, the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest, and I want you to sit down with the snowmobilers, and with the timber folks, and with the backpackers. And I want you to put them all in one room, and I want you to see if you can forge a consensus about what land should be preserved and protected, in what way, and what others are appropriate for forest management and timber harvesting." I was like, "Oh, my gosh!"

So, I remember being in Roseburg one time, and this was in the mid-1970s, and so we had the crew-cutted, you know, bulky timber men at one end of the table, and then the wonderful, caring mother who was nursing her baby, and wearing Birkenstocks, at the other end of the table. It was like, "Oh, my gosh! I'm a twenty-something! How am I ever going to forge consensus?" So he gave us those kinds of opportunities and allowed us to have some really good—I think we ultimately were able to enact a piece of wilderness legislation for the whole state, which struck an important, long-lasting

compromise that was for the betterment of Oregon, and it was because he was so brilliant at bringing people together, and figuring out how to handle it, and trusting his staff to advise him. And then, knowing to point us in the right direction when we were really not very, you know, on the right target.

CP: Mm-hm. Had New Haven prepared you for living in a large cosmopolitan city like D.C.?

JD: You know, that's a good point. I think so. You know, that I had gone from the ivory tower to the rough and tumble, and then to come to Washington was—I was able to have national perspective, because you could see what was happening there. So, moved from West Coast, to East Coast, then the nation's capital. [0:50:01] It was like, it was just a very interesting time to just, always learning. And the opportunities that I just fell into, because of what Senator Hatfield offered, or later on with Elizabeth Dole, and others. I mean, I was thinking back over being able to, you know, be a part of a congressional delegation that visited Pope John, and went to the inner sanctum of the Vatican, to give one of the most inspiring speeches I've ever heard, and to see him just walking four feet from me in his wonderful red Gucci shoes. And that on the one hand, and then on the other hand, because Senator Hatfield was a humanitarian and leader, you know, Mother Theresa, when she came to visit Washington, D.C.—he had a special opportunity for just our staff to sit down with Mother Theresa. And so those sorts of things were just like, how could you ever equal something like that? Long-lasting memories that, you could say, changed your life or changed your perspective.

CP: Yeah, sure. Well, so the visit to the Pope, was that part of the Hatfield job?

JD: Well, no, actually I was thinking. That was when I was—when I was at the Department of Transportation. I believe I was Elizabeth Dole's chief of staff at that time. But the Mother Theresa part was, and being able—and then also, because going back to Senator Hatfield's time, he was the Chair of the Inauguration for Ronald Reagan. And he graciously allowed me to have—to stand right at the doorway when the Presidents, the outgoing and the incoming President and the First Lady come out the capitol. And I was just one foot away of seeing, you know, the look in President Carter's eyes, because it was right after the failed mission in the Iranian hostage situation, and then 30 seconds later, to look at the eyes of Ronald Reagan, who was just about to launch, you know, his Presidency. And so, to have that window on the world, it's a memory that's just emblazoned in my mind, because you could link what happened in history, and make it personal. I was just an observer. I didn't have anything to do with anybody, but that opportunity was one that was important.

CP: Yeah. That's a remarkable circumstance.

JD: Yes.

CP: To find yourself in that, early on in your career.

JD: Absolutely, yeah!

CP: Wow. So how long were you at the Hatfield job?

JD: I was on his legislative staff for three years. Then he became Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and I went over to serve on the committee staff for two years. And I really enjoyed that, because that was dealing with all the federal budget, and we didn't have a deficit or debt at that time, so it was an interesting job. There was more of an opportunity to say yes than there is now. There's more of an opportunity to say no in terms of, you know, support for important federal functions, and maybe not so important federal functions.

Then I had the opportunity to meet Elizabeth Dole, and work with her in the context of President Reagan's initiative to improve the status of women. Because of my involvement in Senator Hatfield's office with that legislation, she reached out to me, and said, "What can President Reagan do?" And during that time, we forged a really good relationship. We both went to the same church, and had an opportunity to see each other in a spiritual growth group that we were both a part of. So that was cool. And then when President Reagan appointed her, she was the head of White House, the Office of Public Liaison for President Reagan. And when he appointed her Secretary of Transportation, she asked me to come down and be a part of her senior management team.

So that was a real change in perspective, because you're—first you work in the Senate, where you're trying to change legislation, and really don't have the perspective of what it takes to actually implement things. For example, when I was

with Senator Hatfield, and on the Appropriations job, he had a firm belief that we were not spending enough on force readiness, on military readiness, and we were spending too much on all of the fancy weapons. [0:54:57] So he asked me, expert in military affairs [laughs] as I was, to do some research, to figure out where could we save some money, and then plow it back into the personnel side. So as a result of that, I did a lot of research on things like the M1 tank, and the attack helicopter.

And of course, to more fully understand their capability, I had to visit the military bases where these were either produced or utilized, so I had the wonderful experience of driving an M1 tank, which is like three times the size of a Hummer, and nearly running in, headlong into the general, because I was given such a challenge. I was just being very tentative in driving it in an open field, you know? And then, all of a sudden, the person next to me, who was the tank operator, he says, "You can do better than that." I said, "Oh no, I think I'd better—." And then I thought, "You know what? I can do better than that." So I just floored that sucker.

And we just barreled down to the field, and I could see in the distant horizon there the three generals waiting for this staffer to tell them what they thought. I'd come up to a screeching halt, you know, and the sergeant next to me, who was the tank driver or operator, you know, he was sweating bullets, because he thought, "Oh, my God! I'm going to be responsible for killing, you know, my officer." So anyway. And then the next day, I remember we also took a trip to the site of where they were testing the attack helicopter. And they said, "Well, you really need to experience the capabilities of attack helicopters." Because they could just turn on a dime, and they—it was just—it was very impressive, but it was highly expensive research and construction. And they'd been having some problems with it, and etcetera.

So they, you know, suited me up, and I get in the jump seat of the attack helicopter. And before we took off, I looked at the guy—I'm not so much for air travel, shall we say, especially in an attack helicopter. And I said, "Excuse me, Captain, but if you have any idea that you're going to show me all that the attack helicopter can do while I'm in here, you have another thing coming."

CP: [Laughs]

JD: "So let's just take an easy ride." "Oh, okay. Yes, Ms. Dorn." I was basically a chicken, so [laughs]. So we had an uneventful ride in an attack helicopter, but they didn't show me all that stuff. But I make it sound more humorous than it was, because the point was that Senator Hatfield wanted to be able to draw attention in hearings with—that related to how we were going to appropriate our defense monies, to make sure that they were being spent in the best possible way. So he didn't need to have an expert in the technology; he wanted to demonstrate how much each attack helicopter cost. What was its capability? What was the end result? What were the problems? And how would that compare if we were to invest, instead, in military readiness? So, that was the point. I learned a lot, and I think I contributed what he needed to have happen, but it was interesting.

CP: Yeah. Well, it's a good thing you didn't run the General over.

JD: Oh, my gosh. I can't believe it.

CP: Career learning.

JD: I was, yeah, twenty-something at the time.

CP: So Elizabeth Dole reached out to you on the basis of your previous work on this women's study?

JD: Yes, yes. And so she asked me to come and help recruit and develop the senior management team for the Department of Transportation. And so I worked with and for her for five years then, but overall for I think almost two decades, I worked with her.

CP: Oh, wow.

JD: And one of the opportunities that I will remember always is the opportunity of being very entrepreneurial in government, and some would say that is an oxymoron. But this was during the time the shuttle was thriving, and they were going to phase out something called expendable launch vehicles, or ELVs, the kind of rocket ship that carried John

Glenn to space, and launched telecommunication satellites. And President Reagan believed it was really important that we have—we increase our capacity for transportation to space, not just only relying on the shuttle.

And the private sector said, "We can do this as an industry. We can develop this industry." But there were a myriad of regulations, as you can imagine, to allow the private sector the ability to launch payloads into space, [1:00:01] whether it—so there were 15 different agencies that said, "No, you can't launch it from here. You have to get munitions approval from there." It was just a big mess. So how can you commercialize an industry where you are just sucking it dry with regulations, because of an unanticipated new opportunity?

So Secretary Dole was able to win the opportunity to create the Office of Commercial Space Transportation. President Reagan designated the department to be the spawn that would allow this to happen. And she appointed me to be the head of the Office of Commercial Transportation, Space Transportation. And it was a fabulous experience, in trying to deregulate a really cumbersome environment, and that took me to every department, and the White House, to try to negotiate the full opportunity for that to happen. And over the decades, we have a relatively robust, thriving private sector space transportation industry that now is talking about taking astronauts to space. So my little 15 minutes of—nobody knew who I was—but 15 minutes of opportunity, to chart a course that I thought, and more importantly President Reagan thought, was important to the future. So that was, it was really interesting.

CP: How do you prepare yourself to be able to help create policy on something like this? I mean, I presume you didn't know a whole lot about space, commercial space transportation before?

JD: Right. Okay. Number one rule: listen, work hard, and hire people smarter than you are, and feel comfortable about it. That's what I've done throughout my career, and it has, I think, it has served me well, but more importantly I think it has served the organization well. So, building a good team, and making sure that you have your ear to the ground about what would solve a problem.

For the first several years of my career, or maybe the first decade, I desperately sought to become an expert at something, at anything. And then I realized that every organization, every challenge, needs to have a mixture, a healthy mixture, of not only introverts and extroverts, but generalists and specialists. And the key is trying to find how to get the best of all of that, so that the rising tide lifts all boats. And so, after my experience as a journalist, and in Senator Hatfield's office, I realized that that generalist skill set of asking the right questions, researching the right things, is as important as having someone who is, you know, ten layers deep. So then I felt better about my taking on new challenges.

Because after that, after DOT, then I went to the American Red Cross and worked for—well, I also went to the Labor Department; I forgot about that. But we were facing, at the American Red Cross, one of the biggest challenges in the era of HIV/AIDS, of the safety of the nation's blood supply. And Mrs. Dole's phenomenal leadership in corralling a nationwide system, centralizing it, in order to make sure that we could preserve and protect that supply, when we weren't exactly sure what was the cause of HIV/AIDS. Knowing that—I mean, she wasn't an expert in protecting the nation's blood supply, but she was a phenomenal leader, and knew how to recruit, and hire, and coalesce, and build public support for what needed to happen. So she has been my model for that. I mean, when she became Secretary of Transportation, I mean, you know, she wasn't an expert in transportation.

CP: Yeah.

JD: And when I became, later, head of the Federal Transit Administration, I remember Secretary Mineta asked me the question—he said, "Jenna, I know that you have ridden public transportation, but is there anything other than that that you know about that particular, you know, expertise?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, you know what? That doesn't bother me a bit, because you will ask the right questions, and I know you to be an excellent manager. And that's what we need to do." [1:04:59] And sure enough, I mean, I had 500 transportation experts who worked for me, and they didn't necessarily need one more transportation expert. They needed a different skill set, so.

CP: So it's about building a good team and managing them well.

JD: Yes, yes. And not being risk-averse, trying to develop a vision that looks ahead, instead of just status quo. You know, those are a couple of other things that I've learned in trying to tackle tough challenges.

CP: Yeah. Well, tell us more about Elizabeth Dole. She has obviously been a hugely important mentor to you.

JD: Yes. Well, she is a phenomenal person. She is a humanitarian, and a leader, and a perfectionist. I learned—95 percent of what I learned from her, I view as positive. And the other five percent, I said, "You know, I can see that the perfect can sometimes be the enemy of the good. You'll miss a few things." And she and I struggled with that sort of perfectionism, sort of. I don't know if it's because we're women, we feel like we just have to get everything right. But then you just miss so many things, you know? So, anyway.

But she has a heart of gold; she's wicked smart. She has southern charm in the best possible way, because she can convince anybody of anything. And I'm so glad that she is always interested in doing the right thing, because that skill set could be deadly if not, so. She and I have developed a really wonderful friendship, and she's the Godmother to my firstborn son, so we remain in close touch. And I had the opportunity and the privilege to serve with, or to serve under her, let's see, when she was Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Labor, and head of the American Red Cross. So I was on her senior management team in all of those times. Very different challenges. Each had its own set of circumstances, and I enjoyed them all.

CP: Mm-hm. So you were a part of setting up the team, and managing the team?

JD: Yes. Yes, uh-huh. At the Red Cross, I had specific responsibilities for managing our international portfolio, and because we worked with Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the world, managing our human relations functions. We had hundreds of people that worked for the Red Cross, nationally. And also marketing, communication, and fundraising, so headed those up. And had a particularly interesting set of opportunities in working with the International Red Cross.

And worked on issues on a commission with Princess Diana, and that was really an interesting sort of experience with eight or ten other Red Cross and Red Crescent leaders. And our goal was to try to build a better working relationship across Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, in order to respond to disasters, and to respond to, you know, natural disasters, and war-torn areas. And so I got to know her fairly well, actually, over a couple years. And then she and Elizabeth Dole also forged a relationship later on, because both of them were strong advocates to prevent, or to deal with, the issue of landmines, so that was an interesting experience.

CP: You've met a lot of famous people! [Laughs]

JD: Well, I've been lucky to have done—yes! And you know, as Senator Hatfield used to say, "You know, Jenna, I just put my pants on one leg at a time, as does every other famous person." So he was always, you know, "Hey, I'm just a regular guy," kind of thing. And so you note, when you meet these famous people, or if you work with them, that they have phenomenal strengths, and they're human.

CP: Yeah. So Princess Diana, then, huh?

JD: Yes, yes. Oh, she's—I think she had—I mean, she had a gift of relating to people at all different places of life, whether it was the homeless person, or the victim of AIDS, or the King of whatever country she was in. [1:09:58] And she had a fascination with—I remember a couple of times, she asked, "Well, Jenna, can you tell me a little bit more about the Kennedy family? What do you know? What about Jackie?" You know, it's like, I didn't know anything about the Kennedy family, any more than what I had read in, you know, in my history class, or in *People* magazine! [Laughs] But she, you know, because she wanted to talk to an American who would—so, she was—and I do believe she was out of her element in this policy discussion.

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: And she knew it, and I think she was misplaced in it, because she had never been in a policy environment. It was only us wonks. We wonks had been in that environment. So I think it was not the best fit, but she made the best of it.

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: And her instincts about how to solve problems, maybe not how to translate them into policy, but how to practically solve problems and build relationships were—it's very commendable, you know?

CP: We talked a bit about the Transportation and the Red Cross jobs, but we haven't talked about the Department of Labor job with Mrs. Dole.

JD: Yes. So, my responsibility there was I was the Assistant Secretary for Policy. And so, I had a kind of responsibility to make sure that the regulations that came out of the workplace safety department, or the educational policy—or workforce policy, or Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation, or International Labor Organization—that those regulations were consistent with President Bush's philosophy. So that was one of my responsibilities.

And then also, I had some responsibility for an initiative called the Glass Ceiling Initiative, so I worked with several colleagues, and of course under the leadership of Elizabeth Dole, to try to understand and get insights and remedies for women who were having a tough time breaking through to the highest levels in corporate America. We also did some interesting things in terms of negotiations when there was the Pittston coal strike, and trying to get a breakthrough in that. She was a phenomenal leader, and I was a background supporter in that. Also had a number of opportunities to work on some policies related to the parental leave and minimum wage.

At that time, the Republican administration was not in favor of either. That was one of those experiences where, oh, my goodness, I don't know if I agreed with the Republican position, but you know, I signed up, so that was one of those experiences where you had to get good at arguing the other side.

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: You know.

CP: What are your memories, or perspective, on the Dole presidential campaign, 1996?

JD: Which one? There were many.

CP: Oh, were there?

JD: Yes. [Laughs] He ran for president many times. But I was only involved once.

CP: Okay.

JD: In '96, I was her Chief of Staff when he ran for President. And so I didn't get the full glimpse of the campaign environment, but it was enough to tell me that it was not part of the profession that I—I never want to be involved in a presidential campaign again! I mean, it is just so incredibly rigorous, and so incredibly poll-driven, and you know, sound bite driven. And it just is—and the fundraising, and the incredible pressure to make payroll, and buy advertising. I don't think we have it right in America. I'm very glad I did it. I saw an aspect of our political life, and partisan life, that I don't think is particularly attractive or fun. And that says nothing negative about Senator Dole, either Senator Doles, or the candidates. It's just our system. It's all—it's so tied up in the money, you know?

CP: Mm-hm.

JD: And that's—I hope we change that, but. [Laughs] [1:15:00]

CP: So as her Chief of Staff, were you travelling with the campaign?

JD: No, it was mostly orchestrating from behind the scenes, to make sure that she had the support, as she traveled to every single county in Iowa in the primaries, and that we got the briefing papers right, that we dealt with the constituents so they were happy, and helped to recruit the local chairman, helped to make sure that Senator Bob Dole's staff was on the same page as his wife, in terms of where they each were. So it was more of a logistics-slash-behind the scenes political job than it was on the frontlines. I went a few times to the various church basements in Iowa, for Elizabeth to give her testimonial, and to have all of the people sign up. So, enough to get the fever of it.

CP: [Laughs]

JD: But I was very glad to have that be over with. It didn't end positively for him [laughs], but you know, so, I was sorry about that.

CP: Well, it looks like the next move you made was in a different direction—that was with the National Health Museum?

JD: Now, let's see. I'm trying to remember. I think—

CP: It looks like you were at the Red Cross 'til 1998?

JD: Oh yes, at the Red Cross 'til '98, then I went to the National Health Museum. And this was another phenomenal mentor whom I was fortunate to have. You're too young to remember, but C. Everett Koop was the Surgeon General, and he had this—and once he left that position, he had this vision of creating a national presence on the mall that was an interactive place for individuals to understand, and take control of their health. And it was just at the beginning era of all of the fancy technology, where you could do a lot of interactive things. And so he said, "We have a place for history, a place for art on the national mall, but we don't have a place for health."

And C. Everett Koop was one of those phenomenal leaders who represented his personal convictions, whether it had to do with, you know, talking about condom use to save lives, or anti-smoking campaigns. He just had the courage of his convictions. And he was my chairman, and he recruited me to head up, to be the president of the organization. So I had the real neat opportunity to build a board of corporate 100 leaders that would help define the vision, and raise the money, to help recruit a team that would design the museum, so that there would be a concept from which you could raise the money. And then, to be able to select, with our team, a world-renowned architect to build the design. And then to put on the internet the pre-concept, so that you could start learning without actually being there, and then to build a campaign to try to purchase land adjacent to or on the mall.

So, ask me if I've ever done that before. No. But with his leadership, and recruiting a great team again, and having the vision that you believed in, we made phenomenal progress in that regard. We ran into a log jam by one member of Congress saying, "You know what? I don't want to sell you that plot of land." And that was about the time then that Secretary Mineta, Norman Mineta, was appointed by President George W. Bush to head up the Department of Transportation. So he called me, or his deputy called me—Michael Jackson called me and said, "You know, would you have an interest in coming back in government and running the Federal Transit Administration?" And I said, "Well, yes. It comes at a perfect time." [Laughs]

And so I went to the interview I described, and I was lucky enough to be, then, confirmed by the Senate. I think it was the third time, for the position as the head of the Federal Transit Administration. And within two months after my being—after being appointed there, 9/11 happened, and the responsibility of the Federal Transit Administration, a 7 billion dollar organization that administers grants, and has oversight of the nation's subway systems. So, as you well know, the havoc of that tragedy to thousands of lives, and to the livelihood underground—that whole New York Transit subway system was destroyed. [1:19:56] And so it was the responsibility that President Bush gave to the Federal Transit Administration to oversee the development, working closely with the New York community, of rebuilding and recovering the New York subway. So that was a—that was just a phenomenally challenging, and scary, scary time.

CP: Yeah.

JD: And trying to coalesce all of the community in New York, and put together a plan for deconstructing, reconstructing, while honoring the hallowed ground on which, you know, thousands of people had lost their lives. So, it put to the test hundreds of people, including me, in just that project, to try to figure out a path forward. And that was a very rewarding project to work on. At the same time we had to—we were concerned that the terrorists would attack a subway anywhere in America, because that's what terrorists like to do, is, like, terrorize. So where you least expect it. Of course, we knew that our nation was focused on, and our government was primarily focused on, airline security, but we also worried about the vulnerability.

So we needed to coalesce 600 transit agencies, to say, "We need your help," and work together to do everything we can to protect the travelling public. So instituting security protocols, and what emerged was some of the—like, New York

subway came up with "See Something, Say Something," and other sorts of—other sorts of creative ways to make sure that we protected the travelling public, which was the responsibility of each of the agencies. So that four years at the Federal Transit Administration was one of the most difficult of my career to date.

CP: Yeah. Well, what was your personal experience of 9/11, which obviously also involved an attack on Washington, D.C.?

JD: Yes, it did. Well, when it happened, I was about to go on a TV interview in San Diego, to talk about the Federal Transit Administration and the light rail project they had in San Diego, and then we viewed the horror that was happening in New York, and with two engineers that worked for me, who then predicted, they said, "With that first attack, we think that building is gone." You know, so to have these engineers who had been trained to understand structures, and to just be in that moment, and then to be 3,000 miles away from my two young children, who were five and seven at the time. And then, like, thousands, tens of thousands of Americans, when Secretary Mineta shut down the air traffic system, I was stranded in San Diego, you know, for five days before I could get back to be with my family. And I was certainly among many, many, many who faced that.

And then of course, immediately, being concerned, which was my job—how are we going to assist in any way, New York, the travelling public and the subway operators? And it was shortly, within a couple of weeks, I went to the site, to ground zero, and had the opportunity that will be forever emblazoned on my mind, of going—climbing down a ladder three stories deep, and seeing the workmen and workwomen, the women and the men with their faces black, and their uniforms black, trying to make ready so that they could flood the bathtub, which was the incredible pit that had been created. And you saw massive, massive steel girders bent like toothpicks. And you know, just the haggard look on these peoples' faces that, you know, they'd been up for 48 hours straight, and there was just this resolve that they were going to—they were going to bring New York back. It was just amazing! And as a result of—you know, it was their spirit, and their incredible fortitude that made me realize we are [1:24:59]—we are going to do whatever we can as a federal government, supporting President Bush and Secretary Mineta, that I need to do my small part to make it easier for them to have a plan, execute the plan, and get the subway up and running. And you know, I wasn't operating it; I was facilitating, paving the way, so that they could do their work, so.

CP: How well were you able to coordinate during that time period? I mean, you were stranded in San Diego, and it's a chaotic time. I'm wondering about, at the level of government you're at, how easily people were able to figure out what they were going to try to do in response.

JD: Well, you know, for all of the perceived dysfunction of the federal government from the outside, the ability for our leaders and those civil servants to come together and figure it out is pretty phenomenal. You know, the things that were done and executed in Congress and the Executive Branch shortly thereafter—I mean, in a matter of weeks. Pretty phenomenal. And that was in an era when we didn't have all the technology that you could communicate. I mean, cell phone, yes, but that was—we didn't have the functionality that we do now, nor did we have probably the sophistication of knowing how to connect the dots, in terms of protecting against terrorism. But I have nothing but praise for, you know, local, state, federal officials. And it is hard to coordinate across a lot of federal agencies, and going into the bunker of where all of the telecommunications are headquartered, and the cabinet secretaries are figuring out in real time, what do we do, is just very, very sobering.

CP: Mm-hm. So were you waiting to receive orders at that point, or were you—?

JD: You know, it was interesting. There was incredible hyper-focus on the aviation system. And there was, of course, focus on trying to—on ground zero, diverting the subway and bus traffic, so that New York could come back up again, you know. So those were the two focus areas. But at that time, my team and I knew that nobody from above is going to be focused on the Federal Transit Administration. We had better figure out what it is that we need to do, and of course, then you—in some of those cases, you beg for forgiveness rather than permission, because everybody is focused on what they need to do. You have to use your common sense, instinct, your good judgment, and then you go from there. You know?

CP: Mm-hm. Yeah. Well, one of the themes that keeps coming up in our conversation is women's issues, and you were President of the Women's Forum of Washington, D.C. for five years?

JD: Oh, yes. Uh-huh.

CP: What was that about?

JD: Well, it's a group of women leaders from all different sectors and disciplines who have excelled in their profession. The mission, I guess, is two-fold. One is to assist high-potential women as they're moving up in their careers, to help them. We have a sophisticated educational and training program through Harvard and other places that we support, because whether they're in corporate America or in government, we want to have that group be, you know, educated and supportive of each other, so that they can rise through the ranks. So that's one mission. The other mission is to be more informed, as leaders, about things that are beyond our own experience or leadership responsibilities. So, what I think is a great thing about this organization—it's called the International Women's Forum, so we have 70 chapters in effect around the world. But what's great is you have leading artists, leading architects, leading adjudicators, leading corporate officials in the private sector, and for us to come together for various programs, and stimulating conversations, it has broadened each of our thinking. [1:30:00] Because the more you get ingrained in a particular—like, I'm in nonprofit leadership now, but I love talking to people who are involved in different sectors, and I can learn so much!

We have some common challenges in leadership, but we also have some different experiences and we can learn from each other. So we have a conference a couple of times a year where we bring in world-renowned folks. And we have members that I'm privileged to be a member, with people like Justice O'Connor, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and leaders in corporate America. So then, because they believe in this organization, they'll come and talk with us, and share their perspective. So it's been an enriching experience for all of us, and I was proud to lead the Washington chapter of that for several years.

CP: Mm-hm. One thing you mentioned earlier was your Senate confirmation for the Federal Transit Administration. You said something, that was the third time you had to go through that process?

JD: Fourth. I had four. And so there are—I don't know how many positions there are now, but are required to be presidentially appointed, and confirmed by the Senate. So you go to the Senate Authorizing Committee and try to convince them that you're the one, and that the President did right by nominating you. So I've been fortunate enough to have four Senate-confirmed positions. The fourth that we didn't discuss, which was really enlightening for me, and it was a very different opportunity—shortly after, or right after my Federal Transit Administration experience, I was appointed to be a U.S. representative on the board of the World Bank. So the World Bank is an international financial institution that gives support for development in countries around the world, and the board is a very unique board: 24 members that represent 188 countries. So there are only five board members that represent their own country, one being the U.S., and then the others are coalition appointments. The board meets twice a week!

CP: [Laughs]

JD: I think we calculated, or the staff of the management team calculated, that we have to review something like 20,000 pages a year of data and grants, etcetera. So it meets twice a week, and each board member has a staff of ten, or 15, or 20. So if you were the CEO of the organization, you would want to blow your brains out, because, you know, your board has a staff! You know? But it's a very interesting and important institution. It has its flaws, and each executive branch agency and Congress, you know, has its usual rough-and-tumble, like we do with the U.N., but phenomenally smart people who run the organization, and who support it.

I had some really interesting trips. Oh, I took one trip to Africa to better understand the development challenges of the programs that we fund, and went to the Central African Republic where we were escorted by people with the equivalent of AK-47s, because it was a country in revolt. I mean, it was a country that was incredibly challenged. They spoke something like 188 dialects within that country. We sat down and visited with the president about what are the challenges? How can we overcome them? You know, and to get to the Central African Republic, when we were in—let's see, I think we were in Gambia, the Gambia, which is on the west coast. To get to Central African Republic, which is just halfway in the middle of Africa, we had to go back to Paris, and come into Central, because they don't have airlines, regional airlines. That's the only way you can do it, is that way. And it's too difficult, expensive and traumatic to go by car in between.

So, I mean, that's just like a mini snapshot of the challenges that emerge in assisting developing countries. And then coordinating with other countries who are supporting development there, [1:34:58] whether—Germany, and France and England all have a different philosophy about how it is that we can inspire and help create an environment for improving peoples' lives. And so that was the politics of that.

And I was there during Paul Wolfowitz' era, when he was the CEO, and he was very aggressive, appropriately, as was this administration, on making sure that there were—that we would dramatically diminish any corruption, so that anti-corruption really was important to the success, the sustainability of the organization. Because if you believe that your contributions are not going to go towards the positive end that is your mission, you're going to quit contributing, and everybody hurts. So that was really, highly political in that environment. So I really felt that both my journalistic training, and my coalition-building experience in my other jobs, was very helpful to building relationships with other members of the board, so that we could build a united front. And so, I was there only about, I think, short of two years.

And then I had the opportunity to run a think-tank called the National Academy of Public Administration, so I was the CEO of that four years. And it's a group of incredible leaders in the public sector, former governors, former senators, former senior officials in agencies, whose mission is to improve the management of government. In other words, okay, are we really coordinating as best we can to prevent another Hurricane Katrina? Do we have the right transition, presidential transition approach in a terrorist environment? So that we know that both the candidate who may win the election, and the president who is sitting in office, that that sort of transition doesn't just happen in one day, but it happens over the course of the transition of power. Is everyone is on the same page, with respect to the expertise needed to make sure that that will go well, and that the environment is safe and secure for the public?

So, it was a very interesting job, and our approach would be that we would take—we would get an assignment from Congress, or from an executive agency. The Environmental Protection Agency would say to us, for example, "You know what? We have a competitive grants program that is designed to prove how best to change the public's attitude about x. Have we got it right? Is the grants management process really going to yield the result?" So then what we do is we put together a panel from among the 600 fellows who are elected to be the National Academy of Public Administration think tank, and we put them together. And there could be a diversity of experts, from marketing expert, to, you know, an environmental expert, to a grants management expert, to a former governor who was a guru in making things green, or whatever. And they would come together with the staff of our National Academy of Public Administration, to try to see how they could solve the problem. What kind of system and process will yield the best results? Evaluate what's in place, and give suggestions about what to do.

It's an organization chartered by Congress, nonpartisan, nonpolitical. So what was fun to me about that, and very rewarding was that you would have a Democratic governor and a Republican former senator, who both believe passionately in this particular problem, but ideology did not matter for this, so we were able to work together as civil servants and elected officials should be able to do, to solve the problem. So that was fun.

CP: It strikes me, with all of these jobs you've had, you must have a real good ability to evaluate an organization, and figure out how to ingratiate yourself pretty quickly.

JD: [Laughs] Well, I don't know about that! You have to be—I think to do well, and I haven't always succeeded in everything I've done at all. I mean, I have made a fair number of mistakes. But to do well, you have to be a quick study. You have to be able to discern: what are the real problems and what are the perceived problems, and understand where everyone comes from in solving those problems. So those are some skill sets that I think I can bring to the table, and you know, I think you can't be afraid to ask questions. That's one of the things I learned really in my journalistic background from OSU, and from Senator Hatfield, who said, "Have the self-confidence that there's no question that's a stupid question." [1:40:05] And you know, I've asked many stupid questions, and I've gotten some interesting answers that other people who might have thought it was a stupid question said, "Well, I didn't know that!" You know, so those sorts of things, I think, can help you be better at your job.

CP: Well, you are presently the CEO of the American Academy of Physicians Assistants?

JD: Yes, and I really am enjoying that. I have only been there fewer than two years. But the physician assistant is a fast-growing profession that is trained to practice medicine, and they are in a team-based environment, focused on the patient.

So it's basically a two-year master's degree program. I've never run a membership organization that is this large, so that there are individual members. We represent 90,000 PAs, and our goal is to make sure that those PAs can practice at the top of their license, and they're regulated by state and by federal government, and to provide them the educational tools to keep up with technology, and to be a financially sustainable organization. So, we have a great team that I've been able to recruit from different aspects of my long career, and the profession—wicked-smart, caring, innovative people who care about the patients, want to connect the dots, see the whole patient, you know. So it's—I love it. It's a very fun, rewarding, and challenging job.

CP: Yeah. And one thing that's fairly recent, that jumped out at me from your vitae, is that you are also a member of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels?

JD: Yes! You know, that was one of those surprising things. I'm not exactly sure what it means, but apparently we recently had an important, to the PA profession, legislative success, that would allow PAs to more fully utilize their skills in practicing in Kentucky, which will extend the opportunity for care to more people, and perhaps improve the patient health because of their involvement. So, they recommended that I have this honor, and you know, I'm honored. [Laughs]

CP: [Laughs] Well, you mentioned, you've been in Washington for a long time. I'm wondering if you can comment how things have changed, from the time you got there to the way things are now?

JD: Yeah, right. Well, this won't be surprising to anyone who follows this, but I fear that the issues have become more complex, obviously, and the political will to come to consensus has been really dramatically eroded. And in my humble opinion—other experts have certainly defined this, but I agree with them that part of the root of that is in the money. So, you see how much it takes to run for office, and in order to really get through all of the clutter of information, you send out your Twitter, or you know, you do a direct mail, and you have to say the most outrageous thing about the opposing party! And then you actually have to—then you get people who contribute based on that, and then you have to deliver on that, what may be an extreme position.

Of course, that's a very simplistic way to look at it; it's not just the money. But I think there are some very important differences in philosophy, but that collegiality in Congress, and in our political environment? I don't know how we get it back. I mean, I remember speaking with Senator Hatfield after he left the Senate, and he mentioned how he had commiserated with other incredible leaders in the Senate, who said it's just impossible these days to have, you know, have effective working groups across parties. It takes heroic efforts to do that. And then, it can be to their peril if they do it. So, something will happen to break that logjam, I hope, because we need to attract really phenomenal leaders, and you know, public office is not a route for the faint of heart. [Laughs] [1:45:06]

CP: Has the logjam made it more difficult for you to get things done in your jobs?

JD: Oh, absolutely! Absolutely. For example, because there's such a logjam, it's impossible for some of even the agreed-upon things to get passed, because there's no vehicle. You have to put what we used to call a Christmas tree. You take the, you know, the debt ceiling bill and attach all of these amendments, because no other legislation is moving. But then there's such a disregard for—or there's an inability to get support for the debt ceiling bill if it has anything on it, so then they strip it out. You know, I just—I'm sure in some ways, it's not any worse than it has been at other times, but it sure seems like it, from kind of an insider-outsider perspective. And so that's of great concern, I think—should be to Americans. We've got to figure this out. [Laughs]

CP: Hm. Another thing I want to ask you about is how have you managed to balance family life with your career?

JD: Oh. Well, I haven't always done that well, and I've learned a few things. I was a workaholic in my 20s and 30s, and I missed some things with my children, and had some failures in my other relationships. And I think part of it was because I was just, some would say, driven. But I am very proud to say that I think the most important contribution I have made on this Earth is that I have been able to raise—and a lot of it was due to their own initiative, and their father's help, as well—but two upstanding young men. And as Jacqueline Kennedy said, if you don't get that right, not much else is important—or she said it much more beautifully than that. So I am very proud of that. I think both of my boys, John and Ben—John is 23 and he is a successful and aspiring investment banker. And my younger son is majoring in construction management at Colorado State, and already owns his own small business. And so they seem very happy, and they love their mother!

[Laughs] So I couldn't have done everything wrong! But they've also had some phenomenal opportunities because of the opportunities I've been able to have. And I think it has given them a perspective that it is important to try to make a contribution, to try to give back, that women can lead. I wanted my boys to know that. They know that, not just because of me. Their godmother Elizabeth—they see her, so anyway. But it's been—the biggest joy of my life has been a mom.

CP: Uh-huh.

JD: And, you know, I did make some sacrifices about them, that maybe I wouldn't do again, but in some ways, I don't have any regrets. Because my parents, for example—they moved back from Oregon to Reston, Virginia, to help support. And so my young boys, at the time, had a phenomenal experience with their grandparents. So, it all worked out. It was a nice little nuclear family. [Laughs]

CP: Well it's clear that you have a strong passion for public service. I'm wondering if you have any other points of pride, when you look back on your career?

JD: Oh, wow! Let's see. Well, yes. One, and it's not necessarily a substantive one, but it's one that gives me a lot of satisfaction, and that is, in every job where I've been a part of a team, or I've recruited the team, that I've continued that relationship in my next job, I mean, just in keeping in touch. So I think that's part of the joys of working in a team environment. And I've made some phenomenal friends, and learned a lot from them. And I think we've made a good team in what we were working on together.

CP: Yeah, great. Well, I have really enjoyed this interview. Is there anything else that we missed, that we could talk about?

JD: [Gasps]

CP: It was kind of a lot.

JD: I mean, I can't imagine! We covered a lot of ground, and so I'm very honored that you would even be interested. And if there's anything that I can clarify, or help you excise, or summarize, I'm very happy to do that.

CP: Great.

JD: So thank you very much, Chris, and thank you, Mike. It's great.

CP: Thank you, Jenna. [1:49:43]