

**Interview: Shirley Vaughn**

**June 22, 2004**

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

**Transcribed By:** Brent Garcia, February 8, 2006

**Interviewer:** Thank you for coming to talk with us today.

**Shirley Vaughn:** It is my pleasure. I think maybe I will tell you a little bit about 1958. I lived in Pratt, Kansas. I knew Bob Dole's sister, Norma Jean. She is quite a funny person. We played Bridge together. Bob was going to run the first time for the senate. She was asking for anybody that would like to work. Now, I know they had "Dolls for Dole." I was never a doll for Dole. But, I knocked on a lot of doors and said, "Dollars for Dole." Some of them had never even heard of him. I got a few doors slammed on my face when we first started. No one had ever heard of Bob Dole. After meeting him and being around him at that time, I got very well acquainted with Bob. I was very impressed with him. We were talking earlier, you and me, that I met President Nixon. Everybody thinks of him as being an abrupt person to talk to. But, I guarantee you he isn't. He was very understanding and he made everybody feel like they were very important. Bob does the same thing. Bob was a good campaigner. He shook hands with people. He went everywhere, to the kitchens and down the halls. He went into the barber shops and everything. He was always a good campaigner. I think that is what makes a good politician, one that talks to everybody, not just the important people in the world.

**Interviewer:** Well, I think that you have a history in politics, don't you?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yes, without even meaning to be. I have been told that Eisenhower and Alf Landon came to my grandfather's farm and talked about running for president in the very beginning, before he ever decided to announce his running.

**Interviewer:** Your grandfather was Clyde Hill?

**Shirley Vaughn:** George Hill. That was my first introduction to politics. My father got into politics under Bennett. He was a legislator in the House. He became Speaker of the House. He was very interested in everyone, not only Democrats or Republicans. He was good for Kansas. Even after he retired, he would go up and talk to new legislators. That is where I was inducted into politics.

**Interviewer:** You worked for Congressman?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Congressman Larry Winn for twenty years. I was his third district campaign manager. Larry was a lot like Bob. They got out and beat the bushes. They both had a handicap. Larry had an artificial leg. He walked the pavement and beat the bushes. No one even knew. That is how Bob was. Bob was the same way. I think that's one of the reasons I got involved with him. I thought of his past and all that he had been through. To still be interested in the nation is very impressed. He was ill for so long, and wounded. He went on; even though I knew it hurt. I know he suffered. But, he never gave up on his dreams and on the dreams of Kansas and the U.S. He is someone that we can all be proud of, Democrat or Republican. I don't care who you are, you have to be proud of his accomplishments. At least I am.

**Interviewer:** I know you've been active in Douglas County since moving here.

**Shirley Vaughn:** That's where I first started working and campaigning for Congressman Winn. Congressman Winn and Bob would travel together sometimes. We got to spend a lot of time with both of them. They were both good campaigners. Really, Bob has done a great deal for the University of Kansas. He is very proud of the University of Kansas. He has been back here many times and for many occasions. For basketball or anything else, he has been here. Eisenhower was our president for a long time. But, Dole is kind of like our president because he is the native that we love the most. His place, the Dole Institute is absolutely beautiful.

**Interviewer:** I think that everyone was pleasantly surprised when they saw it, don't you?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yes. The stained glass windows are magnificent. My daughter came up with me and said, "What is that town?" I said, "That is Russell, KS."

**Interviewer:** I know when you worked with Congressman Winn you worked with Joanne Coe, his administrative person for a number of years. We have to thank Joanne for saving all of the information for the exhibits.

**Shirley Vaughn:** I was looking down in the archives. He got so many gifts from foreign leaders. I don't know where you are going to put all the pictures.

**Interviewer:** It is wonderful, the archives. They are so well organized.

**Shirley Vaughn:** Is it true that they only keep Washington, D.C. for a year?

**Interviewer:** I am not sure if that is true. They had been keeping his throughout the year. They had them in the Spencer library, being organized, before moving here. They are still working on them of course.

**Shirley Vaughn:** My granddaughter says, "It is like a birthday every day; so many boxes to open."

**Interviewer:** Your granddaughter is now interning at the Dole, correct?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yes. Her name is Heather Hilt. She is a grad student.

**Interviewer:** It is nice that we have students come here to intern, don't you think?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yeah, I think that they will never get to know the real Bob unless they come over here and intern. Or, unless they listen to his speeches and the things that he has done.

**Interviewer:** They could listen to these tapes or read the transcripts of the oral histories.

**Shirley Vaughn:** He has touched lives. Everybody has been touched by Bob, and helped. I think of all of the things that I have, from Reagan on down, always had Bob in the background. I always knew that Bob was part of that. When he dedicates himself to something, he dedicates himself all the way. At least what I have seen of him and been around him. He has been very dedicated to anything that anybody wants. He does indeed question those things, but if he believes in it, he will go all the way with you. He has done that for years.

**Interviewer:** I understand that you were in the savings and loan business?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yes. And he helped us through legislation in Washington, D.C. and things.

**Interviewer:** I know it was very important.

**Shirley Vaughn:** We had to go to him and ask different things over the years. He was always there for us. Every time he came to town, he would always come and visit us. I feel as though he is kind of family. I think that all Kansans feel this way.

**Interviewer:** Isn't that right. Let's talk a little bit about the changes in politics you have seen since you have been active.

**Shirley Vaughn:** The things to me that have changed are that people forget the good things people do and they dwell on one certain aspect. All of the sudden, they are no good. They forget all of the good things. Even when Bob was running, the people forgot all of the good that he had done. Today, people are placing all of the blame for major problems on the president. I admit there have been problems in his term. But, people are forgetting that they are human. When they remember this, people do not appreciate them as much. Then we think, we are just as good as they are. I do think that they are much more liberal.

**Interviewer:** Do you find the students that you have in there are pretty liberal. Or, are they thinking people?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Well, you know, its kind of divided in the fraternity. I will gladly say that it is almost 50:50. The young men that were all for going to war and trying to save the country. After 9/11, there wasn't a boy there that didn't think that we were doing the right thing. Actually, I would like to say that it is 70:30. There are the liberal ones who are very outspoken. They aren't very willing to do anything about it, but they are outspoken. I find that the professors are the same way. They listen to their professors. I will say the University of Kansas professors are more liberal. When they talk about things, the students listen.

**Interviewer:** Are most of them Kansans that go there?

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yes, I would guess. I have a few from Iowa. Most of them are from Johnson County. You can tell the homegrown Kansans compared to the others. The people from Kansas are true Kansans. I feel that is because of their parents that have lived here for a long time. They still think Kansas is the best. I don't think students nowadays have an interest in state politics as they should. They like national. I would like to see them take more advantage of the things that Kansas has, and get more involved. My father used to be a great advocate getting involved, not as Democrats or Republicans, but as citizens and legislators.

**Interviewer:** Do you think maybe the T.V. has something to do with that? We get a lot of these sound bites.

**Shirley Vaughn:** Yes, absolutely I do. We don't hear as much about Kansas politics, even when they are in session. They really need to know about Kansas politics, then national. I think that the young people today feel grown up because at 18, they are legally of age. Yet, they really aren't adults. But, they have all of the responsibilities. All that they cannot do is drink. But, they can vote, go to war, etc. They are thrown into the adult world before they are ready. I think they need to know about Kansas. My children were pages in the legislature. The kids nowadays don't do that as much. But, Bob has been over the years back in Kansas. He goes to dinners and things. He came to dinner with my children and me. They got to know Bob. My daughter is now a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. She is interested in national politics because of that. Anyway, I think that they don't know. If people only had five minutes to sit down with Dole, and let him talk to them, I think they would be flag rising. I kept saying, "What can I do for America?" After you have been around Bob for a while, this happens. This new place here is really great. You can listen to his different videos. They tell a lot. Fifty years in politics is a long time.

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