

**SECRETARY OF STATE  
THYRA THOMSON**

**Interviewed by Mark Junge – 1993  
Cheyenne, Wyoming  
Transcribed by Bess Arnold – March/April 2010**

JUNGE: Today, as Thyra said, is the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1993. My name is Mark Junge and I'm here at Thyra's home in her living room in this wonderful house just off of Lincolnway on Sunrise Road. It's a beautiful late fall day...a gorgeous day with blue skies. And, we're just going to talk a little bit here today about her life and about her career. With that as an introduction, Thyra, I guess the first thing I always ask people is when and where you were born.

THOMSON: I was born in Colorado on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1916 in a small town called Florence.

JUNGE: And who were your parents?

THOMSON: My father was John Godfrey and my mother was Rose Altman Godfrey.

JUNGE: Can you tell me a little bit about the Godfreys and the Altmans starting with the Godfreys because as we were sitting over here a little earlier you were talking about going back with Bruce, wasn't it, to Wales? Could you tell me a little bit about your ancestors?

THOMSON: Well, actually, because I knew so little about my father who was killed in a mining accident – he was superintendent of mines for Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in a little town called Fremont, Colorado outside of Florence. He died when I was three so I really didn't much about him. All I knew was that the family Bible said that he was born in Caerphilly near Cardiff, South Wales. With that enormous amount of information, Bruce and I decided to go on a treasure hunt to Wales and find the roots of my father. We were enormously successful. It was wonderful. Actually, Bruce started by calling London and Cardiff before we even left the United States and we found records of his birth in Cardiff and so the lady said, "From where are you calling?" Bruce said, "From the United States." And she said, "Oh my! That must be frightfully expensive." She said, "I will look it up and you call me back tomorrow!" So, actually when we arrived then in Cardiff, we flew directly through London – we had to stop in London and catch a train to Cardiff and when we got to Cardiff we immediately went to the registry office and there she had a copy of Daddy's birth certificate which was in –I believe, if I recall, was in February 23<sup>rd</sup>—pardon me, February 17, 1875. And, we learned there that he was not really a Welshman – that he was born in Barnstable, Devon shire, England. And the Welsh were quick to inform me that Godfrey was not a Welsh name! However, he had married Elizabeth Thomas of Rudry. Rudry was a small village outside of Caerphilly and the Thomases evidently were a big prominent family there because the

whole graveyard was filled with Thomases. So, he had married a Welsh woman and of course all his children, including my father...and this was funny...we left the registry office after getting his certificate and went to the census bureau and there we found in the census records for 1871 and 1881, my father's family because now we knew where to look. It was in the village of Rudry..and Rudry...

JUNGE: How do you spell Rudry?

THOMSON: R-u-d-r-y.

JUNGE: Ok.

THOMSON: The background of that is Lord Trefegar...Tredegar, pardon me. Lord Tredegar built a castle called Ruperra and his son, his oldest son and each of the succeeding oldest sons of the heirs lived in Ruperra, the castle there right outside of Rudry and everybody in Rudry worked for that estate including my grandfather. It was just wonderful to discover all of these threads. So then when we went to the census bureau, by 1881, Elizabeth and John...Elizabeth and Michael...my grandfather's name was Michael Godfrey. Elizabeth Thomas Godfrey and Michael Godfrey had had eight children by that time. We don't know whether they had more after that because the succeeding census didn't list them so the evidently moved to a different village. We lost track of them at that point. Anyway, we found my father and all of his seven brothers and sisters and we went then to Rudry to see if we could trace any more information and God was on our shoulders because as we...we went through beautiful commons, my goodness...Wales is the most beautiful country in the world! It has this cool, moist climate and everything is green. And all of the hedgerows in the fields are trees and we drove down this country road and the trees were so lovely, they formed a bower over the road and all of the hillsides are covered with flowers. Certain times of the year, the whole commons, the whole hillside is rhododendron...it is beautiful beyond belief and everything is flowers!

JUNGE: Of course the Welsh people are sort of unique people too aren't they?

THOMSON: You want me to talk about the people not the countryside? (laughter)

JUNGE: No, no....they are part of it.

THOMSON: Yeah, they are but actually what we did was, we stopped at...after taking pictures of all this beauty around us, we stopped at an inn called the Black Dragon Inn which was a roadside inn.

JUNGE: The Black Dragon Inn.

THOMSON: Well, you know the red dragon is the sign of the Welsh and we learned when we were there that the reason they used the dragon was they were attacked by

everybody in God's creation. They were attacked by the Vikings, they were attacked by the Irish, they were attacked by the English and everything so they formulated this scare that the hills were filled with red dragons and it's still the symbol of the Welsh is the red dragon.

JUNGE: Is that what you have on your front door?

THOMSON: Yes! Yes! I have one on my front door. I brought that home. That little shield. That's true. You're very observant! Well, anyway, we stopped at the Black Dragon and we went into the pub there and as soon as...there were only three people there...it was early in the day. There was the young man running it, and a gentleman farmer and sort of a rough young man with this ferret. He hunted rabbits with this ferret. He had a ferret in a cage. Well, anyway, when they found out we were looking for John Godfrey's heirs – Michael Godfrey and Elizabeth Thomas Godfrey. They were very excited and wanting to help and said we must talk to the woman who ran the inn where we got the information. She actually was a school teacher in Rudry ...cross filed all of names of the cottages in the early days because they didn't have house numbers. She said..and we said, "Well, my father was born in Tredigger..no, Tercipith?" And she said, "Well, Tercipith? Is the house just beyond the church which is next door to this inn." Now that's how close we were. I have these lovely pictures I want to show you of the church. The whole courtyard is filled with Thomases. We didn't find any Godfreys there but we didn't examine every gravestone either. But the church is still being used and that church dates from we think 1300, 1400.

JUNGE: You mentioned how well preserved things are.

THOMSON: Yes, because everything is of stone. And the young minister—Father John Davies, he was Episcopalian, but you see the Welsh really are not Episcopalians, they're the Free Welsh Church which is slightly different. I don't know everything about it but he actually opened up the church's safe and showed me my grandfathers'—Michael Godfrey's signature as he signed it the day his baby daughter was christened in that church.

JUNGE: Wow. Well, now who were the Thomases?

THOMSON: That was my grandmother's family. See Michael Godfrey married Elizabeth Thomas. My father John Godfrey's mother was Elizabeth Thomas

JUNGE: Why then couldn't you...you say the whole cemetery was full of Thomases...so he came to Wales from Devon shire.

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: And he was an outlander. He was an outsider.

THOMSON: But he married...I'll tell you what we figured out...Daddy John Godfrey, who was born in England, in Devon shire left home and went to Wales to seek his fortune at the time that the mines and industry was booming in Wales. And two of his sons, my father John Godfrey and his brother George left Wales and came to the U.S. in the next generation seeking their fortune. See, history is repeating itself.

JUNGE: So, things couldn't have been that good for them in Wales.

THOMSON: Well, times change don't they? Just like they have in Wyoming. We have boom and bust in cycles and all this kind of thing. So what happened was John Godfrey left Devon shire and came to Wales and his son ...No! I'm saying that wrong. Michael Godfrey left Devon shire and went to Wales and his son John Godfrey left Wales and came to the United States. Well! Like I say, after we had gone to the church yard and found the birth records and every thing, we went to the house next door which is now called Green Yard and found out that two cottages...two small cottages had been placed together...one was called Tercipith? And I don't know what the other one was and now it forms a lovely home and I have pictures of it and they invited us in to see where my father was born. It's called Green Yard Stable there now. It's right on the outskirts of Rudry.

JUNGE: What sort of people are they? The people living in Tercipith(?) and that general area?

THOMSON: Oh, well, I'll tell ya...they're very interesting people. For one thing, (laughter) all of the men look like my half brothers! They're...the men are slim of build. They're strong of jaw. They're neatly muscled. You don't see fat people. I didn't. In all of Caerphilly, I didn't see any fat men, you know. Uh, the women stride in nonsense shoes. Most of them pushing walkers or baby carriages. You know, they take their children with them wherever they go. An interesting thing about the Welsh – the Romans went into Wales about the first century after Christ, during...you know...before 1 A.D. and they stayed until 400 A.D. and then they left. Then, the Normans came in at about 1100 A.D. Well, from 400 A.D. to 1100 A.D., there's very little Welsh history because the Welsh simply didn't write down their history. Most of what we know about the Welsh is told through the eyes of a conquering enemy, which you have to be a little suspect. The Welsh didn't write it down, the Welsh just sang and to this day, they sing gloriously! We went to two or three churches when we were in Wales and they were very hospitable, they welcomed us, they handed us a songbook and they sang gloriously—part harmony and everything—there was never a note. The songbooks had the words but everybody knew the tune, even the little children! You know, they're brought up on it. They're wonderfully romantic people! They're beautiful people!

JUNGE: And a great sense of humor, right?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: Very subtle?

THOMSON: And they tell me you can't always believe a Welshman because he is inclined to want to please you so he will tell you what you want to hear. So, I don't know about that. But I have here pictures of the house where Daddy was born and the church where his family, children were baptized.

JUNGE: And, I'd like to see those sometime but I'd like you to talk a little bit about this whole experience...why did you go back? Why did you go back? What was the motivation?

THOMSON: Well, perhaps it's my age. You know, there comes a time when the stream of life and history becomes much more important to you. All the time that I was, you know...in college...or married and having children and living in Washington D.C. with my husband and then, running for office myself and then 24 years in office which was a magnificent experience that opened up the whole world to me – I was too busy for reflection. But you see I retired in 1987 and now it's '93 and suddenly it has a great appeal to me to know and to save for my sons, the family history and Bruce has this same interest so we went to Wales. We had a wonderful experience there. We stayed in inns that date from the 1400's. One of the most beautiful inns we stayed in—Sugamvar—is older—dates from before Plymouth Rock. You know, it just blew my mind to think that these beautiful places are still being used when in the United States we tear down buildings because they're 30 years old. You know, to me, it just opened up a whole new thinking.

JUNGE: Thyra, did you see anything in the Welsh people that you met and talked with and sang with, conversed with – did you see anything in yourself or your father in those people?

THOMSON: Oh, of course.

JUNGE: What, for example.

THOMSON: I think they're very handsome people. Of course, I had six brothers so I look more at the Welsh men, I think and the Welsh men are very handsome people. When we got up to Edinburgh because we ended up going to the Edinburgh Festival before we came home. The Scottish people in Edinburgh, because we spent more time with the natives than with the tourists – we could see two gene pools. The Scottish are either very short or very tall. You know? But we didn't see that in Wales. The Welsh people are not overly tall but they're very good looking. They're muscular people.

JUNGE: Any habits, a way of speaking, the way they speak?

THOMSON: Oh, of course. Their language is impossible! (laughter)  
It's a joke, really!

JUNGE: You don't remember your Dad. When did your mother die?

THOMSON: This is interesting. My mother died in 1979 and my father died in 1920. She outlived my father by 59 years!

JUNGE: Did you recognize anything, when you were in Wales, that maybe your mother told you about?

THOMSON: Oh no, because Mother didn't know anything about Wales.

JUNGE: She didn't?

THOMSON: Of course not. She never saw Wales... she married a Welshman here.

JUNGE: But she didn't pick up anything from him? You'd think that she'd have picked up a lot of little pieces of information and ways of doing things from him.

THOMSON: Well, yeah, there were some things. For instance, he wanted melted cheese for breakfast every morning and she just thought that was a pain. My mother came from a German family and they didn't eat all this cheese. (laughter)

JUNGE: Did she ever talk about him? About your Dad? Because you didn't know him...you were what, three when he died.

THOMSON: I was about three when he died.

JUNGE: So, you said earlier that you don't remember anything but you kind of do because people told you things.

THOMSON: Well, yes. Mother had a great deal of respect for my father. You see, she married an older man. Daddy had come from Pennsylvania with his first wife. Daddy had come from Caerphilly to Pennsylvania, was married in Pennsylvania and had five boys. His wife was very ill and in those days they recommended you go out West to the dry climate. So, he brought his wife and five boys to Colorado where he became superintendent of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. He worked up to that. He had to take a lot of examinations and all this kind of thing. Well then, she died. His wife died and he married my mother who was 18. Daddy was about 36 when they were married. So that doesn't seem very far apart now, we're used to that. Now that doesn't seem like a great span but anyway, they had my brother Bill Godfrey and myself so there were seven children in the family altogether.

JUNGE: Now there were five boys before.

THOMSON: Yes. My mother had five step-sons and then two of her own.

JUNGE: She took on a lot of responsibility when she married him.

THOMSON: Well yeah she did but you see, he was the big dog. I mean, he was the superintendent, the head of the mine. You see, they lived in a small mining community in Colorado and he was, like I say, the Big Dog!

JUNGE: Did he work his way up when he got to Colorado or had he been pretty big in the mines back in Pennsylvania.

THOMSON: All I know is the certificates I found and he would pass. And you know, he would pass “fire boss” examinations in Pennsylvania and then “mine foreman” examinations and then, you know...all of these different things he was learning as he went along and he had to pass all of these examinations to get where he got.

JUNGE: Did your mom talk to you at all about him as you were growing up?

THOMSON: Oh, she thought he was God. He was her protector. I mean, Mother was...I have a little...Mother was a very insecure person because she didn't come to this country until she was 15-years-old and she was very beautiful, actually. And that may have put off some of the people she would have most liked to have been her friends. In other words, when she married Daddy, here was...you know, the wives of the other men who she would have loved to have had befriend her probably were not to happy that he had married this lovely German girl. Consequently, Mother was a little bit shy.

JUNGE: Well, she was awfully young....

THOMSON: Yes, she was 18.

JUNGE: Well, why would they have held anything against her because she was this German girl? Did they want him to marry another Welsh?

THOMSON: No, no. I don't think so. I just think that human nature being what it is, maybe she wasn't as readily accepted as...you know....

JUNGE: Because she was a beautiful person.

THOMSON: Yeah!

JUNGE: Maybe they were a little jealous?

THOMSON: Well, I don't know about that. But anyway, Mother had the unfortunate circumstance of losing her husband when she was very, very young.

JUNGE: Did she remarry?

THOMSON: Well, she did very, very late in life and it didn't take. I don't think she was married but only a few months but essentially she lived her whole life...she died at 85...and she lived all of that life by herself. She lived here in Cheyenne.

JUNGE: Was she a resourceful person?

THOMSON: Oh yes. Mother prided herself on being “quote” a good manager.

JUNGE: Did you pick that up from her?

THOMSON: Without question. Actually, I think that the workman’s compensation when my father died in 1920 – she got \$44 a month and she earned her own living and sent me to college and she lived on her own money until she died.

JUNGE: Give me an example of how she was organized and how she was able to take care of her life.

THOMSON: Well, I think her title was “executive housekeeper” of Memorial Hospital here in Cheyenne. It was her last job here in Cheyenne before she retired. She got along very well, you know. Both with the hospital heads and the doctors and the people under her.

JUNGE: Was she a member of the old school? Tough. Demanding. People didn’t get out of line?

THOMSON: Oh no, no, no. Well...maybe. I don’t know. Maybe partly. No. I wouldn’t describe her that way. As a boss, she was very self-confident. I think she gained a lot of confidence, as she grew older.

JUNGE: She was pretty young when your father died. By the way, how did he die?

THOMSON: He died in an explosion in Emerald Mine in Colorado.

JUNGE: He was a mine superintendent, right?

THOMSON: Yes. It wasn’t Emerald Mine...it was Fremont Mine. Yes, he was mine superintendent and he went down into the mine early one morning and they never knew exactly what caused the explosion but anyway, he was blown to bits.

JUNGE: How did his death affect the family?

THOMSON: She was left with five stepsons and two small children of her own – a son and a daughter. And to make matters worse, her mother died six months later. So here was this young girl, really, left with a lot of responsibilities except that her stepsons were very good. They all went to work and her brothers went to work so that betwixt and between ...families adhered together in those days. You know, we had a very close-knit family. It worked! I remember...Mother always had the vision...We moved to Florence, Colorado which was a little small mining community on the Arkansas River...agricultural community, farming community. She was giving my brother piano

lessons. That was the point and she took him to Pueblo, Colorado thirty miles away to hear Potaruski? (sp) because she thought that would give him a great desire to play the piano. You know, it was typical of that generation, our forefathers – they came to America because they had this vision. And you know, they continued it. Their children were to be educated...they were to have...they were very sincere about it.

JUNGE: It's not unusual.

THOMSON: Before we moved to Florence and we lived out at Fremont, Mother would walk with Bill from Fremont to Florence to give him piano lessons. It was three miles. She had to walk both ways! (laughter) That was her pride and joy but you know she...I admired her very much. In fact, I wrote a little...I have it in there on my dresser...I wrote a little memorial for my mother because I did not have a customary, traditional funeral for her. Just the family.

JUNGE: Was she an outgoing person or did you do that because she wasn't very outgoing?

THOMSON: Oh no, she was! She was. She had a...I don't know what her education was in Germany. All I know is that when she came to the United States, she spoke "high German" which was rather unusual because that was the official German—the German of "officialdom" in Germany and she spoke high German. So, she must have had good schooling there. She never went to school in the United States. But her grammar and her English was much better than mine or any people around her. Much better than anybody in our family.

JUNGE: Did she ever say why they came over?

THOMSON: Oh yes, they were seeking their fortunes. Grandmother, grandfather came over with one of their sons – my mother's father. Actually, he was her step-father...came with one of the sons and established themselves here for about a year or two and then they sent for Grandma and I think six...six other children.

JUNGE: Why did they come to Florence?

THOMSON: Actually, they first stopped in Iowa and I don't know whether there was a German community there. Mother worked for a golf and country club in Iowa.

JUNGE: What did she do?

THOMSON: I don't know. (laughter)

JUNGE: Well, then how did they get....did she ever tell you how they got from Iowa to Florence?

THOMSON: No.

JUNGE: Was your stepfather...did he work in a mine?

THOMSON: Well, he was in the mines too. The mine industry in the early 1900's were just like the oil industry is now. You know, it was the big blossoming, booming industry and I suppose it was just opportunities were better.

JUNGE: Did she ever say how she met your Dad?

THOMSON: Well, our community was very small. Everybody knew everybody.

JUNGE: Florence isn't that big but this is a coal mining area, right?

THOMSON: Fremont was actually the name of the town where they lived. It was a little community about three miles from Florence.

JUNGE: Ok. CF&I....

THOMSON: Colorado, Fuel and Iron Company was one of the biggies in the west.

JUNGE: Yep. It was a steel manufacturer but they owned the mines in Florence.

THOMSON: Oh yes.

JUNGE: Was that a company town?

THOMSON: Yes. Yes, it was.

JUNGE: So you bought...your mother bought at the company store?

THOMSON: Actually, they didn't have a company store. They had schools and they had a big clubhouse which was the heart of the community. There wasn't a church there. We had to go into Florence to church.

JUNGE: What denomination were they?

THOMSON: I think we started out as Baptists.

JUNGE: Oh, did you?

THOMSON: Yeah, it seemed to me that Baptists were the thing available there and Daddy bought the first motorcar in Fremont. We had a great big seven passenger Studebaker and mother wore great big beautiful hats!

JUNGE: And you remember that.

THOMSON: Oh yeah! I can see the pictures. I have all the pictures.

JUNGE: What are your earliest memories of Florence – going way back now to a time when you were just a little girl?

THOMSON: Well, it was a very pleasant town. The weather was kind of nice. The schools were close. There was a lot of wonderful food because it was a farming community. I remember one day my brother came in. He said, “Thyra.” He said, “Sis. Sis!” He was only three years older than I was. I was maybe about five, he might have been about eight. He said, “Sis. I’m going to let you...I’m going to let you climb our tree”...whereupon he fastened a rope around my waist and all the boys in our neighborhood had nailed these boards across the trunk of this big fat tree so you could climb up and they had built a little clubhouse up there and they were going to *let* me climb the tree! But they were afraid I would fall down so they had tied the rope around my waist and one got above me and one got below me to push. I was a little suspicious at this to begin with. We got up there and they were going to let me swing on their swing. They had tied a rope on the swing opposite...a tree opposite and they would pull it toward them with a rope and then, it wouldn’t quite reach so you had to jump for it...put your hand on this one rope—just one rope. Not two ropes. Just one rope through a seat and I held on to that and then I jumped for it. And when I jumped for it, I got my legs over the seat all right but my dress got caught on a nail and I was swinging up there in the air! Godfrey! My mother about killed him! But anyway when my dress tore and I went sailing on, back and forth and back and forth and back and forth until we finally came to rest. And the reason he had done it was because they were trying to coax another little boy to go and swing on the swing and he had to climb this tree to do it and he was afraid to. My brother Bill said, “Why, even my sister will do that!” I was proof! I didn’t know I was being...we had a lot of fun (laughter) in other words. It was a very small community and a lot of fun!

JUNGE: There’s a picture on a campaign pamphlet of you in the files of the Archives over there and there’s a picture of you with a little Red Cross outfit on.

THOMSON: Oh, how did that get into the file?

JUNGE: I don’t know but tell me about that?

THOMSON: Well, see I don’t even remember that much except that that was during World War I and my brother has on a soldier suit and I have on a Red Cross suit.

JUNGE: Yes.

THOMSON: Yeah, that was during World War I. See, I was born in 1916 and that must have been in about 1918.

JUNGE: Did you go to the local school then in Florence?

THOMSON: Yes. Hm mm.

JUNGE: Did you get a good education?

THOMSON: Oh, I think so. I went in Fremont, then in Florence, then in Canyon City and then I went to school in Denver. My mother became quite ill and she had a severe injury of the spine which resulted in tuberculosis of the spine and so she was in a hospital in Denver for about three years. Then from Denver, I came up to Cheyenne to be with a half-brother here. I went through high school in Cheyenne and that's the reason I went to the University of Wyoming is because I was here.

JUNGE: Tuberculosis of the spine? Is that polio?

THOMSON: No, they called it tuberculosis of the spine and I don't know much about it except that in those days they just immobilized you and let it mend. She was in a brace...I mean..in a cast.

JUNGE: Was that when you came up? When they diagnosed it – that's when you came up to Denver? At age 13?

THOMSON: You know more about it than I do. You've got all the records. You are something! Yeah, that was about right.

JUNGE: And that's the reason why you went to Denver – because she could not any longer take care of the family.

THOMSON: Yes. Well, that's where her medical attention was.

JUNGE: Ok, so she moved up with all the kids.

THOMSON: Oh no. These half brothers were all considerably older. They were all out working on their own. Some of them were married and everything else.

JUNGE: Do you still have half brothers down there in that part of the country?

THOMSON: No, they're all gone now. You see, they were all a lot older than I and I'm not a spring chicken anymore so...they're all gone now. My last half brother died...oh, just about five years ago.

JUNGE: What about your brother Bill?

THOMSON: He's gone too.

JUNGE: You're the last one.

THOMSON: Yes. I'm the last one in my family although I'm leaving this Saturday for Washington State to visit one of Mother's sisters who is still living...Auntie Emily. She is 91-years-old and I'm going to see her.

JUNGE: Boy! You should take a tape recorder.

THOMSON: Oh, she's wonderful. I should take a tape recorder.

JUNGE: You bet! Well, tell me a little bit about the change now. You went from Florence to Denver. How did that affect you? Can you look back and think that was a traumatic thing in your life or...

THOMSON: Oh no! I loved Denver! Denver was wonderful!

JUNGE: Where did you stay? Who did you live with?

THOMSON: I lived with Mr. And Mrs. W.C. Shepherd (?) I don't know whether to call him editor or publisher of the Denver Post.

JUNGE: Oh really?

THOMSON: Yes. And I went to school.

JUNGE: Why did you happen to live with him?

THOMSON: They were friends of Mothers'.

JUNGE: Hmmm. Well, that was an interesting background then. What are your memories of the Shepherds?

THOMSON: They had two sons – Jack and Hugh –and they were grown. I was just a girl in high school. They were both away from home at that time. One of them would breeze in and out occasionally.

JUNGE: You know, to me...and I'm glad you're talking about all this...and I don't know if you've talked about it much before but I'm interested in that early life of yours and how you came to do what you've done because I think your career is incredible and I think all these things in the past sort of worked, do you know what I'm saying?

THOMSON: Like I said, I'm not one to look back very much. I always looked forward so I guess I haven't really analyzed but Mother's ill health caused me to be in a different school every year until about the time I went to high school -- probably ready for college which meant I had to adjust very quickly. I lived for a while with a half-brother and his wife in Crested Butte, Colorado.

JUNGE: Oh you did?

THOMSON: Do you know Crested Butte?

JUNGE: Well, I graduated from Western State College in Gunnison and of course spent time up there.

THOMSON: Of course, I know Gunnison very well. I fished Gunnison River and Taylor River country. All of that country was wonderful.

JUNGE: And Crested Butte is an anthracite coal community. Now it's a ski community!

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: Go ahead and tell me, how did you get up there?

THOMSON: This was when my mother was ill and you see I kind of shuttled between the half brothers. This is a funny thing – it sounds like the Martins and McCoys. My half-brother Malvern married mother's sister Emily. She's the one I'm going to Washington to see. Now, there's no blood relationship here because Mother's sister Emily was a half-sister and Malvern was not really Mother's son. He was her step-son so there's no mixing of blood here but we lived in a small community and the choice was rather limited and Mattie and Em fell in love. In other words, Mother's stepson fell in love with her half-sister and that's the one I'm going to see. They were double relatives. My half-brother was my uncle and my aunt was my sister-in-law. We were the only relatives they had!

(laughter)

JUNGE: How far apart in age were they?

THOMSON: They were the same age. They were married when they were about 19. She was like a second mother to me because I lived with them for a while and then I came to Cheyenne and lived with another half-brother and his wife – John and his wife here in Cheyenne. I shuttled around quite a bit and it never bothered me much. I was always able to...I went to East High School in Denver which I think...since this time, since that time, has become sort of a black school.

JUNGE: Yeah, it is mainly black.

THOMSON: Uh huh. But when I was there living with the Shepherds, we lived on 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway between Cherry and Dahlia and that was my high school

JUNGE: Well, when I was living in Denver...I grew up in North Denver, near Elitch's and we used to talk about the kids at East High School being kind of high fallutin', hoity-toity types that had money.

THOMSON: (Laughs) Well, of course, there were a lot of moneyed families up there in that area.

JUNGE: It was a good neighborhood.

THOMSON: Yeah, it was a good neighborhood.

JUNGE: It was a wealthy upper-middle-class neighborhood if I remember correctly. Was it that way when you were growing up there?

THOMSON: Yes, as I say, we lived on 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue Parkway. It was a fun place to be. Then I went from there to Cheyenne and from Cheyenne to the University of Wyoming.

Tape 2

JUNGE: We were talking about your life in Denver, what you thought about growing up there.

THOMSON: I thought East High School was a wonderful opportunity for me because the choice was greater. But you know, modestly, I did well in school wherever I went.

JUNGE: What effect did being raised in a family of boys have on you? I mean you have three sons. You only have one sister, right?

THOMSON: I had no sisters. I was the only girl for two generations.

JUNGE: And that had to affect you.

THOMSON: Of course! I loved men! I feel very comfortable with men. You know, it's great! (laughs) I'm at ease with men. I had a father and six brother and a husband three sons.

JUNGE: But men haven't dominated your life, have they?

THOMSON: Well, I don't know. Seems to me I spend an awful lot of time with them. (laughs)

JUNGE: Were you babied?

THOMSON: Oh, I think so. I think I was spoiled a little bit. You know, all of the half brothers called me "Sister." I was like a toy to them because suddenly I was not only the baby of the family but I was a little girl.

JUNGE: Did they protect you?

THOMSON: Oh sure.

JUNGE: So, I guess what I'm saying is it seems to me that you grew up in a very secure, even though your father died when you were just three and your mother had this illness you still had this blanket of security around you.

THOMSON: Oh, of course, yeah!

JUNGE: Which is good.

THOMSON: Right.

JUNGE: Denver was a completely different place from Florence.

THOMSON: That's why I say it was such a wonderful opportunity.

JUNGE: You went from a very, very tiny close-knit community...

THOMSON: A little rural community...

JUNGE: ...to a cosmopolitan city, or relatively cosmopolitan.

THOMSON: Yes, right. In fact, East High used to have its' senior prom at the Brown Palace or someplace, you know. (laughs)

JUNGE: Tell me about your high school days there. Did you participate socially in a lot of things?

THOMSON: No. I didn't. I was rather young. You see, when I came to Cheyenne, I think was here for my last two years in high school – I think my junior and senior year and I graduated when I was only 16. Graduated from high school when I was only 16 so I wasn't participating in many social events in Denver when I was 14.

JUNGE: You graduated in college though in...

THOMSON: I laid out one year. After I graduated from high school here at 16, I had a very important job in Cheyenne. Actually, my mother had just gotten out of the hospital in Denver and she came to Cheyenne and she was still wearing braces and I was so happy to be able to live with her. My very important job was with Woolworth's! I got a job at 16 out of high school at Woolworth's and worked there a year before I went on to college. Didn't go to college until I was 17.

JUNGE: Why did you mother come up to Cheyenne?

THOMSON: Well, because I was here. Because Bill was here. Her children were here.

JUNGE: Why did the Shepherd's send you up here though?

THOMSON: Well, it's kind of a long complicated story but like I say, I came up here to be with – I had two half-brothers and their wives here in Cheyenne. One was John Godfrey and one was Richard Godfrey and my brother got a job at the air base. He worked at the commissary at the air base.

JUNGE: Who was that?

THOMSON: My youngest brother, who was about three years older than me – Bill.

JUNGE: And what did the other two do, Richard and John?

THOMSON: They were on the railroad.

JUNGE: Ok. So the Shepherds sent you up here to live with them?

THOMSON: My mother did.

JUNGE: Why didn't you stay down there?

THOMSON: Well, like I say, my family was here and it was easier for her to join us up here.

JUNGE: Wasn't it difficult for you to make the change from East High in Denver to Central High here in Cheyenne?

THOMSON: No. No. No.

JUNGE: Did you get involved in high school activities here?

THOMSON: Oh yeah!

JUNGE: What did you do?

THOMSON: The things high school kids do.

JUNGE: I mean, were you involved in plays or athletics?

THOMSON: Not so much, because I would go for awhile, the first year I was here, I would go every weekend to Denver to see my mother. I spent an awful lot of time on buses going back and forth to Denver. And then, it was just about the time I was graduating from high school when Mother was released from the hospital and came up here wearing braces. So, we lived in a small apartment and I got a job at Woolworth's.

JUNGE: Where was your apartment?

THOMSON: It was down on Evan's Avenue. Mother, bless her heart, she used to always think I was too thin. She wouldn't think so now. She used to make me what you call "pep" cocktails which was orange juice in which you would put an egg yoke – a raw egg yoke – and honey, and beat it up and walk from Evans Avenue downtown to Woolworth's and bring that to me every day so I would have a refreshment. She made all of my clothes to go to college. She was a beautiful seamstress. She made all of these nice things to go to college. I became a Pi Phi at college. I was rushed. She wanted me to have it all.

JUNGE: She doted on you.

THOMSON: Well, I was all she had left you know – my brother and myself because the half brothers were grown up and had their own families and so, we were close.

JUNGE: Did you – you've held down so many important positions in your life, I'm wondering if that was manifest in your early life too. Did you have a tendency to be a leader in school?

THOMSON: I don't think so until I went to college. In college, I did some interesting things but not in high school at all. I wrote for the Branding Iron when I was in college. Like I say, I really have never looked back much so...

JUNGE: You never tried to get a position in student government in high school or anything like that?

THOMSON: In high school, no. In college, one thing that limited me a little bit was that I worked when I was in college. I had good jobs all the time when I was in college. I was secretary in the Department of Economics. I worked for the registrar. I had a good job in the Department of Agriculture, agricultural economics. I did all these things and went to college full time and graduated cum laude.

JUNGE: You worked for Ralph McWhinnie?

THOMSON: Yes. I still see him. He was, the other night at this banquet where we opened the American Heritage Center. In fact it was really amusing because we...Pete Simpson was seated at a round table and on one side of him was his mother who had come from Cody because Senator Simpson – Senator Milward Simpson's bust was unveiled the day before at our Honors Convocation. I sit on a board for the University now. I sit on the advisory board for arts and sciences now so I was there for the Honors Convocation. Mrs. Simpson had come from Cody for it and of course she was getting quite fragile and he brought her to the reception Saturday night at the American Heritage Center and his mother was sitting on his left. Ralph McWhinnie who must be about 98 or 95, I don't know how old Ralph is, sat on his right. Mrs. Simpson was sound asleep on one side of him and Ralph McWhinnie was sound asleep on the other side of him. I said, "You have scintillating company!" He's such a doll!

JUNGE: You realize I'm asking you all these questions and having you dredge up this past....

THOMSON: And I'm very awkward at it.

JUNGE: Well, when we start talking about your career and your opinions about certain things that happened in history I think it's going to get a little bit easier for you. I know it's a little difficult for you to go back and dredge this stuff and yet you know why I'm doing it.

THOMSON: Oh yes.

JUNGE: Kind of.

THOMSON: (laughs:

JUNGE: I think people should know where you're coming from, what kind of person you were as you grew up, what led to the things that you accomplished in your life so it's necessary to go back and...

THOMSON: You know I came from a generation – everyone in college – because it was the years of the Great Depression when we were there, when we got out of college, the thing first and foremost was to get a job. There was no dilly-dallying around. You had to get out and support yourself. We all were very eager to be useful citizens through necessity.

JUNGE: Oh yeah. You were a young woman. You had to do something. And with your family situation too I would expect pushed you out a little bit more too, right? There wasn't that father that was comfortably ensconced in a nice job....

THOMSON: No. No.

JUNGE: There wasn't all that security there. But you didn't grow up poor on the other hand, did you?

THOMSON: No, as a matter of fact during the society, Johnson's Great Society when the sociologists took over and were making all of these studies and were coming up with all of these trivial surveys and all of this kind of thing, I was Secretary of State before I realized I had been a child from a deprived background living in substandard housing. That's how it would have been defined.

JUNGE: You never thought about that as you grew up.

THOMSON: Well, no. You see that's why it's so foolish today to apply today's political correctness to something that happened several years. The whole viewpoint was

different. What was traditional for one generation is not traditional for another generation.

JUNGE: Do you think it's important for people to understand that?

THOMSON: Oh yes. That's where wisdom lies. In fact as I was going through my papers, I saw this over and over again. There was a time when we were expected to "goosestep" to all of the popular ideas. Today we call it "political correctness." The language is different. When I was looking through my paper, I saw that I was talking about protecting the environment. That was 23 years ago. You see...

JUNGE: Were you ahead of your time? And this is jumping the gun a little bit but as long as we're on this, I guess I would ask you if you thought you were ahead of your time in your views on women?

THOMSON: No, I really honestly don't think I was ahead of my time in my views on women. However, I quickly saw around me in State Government how it was a "man's world and a woman's place." I did an original study in State Government on comparable work and I started by researching all of the women's salaries in State Government. I then took everything that was above the cut-off amount for paying social security, which at that time was \$17,500. Incredible. Now they're up to \$35,000 or something. And, I considered a woman in a higher tax bracket, if she were above that – I have the figures, which are not on the tip of my tongue, but it was about – 80% of the employees were women. Less than two percent were in the high tax bracket. There were so many things going on in which there was not a ...a justice. And, it was natural for me to pursue it, not only in the state but nationwide because Wyoming was the Equality State. We had the first and it seemed to me to be incongruous that we should fall so far behind so it was something that I thought was to be pursued.

JUNGE: But you weren't a "women's libber."

THOMSON: Oh, I never was a women's libber but that didn't keep me from having a great ...as a matter of fact, I was published all over the country because I was not one to put down men. In other words, I remembered...who was it?...Nellie Tayloe Ross...no, Esther Hobart Morris who said, "The sweet gallantry of men..." Remember it was "the sweet gallantry of men with their great sense of justice for their courageous women who took the forests and the treeless plains to make homes." And that's what gave the women of Wyoming the first vote. So, I had that same feeling that we had to be thankful to the men of Wyoming because they were the ones who took the great step forward. It wasn't the women who took it forward. There were women all over the United States who were, of course, speaking out but it was the men of Wyoming. And you know the first articles that I published, there was...what was the first published in the Denver Post that was picked up the Kansas City Star that was reprinted in the Reader's Digest? It was something like "Who Needs Women's Lib?" And then next one I published was called something like "Second Thoughts on Women's Lib." And then the next one I published started being original studies on the lack of pay for and promotion for women professors

in colleges and how hard it was for women to be admitted to medical school and women being at the bottom of the rung on the pay scale and all of this. And then I ended up publishing studies on comparable worth. So you see, I progressed a lot too!

JUNGE: But did you incur the wrath of women's libbers who resented the idea that it was the men who gave us...that it was the gallantry of men who gave us some of these things?

THOMSON: (Laughs) I don't think so. You know, I always seem to use a voice of sweet reason myself. I tried. I mean, how could I having six brothers and three lovely sons and a nice father and a wonderful husband be mad a men? It didn't make sense. Men, as a matter of fact, have expressed themselves...they have a lot of wonderful one liners like...men would say, "women control 80% of the wealth and 100% of the sex and they're not even subject to the draft. I'm for equal right and I'll be glad when Congress gives it to us men!" You know, men were wonderful! They had a good perspective!

JUNGE: Well, early on when the state or a territory incorporating women's suffrage I think there was a comment and you made reference to it in one of your papers, some guy making a comment about how "we're glad now that they're not our superiors, now they're our equals."

THOMSON: Yeah, here's to our lovely women. Once our superiors, now our equals..."

JUNGE: Yeah, I hashed that out bad.

THOMSON: Men were always very quick with the one liners.

JUNGE: But at the time in the '70's you had Gloria Steinham, a pretty radical person preaching the tenets of women's liberation I imagine they would have looked upon you at that time as a little old fashioned. I mean, am I wrong about that? In your views because they were way out there demanding things that you would have demanded, right?

THOMSON: I think that the extremists served a purpose. The bra burners served a purpose of drawing attention to the problem.

JUNGE: Now I didn't mean to call you old fashioned. I just mean that the ones who were out there maybe were pushing the boundaries out like you say ...a little further than you.

THOMSON: Well, it's just like today. I won't lockstep or "goose step" with those who apply political pressure either. I think I'm probably somewhat more liberal than a lot of conservatives.

JUNGE: Certainly, I think you did, in actual fact and deed, you did a lot for women, don't you think?

THOMSON: I think so. If you look at the list of places I spoke all over the United States I was invited to speak in an awful lot of places. I was disappointed in the end because my study on comparable worth did not provoke the changes in state government that I would have hoped it would have. That's because when the legislature appropriated money to follow up on it, they gave it to the Department of Administration and Fiscal Control which is like giving it to the fox which is in charge of raiding the hen house because they were the ones that were keeping women at the low pay scale. I was not happy with the result. What had happened in Wyoming was they spent all that money on another study and I forewarned them about that. I said all of the states that just kept studying the matter to death never did get anyplace. But New Mexico took their money and they appropriated it right off the bat to bringing the women's salaries up to the men's salaries. It was done in one fell swoop and they didn't waste it on trivial surveys and studies that had been done a hundred times already! Wyoming wasn't that forthright. It didn't accomplish that.

JUNGE: Why not?

THOMSON: Well, like I say, I don't think that the heart of the Department of Administration and Fiscal Control was in that.

JUNGE: But Thyra, the governor could have stomped down on those people and said let's get the money out to where it belongs. Couldn't he?

THOMSON: There was a lot of thinking in the state at the time that women's lib (laughs) or comparable worth was not needed. They couldn't see that women didn't have a good place in society as it was. As a matter of fact... a charity event to raise money for Stride Learning Center in Cheyenne asked me for a contribution for their auction. I said I would shine the shoes of any man in front of the Esther Hobart Morris statue to the highest bidder. Some man by the name of Bradshaw paid \$32.50 and I practiced snapping my cloth and all of that. I shined his shoes! I got down on my knees and shined his shoes in front of the State Capitol.

JUNGE: What was the purpose of that?

THOMSON: Well, I raised money, didn't I, for charity? And he had a good time.

JUNGE: So you stooped to conquer?

THOMSON: Well put!

JUNGE: Didn't it ever frustrate you...in my long tenure in state government and I've had a long tenure as well ...not as long as yours but getting there. I'm sort of frustrated by the attitude of some women who seem to be unwilling to go out and fight for what is theirs and seem to be sort of following the mode. Didn't it ever frustrate you?

THOMSON: No. Actually, my mind was occupied by a million things. For instance, the first year I was elected, the first year I was in office, 1963...I was in office only a few months the whole north fork of the Shoshone River flooded when I was acting governor and I had to deal with that. The intake on the Greybull River was completely ....the banks were washed out. The intake was just hanging up here someplace. And the mayor called me and he said, "I have enough water for 600 people for 24 hours. What are you going to do about it?" Later that year, that same year when I was acting governor JFK was assassinated. At the time it happened, we didn't know if it was insurrection, what it was. All of the states went on an alert. The president had been assassinated. I dealt with so many things. I got very involved because I was chairman of the Intergovernmental Cooperation Commission – appointed by Senator, then Governor Hansen. I was also head of the Compilation Commission. I was head of the Statute Revision Commission. I was doing all the work that the Legislative Service Office does now. There was no Legislative Service Office. I published the Statutes. I published the Session Laws. I was, in addition, Securities Commissioner. Securities was a very complex field at that time. We went from...well, I could make a speech on the grid of the Public Securities offerings in all the ?? years and common stock, real estate investment trust, oil and gas participating interest, mutual funds, millions of them. I used to sit up in that Capitol night after night after night learning and keeping track of big board and learning, learning, learning. I eventually became president of the North American Security Administrators of all of Canada and United States and Mexico.

JUNGE: How come you never became president of the National Conference of Lieutenant Governors?

THOMSON: I couldn't because I didn't have the title.

JUNGE: Yeah, but in effect, you did.

THOMSON: Well, in effect I was on their executive committee the whole time...well, you know...for years. But they told me frankly, they couldn't make a secretary of state president of the Lieutenant Governor's Conference.

JUNGE: That was rather narrow of them.

THOMSON: No, that was fine. I could contribute anyway. Another thing that I really was very interested in was the fact that the federal government owned so much of the public land in Wyoming. So much of the State of Wyoming! They really took millions and millions and millions out of the state. They took so much of the riches out of this state. They took 135% of ..as much as it took to run the whole state government clear back to 1920. As chairman of the Public Lands Commission of the Western Conference of State Government I kept making speeches all over the west, all over the country on this. Eventually, Senator Hansen, God love him. He was such a fine senator – got those fees on public lands raised to 50%. At first we were only getting 37 ½% and the federal government was ....always took the lion's share. He finally got them raised. These were the kinds of things I worked on for 25 years. Twenty four years. It wasn't just women's

positions. I was very sympathetic but that was just a very small ...you know, I had a job to do and I was very interested in it. I loved it! We were accomplishing something for the state! That's what was interesting to me. I've got a whole drawer full of speeches in there that I gave. I've got a whole file – just on these questions.

JUNGE: In all the stuff I read, I never read anything about this opinion of yours and you were doing something....you were doing a lot of things!

THOMSON: Oh yeah!

JUNGE: Doesn't mean that your heart wasn't into that issue.

THOMSON: Well, it was just that anytime anybody interviewed me, they talked to me about being a woman. (laughs). You know you don't interview the governor and talk to him about being a man. You know what I'm saying?

JUNGE: Exactly.

THOMSON: In fact, one man said to me once, I'll never forget him as long as I live. He got my attention. It was in Pinedale and I got up and gave a speech and he was so heartbroken and he said to me later, "Thyra, if you ever give a speech and quote statistics again, I'll never forgive you." Men didn't want me to talk like that. You see, they didn't want me to be hard-shell about the serious business of Wyoming and that's really what interested me!

JUNGE: So, it is frustrating to you isn't it?

THOMSON: Well, it sort of was.

JUNGE: Does it bother you that I ask you these questions?

THOMSON: No, but it didn't interest me that much. I think I did a lot of good because I was...my position was so that I was invited to speak on a great many forums and I was published on a great many forums and I did that. But I gave an awful lot of other, to me, much more important speeches that weren't covered that well.

JUNGE: I see.

THOMSON: But I still would like to give you all that good material.

JUNGE: Ok, but what I'm hearing you say is that you don't want to go down in history as a person who was solely involved as a person who was trying to establish women in the marketplace, women in government, women....

THOMSON: No, I wasn't just representing women. I was representing all of the state of Wyoming and I think that we had some very serious steps to take. I still think the West

does. I sometimes think the West – Rocky Mountain West will never be understood by the Easterners until we get a president from here. That doesn't include Ronald Reagan because Ronald Reagan coming from California – their interests were all-together different. They were making so much money off of military contracts and their connections to the Pacific Rim that they weren't bleeding and dying over the fact that they were a public land state. Thirty-eight percent of all of the wealth of public land states in the United States came from within Wyoming's borders. You see, it mattered to us.

JUNGE: I've always felt that California is not the West, that this is as far West as you can go.

THOMSON: Well, what happened is the East Coast and the West Coast were settled first because when they went in the mid-1800's to seek gold in California they crossed the Great Plains and this was vacant territory. It was Indian Territory. So, the two coasts were settled first and it was very much of interest to the Eastern that these Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain West be settled and that was the reason that first of all the Homestead Act was passed. They said, "We'll give you land if you'll go there and live on it. If you'll work it, we'll give it to you!" That was the Homestead Act. And then when they came up to this high, dry Rocky Mountains Great Plains shelf, a hundred and sixty acres wouldn't support a cow and a calf and a herd and a livelihood. So then, they passed a grazing act and said, "We will let you graze on this land for a fee per month per cattle unit." In other words, if you will make your homes there you can rent the land instead of having to buy it. And, they said some people came out here. They worked hard. They built homes. They built communities. They made their livelihood here. They established the West. At that time Harold Dickey said, "We won't charge you any more for it than it takes to administer it. You're going to settle the West for us." And the people did. Successive generations lived on this dry land, which was cold and windswept and dry, and they built communities, made their livelihood, they produced their families. Now the whole idea is changing. People act like you got something for nothing. At that time, you were contributing a great deal to the nation.

JUNGE: Yeah, the attitude has changed now. But don't you think in going back to what you said a few minutes ago...well...do you think that Wyoming has been highly colonialized?

THOMSON: Yes. I do.

JUNGE: I mean you're in a particularly sensitive position as secretary of state all those year to see how things, how finances were working, how people were using or not using Wyoming.

THOMSON: Well, they were taking the lion's share of Wyoming's wealth. And as a matter of fact, the Federal Government took more from the extraction of natural resources –oil and gas – in Wyoming than they got from under the ocean off the outer-continental

shelf. Texas got more – got to keep their wealth. Pennsylvania got to keep their wealth. The Federal Government took ours.

JUNGE: Why has that happened?

THOMSON: Because we never had enough clout in the Congress of the United States to change it. Because of the small population. We suffer from geographic isolation and a small population. Clifford Hansen understood that!

JUNGE: There were issues though as Secretary of State that you worked on that were Western issues. Didn't you see – couldn't you see any attempt on the part of Westerners to get together as a block?

THOMSON: Oh sure we did. As a matter of fact, I led them in doing it. We passed resolutions. Like I say, when I was chairman of the Public Lands Commission for the Western Council of State Governments, etc., we were working on these things all the time but Wyoming suffered the most. California is a public lands state. They didn't get excited about it. I even got to the point where I said, "You know it may be we'll have to learn to vote as a block like the Deep South does." The Deep South has clout because they've voted as a block for years. They were Democrats, historically, from the time of the Civil War, they were Democrats and they voted as a block. I said, "If the public lands states ever voted as a block, they'd get the Nation's attention!"

JUNGE: But did those words fall on deaf ears?

THOMSON: Well, like I say, California was so prosperous they had other fish to fry. So many of the other states....it never came to pass so I guess it did fall on deaf ears.

JUNGE: Why? Utah? Nevada has even more public land than we do. Utah's got public land, New Mexico's got public land, Montana's got public land. Idaho? There's a whole block of states there that it would seem to me....

THOMSON: The eleven public lands states, which are contiguous – this is with the exception of Alaska and Hawaii, which are considered Western states too – but the eleven western states, which are contiguous – have about 90% of all of the public land in the United States. This is excepting Alaska. Alaska of course has more land than all of the eleven contiguous states put together. Alaska has the biggest block. And then the eleven western states have about 90% of the rest of all of the public land in the United States. I sometimes think that right now, Carter...President Carter never understood the West. He never understood the importance of water out here.

JUNGE: And yet, he was a farmer.

THOMSON: Yeah, but you see...the moist coast. They talk about riparian rights. They don't understand the lack of water in the West and how you have to preserve it and keep it and use it. You can't just let it all fall and run away like they can on the East coast.

JUNGE: Do you think that was really and truly a lack of understanding on his part or a political situation in which he knew which side his bread was buttered on? I mean, the obvious fact is – and you mentioned it earlier – the Western states don't have the representation.

THOMSON: Well, that's exactly right. We never did have the political clout in Washington. You know the...Alberta, Canada is in the same geological formation as Wyoming. Alberta is so rich from oil because they get to keep their wealth. Ottawa gets very little of it. But here, the lion's share of Wyoming's wealth has always gone to Washington. And then Washington learned to manipulate everything. For instance...when it came to leases on Federal land for oil and gas we were supposed to get a portion of the bonus and none of the fees. And they rigged it so that the fees would be high and the bonuses small so that we were effectively cut out. Where...in accuracy because my memory isn't as sharp as it once was, I've got all of that written in speeches I've given. This mattered a lot to me. I still think that right now, 1993, what is going on in the Senate of the United States has already passed the House of Representatives in Washington is very detrimental to Wyoming and the West. Not only are they raising grazing fees without an understanding what that will do – it isn't a matter of just paying a fee but if they do away with the rights, preferential rights, etcetera, anybody -- who's going to build the fences? Who's going to build the water tanks if somebody can come in and outbid you and take your land away from you one year and graze it to death and then go off and not bid on it next year? You know there's so many things that people who don't understand the land and the West and the use of the land out here. What are they going to use the land for if they don't raise sheep and cattle on it?

JUNGE: I was talking to a gentleman who is a biologist and now he's a private consultant. He used to work for Game and Fish and I said pretty much just your point of view and he said, "So! Some of those marginal ranchers will have to go out. That's the way it's been in America and they've gotten away with more-or-less murder for..."

THOMSON: Well, they're wrong! He's wrong! But the worst part of it is what Simpson, Alan Simpson said and Malcolm Wallop and that is "without any hearing at all, they're trying to take the West's water rights." That's written into the bill too! See that's what they're really opposing with this filibuster. Water rights is the life blood of the West.

JUNGE: How would they take away the water rights? I don't get it?

THOMSON: Well, you see...have you seen the bill?

JUNGE: No.

THOMSON: Did you ever hear of the hearing on it?

JUNGE: No, I haven't heard of the bill. I felt it was a grazing issue and not a water issue. I don't understand how it's a water issue.

THOMSON: No, I think that's what got all the publicity to begin with. Actually what has happened is Babbitt has written a lot of provisos in there pertaining to water that were sort of obscured until some of the western senators and that's what the filibuster is about – they wanted that bill postponed at least a year so that they could have hearings, discussions, debates.

JUNGE: How could it affect Wyoming water law which was established early on by Elwood Mead – you know, talking about prior appropriation, the age of the appropriation, making the..or the age of the appropriation having something to do with the disposition of the water or the dispersement of the water. I mean, it seems like the Federal Government couldn't run roughshod over a state system that works. I don't know what Babbitt is thinking of there.

THOMSON: Like I say, I don't know what's exactly in the bill but I know that at the crux of the bill. And you know Babbitt has kind of got his head on backwards anyway because he said, "Well, if you don't do it by law, I'm just going to do it by rule." Well, the first thing I was taught in office way back in 1963 when I tried to bring something to the legislature, a lawyer said to me, "Thyra, you can't do that." Pardon me; I'm a little bit confused. After something that the legislature had refused to act on and I was going to put it in the rules, he said, "Thyra, you can't do that. You can't do by indirection what the legislature has refused to do by direction." Somebody ought to tell that to Babbitt. I don't know that the court would uphold him if anybody chose him because if an administrator can't exactly thumb his nose at the election process in the United States. If the Congress of the United States refuses to act on something then I don't think you can just ignore them and do it by fiat. He they hadn't acted on it, maybe he could. Once they've acted on it, come before him, like I said, the rule is you can't do by indirection what the law forbade you to do by direction.

JUNGE: If anybody should understand the West and it's problems in regard to grazing and water, you'd think it would be Babbitt from Arizona.

THOMSON: Well, like I say, he's got his head on backwards. You know this is all a part of this swing back and forth that happens...I think that the extremists...in the environmental movement have performed a great service because they focus the attention of the nation...but I don't think they're always right. I think that they are one-sided to the point of ignoring a lot of important value. And, it'll swing back to some sort of reasonable answer between human needs and the needs of animals or whatever.

JUNGE: Thyra, I was talking to Nancy Freudenthal one day and she was saying...

THOMSON: She's a brilliant girl. Nancy Freudenthal's bright!

JUNGE: Very bright! And she said she's seen some very uncomfortable "friends" in Wyoming. Friends being that of outsiders buying up rural land – ranches – and then clearing off the lessee or the potential lessee so what you're winding up with is outside or

absentee owners who use this as a recreational piece of ground and I wonder if you see the whole rancher industry sort of going under at some point?

THOMSON: Your question is so timely. In this morning's paper, the Wyoming Eagle for November 8<sup>th</sup>, the headline is "Ranch Culture is Fading Among the Soaring Prices." And here is quite an extensive article expressing the view that you just had – that there's a real danger to the western way of life.

JUNGE: Do you feel that?

THOMSON: Yes, I do. I feel that ranchers are in a particular squeeze right now. This article points out that even if a rancher sells out he still doesn't realize enough money from the sale of his property even with soaring prices to pay off all of his debt and to pay the government the big capital gains tax or the inheritance tax, whichever it might be. We all recognize that there's change every day in our lives and I think we have to accept change.

JUNGE: Well, you had a ranch for awhile near Cody.

THOMSON: (laughs) Right! And when my husband died and I was left with that ranch I had to make the great decision – do I move on it with three young sons and try to make a go of it or do I sell it and do something else? And I think very sensibly I decided I knew very little about ranching and I knew a whole lot more about how to handle money than I did about ranching. Ranching is a very complex situation if it's done well.

JUNGE: Where was it?

THOMSON: I had a beautiful ranch! It was midway ...it was at Wapiti, Wyoming which is midway between Cody and Yellowstone Park. I had first water rights on the north fork of the Shoshone and I was smart enough to know the value of that but I was not prepared to isolate myself and go up there and try to learn the hard business of ranching.

JUNGE: Do you wish now that you wouldn't have sold the ranch?

THOMSON: Oh no, no, no, no, no. No! It was the smartest thing I ever did!

JUNGE: But think of what that ranch would be worth today!

THOMSON: That's what people are always saying to me and I say, "So is my money." You know, this is the heart of investing money is time. Time is the heart. Time is the reason that land values soar. Time is the reason that your money soars. Is all you have to do is keep it long enough that at a favorable investment rate and it multiplies...at ten percent, money doubles every seven years!

JUNGE: Did you learn this when you were Secretary of State?

THOMSON: Well, you know I was not without some knowledge when I came here. (laughs) I studied economics and business and everything in college. I knew some things.

JUNGE: What led you to go to the University of Wyoming? Was it a financial thing? Was it friends that were going there? Why did you want to go to the University of Wyoming?

THOMSON: I think it was friends. I thought then and I still think to this day...especially today. The University of Wyoming is a splendid educational institution. Really a very fine educational institution.

JUNGE: Even today with all the problems?

THOMSON: Oh, it is one of the best. As a matter of fact, U.S. News and World report says that for an excellent education for a reasonable cost, you can't beat the University of Wyoming. Nationally, it's in about the top 20.

JUNGE: But that's not the reason you chose it.

THOMSON: Well, probably because I was a citizen of this state and a lot of my friends were going there and it was a very natural thing to do.

JUNGE: What was your ambition in going to college? With your mother being in the shape she was in, why didn't you decide, "Well, I've got a good job at Woolworths. I'll see what I can do here."

THOMSON: Oh no, no, no, no. I don't think there was every a time in my life that it wasn't just presumed I would go to college. It was just one of the things you do.

JUNGE: That was family tradition?

THOMSON: Yes, education was very important!

JUNGE: Everybody? All the brothers went to school?

THOMSON: No.

JUNGE: Well, then why was it just presumed that you would go to school?

THOMSON: Maybe it was my mother. After all, my dad died when I was three and she reared me and it might have been part of her old world upbringing.

JUNGE: So, did you have an idea of what you were going to do in college? You were just going to go to school?

THOMSON: My natural proclivity was for business and economics and I also studied the social sciences, which was very happy when I sat on the Board of Charities and Reform. You see, I got a degree with a major in psychology and a minor in business and sociology.

JUNGE: So you've always had an interest in the social sciences then?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: Why psychology? Why not history or political science?

THOMSON: (Laughs) I'm not sure I know.

JUNGE: See I go back to my college days and think, "Well, I started out as an English major. I started out as a person –I thought I would write the great American novel." But, I quickly transferred to history when I found out I was getting A's in history and B's in English.

THOMSON: (Laughs) Actually, I think a fine liberal arts education is to be desired. I think that is a high priority but like I say, it was the height of the Depression and we had to look toward getting a good job. Psychology – I was actually a qualified mental tester when I came out of school and I didn't ever use it but I was qualified to do it.

JUNGE: How did you afford to go to college during the Depression?

THOMSON: I worked! I had a full time job all the time I was in college.

JUNGE: Where at?

THOMSON: For Ralph Conwell in the Department of Economics, R.E. McWhinnie in the Registrar's Office or ?? in the Department of Agriculture ... Agronomy and Agricultural Economics.

JUNGE: These are successive jobs?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: But didn't you say your mother helped you too?

THOMSON: Oh yes, she did! Do you know what it cost when I went to college?

JUNGE: No.

THOMSON: And I joined a sorority. I lived at the Pi Beta Phi house and my bill for board and room and sorority dues was \$45 dollars.

JUNGE: Was that high in those days?

THOMSON: No, no, that was sort of center ground. Isn't it amazing? Now it costs \$20,000 a year to send a kid to college.

JUNGE: So you didn't have to get loans?

THOMSON: We didn't get loans in those days. No, no, no! At least my family didn't get loans. We never had a car until we could pay cash for it. We walked!

JUNE: And you lived in the Pi Beta Phi house. What was rush like for you?

THOMSON: (Laughs) You know, it opened up a new world to me!

JUNGE: Why? These were people that you knew pretty much weren't they? Your friends....

THOMSON: Oh no, they came from all over the state and from out of the state and a lot of these girls had sort of interesting backgrounds and different experiences.

JUNGE: Were there any memorable people among them, do you remember, that stand out?

THOMSON: I made a lot of wonderful friends there. It's sad to say many of them are gone now.

JUNGE: Did you have a big sister who sort of took you under her wing?

THOMSON: I don't even remember who it was. I remember one thing is that we had lovely dances then. I felt so bad when I found out kids don't have college dances anymore. We had the "Engineer's Ball" and the "Commerce Carnival" and the...

JUNGE: "Iron Skull Skid?"

THOMSON: The "Iron Skull Skid" and the Potter Law Club and all of these things and we had the best time.

JUNGE: Is that how you met your husband?

THOMSON: Actually, I met him ice-skating. I was ice-skating in Laramie one night and I kept falling down and this fellow kept helping me and he finally said, "You know, I think your skates need sharpening. I'll take 'em and I'll get 'em sharpened for you." And when he brought my skates back to me he asked me for a date. One month later, we were engaged to be married.

JUNGE: One month later?

THOMSON: Yes. We were engaged for two years before we could afford to get married.

JUNGE: Well, you had sort of a whirlwind romance then didn't you?

THOMSON: Well, yes. We knew right away!

JUNGE: How is it that you do?

THOMSON: I think it's called symmetry! (Laughs)

JUNGE: What was it about him?

THOMSON: Keith was a very bright guy and at the same time, he was very gentle. He was very low-key. He was very polite. He was almost like a Welsh man! (Laughs)

JUNGE: And of course, it was just your skates he was interested in.

THOMSON: Oh, yes. (Laughs)

JUNGE: One month, my gosh! He was working his way through school too, right?

THOMSON: Yes, he was manager of the bookstore.

JUNGE: Which was over in the Student Union right?

THOMSON: No, it was in a funny little building on campus. As a matter of fact, we didn't have a student union when we started out. But he was also very active on campus he was president of the Potter Law Club and he was in the student senate and he wrote for the Branding Iron and he had accomplished an awful lot.

JUNGE: Did that attract you to him – the fact that he was so involved and a leader?

THOMSON: I don't think that was what attracted me to him. I liked him because, like I say, he was good-looking, he was gentle, he was bright, he had nice manners, I thought he was just, you know, a "diamond."

JUNGE: Had you had other boyfriends before him?

THOMSON: Oh, sure

JUNGE: And he had other girlfriends before you?

THOMSON: Oh, I'm sure.

JUNGE: Isn't that something how that works, that chemistry? Of course you were both ready, I mean, how old were you at the time you met him?

THOMSON: I think about 18. I went to college at 17, I don't know I might have been 18 or 19.

JUNGE: How did you both do in school?

THOMSON: Well, he got very good grades and, you know, I graduated cum laude. Keith was a quick study because, you know, he was working all the time. I used to get unhappy because he could absorb something much faster than I could. I remember one night he came up to the House, being the Pi Beta House, and you know he had to walk blocks and blocks and blocks to get there. The Pi Beta was almost downtown in those days and he walked up there and we played ping pong for a while and we sat on the couch and held hands for a while and talked a long while. We didn't have a car and I kept saying 'Keith, you've got to go home, I have a geology exam tomorrow, and he said, 'So do I.' And I couldn't get him to go home. Finally he went home when, you know, the lights-out came. So he went home and I stayed up half the night studying for the exam, and he didn't at all and yet he got a better grade than I did (laughs). Not to worry. Not to worry.

JUNGE: He was known as a conservative politician and office holder, right? I mean, he was conservative in his views?

THOMSON: Oh, yes, he did not believe exactly in big government and you know he believed strongly - he had come back from the war - I mean he did not go to war until after he got out of college, but Keith was always a free enterprise man and the less government interference, the better.

JUNGE: Did he change from the time you first met and were first going with him to the time he ran for office, did he change his views? Was he a little more liberal, maybe?

THOMSON: I don't think so. No.

JUNGE: Do you think maybe that was one of the things that attracted you to him, was his conservative point of view?

THOMSON: We didn't talk much about those things (laughs).

JUNGE: You were too involved with other things.

THOMSON: Yeah.

THOMSON: Here are the medals that, maybe you can see them from where you are sitting, that he got during the war - see them over there on the wall?

JUNGE: Oh, I see, was he wounded? He got the Purple Heart, didn't he?

THOMSON: He got the Legion of Merit and the Purple Heart and the Italian Iron Cross and the Bronze Star.

JUNGE: Did he tell you how he got them, I mean what the action was exactly?

THOMSON: I have all the commendations and everything, the descriptions in his files which are about to go to the university, incidentally. But as a matter of fact, he always teased me. One time we were sitting at the table eating and he was teasing me and I took my table knife and reached over and cracked him on the hand. He always swore that the scar he had from me hitting him was bigger than any scar he got during World War II (laughs). He liked to call it to everybody's attention.

JUNGE: He decided to go into law early on or was it after he graduated he decided to go into law school?

THOMSON: No, he was committed to going to law school. He had a very interesting mother. She was dominant in the family and she always told him he could do anything in the world he wanted to do and he believed her.

JUNGE: Was she politically involved?

THOMSON: Oh yes, she was one of Wyoming's strongest Democrats and she said the moment he learned to read and write he went Republican. It drove her crazy.

JUNGE: Why did that happen?

THOMSON: Why do kids do the opposite things from their parents?

JUNGE: Was his father Republican or was his father also Democrat?

THOMSON: Well, I'm not sure that I ever heard Dan Thomson pontificate about his politics at all. Mother Thomson was very involved in politics.

JUNGE: This was Mary.

THOMSON: Mary Forbis. They all called her Forbis. Mary Forbis Coffey Thomson?? Forbis was the name that she was known by. But for three terms when he was running for Congress and was elected to Congress she never ever voted for him in the primary because she voted in the Democrat primary and I think she was Democratic State Committeewoman, but then when he ran against Frank Barrett for U.S. Senate, she was afraid he was going to get beat so she went in at the primary and asked for a Republican ballot and voted for Keith and stood in the very same spot and asked for a change of party and changed right back to Democrat. She was a Republican for all of 15 minutes or so.

JUNGE: That's great. What a great story. Now, I was asking Mabel Brown whom I saw over at work the other day, last week. I said, "I am going to interview Thyra Thomson on Monday, Mabel, what would you ask her?" She said, "Oh, you know, the Thomson side of the family," and she was familiar with it because she's from Newcastle, obviously. She said "It's sort of interesting, you should ask her about the two sides of that family; one was WCTU inclined and the other was a saloon keeper." Did you know anything about that?

THOMSON: She probably knows more about it than I do. That may have been Keith's grandparents, because Mother Thomson's mother, in other words, Mrs. Coffey, I think may have been a WCTUer. I never saw her. She was gone by the time I knew the family and his grandfather, Mr. Coffey, I think was sheriff in Sheridan at one time. He may have kept a saloon in Sheridan at one time, I'm not sure. He finally ended up going to Alaska and never coming home.

JUNGE: And you say you never met these because that was before your time?

THOMSON: No, but you know Mother Thomson was a very strong person and I think she took after her mother, Mrs. Coffey.

JUNGE: Who would have been the WCTU member?

THOMSON: That's hearsay to me, I don't know that.

JUNGE: Well, tell me what kind of a person she was. You say she was a very strong person?

THOMSON: You mean Mother Thomson?

JUNGE: Yeah.

THOMSON: I thought you were talking about her mother being a member of WCTU

JUNGE: Right, but you wouldn't have remembered her.

THOMSON: Right. Well, Mother Thomson was a very dominant person. She thought she could do anything and did. She was very well-liked. She participated in everything. She had twin daughters and twin sons and Keith. I think Keith was the only single child born in that family. He's the first, and then they had twin daughters, both of whom are still living, and the son, the youngest son, I think was also a twin, but his twin died because he is a single child too. He is living in Nebraska now. One of the twins is living in South Dakota. The other twin, of the daughters, is living in Seattle. I'm in touch with them all the time.

JUNGE: So she was a pretty strong woman.

THOMSON: She ran what she called a rooming house in Newcastle during the oil boom. She had I don't know how many men living in, she had a great big two-story house. She even had men on cots up and down the halls, there was such a demand for houses. She was quite a business woman. She got the whole place paid off and she said to Keith, 'I'm going to put an addition on it.' He said, "Mother, don't do it." He said, "I've seen the specs on this oil field and it's going to come in very big and it's going to drop off very fast," and she said, "Oh, I can't stop now, I'm making too much money. Whereupon, she put on this big addition on the place and about the time she got it completed the oil was practically dried to a trickle so everybody and it was sitting vacant so the bank took it over because she borrowed all this money for the addition and she ended up with a very nice brick home, a nice brick bungalow, and it was incredible how she could do it. She said, "Well, it was the bank's fault, not mine. After all, they're the bankers, they should have known better;" certain amount of logic to that.

JUNGE: Did Keith take more after his mother more than his father?

THOMSON: Oh no, no, no. But I think she was a driving force that made him think...I think she was very instrumental in his success because she expected it of him and she told him he could do and he did it. But in feature and in personality he was much more like his father.

JUNGE: How did you get along with her in life?

THOMSON: Wonderfully.

JUNGE: Was his mother the power in the family or was his father the strong, silent type in the background, or what?

THOMSON: She was. I think Mother Thomson dominated the family pretty much.

JUNGE: What did his father do?

THOMSON: He worked in the flour mills in, was it Beulah, Wyoming?

JUNGE: Oh, yes, the ??? Flour Mill.

THOMSON: And, of course, he was a rancher a great deal of his life. He came from a ranch family and I think it was probably his grandma's wish that they move to town when he left the ranch, because I think Dad Thomson liked ranching until he died. All of his brothers are ranchers.

JUNGE: And Keith grew up on the ranch, didn't he?

THOMSON: Uh huh. He always described himself as a ranch boy who left home and went to college and worked hard all of his life to save a little money to buy a ranch and

that's the first thing he did was buy a ranch up at Cody, up at Wapiti between Yellowstone and Cody.

JUNGE: Was he raised on a ranch pretty much all his life?

THOMSON: Oh, yeah.

JUNGE: Okay, so he was a ranch boy then.

THOMSON: Mm hmm. He spent all of his summers out there and, of course, part of the winter. When he was in school he was in Newcastle.

JUNGE: When you were going together or in your early married years, did you spend much time up in Newcastle?

THOMSON: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We went up there all the time. Like I say his mother was a delightful, crazy woman. She was just..you know, she viewed everything a little differently. She loved to play cards and you never could beat her. She would cheat if she could, if she had to, you know. She was just wonderful fun. Every night there was a bridge game going and big argument and everything. It was just wonderful. She had a lot of exuberance. There was nothing dull about her. She was a very exuberant lady. I remember one time we went to Newcastle. We went to Newcastle to see them frequently, and we drove up to the front of the house and here was this stream of cars. This was when mother had the rooming house, and here was this stream of cars and a car and a trailer and a brand new Ford, etc. etc, and he just sort of blanched and we went in the house and he said, "Mother is that your new car out there, the new Ford out there?" And she said, "Yes." She said, "Keith Thomson don't you say one word to me, don't you say one word to me," She said, "I had to buy that new car. I couldn't pay for the old one." This is what you call sideways thinking and she got away with it all the time.

JUNGE: (Laughs) Sounds like the makings of a radio program, "Mother Thomson's Boarding House."

THOMSON: Right.

JUNGE: I read where she was Mother-of-the-Year or something like that, Wyoming's Mother-of-the-Year.

THOMSON: And you know it was really funny when we went to put her on the plane to go to..you know all the time Keith was in Congress I begged her to come back to Washington so we could show her around. I knew she'd love it, but she was afraid to fly, so she didn't come. But when she was Mother-of-the-Year, she was going to fly. Keith and I had a home over there on Dey Avenue, a brand new home that was pretty and she arrived and we were going to take her to Denver to put her on the plane for New York and she had this great big old, heavy trunk suitcase, kind of a metal one. So I said, "Mother, let me put your things into something a little easier to handle and a little more

stable. So we packed and we packed. She had everything to match. She had more stuff than you could imagine and we got her all packed and we took her to Denver and she seemed so brave. I know she was scared to death, bless her heart, but she didn't let on. So she was going on United Air and it happened that it was the last gate on the last concourse and she was kind of a heavy woman and she had to walk all the way out there and she said to Bruce who was walking with his grandma, he was so sweet to her, and she said, "I want a drink." So Bruce stopped at a fountain and she took out of her purse a whole handful of pills and popped them in her mouth and took this great big swish of water. I don't know whether they were sleeping tablets or whether they were aspirin, or what they were, but she was fortifying herself for this trip. So Bruce says to her, he says, "Grandma, if you get warm on the plane, you just ask the stewardess to open the window for you (laughs). He was just joshing her, you know. Actually, she had the world's best time. She was at the Waldorf Astoria in New York and on the way going she just had the most fascinating time, 'cause she had two seat companions and grandmother talked a mile a minute and she had these two people pinned (laughs) and she had a wonderful time, just wonderful. As I recall, and I'm not sure, it seems to me that she did go on down to Washington and Charlie Hallock was her dear friend because Charlie used to come out and spend some time with Keith and me at the ranch all the time.

JUNGE: How did they know each other?

THOMSON: Well, mother was at the ranch part of the time, Mother Thomson.

JUNGE: Okay – Oh, and Hallock was a friend of yours and Keith's?

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: Didn't he have something to do with getting a nice letter off from the White House from Lyndon Johnson to her? I read something like that in a news article. He wrote her such a nice letter and it was so full of detail that it made you wonder if this Hallock hadn't primed somebody at the White House.

THOMSON: Possibly it was. I don't know about that letter. I don't think I've seen it.

JUNGE: I understand that when you were on the legislation committee for the Federation Women's Club, whatever it was, Women's Federation Club, you had something to do with the agency that I work for started.

THOMSON: Oh, yes.

JUNGE: What's the story behind that, I'm interested in that.

THOMSON: Golly, that was 30 years ago and I don't remember much of the detail, but I worked rather closely with Lola Homsher and we got legislation that she recommended passed.

JUNGE: Why were you interested in that. Was it just something to do, or did you have a particular interest in what she was doing.

THOMSON: Well, I think she kind of sought me out.

JUNGE: She spotted you as being a mover and a shaker, maybe?

THOMSON: I don't know because at that time I was just a housewife with small children living out here on Cheyenne Place. It's just a little short street, Cheyenne Place. It's only a couple blocks long.

JUNGE: Okay. What matters to me, though, is how this whole thing got moving. Was Lola the first director? Who was the first director of this agency?

THOMSON: I think Lola, as I recall.

JUNGE: You don't recall how this all got started?

THOMSON: No, I don't. It's 30 years ago and I don't remember.

JUNGE: Was Frank Bowron involved?

THOMSON: May have. I never met with him. I don't know. Was he in the State Legislature?

JUNGE: Might have been.

THOMSON: I just don't know.

JUNGE: He was one of the founders of the State Historical Society back in 1952. Didn't you run against him?

THOMSON: I may have. I never paid attention to him as my opposition.

JUNGE: You didn't? Why not?

THOMSON: Why should I?

JUNGE: Because they're your opposition.

THOMSON: No, you go forward, you do your own thing in this. You know, they had a race to run. I had a race to run. I couldn't even tell you who my opposition – what was I elected, six times? In six elections, I would be hard pressed to tell you who my opposition was. I couldn't do it.

JUNGE: Sometime if you ever dig anything up on that organization in the '80s, I'm very interested in that.

THOMSON: I'm sorry to say I don't think I have anything because, you know, it was before I was in office and it was before I kept files. After I was in office, of course, I had pretty good records.

JUNGE: What kind of a person was Lola? She was a predecessor, obviously.

THOMSON: Well, she was very devoted to her job. I think she got along with the Legislature fairly well. She lived with a woman.

JUNGE: Henrietta Berry.

THOMSON: Yes, and was Henrietta in that same division? I think they worked together.

JUNGE: This wouldn't have been said years ago, but you and I can talk about it now because everything is sort of out in the open, but I wondered if there was a lesbian relationship between those two. I've heard that. Now it wasn't unusual for women to live together in those days and people thought nothing of it, but I've always wondered if there was another sort of relationship.

THOMSON: I wouldn't know. I didn't seem them together an awful lot. Although Lola spoke, always referred to "Henry" frequently. And I'm reminded of the story of the woman who said "Two school teachers have moved into the apartment across the street and I see them come and go all the time. No man ever enters or leaves." She said, "Do you suppose they're Lebanese?"

(Both laugh)

JUNGE: That's great. What a funny story. Well, I don't know if you even want to comment any further or not, but it's interesting to me and I've been talking to people and apparently Henrietta Berry was a sort of (unintelligible) and kept Lola in line. And Lola was no exactly, you know, a wilting flower, so it was an interesting relationship.

THOMSON: Just as you say, I'm sure that throughout history these things have always been there, but no so much in evidence, or so much admitted publicly.

JUNGE: No, it would have been a terrible scandal in those days, but today it's getting more and more open and I'm glad of it myself. I understood that Lola was fired by Hansen.

THOMSON: See, I don't know that.

JUNGE: Because she wanted to get a new building and Katherine Halverson told me, when I talked to Katherine, she said “it’s interesting how each person who tried to get a new building for the Historical Department...”

THOMSON: Ended up being fired.

JUNGE: (Laughs) Yeah.

THOMSON: Well, frankly, I always wondered why it never came to pass because when I first became interested in the Archives and Historical Department, a lot of Wyoming records were being rained on up in Guernsey, Wyoming, or some other place. They were just being stored here, there and everywhere. I didn’t understand why the Legislature didn’t recognize that as a bona fide need and some pride in our heritage and history, but it’s never come to pass to this day, never come to pass to this day.

JUNGE: You said we were close with Robert Bush?

THOMSON: Yes. What happened, of course, you know, this was at the time from about ’75 to the early ‘80s Wyoming was just thriving. We had resource development and a big demand through the state for housing. The state, you know, income was good, we had money for grants to cities and towns. What happened was that Bush came before the Capitol Building Commission with this elaborate plan for an Archives and Historical combined.

JUNGE: He came with a proposal?

THOMSON: Yes, this combination building was going to share one heating system, etc., etc. and was going to be on the other side of the Capitol comparable to where the Supreme Court is. It was going to make a very nicely balanced core Capitol Complex and the board voted favorably for it. Whereupon, Lynn Simons spoke up and said that she thought it should be postponed a month to examine possible other locations and the governor, Governor Herschler, said, “Okay.” Governor Herschler said okay. Whereupon that hits the papers and every city and town in Wyoming wanted that building, which, of course, killed the proposition right there because, you know, the Legislature, every legislator had to support his own town’s request and we never got it here in Cheyenne, the capital.

JUNGE: Buffalo was interested in it.

THOMSON: Yes, there were several towns that were interested, and that all came as innocently as that, or I don’t know that was that innocent. I, of course, thought it was unfortunate circumstance. We could have had it, the money was there, that’s when the money was flowing into the capital. We could have had it at that time.

JUNGE: Do you remember the hassle that developed between the Recreation Commission and Archives over SHPO?

THOMSON: No, I don't. Tell me about it.

JUNGE: The Recreation Commission had been given the State Historical Preservation Office and it was my understanding after having worked for the Preservation Office after all those years the reason why it came to us is not because we already had the Land and Water Conservation Act matching program and not because we already ran what we inherited from the State Parks Commission in physical sites, tools, wheelbarrows, backhoes and such, but because Governor Hathaway did not like Neil Miller, so he gave this new program that came into being in 1966 in the Historical Preservation Act, it was a matching program and the matching grants would be used to rehabilitate physical sites so that was ostensibly why it came over to us, but the real reason, they told me, was because Hathaway didn't like Neil Miller. Well, I've always wondered what Frank Bowron's part was in all this because Frank Bowron and Bob Bush were the drivers and the pushers to try to get the SHPO moved from one agency to the other.

THOMSON: What is SHPO exactly?

JUNGE: It's the State Historical Preservation Office. Remember the argument that Herschler talked about if the window fell in at South Pass City.

THOMSON: No, I don't remember that. Tell me.

JUNGE: It is the responsibility of the museum, but if the window falls out, then it's the Recreation Commission and then it was insoluble.

THOMSON: When Win Hickey and I went before the Appropriations Committee to get money to buy Nellie Tayloe Ross's house.

JUNGE: What happened on that?

THOMSON: Well, we could have gotten it for \$100,000 and the Appropriations Committee asked for a recommendation from, I suppose the Historical Department, I don't know exactly the operation of that agency; but, they came in with a price about three times that much to lift the corners of the house and do all kinds of rehabilitation and take the paper off the walls to get it down to its natural condition and they killed the whole proposition. They just killed it.

JUNGE: It was you and Win who were behind that, though?

THOMSON: Yes. Win Hickey and I.

JUNGE: Well, that brings me up short here to another topic and I'm wondering if maybe we should continue this. How do you feel?

THOMSON: Well, I'd be glad to. Like I say, I don't know that I'm a very good candidate. I like to talk business rather than personal things, but maybe I'll get used to being more at ease about talking about myself. I've never been used to that.

JUNGE: You've been fine, just fine. I don't see any problem and now that we're past most of that now we get into some of the issues.

THOMSON: Well, it interests me in my 24 years in office, you know, that's a quarter of a century of Wyoming history right there.

JUNGE: Do you see, though, how we have worked our way up and are getting closer to it?

THOMSON: Sure.

JUNGE: Okay, and all the previous stuff is really good material.

THOMSON: Is it?

JUNGE: Oh, yes. This is going to be helpful for anybody down the road, but now we're at the point where, you know, you're really interested in the subjects and I am so unknowledgeable.

THOMSON: Let me just say this. I did this this morning because I was trying to put things in proper perspective. My thinking tends to be linear and I was trying to get a horizontal view of this so I wrote down the presidents since the time I entered office to today and I wrote down the governors from the time I was in office 'til I left office, and I wrote down the senators, U.S. senators, trying to get a mosaic of the forces. I was elected in '62, took office in '63. JFK died in '63, Johnson and his great society with the 'up-the-anti' government was in office from '63 to '68. Nixon was in office from '69 to '74. I don't remember the exact date of Watergate, I don't know.

JUNGE: '72, '73 I think.

THOMSON: Ford was in office then until '77. Carter was in office from '77 to '81 and that was the period of the greatest inflation we've ever had in my lifetime. Inflation got up to 21 percent. Reagan was in office from '81 to '89 and, of course, I left office in '87. Bush was in office, of course, then and then Clinton. Now the governors – I served with Hansen, who was in office '63 to '67, Hathaway '67 to '75, Herschler '75 to '87. In other words, there were six presidents and three governors while I was in office.

JUNGE: What's your statement about that?

THOMSON: And then Hansen, Milward Simpson was in office as U.S. senator when I first entered and then Hansen was in office from '67 to '79, U.S. senator and Wallop from '75 and will be to '95 and Simpson came on in '79. So you begin to get this

mosaic. Actually, it's more interesting to me, not the senators so much, because they were all Republican, but the fact that we had six presidents and three governors while I was in office. It's kind of interesting, isn't it? Because of the connection between federal mandates and the state government.

JUNGE: In what way? I'm not sure I make the connection.

THOMSON: Well, because so much of what we did at the state level came with some federal mandates and federal grants. Just like you mentioned a few minutes ago, so much was required matching funds, etc. etc. I remember during the Johnson Administration when Senator Hansen, who was then Governor Hansen, asked me to go back and sit on the...representing the Wyoming Commission on the status of women, when Willard Wertz, Johnson's secretary of labor, said "We shall bypass all state governments and go right from the federal government to every city and town in America." That was what he said. And the great society was just dispensing money just like all of it was debt money. It was a very interesting time.

JUNGE: Do you think we've continued down that road, or have we diverged and gone..

THOMSON: Oh, no, we've had lots of jobs because Nixon then tried to do the opposite. He tried to send money directly into the states from returning money in lieu of taxes and those kinds of things. He tried to strengthen the state government and decentralize power in Washington.

JUNGE: Yeah. I think I understand your perspective on that, 'cause you have quite a perspective.

THOMSON: Well, I have the perspective of a quarter of a century and what is important to me might not be the same thing that would be important to somebody else.

JUNGE: Absolutely.

TAPE 3 SIDE A

JUNGE: Speaking of your mother, I read the comments, which you made at her memorial service.

THOMSON: Uh huh – which was right in this room.

JUNGE: The service was?

THOMSON: Uh huh. We didn't have a service at a mortuary or funeral parlor or church, we had it right in this room.

JUNGE: Why did you decide to do it here?

THOMSON: Well. I wanted it to be intimate. I think so often when you get to be 85 years old your friends are gone and it gets to be a different kind of thing.. But we had all the people here who knew mother best and they spoke, everyone of them spoke, about mother and it was wonderful.

JUNGE: You made a comment that kind of surprised me. You sort of indicated that in some ways she was sort of a “hard” woman, a sort of “intractable,” would that be a good word?

THOMSON: Mother was very businesslike. She was kind of a combination because she didn’t have the confidence that she would have had had she not been foreign-born, but at the same time, she had a good strong personality and I’m amazed at how many things she did, really.

JUNGE: Do you think that her personality is in you?

THOMSON: Oh, it has to be, part of it. I do think that we learn from our parents. We resemble our parents and it crops up every once in a while, although we disagree, of course, but that’s human nature.

JUNGE: Did you and your mom butt heads a little bit?

THOMSON: Not really. You have to realize that mother suffered from bad health. She had a “floating kidney.” She also had tuberculosis of the spine. Those two things combined kept her in the hospital for many, many years so that I was out on my own very early. We didn’t have any arguments or difficulties or anything. It was more of a reversal. I always felt like I was taking care of my mother, you know.

JUNGE: And, of course, you didn’t know your dad at all, so you don’t know what you got in the way of personality from him.

Maybe I’d better put something on the front of this tape for the transcriber of future generations. Today is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1993. My name is Mark Junge and I’m talking with Thyra Thomson, retired Secretary of State, long-time Secretary of State for the state of Wyoming and we’re here at her home. What is the address again here?

THOMSON: 3102 Sunrise Road.

JUNGE: Right, in Cheyenne. We’ve got our shoes off and we’re just talking a little bit today about her career. Thyra, I hope you don’t mind these little asides.

THOMSON: No.

JUNGE: You know the last time I think we cut off approximately where you had met Keith and you were going together in college doing things that young people in love do

and I think we sort of cut off there. I can't remember much beyond that and I think you mentioned it was Keith's good looks initially that attracted you to him, right?

THOMSON: And gentle personality. Keith was a very well-mannered man. Of course he was essentially a rancher, born and bred.

JUNGE: He was younger than you.

THOMSON: Two years.

JUNGE: By two years. Do you think he was mature for his age?

THOMSON: Oh, yes, and very, very bright. Keith was a very brilliant man.

JUNGE: What sort of personality was he? Did he have a serious bent to him?

THOMSON: Yes, and he was an achiever. I mean, I think he was president of the Potter Law Club and he was elected to the Student Senate at the University and he was a very good student and he just, he was an achiever. He always had goals and he reached them.

JUNGE: What did you see in those early years as your future with him, can you remember?

THOMSON: Oh, we weren't nearly that analytical (laughs). We were in love (laughs).

JUNGE: Was it love at first sight?

THOMSON: We were engaged a month after we met.

JUNGE: So you guys had a whirlwind romance?

THOMSON: Mm hmm. And then it was two years before we were married because we were both students and we both worked. I had a full-time job at the University and he had – well, I can't say my job was full time, exactly, when we met. It was when we were married, but he managed the bookstore and first I worked in the Office of Economics for Ralph Conwell, who was department head, and then later I worked full time for A.F. Vass, who was head of Agronomy and Economics.

JUNGE: A.F. Fass?

THOMSON: Vass.

JUNGE: Oh, Vass.

THOMSON: So I was employed at the University of Wyoming and so was he. So when we got enough money together to buy a second hand car with the whole side caved in we

paid \$300 for it. We got married and went on a honeymoon (laughs). Keith had two more years of law school and I had my degree.

JUNGE: Where did you go on your honeymoon?

THOMSON: We went to Thermopolis, Yellowstone Park and then we crossed the Big Horn Mountains and went down to Newcastle to see his folks.

JUNGE: Was it a good honeymoon?

THOMSON: What a question. Of course it was. It was wonderful. One silly thing that happened – I'm trying to correct myself. I think we went into Spearfish, South Dakota. That's where his folks were living at the time we were married. But the thing that happened that was so funny – I was eager, you know, to be the perfect wife when I met his mother and Keith asked me to press his trousers and I burned a hole right through them (laughs).

JUNGE: So did that leave an impression on his mother?

THOMSON: She was a lovely woman. We had a lot of fun together, Mother Thomson was a delight.

JUNGE: Did you support him while he was going to law school?

THOMSON: Not exactly. It would be more accurate to say I supported myself. It was a sort of half and half proposition because he was managing the University of Wyoming bookstore, so he had about as good an income as I did. The two of us – there were only fifteen married couples on the entire campus at that time.

JUNGE: Is that all?

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: That doesn't sound right. Why?

THOMSON: Well, this was before there was such a habit of people being married before they finished school and that came about more with the war. See, with World War II they were finished with college before they got married. It was a matter of money. We were all so poor. You know if you worked on the campus, you got maybe 25 cents an hour.

JUNGE: Were you looked down on for being married?

THOMSON: Oh, no.no. In fact all law students, the Potter Law Club students, rendezvous'd at our house, they thought it was wonderful, in our basement apartment.

JUNGE: Now, this may be hard for you to answer but what was your and Keith's image in school. How did people look at you?

THOMSON: Just like anyone else, just like any other students in school. Except, that, of course, Keith was a leader and, you know, like I say, he was part of the Student Senate and he was elected president of the Potter Law Club and we both wrote for the *Branding Iron*, but if I recall he didn't have a column. He was in ROTC and got his commission.

JUNGE: How did you get your job writing?

THOMSON: Writing?

JUNGE: Mm hmm.

THOMSON: You mean when I was in college or later?

JUNGE: In college.

THOMSON: I just went up and asked for it.

JUNGE: What did you expect? I mean, did you want to write a column?

THOMSON: Well, I was a reporter – I'll tell you how those things come about (laughs). I was a Pi Beta Phi and the sorority I found was very good at seeing that you participated in campus affairs. That was part of being a sorority member. And they said we had to have two outside activities, so I looked at all the activities and I decided that writing for the paper would be one I would enjoy, so I just went and told them I'd like to be a reporter.

JUNGE: Was it difficult for you?

THOMSON: No, it was a non-paid job, they were happy to have me (laughs).

JUNGE: You didn't get any pay?

THOMSON: Oh, no. Those were campus activities. Those were all volunteer activities.

JUNGE: Later on you got paid, though, for your column from Washington?

THOMSON: Well, no, I didn't get paid then either because I was the wife of a politician and that was all citizen service, you know, constituent service.

JUNGE: But would you say that it was worth your time even though you didn't get paid?

THOMSON: Oh, yes. I really enjoyed it. For one thing, if you have to put things on paper, you're much more apt to remember, to view them accurately, you know.

JUNGE: Think them through.

THOMSON: Mm hmm. Exactly.

JUNGE: When you were married to Keith in those very earliest years, can you remember what you saw down the road, did you see – the way your history is compressed, the way historians compress history, it makes me think, well, yes, you knew that he was going to run for office, that he was going to be a senator and that you would be Secretary of State. What were you thinking in those early years?

THOMSON: I think maybe Keith had more vision of his future than I did or even expected. His mother told him that he could be anything he wanted to be. She told him that from the day he was able to understand language and she told him also that he had to go to college. It never even entered his mind that he wouldn't go to college, and, I mean, it was just something you did. His family didn't have a lot of money, that's why he had to work all the time, but it didn't stop him from doing it. And I think he had more of a vision than I did; but, frankly, I was just a good student who had some status on campus myself, due to the push of my sorority (laughs). We had a wonderful time. I loved to dance, you know, we had some wonderful balls. I feel so sorry for the college kids. They don't have any of that fun anymore. We had the Engineer's Ball and the Potter Law Club activities and the Commerce Carnival and all those sorority and fraternity dances and college was fun. But we worked hard at the same time. As far as visualizing our future, we met our needs. We never knew as we went along and that was just about as far as I looked. Keith, I'm sure, had a lot more vision than I did, but when he died and suddenly I wasn't only the widow of a congressman and U.S. senator-elect, but I was the sole support of three sons. Then I began to kind of look to the future, you know (laughs). It does give you a different outlook.

JUNGE: Mm hmm. So, you were sort of naïve?

THOMSON: I don't think so. I think I was very much a realist, but I was engrossed with the days. I still am. I'm still very much a person that lives today. I don't live yesterday. I don't live tomorrow. I live today and I think I was very much in love. It's a very exciting time when you finish college and you're just like a man goes into a career and, of course, women do today too, but at that time, of course, I had a career until Keith came home from the war. I worked for about, oh, the first four years of our marriage and I did help him complete law school, there isn't any doubt of that. But once he came back from the war and we had – I had my first baby before he left, and then we had two more children and he was starting a law practice and we were buying our first home.

JUNGE: What do you mean, you supported him? You actually went out and got a job to support his law school work?

THOMSON: Well, as I said, we both had jobs. I worked all the time that he was in school.

JUNGE: Okay.

THOMSON: But he also worked. He was manager of the bookstore.

JUNGE: I guess what I was trying to get at here, I'm searching my mind a little bit. Maybe this would be a better question. How did Keith see himself? He was from a ranch back in the Newcastle area.

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: Alright, why didn't he come down to school, get a degree in ag economics, go back and run a ranch? Why did he go to lawyering and eventually politics? What was it about him that pushed him or led him in that direction? He could have been a rancher. He had a good head on his shoulders...probably would have been a very successful rancher, right?

THOMSON: Well, and he loved the ranch, you see (laughs). After he went to Congress, first he practiced law for...let's get things in order here. After he got out of law school, he was immediately called into the service. In fact, before he even got his, passed the Bar, World War II started and in April of, what was it, 1941, before Pearl Harbor, he was called into service because, like I say, he had taken ROTC and he already had his commission, so he was one of those who was called up first in April. He would have gotten his degree the 1st of June and taken his Bar. The University granted him and Bob Rose, who became Supreme Court Judge Rose, their degrees one month ahead of time. They would have got their degrees one month later and he was – I think he took a quick Bar, as I remember. He was eager to take his Bar before he left and I think he got that in before he left. Well, we were called into the service. We went to Texas and then we went to Oregon and then he was shipped overseas and I had one baby and when he came home, he was nine years in law, practicing law with Harry Henderson, a very prominent Cheyenne lawyer. That was before he went into politics and then he ran for office. During the time he was practicing law, he served, as I recall, two terms in the State Legislature. In '54 he was elected U.S. Congress. He served three terms and, like I say, he was, he always had these visions, he ran for U.S. Senate. He knew he could be elected. He was elected and then, of course, he dropped dead of a heart attack at 41.

JUNGE: Okay, let me put this a little more (unintelligible). Do you think Keith was oriented towards power? Do you think he was oriented toward success? What was his motivation? If he loved the soil, maybe he would have gone back and been a rancher and taken you with him and you would have been a rancher's wife, a very prominent Newcastle rancher's wife.

THOMSON: (Laughs). Well, obviously he didn't love the ranch that...that's what I started to tell you. The first thing he did after he was in Congress and we saved enough money, the first thing he did was buy a ranch. He bought that ranch before he died. He

always described himself as a ranch boy before he left home and he worked hard all his life to save enough money to buy a ranch. So, you see, he did come back to his roots.

JUNGE: Well, he didn't love the ranch enough to be a rancher the rest of his life.

THOMSON: Well, not only a rancher. It was sort of an avocation with Keith. But, like I say, I still think that all of the visions that Keith had were implanted by his mother.

JUNGE: A drive to succeed.

THOMSON: She was very active in politics herself, the Democrat Party. Keith used to tease her. He said as soon as he was old enough to read and write, he joined the Republicans (laughs).

JUNGE: That reminds me of something. I was watching a National Geographic special last night. Did you see that? About these two African cinematographers, husband and wife photographic team, and there was a long, one-hour program on zebras which was a symbol of African wildlife. They made a point in telling you, the observer, that the young zebra, when it's born, the mother has to protect that zebra from other zebras so that he doesn't imprint with somebody else's stripes.

THOMSON: Ahh.

JUNGE: You see, if the other stripes imprint on him, he'll never go to his mother for milk and if he doesn't go to his mother for the milk, then he dies, obviously. So it's very important for her to shield him physically from the other zebras. When you were talking there about Keith's Mom, it made me think...aha.

THOMSON: She imprinted.

JUNGE: She imprinted.

THOMSON: I have no doubt in my mind but what she did.

JUNGE: It's hard to label exactly what drives us, what motivates us.

THOMSON: Well, I think his fine mind, too, because, you know, he was a very good lawyer and I think a fine mind often is an inquiring mind. Expansive.

JUNGE: Unwilling to stop at a certain point.

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: Do you think that you're that way?

THOMSON: Oh, shucks (laughs).

JUNGE: No, seriously, Thyra, you could have stopped. You didn't have to go into politics

THOMSON: Well, you know, I get myself involved in things. I always see a new vision, a new project, a new interest. I really do. It's what makes life interesting, isn't it?

JUNGE: Oh, yeah. And busy.

THOMSON: I believe in commitment.

JUNGE: Uh. Those early years, when he came back from the service..well, I guess, let me ask you about his service career. You've got all those medals on the wall. You've got six medals up there. Did he ever tell you about his career in the service?

THOMSON: Very little. There are lots of papers downstairs, but, you know, all of his commendations, and...I still...The war ended in 1945 and we're almost to '95, so that's almost 50 years later. I am still receiving letters from men who served with Keith Thomson in the war.

JUNGE: What kind of letters?

THOMSON: Wonderful letters. There's one man in Kansas, I believe it is, he runs a waste facility. He was very much ahead of his time in that developing some kind of an incinerator system that was environmentally correct (laughs), but he was a sergeant under Keith and he always told me, you know, he'd write me these long letters of having served with Keith and it was very interesting from an enlisted man's viewpoint. And, then, I have a book over there on the breakfront, a man from Sterling, Colorado, wrote about the war years and brought me, came up here from Colorado and brought me a copy because he mentioned Keith in it. And my explanation is that these men are reaching an age where they're retired and they're going through their own papers and their own recollections and they're beginning to appreciate that period of their lives. And this man from Kansas who belongs to veterans' organizations, and I can see that he is an organizer, has written me twice to come to their national annual meetings - the colonel's wife, the colonel's wife. He always referred to Keith as "the colonel." You know, Keith was just a kid. Keith was very, very young as a colonel. He was the youngest battalion commander in the United States.

JUNGE: How old was he?

THOMSON: About 24. It was incredible. Let's see, '45 the war ended and Keith was born in 1919, so about 26, I guess, but see those fellows still respected the colonel.

JUNGE: What were their impressions as they write you from time to time.

THOMSON: Well, this one gentleman says that the colonel would never ask a man to do anything he wouldn't do himself. They liked that about him. And, you know, he told me all sorts of fun tales about them stealing chickens in Italy to have something different to eat and the horrible time they had on Mt. (??) when their whole battalion was decimated and, you know, they came off of that mountain. One of Keith's captains of a company was pulled off that mountain head down over the back of a mule – still survived. But, you know, they told me lots of tales about things like that. Lot of it – it was interesting. It was man's talk. I have a feeling a little bit – I was getting copies of letters he was writing to other people too, but he thought a lot of Keith or he wouldn't have paid so much attention to me. And I'm a little bit ashamed of this, but I was so busy with my own job, getting these letters when I was Secretary of State. Maybe the fact that I was a public figure triggered him paying attention too, you know, I suppose, but I'm a little bit ashamed of the fact that I was so busy with my own affairs at that time, and the State's affairs, my three sons, etc., that I never really carried on a voluminous correspondence with him. I did acknowledge his letters and tell him that I was sure that Keith's sons would appreciate having them in the future and things like that, but I never ever tried to follow up on that.

JUNGE: Is he gone now?

THOMSON: I don't think so. I heard from him last Christmas.

JUNGE: You made a statement that I thought was interesting before we even went on tape, when I first came in the house and that was that you are, again, a today person. Do you think you are beginning to appreciate history more?

THOMSON: Oh, yes. For the first time really. That's why I appreciate you is because you've made me kind of focus a little bit. I do think that (laughs) laziness makes you inclined to put off some things that you'd like to do, but I've really enjoyed this, particularly because I've just returned from Wales where Bruce, my middle son, and I went to trace my father's heritage.

JUNGE: Mm hmm. And we talked a little bit about that. I wonder what it is about a person's age, your age now, that makes you want to go back, say "Oh, boy, maybe we should cover some lost territory here."

THOMSON: Suddenly you begin to appreciate the fact that you're just a part of the web. You're just a point in the stream of life and what goes before you and what comes after you is equally as important as whatever you have been or done or think or feel, you know.

JUNGE: Are you so busy during your career that you can't take time to think about those things?

THOMSON: I think so. Uh, depending an awful lot on your own personality. I think I was a type A and I did a great many things because when you're an elected official what you can do is only limited by your own energies.

JUNGE: Mm hmm.

THOMSON: Particularly in my post because I was not only Secretary of State and therefore the keeper of most business documents for private enterprises and what not, but I was securities commissioner, I was chief elections officer, I was lieutenant governor. My goodness, there was an awful lot out there. In fact, when I first went into office, I used to sit up in that Capitol building night after night, particularly because there was so much to absorb in the field of securities, stock, bonds, real estate investment trusts (??) Participating interest, mutual funds, you know, everything was out there, money market certificates and I was like a blotter. I was supposed to regulate this stuff. I eventually (laughs) it took me a while to do it, but I was elected president of the North American Securities Administrators.

JUNGE: It shows you did your homework.

THOMSON: Well, the other thing that I think kept me busy and occupied was the fact that, see, I was just on the cutting edge when women were beginning to come into their own and I was, for a while, the highest woman elected official in the country. That didn't last too long because there were a couple of governor's wives that came after that. Mrs. Wallace took George's place, but anyway it was...

JUNGE: Dixie Lee Ray, wasn't she one?

THOMSON: Yeah, but she came a little bit later, but, consequently, because I was getting a lot of notice, I was invited to speak all over the United States. I spoke from Westchester, New York to San Francisco. I spoke to oil well service contractors. I spoke to bankers. You know, I was really out there among...and I loved it. I mean, I loved it because it gave me a reason to know about all these things.

JUNGE: But I read your speeches. You gave me a whole stack of speeches in preparation for this interview and it seemed like you knew just what to say to those people. You, of course, made your usual political statements and blasted the Democrats.

THOMSON: (Laughs).

JUNGE: I think it's interesting that you knew what to say to the oil well contractors, you knew what to say to the civil defense coordinators. How did you know what to say to these people?

THOMSON: Well, you do a lot of homework and I was terribly interested in what was going on.

JUNGE: In the civil defense coordinators?

THOMSON: That was very important to me because, you see, when the governor was out of state, I was responsible to meet every emergency that came and the first year I was in office, we had this tremendous flood in the northern part of the state in 1963 and that's the one when the north fork of the Shoshone (unintelligible) so badly it washed out steel trusses, bridges, you couldn't even find a matchstick under it it was buried under silt for days. On the other side of the mountain in Greybull River, the torrents came so greatly and washed out the banks and the intake from Greybull River to Greybull citizenry, the water intake was sitting up in the air. All the bank under it was gone. You know, the mayor called me up and said "I have enough water in that water tank for 400 people for eight hours, what are you going to do about it?" You know, this is the kind of thing you deal with. We had no disaster coordination then. They didn't have any emergency preparation back in 1963, that all came later – Wyoming Civil Defense, Disaster and Civil Defense Agency came later.

Suddenly, there was a great necessity to be able to put your hands on everything that would work, both private and public.

JUNGE: Okay, so the basis of that speech then came from practical experience?

THOMSON: Well, yes. You know, we had tornadoes, we had earthquakes, we had blizzards in Wyoming, we had thousands of cattle stranded, we had spills of materials that would have been very dangerous, we had crashes. There were all kinds of things that happened continually and, you know, I think the last time I counted was in 1980, it was six years before I left office, but at that time I had been governor for about a year and a half and so, that is the governors had been out of state more than 500 days at that time and by the time I left office, I suppose it was two years and a half.

JUNGE: Okay, now that speech was based on all the practical speeches that you had, but what would you possibly know about the oil-well contractors business, oil-well drilling contractors business?

THOMSON: Well, you know when it comes right down to it, private enterprise has to know about state government, because they have to deal with both the federal and state government. Unfortunately, the regulations are more onerous all the time. But similarly, anybody who has any responsibility in state government should know about them and their problems and their interests and it was a vital resource to Wyoming. What did we say? For years we said that the three most rewarding revenue producing strengths in the state of Wyoming were resource development and agriculture and tourism. Sometimes those top two would vary a little bit, whether they were first or second, but these guys were oil well service contractors. They were the heart of our oil industry – oil and gas industry. It was a very important economic.

JUNGE: Did you write your own speeches?

THOMSON: All of them.

JUNGE: Why didn't you have a sort of speech writer, a secretary or somebody?

THOMSON: No, no, no, no. You know I was enveloped in this office. I was a public servant. I had to know what was going on. If I had to sit and tell everyone else what was going on to write a speech for me, I might as well write it myself. I was the one that had the knowledge. I was the one that did the work. I was the one that has the (unintelligible) interest. I don't have an awful lot of..what is the saying about...I don't know that I write terribly well.

JUNGE: I think you do.

THOMSON: Maybe reporters could have done better, but I did study journalism in college.

JUNGE: And you learned that you tell people what you're going to say, you say it, and then you tell them what you just said. You have an introduction, a body and a conclusion, and your speeches generally have that.

THOMSON: Well, yes.

JUNGE: You learned that in journalism class.

THOMSON: You know, it's changed, though, today, Mark. Now I have to learn the 30 second byte. You would never know that from my expounding here this morning, but to tell you the truth, it has been suggested a time or two that I host a talk-show just because I know so many people. I know how things are done in Washington. I know how things are done in state government. I wouldn't be the good speaker on a talk show, but I could be a very good hostess on a talk show because I understand protocol. I understand some things that – the right and the wrong way to do things, so it has been suggested that I would be a good hostess on a talk show. If I were to ever be a hostess on a talk show and I invited interesting people to come, I would let them do the talking. It always bores me on TV when they invite somebody, you know, real interesting to come and then they interrupt them all the time with questions that don't allow the flow. You know, a good interviewer lets you expound, just like you let me expound, but too many of our people today on these talk shows...and if there's one thing that bugs me, it's this business of, you know, your house has burned down, four kids and your husband died. "How do you feel?" (Both laugh). Is there an answer to that?

JUNGE: Can't you tell by the tears in my eyes? Well, why don't you do a talk show?

THOMSON: Nobody's asked me. I mean, the people at the stations haven't asked me. You don't think I'd be as good as Rush Limbaugh? (Laughs).

JUNGE: Rush Limbaugh doesn't have a talk show. He does all the talking. Well, a talk show in a classical sense, where, you say, you listen to people. Rush doesn't listen to people. In other words, you would do it if somebody asked you to do it?

THOMSON: Well, I might. You know, I had a lot of experience with people from foreign missions, both in Washington and here, that is, you know, people I hear from to this day in people like Jim Nutt, who was the Consul General of Canada. I still hear from him. He and his wife still come to see me. I have a lot of people of that stature. I have a book right over there that was sent to me by Larry L'Estrange who was the British Consul. We were friends. I have both in-state and out-of-state appreciation.

JUNGE: In contacts?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: Could you get these people in?

THOMSON: Well, I know that when people come in for a different reason, anybody in the state who invites an important person to speak in Wyoming would be happy to have an opportunity to use the media while they're here and I know that.

JUNGE: Mm hmm. Where did you learn all your protocol?

THOMSON: In Washington.

JUNGE: That's where it came from?

THOMSON: Oh, yes. We had the green book.

JUNGE: The green book?

THOMSON: The green book is put out in Washington; I presume it still is. It lists all of the ranking members of the administration, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, all the heads of the military, all of the Cabinet officers, all of those kinds of people and your..uh

JUNGE: Rank?

THOMSON: Station, rank.

JUNGE: But there's a lot of subtleties in the way you talk to people, the way I observe. Because of our relationship here in the last couple of weeks just talking to each other, but I observe that there's some subtleties in your mannerisms and some subtleties when you approach people.

THOMSON: I hope so.

JUNGE: Those you didn't learn out of a green book did you?

THOMSON: Well, maybe experience. You know, I've been around a long time (laughs). I have been enriched, fortunately very enriched, by having met a lot of very talented, interesting people from all over the world.

JUNGE: Name a few, if you can.

THOMSON: Well, I just named you a couple who I still have contacts with. I did also go with the lieutenant governors to Taiwan. I met Premier Sun; of course everybody over there is named "Sun." Premier Sun is no longer living. I met King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. I spent time in Egypt with their heads of government. I spent time in Jordan. I was entertained by Queen Noor, who is the wife of King Hussein. Incidentally, she lived in Washington when we were there. She was going to the National Cathedral School for Girls. These whole things, like I say, it's just a web out there.

JUNGE: But if you can point to the people that you just thought were fascinating personalities.

THOMSON: Margaret Thatcher.

JUNGE: Really? Boy, that just jumped right out.

THOMSON: I really admired Margaret Thatcher because she had the courage to turn her whole government around. She got private enterprise back into Britain when it was very dominated by socialistic policies and was going downhill very fast and she really had the moral fiber and the strength to turn that country around.

JUNGE: Did you meet her?

THOMSON: Not personally. I've been in the same room with Margaret Thatcher. As a matter of fact, when I was in California last March, she was speaking in California. I can tell you a story.

TAPE 3 SIDE B

JUNGE: Okay, I'm listening. Tell me the story about this Margaret Thatcher.

THOMSON: (Laughs). Before we get to..well, I'm trying to think of the order of things. I was at a place called Maritesh in Palm Desert. This is in the Palm Springs area and I had been going down there for about years for a couple of months each winter to play golf there and Maritesh is an enclosed community, it's a walled community. There's about 250 homes built around a nice golf...it was a rather well-knit small complex and I was walking around the complex one afternoon getting my exercise, doing the outer circle and I came upon a woman who was walking up the hill and I was walking down

the hill. And she stopped and engaged me in conversation because I think she was getting winded. She was going up the hill. She turned out to have quite a noticeable accent and I said, "Are you British?" And she said, "Yes, I'm here from England." So we visited a few minutes and I said, "Well, Margaret Thatcher is speaking this week at one of the hotels and will you see her?" And she said – oh, she went into rhapsody, she was very much a supporter of Margaret Thatcher. She said, "You know, we had a problem with that European economic community because Margaret was reluctant to turn over all of the decision making for Great Britain, you know, to a third agency." "But," she says, "We went along with it. We joined the European economic community and we were getting along fine until they started to standardize everything." "And," she said, "they wanted to have the same standards for measuring everything in the whole European economic community--all of these nations throughout Europe." "And," she said, "you know if you can believe it, they wanted only one size condom, one size fits all." "And," she said, "the Danes told them to go to hell and so did we."

(Both laugh).

JUNGE: That's a good one. She said that?

THOMSON: Yes (laughs).

JUNGE: All right. (laughs).

THOMSON: That's not a story I tell in public.

JUNGE: By the way.

THOMSON: You know, the (unintelligible) is so funny. This happened in California last March too. I went to the grocery store and this lady had been searching high and low up and down the aisles of this great big super market and so she couldn't find what she wanted, so she stopped to ask one of the boys who were stacking shelves and she says, "Can you tell me, please, where I can find chutney. And he says, "Chutney, chutney, what is chutney?" And she said "Well, it's a condiment." And he said, "Oh, right this way" (laughs) and he took her you know where, over to the..

JUNGE: Pharmaceuticals.

THOMSON: Yes (laughs).

JUNGE: You know, one thing I noticed about your speeches is that they are liberally sprinkled with humor. Did you have a source? Did you have a little joke book that said "jokes for miners, jokes for civil defense coordinators?"

THOMSON: I tell you, government presents you with a lot of opportunities for humor (laughs).

JUNGE: And politics.

THOMSON: Oh, yeah. You know, I admire Hillary Clinton very much too. She is, I would say, very high on my list of people I admire. I think she has courage, you know. She has confidence.

JUNGE: Do you think you were the Hillary Clinton of your day?

THOMSON: No. I wish I could say yes to that, but let's be honest.

JUNGE: Why? Let's do be honest about that.

THOMSON: Well, I guess somebody else is going to have to decide what place I played in history. I think that the fact that I served across some very interesting changes in state and national government, like under...I never like to say "under." I like to say "with," but I served with three governors, both Democrat and Republican and six presidents.

JUNGE: What's your perspective on that?

THOMSON: Well, it was very interesting what was happening both in the nation and in Wyoming. They didn't exactly coincide, but the federal government became very dominant.

JUNGE: Under Johnson with the Great Society?

THOMSON: Exactly. Senator Hansen asked me to go to Washington, D.C., pardon me, he was Governor Hansen then, asked me to go to Washington D.C. to meet with the Status of Women, the National Status of Women's organization. Wyoming didn't even have a counsel of Status of Women then. We did later, but at that point we didn't. But I went back and I met in the White House with Mrs. Johnson and the Cabinet members who were most active at that time. Willard Wertz said, quote, he was Secretary of Labor, and he said "Our goal is to bypass all state governments and to go directly into every county, city and state in America." That was the goal of the Johnson Administration. And they enacted all kinds of programs that would provide housing and food and meet every citizen's need. The only problem was, along with that, came multitudinous rules and regulations all of which were written to meet the federal requirement and not a state need. What was for New York City with 10 million people wasn't exactly appropriate to work in Wyoming where we had less than a half a million people scattered over 98,000 square miles. It didn't make sense.

JUNGE: So, it wasn't the issue of helping people in the Great Society, of giving aid and succor to the poor, the downtrodden, to minorities and the disadvantaged. That wasn't the issue then with you. You were sort of a progressive Republican in that sense, weren't you?

THOMSON: Yes. Actually, because the federal government took the lion's share of Wyoming's resources, they owned 72 percent of our minerals and they took 62 and a half percent right to Washington, the lion's share. I mean, of all of the revenue from it because they took so much of our wealth out of state. It was really a good idea for them to send some help back here, if nothing else just to build highways across 98,000 square miles. That always was a burden on my heart that Texas and Pennsylvania got money, and Louisiana more income from oil in the waters off their coasts than we did in the state of Wyoming within our borders because the federal government was taking all of our riches.

JUNGE: Okay, now Thyra, how did that get turned around? Well, it didn't get turned around, they changed the percentages, right?

THOMSON: Right.

JUNGE: From 62 and a half to 50.

THOMSON: Senator Hansen accomplished that when he was in Washington. He was head of the Natural Resource Committee of the Western Interstate Conference of the Counsel of State Governments, now there is something for you. And, of course, I got them to pass resolutions that either the federal government would put up for sale the appropriate lands that they could have sold - you don't sell the forests or the monuments - but the one third of all of the country that was owned by the federal government. A great many thousands of acres could have been sold. Either they could have been sold or else we should get a higher return of revenue from the resources produced within our borders.

JUNGE: So you had something to do with the change then, do you think?

THOMSON: Oh, I hope so. Of course, it still bothers me that we had been snookered by the federal government in that regard and the simple reason was we never had the political clout. We had 11 public land states in the West and our 13 western states, including Hawaii and Alaska and, of course, Alaska when they came into statehood was smart enough to get 90 percent return on their money right there.

JUNGE: Which was unconstitutional, wasn't it?

THOMSON: No.

JUNGE: I mean, how could one state have an advantage over others?

THOMSON: Well, it all had to do with the act of admission and at that time, Keith worked very hard. He saw it as an opportunity for the public land states to get 90 percent also, but he died, you see. And, of course, when I became Secretary of State two years later after his death, I was elected - he died in 1960 when JFK was elected President, he was elected U.S. Senate. He was one of only two Republicans in the nation elected to the Senate that year.

JUNGE: He had a lot to do with changing this, or he would have had a lot to do with changing the 62 and a half percent figure?

THOMSON: When I was elected then in 1962 and Hansen was elected governor, we cooperated very well on this. I mean, he understood the problem and when he went to Washington as senator in 19..what was it, '66, I'm not sure, he was the one that got the state's share changed from 37 and half to 50 percent.

JUNGE: Do you think Keith would have done that had he lived?

THOMSON: Oh, Keith would have had the 90 percent when Alaska came in. But, you see, it wasn't the effort of one man because the problem was we didn't have enough votes, all of the 11 public land states didn't have enough votes. You could combine us all and that was my big argument at the time is that if we didn't have enough sense, the 11 public land states had enough sense, to vote as a block, this would include California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, Nevada, Washington. If we would have voted as a block, we could have done anything. The Deep South controlled the Senate of the United States and the House of Representatives for years just because the Deep South voted as a block. I said if we would have voted as a block, if we couldn't elect a president, we could at least make a big impression on any man who wants to serve as president that he had to deal fairly, fairly with the public lands states. But California was getting so rich from military contracts. You know, my goodness, the money that was pouring into California from Navy, Marine, Army, all the bases out there, millions and millions of dollars. Oh, you know they used to boast that California was the seventh biggest country in the world by itself; that Los Angeles had more money than all the rest..well, you know how they carried on. Well, you couldn't get them interested in this proposition of what was happening to the public land states they were so busy meeting their own goals by itself but I just think that..and the time has never come about. It got worse because then Carter asked for the Wind Fall Profit Tax. Doesn't that stir up your gore? Isn't that an inciting, emotional issue? It makes you feel like "somebody's getting all this money," By using those inciting words, he got the people of this country to agree to \$3 billion of new taxes. You see, that was \$1,100 for every man, woman and child in the state of Wyoming. You know, it was an enormous...but, you know Malcolm Wallop tried to get the money from public lands off of, the revenues of the federal lands that were in our state, exempt from what he called the Wind Fall Profits. There have been people right along who tried to work on that situation, but the truth of the matter is that Easterners view the West as their back yard and they have all the votes and we didn't and they wanted to suck all of the money to Washington and Carter's doing the same thing. Right now every issue in the paper you pick up with Babbitt it's something deleterious to our revenues.

JUNGE: Mm hmm.

THOMSON: You know there some good sense if it were put into perspective.

JUNGE: What happened with Hansen. He didn't have the votes. He couldn't get this block of western states to go along with him, like you said, so how did he get the job done? That must be some story in itself on how that happened.

THOMSON: You ought to talk to Senator Hansen about that sometime. Senator Hansen was a very much-respected man in Washington. And a lot of it has to do with the timing and it builds, it builds, you know.

JUNGE: You keep yelling this same thing over and over and finally somebody's going to say, "Okay, enough already. We'll do it." Or there was a political tradeoff. Not a corrupt bargain, but maybe there was some sort of wheeling and dealing there.

THOMSON: Hansen was very much respected in Washington.

JUNGE: Well, all right. Let's go back now. You were talking about your perspective having worked as Secretary of State over a period of six presidents. How did things change? I mean, how did you feel about Kennedy as president when you came into office. He was already president and he died a year after you came into office.

THOMSON: You know, going through these papers that I had at the house, one of the most interesting things to me was the fact that...viewing my comment on some of the things I tackled and was responsible for as lieutenant governor, I didn't once mention that I was acting governor when Kennedy was assassinated. Isn't that strange? That isn't in my notes at all.

JUNGE: Yeah, it is, because people usually remember where they were when he died. Can you remember where you were?

THOMSON: Of course.

JUNGE: Where were you?

THOMSON: Flying in from California. Senator Hansen, sorry, I keep calling him Senator Hansen because that was the last political job, but he was then Governor Hansen. He was out of state in November of 1963 attending a Governor's Conference and he asked me if I would go with the National Guard out to California to assume the transfer of and to take over our C-121's we were transferring from a fighter squadron to a cargo squadron, and so I flew to California with the heads of the National Guards of Wyoming, California and Nebraska and we were at Bakersfield and we went up to Vandenberg Air Force Base and were flying home and when we got into Cheyenne that morning, it was...this is the anniversary, isn't it? November 22...the whole field was ringed with people and when I stepped off that plane, General Esmay and, who else was with him, came up to me and said "Mrs. Thomson, Governor Hansen is not yet back. You are acting governor. The President has just been shot." And really, at that time, we didn't know exactly...this was like noon or 1 o'clock or something, we didn't know whether

this was anarchy, we didn't know what this was. The President of the United States had been assassinated. All of the states had to be on the alert. We had to be on TV.

JUNGE: What was your reaction meanwhile?

THOMSON: Well, of course, you have to be grateful for the National Guard and etc. at that moment and, of course, we had some conversations and we were getting whatever information that came into us from Washington and getting whatever information we could. One of the glorious things about the United States of America is that it transfers power legally, non-violently and, you know, there was a big heartbreak there. He was a new, young President.

JUNGE: Did you feel deeply for him? He was a Democrat.

THOMSON: Well, that doesn't have anything to do with it. But, you know, I knew the Kennedy's when he was U.S. Senator. We lived in Washington. I think I felt the excitement of his administration as everybody did. More at the time I felt a responsibility of keeping abreast of what it meant.

JUNGE: So, you knew the Kennedy's somewhat?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: And mixed and mingled with them. Did you meet the President?

THOMSON: Not after he was President, I didn't, but before he was President I did.

JUNGE: What was your impression?

THOMSON: Well, you know he was sort of a pleasant, very self-confident, witty man that wasn't really too ambitious as a senator. He was head of some sub-committee on Africa and never called one meeting all the time. You know, I mean he didn't work overly hard (laughs).

JUNGE: Well, maybe he was involved with other things.

THOMSON: Exactly.

JUNGE: Well, I guess initially I asked about your perspective on how things have changed from the time you came into office until the time you left.

THOMSON: Well, yes, and you know what happened was I always get off the subject with things, but about the mid-70s this state began to percolate. This was about the time that there was a desire to meet the nation's needs for oil and gas and energy, some within our own borders because there had been that..

JUNGE: Oil embargo?

THOMSON: Embargo.

JUNGE: That was in '73, I think, wasn't it?

THOMSON: Yeah, and it was a very exciting time in Wyoming because the state was just booming. Carter was inflating so fast in this nation that people were betting on the (unintelligible) on everything and then combined with that it hit our oil and gas and resources development. This state was providing oil and gas, coal, trona, soda ash, uranium for the whole nation. Casper was the sales tax mecca of the United States. Per square head, more sales tax was collected in Casper, Wyoming, than any place in the country. And that was because there was so many big rigs, so much powerful machinery to develop all of these resources, the things through Casper they were collecting use taxes on. We opened eight new schools in Gillette in one day. Lyman, Wyoming, well, you see, you had to provide, we were having to build 1600 new homes a year in these places. Wheatland, Wyoming, had a whole new area of housing up there. Out in Lyman in the western part of the state where that over thrust belt was being developed, the people of Lyman, Wyoming, bonded themselves beyond the year 2000 to educate other people's children. People were pouring in here, workers, builders, construction people. There were so many of them they were living up and down draws in tents. And, of course, thank God we had a severance tax, the state had a severance tax. That severance tax money, the State Farm Loan Board, which is a misnomer because we loaned money for many other things, but that comes down to us through history. But, we loaned money to cities and towns and counties for schools.

JUNGE: Sewer systems.

THOMSON: For highways, roads, bridges. We were doing...new water systems. Every city and town in the state got a good water system through that money. We were spending that money very wisely and then Washington imposes this Wind Fall Profits Tax and takes the money to Washington again. It cut our income from these public lands from our 50 percent back down to about a third, about 33 percent.

JUNGE: Has that been repealed, that tax?

THOMSON: You'll have to find that out. I haven't kept track since I've been out of office.

JUNGE: Well, how did that boom in the '70s affect your job?

THOMSON: Well, of course, it was a very busy time for us because Wyoming has a cabinet sort of government with the five elected officials sitting on most of the major boards and commissions, so we were dealing with all of these applications all the time.

But in my own office, we were trying to provide real estate developers, etc. with opportunities to raise money through this public sale of securities to build the necessary facilities, housing and what not, to meet these needs and at the same time protect Wyoming from these fly-by-day and fly-by-night scammers who were trying to come in and skim all the cream off the top. But we had a very good Securities Division. We worked hard at that. We never had a major securities scandal when I was in office.

JUNGE: Of which you are very proud.

THOMSON: Well, I'm thankful for. You know, that was our job. I had some disappointments along the line too because I modernized a lot of securities development and I tried to get an exemption through the State Legislature to exempt registration from blue ribbon issues, etc., etc. and they were a little bit distrustful about those, but on the whole we struck a very rewarding, happy, successful balance between risk and reward for the public investor. We couldn't let the insiders take all the reward and let all the public investors take all the risk.

JUNGE: Well, obviously other people saw that too or you wouldn't have been in office for six different terms, right?

THOMSON: Well, it was very interesting and, of course, that was while Hathaway was in office and Ed Herschler came into office just about the time that the state was getting rolling. He came in '74 and was in office from '75 to '87 and, of course, that was exactly the ten-year span of that boom. I mean, Herschler was in office while the state was booming.

JUNGE: When Hathaway came into office, though, I mean during his second term, '72 to '76, I saw..because I came into state government in '71..I saw tremendous growth in agencies like DAFC, the Department of Administration and Fiscal Control. Were there concomitant increases in positions in your office? Did you grow like the rest of state government grew?

THOMSON: No.

JUNGE: Why not?

THOMSON: (Laughs). Oh, we always had a very small office. I always looked for simpler, better ways to do things, not to just add a lot of people to..for one thing, our space in the Capitol was rather limited.

JUNGE: Mm hmm. How could you do that with the boom taking place? Obviously your time was being taken up more and more now with the various boards and commissions and you had this tremendous increase in business, so, therefore, licenses and what not, regulatory things...

THOMSON: We had our first million dollar year in that office then was from corporate franchise taxing. See, Wyoming doesn't have a corporate income tax or we didn't have a personal income tax, but we did have a corporate franchise tax which meant that the corporations who did business in Wyoming paid an annual fee on the amount of assets that they were using and employing in the state. It was just an annual franchise tax. Your point was very well taken. We were just efficient. We were just good at it. Actually, I had one of the smallest securities, uh, I think the most we ever had in our Securities Division was four, while other states would have eight, ten and twelve or something.

JUNGE: What did you have to start out with in '52?

THOMSON: In the way of staff? I can't remember exactly. I think I ended up with 21 at the end of 24 years.

JUNGE: So, you did grow then, but the business of the state grew too.

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: Why 21? I thought you had four in the late 1980s.

THOMSON: Well, that was with the Securities Division. I mean 21 was everybody in my office.

JUNGE: Oh, everybody.

THOMSON: Twenty-one and we published the directory. We published the (unintelligible). We administered securities, like I say, stocks, bonds, real estate investments, trust, mutual funds, etc., etc., trade names, elections. We accepted the filings of corporations, limited partnerships.

JUNGE: And that's all?

THOMSON: No, there were a couple of other things (laughs). That was the administrative work. But, of course, one of the chief jobs of an elected official is going out and speaking because people want to see their elected officials and they invite you to speak at commencement exercises and conventions and all that kind of thing all the time.

JUNGE: How can you disconnect political electioneering, or whatever, campaigning...how can you disconnect that from your job to go out and speak to people about issues as a publicly elected official?

THOMSON: What do you mean?

JUNGE: I'm saying, do you recognize the fact, if it is a fact, do you recognize the fact that it's really impossible for a state public official like yourself as Secretary of State, to go out and talk to people about an issue knowing that you're getting votes by doing so?

Is it impossible to separate that? I mean, isn't that a fact? That's what I mean. I don't know how else I can put it.

THOMSON: I always deplore single issue politics because there's no way you can win. Incidentally, one thing you have to remember is that elections is the one place where the winners, the majority of people pick the winners. You know, you don't do that when you play a slot machine or any other gambling, but in elections you do. But I always deplore single issue politics because, let me give you an example. Suppose you're running for office and you...eight out of ten people agree with a position you've taken on a single issue. The other two don't agree. Eight agree, two don't. Twenty percent don't. Well, if you have five issues and 20 percent disagree with on every issue, you've got 20 percent of the people disagreeing with you by the time you add those five issues up, do you see what I mean?

JUNGE: Mm hmm.

THOMSON: You can't worry about single issues. You really try to understand people's needs and they're usually self-explanatory and self-satisfying. People have real needs. When you stop to think of what it takes to run a family, a community, a state, you know that's where we are in local government. The one thing that I deplore is that I believe that government itself has become a single issue. A selfish issue on nearly every issue you have, the government workers are looking out for big government because that's where their paychecks are coming from. That's hard for me to say to you. You work for government. It's hard to say to me. I got my paycheck from government, but you always have to beware of that.

JUNGE: Sure.

THOMSON: For instance, when you talk about housing for the poor, the people who are always out there lobbying for it are the builders, are the people who loan the money. They're not the poor (laughs). Everybody has...particularly in Washington. Washington government has become so big that you always have to find out where the federal employees stand on an issue, you know, that's distressing.

JUNGE: Because they're a force to be reckoned with themselves.

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: Well, I don't know. I was going off down a different road on that question, with the answer to that question.

THOMSON: Well, bring me back to it. I apologize.

JUNGE: No, I understand what you're saying, you make a good point, but I was just going to say people who politic for office, or who campaign for office, that's a better word, sometimes they are accused of using their office to get out and get votes and I

guess I was just asking you, was it difficult for you to separate those two because you had to be, you ran for office four times, I mean six times for your term of each one, So when you go out and speak before a group aren't you obviously campaigning, really, whether it's an election year or not?

THOMSON: Well, I guess you could say that. I never looked at it that way, but I guess you could say that.

JUNGE: How did you look at it?

THOMSON: The people invited me to speak, probably because they couldn't get anybody else (laughs), because they had a need, an occasion they wanted to get a speaker that would draw them a crowd. You were meeting a local need and you went with that idea. You know, you would go to bring information to them. That's all I ever tried to do was to understand where they were coming from and bring information to them.

JUNGE: And in so doing you were acquiring their confidence and their good will.

THOMSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: And let the votes take care of themselves.

THOMSON: Right. That follows.

JUNGE: What happened, we were talking about numbers of people on your staff. What happened that year that Tom Stroock got rid of a person, or cut out a position that Herschler tried to get back for you? What was the situation?

THOMSON: 1986. That's when I went out of government, the next year, so I can't tell you what happened after that, but that was in 1986. Uh, that was a mistake on Tom's part obviously (laughs). You know when you run a tight ship and when you're the second highest elected official in the state...the least he could have done was come and say, "Hey, Thrya, can you do without this one. Why are you putting in for it when it hasn't been filled this year?"

JUNGE: Why didn't you?

THOMSON: I don't know.

JUNGE: Did he use it as an issue to gain leverage somewhere else?

THOMSON: I don't know. But, you know, when I turned over that office, the two top people that I had in Securities are still there and I wanted to leave it in optimal shape (laughs). Yeah.

JUNGE: Well, I think overall you have to be proud of what you did in that job, don't you think, or how do you feel about your accomplishment?

THOMSON: Well, I feel very good about it because I think if I hadn't done a good job, the people wouldn't have re-elected me all the time. I did a lot of good for the state economically because not only did I have a good, intelligent administration of Securities that struck a happy balance between economic development in the state and protecting the public investor, but I actually got in business from other countries. As you know that when I went to Taiwan, they sent their foreign minister back here and he brought that big group, marketing group, with him and they bought one fourth of Wyoming's wheat crop in one year.

JUNGE: Who was the key behind that, the impetus? What was the impetus?

THOMSON: Me.

JUNGE: It was your idea?

THOMSON: Well sure. You mean for them to buy the uh?

JUNGE: Yeah, or even to get involved with Taiwan? Why not mainland China?

THOMSON: Well, I went to Taiwan because the lieutenant governors were invited to go, of the 50 states. I had gone to the ROC, Republic of China/USA Economic Conference the year before in Arizona and the Taiwanese government invited the lieutenant governors to visit Taipei, the reason being is our government, and I don't want to get off this subject, but our government was not recognizing the Republic of China. They had recognized the People's Republic of China, the Taiwanese government was extending its hand, it was reaching out so I went with the lieutenant governors there and when we were received by Premier Sun in a private audience (untelligible). I've never seen such...you know they would present us..something would go on that day and by nightfall they would have it completely produced, bound, whether it was a pamphlet or whether it was a television interview, they would have it in our hands a couple of hours later. They were extremely well organized people, but when Premier Sun had a private audience with the lieutenant governors, I can't remember how many of us went, we were seated alphabetically around the states, we were seated in a circle so he could identify us. And, of course, "W" comes pretty close to the end, so by the time he got around to me, I said that I had appreciated their flying me with the rest of the lieutenant governors to Taipei. I thought the conference was extremely well run. I had had time to go over and see the palace museum in which I saw Wyoming jade, identified that they had bought Wyoming jade and carved it and it was a beautiful object. But, in looking over the pamphlet of purchases they had made from the 50 states they did business with, I said Wyoming was the only one you had no direct purchase from and I said, "Premier Sun, I know you want to correct that," and he smiled and he could tell I was jibing him a little, and so, by damn, he sent a foreign mission here to correct it.

JUNGE: Okay, this is tape 2 (is actually transcription from tape 3) with Thyra Thomson today the 22<sup>nd</sup> of November, 1993 and we just talked about the person that Mr. Sun sent, Premier Sun, sent to Wyoming. Who was that?

THOMSON: Vincent Shu.

JUNGE: Vincent Shu. Okay, so..

THOMSON: And interestingly enough, Vincent Shu was the only Taiwanese-born man in that government at that time in a high station. You see, all the others had been brought in from mainland China when they escaped, you know, the communists. They had all gone to Taiwan, but Vincent Shu was native-born. But they came here with a very fine group of people that I had met when I was in Taipei. Mr. Miaou (spells M.I.A.O.U) was like the Rockefeller of Taiwan, you know. He was head of the sugar industries, he was head of the flour industries, he was head of all kinds of industries. He came himself here with Shu and several other people and they purchased one fourth of Wyoming's entire wheat crop that year.

JUNGE: Was that deal continuous?

THOMSON: You mean did they do it every year after that?

JUNGE: Right.

THOMSON: Not successive years. In fact, I wrote to them after that because the next year they had bought wheat down in, someplace in South America or someplace, but I kept in close contact with them. Miaou was in my home. I entertained him right in this room you are sitting in. And, incidentally, the way I did it was we had a man, I'm going to forget his name now, Major somebody at the air base whose wife was Chinese and I asked her, "Jackie," I'm losing the last name. I asked her if she would come and help me entertain these people from the Republic of China and she came. And when they drove up in front of my home and the front door was opened by a Chinese who spoke to them in Chinese, I thought it was a great coup.

JUNGE: (Laughs).

THOMSON: And they came in and we had tea which she served to us and we chatted. I think they must have been here about 45 minutes or an hour and when they left, of course, Miaou had an interpreter with him. He is not self-confident in English. So he spoke to Jackie in Chinese and the door was almost shut and I said, "Jackie, what did he say, what did he say?" And she said, "He asked me if I was ever homesick." And I said, "What did you say?" "I said, "You're a perfect diplomat."

JUNGE: Was this before the deal was consummated to buy one fourth of the grain, or after?

THOMSON: No, it was after. All of that deal took place in the Capitol.

JUNGE: So this was more or less a one-time injection into the Wyoming economy.

THOMSON: Well, I think they've been back on several occasions since. I don't know. I haven't kept track of all their purchases since, but they have been back on several occasions, not the same group, not as high stationed a group, but there have been visits several years. They keep in close contact.

JUNGE: Was that one of the coup's of your administration then?

THOMSON: Well, I felt like it was, yeah. And then, you know, I went on to Los Angeles where I met with groups in the middle east and consequently when I was in Taiwan, I also, and I met with Miaou on the fact that David somebody over there, I was introduced to him. They purchased uranium and I said, "Why are you not purchasing uranium from Wyoming?"

JUNGE: Mm hmm.

THOMSON: And so he said, "I will get our needs to you." And under my doors the next morning was their list of contracts, who they were in contract to, for how long, how much they purchased per year and who they were under contract to and when their next contract would come up by date. That was how fast those people operate.

JUNGE: But they didn't buy uranium from us?

THOMSON: Not at that time. Their needs were filled, but they gave me all the information so we could bid on the next go-round on uranium and, consequently, when I came home, I pursued that situation with the uranium and I found out that they were purchasing from Pathfinder and the reason it didn't look like Wyoming was because Pathfinder was a California corporation, but they were purchasing.

JUNGE: Could I ask you one more question before we cut this off and take a break? Uh, and thank you for that story. That's very enlightening how that all happened. I like the personal touch. Do you know Mike Amundson(?) who played basketball for the University of Wyoming?

THOMSON: Amundson (?) I don't think so.

JUNGE: Yeah, big tall guy. They called him "The Lug." He didn't play much, but he was always trying whenever he got in there. Anyway, he got his Ph.D., is working on his Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska.

THOMSON: Uh, huh.

JUNGE: Went through the American Studies Program at UW and his dissertation is going to be on the uranium industry in the West. And I asked him about the reason why that industry collapsed. I said he should talk to high level people or try to find out what kinds of deals were made because all of a sudden the yellow cake was coming from outside the United States. Jeffrey City and a number of other towns in the West, not just Wyoming....

THOMSON: Closed down.

JUNGE: Closed shop, yeah. Do you have any insights as to what kind of insider deals were made to sort of wipe that industry out? There were some tradeoffs somewhere.

THOMSON: No, I really don't. I do think that fear entered into a large part of it. People who have, countries who have tended to use uranium successfully are those that needed it worst and as long as the United States had oil and gas and we have enough coal, for heaven's sake, to the mid-20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> century to provide energy need. It's not as clean. But I don't think we concentrated as much on educating our citizenry and that may have had something to do with purchases other places, I don't know.

JUNGE: It would be interesting to find out.

THOMSON: I would be interested to know what Amundson (?) concludes if he's doing a doctorate on this.

JUNGE: Well, I'll tell him.

THOMSON: Yeah. I would be interested in that. Incidentally, this past weekend when I've been in Washington State, my nephew works for the Hanford Electric Plant there. They produce all their electricity with uranium.

JUNGE: Who works there?

THOMSON: My nephew. See I went out to visit my 91-year-old auntie and her son works for, produces electricity via uranium at the Hanford site. And, he told me the most fascinating things about the way we are beginning to dispose of the high level radioactive waste. You know, the federal government has used about 90 percent of the uranium and we never have come up with a way to dispose of the waste. President Carter insisted that they not re-process plutonium, the spent ore which is what scientists say is a mistake because they say that's what does away with the waste itself, uses it up, you know, you re-process, you use it up, but Carter was very much opposed to that so that got stopped in its tracks. They still think re-processing would be one of the big solutions to the waste problem, but the way they're doing it out there now is just absolutely fascinating. See, they have an awful lot of sand there. It's at the confluence of the Snake River and the Yakima River and the Columbia River and they have a lot of sand there,

it's very sandy. They're taking that high level waste and putting it in a compact pile and inserting it deep into this sand and then they put electric rods right down through it and sand makes glass. And by heating the sand with electricity, they enclose all of that in glass, they melt this sand and encompass it in glass, envelop it in glass. If it works, they're going to try it in other places like South Carolina and places, but they have to have the sand. Isn't that fascinating?

JUNGE: Yes. Let's put this on pause, eh?

Tape resumes. Okay, we're back here after a great little repast, a little lunch that Thyra fixed us. It's still November 22, 1993, the longest day in the world's history. We're going on and on and on and (Both laugh). Talk is what it's all about today. We're talking about her career, about her husband and her family and her ideas and we're going to continue in that vein by just touching on a lot of different things. But, what I thought we would do this afternoon is talk a little bit about Keith's getting into politics, if that's all right with you, getting into politics and then how that led to you getting into politics, so can we go back in your memory?

THOMSON: Sure. Whatever.

JUNGE: Let's do go back then to the late '40s when Keith got out of the service and came back and started his law career. Did you both get into politics at that time? Is he the only one that got involved in politics, or did neither of you get involved in politics when he came back from the war?

THOMSON: Well, we were both involved in politics. As a matter of fact, I traveled the state with a lady who was forming Republican women's groups throughout the state. We were trying to keep the Republican Party alive and well and operating during the war.

JUNGE: Who was that?

THOMSON: Mrs. Sam Kirkbride, Peggy Kirkbride. She's still living. She must be 90 now. I also got a badge from President Roosevelt for being one of those who was doing work at home for the war effort. We didn't exactly roll bandages, but we did all of these other kinds of things, every city and town and hamlet in America. And when Keith came back from overseas, he had just been through a real severe experience when he led his battalion and there was terrible fighting in Italy and his battalion was absolutely decimated. He thought he would go into politics because he thought "how foolish to go through these bloody wars and then not carry on when you got home. If you were giving your life for your country, then you certainly should be interested in the direction your country was going.

JUNGE: And he wasn't happy with the direction the country was going?

THOMSON: Well, he thought he could contribute to something and, of course, he was a devoted Republican as I was and we were very eager for the country to get on good economic foot, etc. etc. because when the men came home from the war, there was a big

transition again because when the men went to war, women stepped in and became Rosie the Riveter and all that and when they came back, women went back home and had babies and households and...

JUNGE: Did you fall right into that pattern?

THOMSON: Oh sure, exactly.

JUNGE: Didn't think anything about it?

THOMSON: No, except we thought we were doing the right thing, you know. That was what was needed and we did it.

JUNGE: Did you ever look back on that period and say, "My gosh, what was I thinking?"

THOMSON: Oh no, no question. Uh uhh.

JUNGE: Was there a night that you guys were sitting around the table, was it in a den, a basement when you actually decided together or that Keith said, "I'm going to run."

THOMSON: For Congress?

JUNGE: Yeah.

THOMSON: It happened in the bathroom (laughs).

JUNGE: Okay, go ahead.

THOMSON: Well, he was shaving to go the office and all the three little kids were underfoot sitting around Daddy while he was shaving and Keith said to me over their heads, he said, "You know, I think I'll run for Congress, what do you think?" That was the first peep I heard out of him about it.

JUNGE: Were you shocked?

THOMSON: No, I wasn't shocked. I said "Whatever you want to do is fine" and he bought an old jalopy and painted "Keith Thomson for Congress" across the side of it and the two of us got in the car and campaigned the state, it was as direct as that.

JUNGE: So, you told him right away that you would help him?

THOMSON: No, I said "Whatever you want to do." I thought it was great. I was awfully glad to have him back after the war.

JUNGE: But then he would be taking off again.

THOMSON: Well, you know, Keith had a wonderful quality in that whatever he did is he took his family along with him.

JUNGE: And that's what he did?

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: Can you talk a little bit about those early days and taking his family along and what it was like?

THOMSON: Well, it was very different from campaigning today. We went hamlet to hamlet and he would walk up one side of the street and I would walk up the other side and we always carried something to give out that had his name on it so after people met you and you passed on down the street, they could look at it and see who they were talking to, in case they missed. We always were devoted to the proposition that whenever you met a new person, you tried not only to make a vote, but you tried to make workers. Keith was modest enough to say, "I hope you'll vote for me and I hope you'll work for me." He produced these wonderful little brochures that we gave out and then we gave out various things that we could afford on different successive campaigns. One of the things that Keith became well-known for was he always gave out pencils. It was a useful item and it would say "Keith Thomson for Congress" and he gave everybody a pencil.

JUNGE: Did you have to write out checks from your own bank account for these things, or did you get any help?

THOMSON: To tell you the truth, the costs were minimal the way we did it and I don't remember that detail. It couldn't have been a very big one because, like I say, we had no professional help, we didn't hire campaign professionals or we weren't paying for TV spots or anything like that.

JUNGE: Your son, Bruce, came up here during the lunch break and showed me some copies of some campaign statistics or figures. He estimated that you spent, maybe it was the first campaign and maybe it wasn't, but one of those early campaigns for Congress, if not the first one in '54, your total bill for campaigning came to, what did he say, over \$12,000.

THOMSON: Can you believe it? (laughs).

JUNGE: It was probably a lot less for a seat in the House, for the Wyoming Legislature.

THOMSON: Oh, yeah. We didn't spend any money on that. Keith made himself very well-known very quickly when he came back from overseas because he did an awful lot of pro bono work in the law office.

JUNGE: But how could he when you were freshly married, I mean newly married with a family? How could you afford that?

THOMSON: Well, he would sit up late at night reading abstracts. He would examine abstracts and all day long he would see clients and every night alone he would sit and examine abstracts and we really lived on that money. It was a tedious task that a lot of people didn't want to do and a new attorney in town could have all of that kind of work he wanted, and he worked hard.

JUNGE: His first campaign was a campaign for the House, right?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: The Wyoming House of Representatives.

THOMSON: I'm not sure about that if my memory serves me correctly that he first ran for the State Senate and I think he was defeated that first time and then he ran for the State House of Representatives and was elected twice and then he ran for Congress and was elected. He was never ever defeated again. That first time when he put his name on the ballot for State Senate, I think he'd only been home from the war two years or something, you know. I don't think anybody knew him much.

JUNGE: When he came back from the war, did he go immediately into practice with Harry Henderson?

THOMSON: Well, soon after, because he tried to set up a law practice very quickly and he was writing a contract one day, sitting in the Mayflower Café in a booth and Harry Henderson came by and saw him. There used to be a businessmen's table in there. And Harry Henderson came by and saw him and he said, "Young man, I would like to see you in my office tomorrow." Keith had gone around when he first came home from overseas and wanted to establish a law practice, he had gone to every attorney in the city and introduced himself so Harry Henderson knew he was Keith Thomson, an attorney and that's all Keith did was just introduced himself, you know. So then, when Harry saw him sitting in the booth there at the Mayflower writing a contract, you know, when men came home from overseas, there was no office space, you know. Nothing had been built all during the war years. We were sending our money all to the war effort and there were dentists coming home couldn't find an office to practice dentistry. Office space itself was at a premium. So Harry just said to him, "Young man, I'd like to see you in my office tomorrow." So Keith went in to see him and Harry said, "You know, I have an extra room here that used to be my father's and I'd be pleased to have you use it. So Keith said, "Thank you very much," and he began using the room in Harry Henderson's office. Harry liked him so well that he soon offered him a partnership.

JUNGE: Did Harry ever tell Keith or did Keith ever tell you how Harry got interested in him? You said that Keith got around.

THOMSON: Yes, he actually went and introduced himself to Harry.

JUNGE: But did Harry ever say to Keith later, “you know, I thought of you as being a hustler and a worker and...

THOMSON: I don't know any of those intimacies between them. They were very devoted law partners until Keith ran for Congress and Harry was very supportive. Some of Harry's friends (laughs) didn't like the idea of the young guy in the office running for Congress. They thought that the young guy in the office should sit and do the law practice and Harry should run. But, you see, Harry had already run for the U.S. Senate, I think against O'Mahoney or something like that and he was defeated, so it wasn't that Harry hadn't had his shot and was eager to go again. But he was very supportive of Keith. Harry was an unusually generous, wonderful, wonderful man.

JUNGE: I was going to ask you what kind of a person he was because he was a real power in Wyoming politics, wasn't he?

THOMSON: I don't know that. I don't know that. Harry Henderson was a delightful friend, a wonderful public speaker. He was a wit. He was a very much respected attorney and I really don't know how powerful he was in politics. I know that it helped Keith when Harry supported him.

JUNGE: I've read columns, I don't know whether it was John Charles Thompson's column or what, that Harry Henderson was sort of the power behind the throne, like Tracy McCracken was a power behind Democratic politics, Harry Henderson seemed to be the power behind the throne and that he was the one who came up with some of the ideas. I don't know, maybe it was Judge Kerr that told me this, that Henderson had quite a bit of influence.

THOMSON: Well, let's put it this way. I never was aware of there being any kind of relationships in which Harry pulled strings or anything like that. However, Keith did learn an awful lot from Harry, nine years in Harry Henderson's law office. Harry was a fine attorney and triple rated or whatever it is in Blackstone. For instance, I remember the time that Keith was so distressed because Harry was on a Rotary trip to Brazil, he and his wife, and one of the clients in the office came in all distressed and disturbed and wanted to sue his neighbor and while he was sitting in the office talking to Keith, the neighbor called Keith on the phone and here was the antagonist sitting right before Keith. He was trying to talk to two of them at once. So he wired Harry or cabled Harry, he was on shipboard someplace going to Brazil and Harry cabled back and said, “I trust your judgment completely. Good luck, Harry” (Laughs). You know, I mean that was the kind of relationship they had. But Keith learned a lot from Harry. For instance, one of their clients came in and was bidding on a parcel of land or something and he talked in great detail to Keith about the different factors involved and asked for Keith's advice, suggested something and Keith answered it. And when the bids were open, his client lost the bid by just a fraction and Keith said, “I learned my lesson. I'll never again in my life

advise a client on what he should bid. That decision has to be his.” You know some experiences like that mature you in a hurry (laughs).

JUNGE: Oh, yeah.

THOMSON: There’s nothing like defeat that matures you (laughs). I’m sure that he was quickly exposed to a lot of top-notch clients because he was Harry’s partner.

JUNGE: Which, in turn, must have increased his confidence that he could handle a political job; must have given him the idea that, “Well, I’m certainly as good as that person there, I think I’ve got a better idea.”

THOMSON: Well, I never heard him express such a thing, but you may be right about that.

JUNGE: By the way, who did, which client did he support between the two clients?

THOMSON: I’m not at liberty to tell you.

JUNGE: (Laughs).

THOMSON: The interesting thing, though, is that the one he supported he won the case for and the one that they defeated still came back into the office, was still a good client.

JUNGE: That’s quite a comment.

THOMSON: Well, I think his idea was, gee, he’s still a good lawyer (laughs). He beat my other attorney.

JUNGE: Was Keith good at argumentation in court, or was he more of the behind-the-scenes worker and the person that plotted the way of the paperwork and got the lines all filled out?

THOMSON: My impression is that, you know, they had tremendous clientele that was business oriented and that was what they devoted their time and intelligence to. So oftentimes, trial lawyers are representing conflict or criminals or suits against insurance companies, things like that. Keith didn’t do that. That wasn’t where they were. I’m not saying he wouldn’t have taken the case, but that wasn’t where the majority of the practice was.

JUNGE: It was corporate law.

THOMSON: Mm hmm. I think he probably never handled more than one divorce, for instance, in his life. He would only do that for somebody who..you know, it just wasn’t their area of law.

JUNGE: Did getting involved in politics change your family life at all?

THOMSON: Oh, yes. Politics is particularly a family affair. You see, you're an elected official twenty-four hours a day. It isn't an 8 to 5 job. And, of course, it impinges on your family.

JUNGE: So, you were involved with him? I mean, it wasn't just, "Well, Keith's doing what he wants to do and the family will do what it wants to do." You were all involved.

THOMSON: That's right.

JUNGE: I suspect, Thyra, that you acquired a great deal of expertise yourself and the ability to conduct political campaigns, the ability to conduct your affairs personally as high officials in government and in the corporate world. I would expect that that would have rubbed off on you and gave you a lot of training.

THOMSON: Well, I'm sure it did because I had been through six campaigns with Keith, really, because he was elected to Congress three terms so that was a primary and a general. I don't know that he had primary opposition every time, but potentially for every election you have two campaigns. And then he was elected for U.S. Senate. And, of course, campaigning changed during that time. It was much more involved with communications.

JUNGE: As opposed to what?

THOMSON: As opposed to, like I say, the first time we went out and just shook hands with people in every hamlet in Wyoming, but later we did more radio spots and toward the end we were doing a lot of TV spots. I have right now lots of Keith on film, I mean his television spots. I have lots of that.

JUNGE: Really.

THOMSON: I saved all of it.

JUNGE: Wonderful.

THOMSON: And then, as far as knowing how to deal with people, you know, we entertained an awful lot in our home in Washington, D.C. We bought a house on Stevenson and Chevy Chase in the District of Columbia that was one time owned by General Pershing. It was kind of a thrill for me to think that we were living in a house that General Pershing had when he was there. But we had a rule that Keith could bring anybody home for dinner. We would entertain any Wyomingite who came to Washington who had enough earnest business to cross the nation to come to Washington to see his congressman. If Keith wanted to invite them for dinner I would be happy to entertain them. But I would not have anybody staying overnight in my home. And I said, you know, I'm rearing three boys, I've got three children that I have to keep in

touch with them in school in a large city and you're yo-yo-ing every year between Wyoming and Washington and so we have to have that much home life that I'm not having overnight guests in my home. This is the children's home.

JUNGE: He agreed to that?

THOMSON: Yeah, but I entertained an awful lot of people in my home, most of them from Wyoming, but we would always have some people from Washington and some government who they thought, I thought or Keith thought, they'd like to meet.

JUNGE: Well, I'm kinda curious as to how Keith perceived your job as a wife in those times in Washington. What was your job as wife? What were you supposed to do?

THOMSON: Just to be a wife and mother, I guess a ready helpmate or something, I don't know.

JUNGE: Were you supposed to talk to people? I mean, I remember talking to Neltje? do you know Neltje?

THOMSON: Yeah.

JUNGE: One time about her growing up in a wealthy family, the Doubleday family, and her job was to entertain the guests and her parents might be busy, her dad might be busy putting on a tie and getting ready and her mother might be doing something else.

THOMSON: Uh huh.

JUNGE: But her job was when Somerset Maugham or somebody came to the front door, she was to entertain them and talk with them. She said she really learned a lot.

THOMSON: She's a charmer. I love Neltje!

JUNGE: Yeah. Different, with a lot of courage. I just wonder if that same thing...if Keith didn't depend upon you to carry the load conversationally for a while?

THOMSON: Well, I would never put it that way. I don't think it was a similar circumstance. I knew most of the people he knew except that we played a game. He would meet all the husbands down on the Hill and I would meet all the wives at the Congressional Wives Club. I was very active in that. As a matter of fact, I wrote a play that was produced for the Congressional Wives Club, so I was very active in that organization. And, like I say, he would meet the men that he worked with at the House of Representatives and I would meet their wives at the Congressional Wives Club and then we would compare. I would try to imagine what this woman's husband looked like, and he would try to imagine what this man's wife was like and it got to be kind of a fun game.

JUNGE: (Laughs).

THOMSON: Who was the man from Oregon who was head of the law school there then he switched from Democrat to Republican or vice-versa – Wayne Morris. You know there never was a bigger ego on Capitol Hill than Wayne Morris – so big, a self-sufficient man, larger than life. Not physically, but his presence unquestioned. And guess what his wife was like? You just guess. She was a little, brown-bird of a woman, self-effacing, you would never pick her out of a crowd, so you could never have ever stood a beautiful, dynamic woman beside him.

JUNGE: Mm hmm.

THOMSON: You see what I'm saying? As a psychologist, you know that.

JUNGE: And you were a beautiful, dynamic woman.

THOMSON: (Laughs). You flatter me.

JUNGE: No, but I can see the pictures. Obviously you were. And did Keith depend on that? Did he depend on your looks and your presence?

THOMSON: Oh no, no. Keith was a very bright man who got along beautifully on Capitol Hill because he was a decent person, he was kind to people, he was polite, he was self-effacing. He was very strong, very strong. It was amazing. I have no doubt in my mind that he would have reached great heights had he not died at 41 of a heart attack, because a lot of people who were in Congress when he was who weren't half as well-known or well-liked or as effective as Keith went on to be in Congress. Gerry Ford went on to be President. Mel Laird went on to be a cabinet officer. These people...but I'll never forget. We only had one car and Keith had to go to the Hill every day and so he often took a cab to go to the Hill, so it left me the car with three children and what-not, my running about I had to do. But this one time, I went down to the Hill to pick him up. It was when Kruschev was banging the table at the U.N. with his shoe or something and so then the House of Representatives determined that they were going to adjourn before his visit to Washington. They didn't want to have to give him the courtesy of the floor to address the House of Representatives. So they stayed up all night. They worked all night long and I went down the Hill early in the morning, like 5 or 6 in the morning, to drive Keith home and as we were going down Independence Avenue here this big limousine with Sam Rayburn of Texas came past and we both stopped at the stop light. I was driving, here was Keith sitting beside me and Sam Rayburn waved and he said, "How's that young man of yours doing?" You know Keith was liked, was identified, you see what I'm saying?

JUNGE: Um hmm.

THOMSON: It was a nice relationship. I think that he could have accomplished wonderful things for Wyoming had he lived.

JUNGE: Where do you envision he would have been?

THOMSON: Well, who knows?

JUNGE: Do you think he could have been President?

THOMSON: I think it's very tough to be President from a state that doesn't have more electoral votes, a bigger political base than Wyoming. I think that's a big stumbling block. That's why we end up so often with presidents from New York, or Pennsylvania or Texas or California or someplace that has a big political base, you know. They go into the national convention with a lot of votes.

JUNGE: Now I want to ask you a personal question.

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: Did Keith ever tell you how much he appreciated you?

THOMSON: I don't think he had to. Well, he did, he did. You know, I've got a whole lot of letters down there. I have every letter he wrote to me all during the war when he was in Italy, when he was overseas and they're filled with fond personal expressions for not only me, but the children.

JUNGE: I guess what I was driving at was your role as a wife, as his partner, really. Did he ever tell you how much he appreciated what you were doing for him?

THOMSON: I don't remember it exactly that way. He was a very affectionate man. I remember the little moments wives remember like this, you know, I was in the kitchen with three little boys pulling on me and trying to cook supper and my hair was all down and he came in from the Hill and he slipped up behind me and kissed me on the back of the neck. You know, that's the thing a woman remembers, you know, it matters a lot (laughs).

JUNGE: That's nice. Well, things were going along pretty well in Washington I take it. You were writing a column, right?

THOMSON: Yes.

JUNGE: What was that about?

THOMSON: Really, my observations. Everything was of interest to me. I was so interested in everything. I was seeing everything with new eyes. Even the Washington papers. You know, downstairs you saw a picture of me going to the White House with Keith and a picture of me in the shop where I bought my gown. You know, the *Evening Star* was one of the main newspapers then and they sent a photographer and a reporter

around with me. I don't know, there were 30 some, I'm not accurate about this, but there were 30 some new congressmen, U.S. representatives, that year and I don't know why they picked Keith and me to do the story on, but they did.

JUNGE: Well, you were an attractive couple.

THOMSON: Well.

JUNGE: No, wouldn't you say that, that you were?

THOMSON: They thought so. Evidently, the press thought we were.

JUNGE: But did you think so? I think it's important to say.

THOMSON: You know, I don't know that I ever thought of us in that regard. We just did what there was to do. I don't think we were that objective about ourselves or anything like that. We just did what had to be done.

JUNGE: That column of yours, did somebody ask you to write that? Did you just get an idea that you were going to write? Obviously, like you say, you were interested in all these things, but why did you do a column and who did it go to?

THOMSON: It went to all of the papers in Wyoming. I think I even put it out timing so that the weeklies would print it because we had 75 papers in Wyoming between the dailies and the weeklies. It was interesting to me (laughs), it was interesting to me that one of the papers in the state, I can't even remember which one it was, it think it was one of the weeklies, never printed my column so I just quit sending it to them. So they wrote to me and said "Please send us your column." And the editor would not print it, but he liked to read it himself.

(Both laugh).

THOMSON: I think it was one of the Democratic newspapers out in the western part of the state.

JUNGE: What was it called, your column?

THOMSON: Watching Washington.

JUNGE: And that's what you were doing?

THOMSON: Mm hmm.

JUNGE: And what did you observe when you were watching Washington?

THOMSON: Oh, everything, you know, that went on around us. All of the people that came from all of the other countries were called foreign missions. That was the language that was used. And, of course, if you are an elected official, your name goes in the green book, which means that we were invited to all the top-drawer social affairs in Washington of an official nature, because you are an official, you know, you rank right up there. The elected officials come first, which meant that when the Queen of England came to Washington, Keith and Thyra Thomson were invited by the British government to be there. You know, this was the kind of opportunity you had and so it was fascinating, it was a fascinating six years.

JUNGE: Did you meet the Queen?

THOMSON: Of course. Yes. Very attractive, very small, much more attractive than her pictures.

JUNGE: This column, now, was it inspired by your previous journalism career, thinking, well – you know, it seems to me that you had your hands full with three kids, a house to take care of and a husband to drive back and forth.

THOMSON: But I was bubbling over.

JUNGE: You had the energy.

THOMSON: Well, I had a story to tell. You can tell I'm pretty much of a talker, but I could write it down and send it home.

JUNGE: You're a good storyteller.

THOMSON: Really?

JUNGE: Oh, sure. Now those old columns, where would they be? I guess they appeared in 75 papers.

THOMSON: I have a whole book full of them downstairs.

JUNGE: All of them? A complete collection?

THOMSON: As far as I remember, mm hmm.

JUNGE: Well, tell me, for those people who don't know, me included, what sorts of things did you write about?

THOMSON: Mostly what I did and who I saw and who came to Washington and who visited us in Washington and what they were there for and the interesting things that ensued and all of these kinds of things. Of course, I was delighted that we were invited

as a couple to the White House and I was invited to the White House as one of the wives too, so..