

TIAS 515 Oral History

Dawn Lucien Interview:

April 24th 2009, 2:00pm

Andrew: Thank you...

First of all I am speaking with Dawn Lucien and this is for TIAS 515 Oral History.

I was wondering if you could start by telling me where you were born and maybe tell me something about your parents and grandparents?

Dawn:

I was born in Saint Ignatius Montana and I was my mother's seventh daughter. My mother was 42 years old when I was born so my sisters were considerably older than I except for the one next to me which was seven years older than I and she was five years younger than the closest one to her. So I had all these wonderful big sisters who were all beautiful women. My father experienced some difficulties with the banking system in the first Depression and moved the family to the Yakima valley when I was 9 months old so I associate all of my growing up years with the Yakima valley.

A little town called Prosser Washington which today has fifty two wineries and two of my nephews, which are involved in two of them separately. Bud with Mercer Reserve and my great nephew with Alexandria Nicole. They grow the grapes on their 40,000 acre ranch on the top of Horse Heaven Hill.

But I grew up in Prosser and was very active as a child because a friend and I took tap dance lessons from her aunt and we tap danced all over the Yakima Valley then when I was about 12 I began to sing and so by the time I was a teenager I was singing with a swing band and singing all over the Yakima Valley and involved in Camp Fire Girls and Rainbow Girls and various activities in my High School and my

Junior High School years. I was the president of my seventh grade class. I was a busy young person and I really enjoyed and appreciated those years growing up in a small town.

No matter what I wanted to do my mother would always say, "Oh, what will the neighbors think?" and I grew very tired of what the neighbors would think because I thought "who cares?" but you did care, you cared alot about what the neighbors thought because those were the people you knew and cared about.

I think that a small town is a wonderful place for people to grow up.

My sisters left home and went to college in places like Seattle and one of them became an exceptional secretary. She could type 90 words per minute with 11 carbon copies on a machine that was not electric. She was a wiz. So I had the extra advantage of spending my vacations with my big sisters in Seattle and going to the fine restaurants and the athletic club and all of those experiences which are not normally part and parcel of a little small town girl's life.

I should express that my interest in politics occurred at a very young age. My father, because of his circumstances and having to kind of reorganize his life at a period that was not the most easiest time for him was very interested in what was going on in the world. Dinner table conversation always centered on the events of the day. From the time I could read I would rush home and read the newspaper so that I could get in on the conversations around the dinner table and I think, I know that is what sparked my interest in what was going on in the world as well as what was going on in our community.

I have felt that the government closest to you affects you the most because that's the one that fixes the potholes in the streets and that kind of thing. They affect your daily life and how your police department runs and so forth. But I have been fascinated by what goes on at the higher levels of government.

I met my husband, um I, I went to Mills College for two years and to the University of Southern California for a semester and then I decided I didn't want to be a librarian or a social worker of the kinds of things that were available to women in those days so I applied to be a stewardess for Pan American Airways and I was the first Pan American stewardess hired who was not a registered nurse and who was not twenty one years old yet. So I flew the Alaska route and met the man that I married who was the former assistant to Congressman John Coffee in Washington DC. He not only was his administrative assistant but he was president of all of the 435 administrative assistants who formed an organization in Washington DC at that time. So John Coffee was a poker playing buddy of Franklin D. Roosevelt so he had a lot of clout. More than the people of his district even realized. Of course the man I married, Paul Olson, had a lot of clout on his own being president of all the administrative assistants to all the Congressmen in Washington, DC.

At any rate he had taken that year off to run for mayor of Tacoma and so I was involved in the politics of Tacoma from the time I started dating him. And of course we were married two days after the election deciding whether he won or lost. We would marry on November the 7th. It's interesting because about three day... five days before the election a local contractor by the name of Ivan Anderson who had done some work for Fort Lewis had not done work according to the specification and he had been black listed from bidding on any further contract. So he came to Congressman Coffee to ask him if he could get him reinstated as a person who could bid on government contracts and John Coffee was able to do that.

Then five days before the mayoral election in Tacoma he accused my husband to be Paul Olson, of accepting a campaign contribution from him underneath the capitol steps which is a federal offense. Through the whole campaign and ..into a difficult situation and Paul lost by 528 votes. But it was interesting and we were in New York in Times Square on our honeymoon around Thanksgiving and the

ticker tape that is up there on the Times Square building said Paul Olson cleared of all charges by a Congressional investigation committee.

Andrew: So that is great timing to have that up there and what an introduction to how dirty politics can happen I mean did you have any experience with that kind of shenanigans and politics before?

Dawn: No I did not, but my father had witnessed or heard about things and we would read about them in the newspaper, so we had discussed these things in my past as a child growing up around the dinner table conversation. I guess I was not maybe as disillusioned by this had I not been having an interest in national level politics over all my life period.

Andrew: You went on your honeymoon and then came back to Tacoma?

We came back to Tacoma and bought a house on North Prospect Ave, Tacoma and I had a child, my first child, Paul Junior and in 1950 we bought a house on North Yakima Ave at 813 and I had two more boys and we raised all those boys in that wonderful, wonderful neighborhood. There were about 26 children within about a three to four block area who were of an age so they had a great growing up period with all these nice children who lived within the same neighborhood. In those days they played outdoors and didn't come in until dark and had wonderful times and their memories are good about their growing up years. Tacoma is a very welcoming and beautiful community. I call it the gem of the universe. I think there is no place in the world that compares with Tacoma.

I had never even visited this part of town, I had just drove by on the highway back and forth from Seattle to Olympia or Portland or whatever until I became involved as a Tacoma citizen and could see this community for the beauty and advantages it had.

Andrew: At this point in time you have the three children. When was your first foray into politics?

Dawn: That's interesting, as my children were quite close together and so I hired a wonderful woman named Pearl. I paid her 65 dollars a month if you can believe this and she was a live in helpmate housekeeper for me. So I was able to have freedom that a lot of women under those circumstances might not have had. Pearl was always there and was just wonderful. And so I was able to be involved in the women's downtown association. It was a very important association in those days and almost all businessmen belonged to it and there was a women's auxiliary so I became very active in that. I was chairman of the mother's March of Dimes, I went through those kinds of things that women did in those days.

The newspaper had a rotogravure section where they featured things women were doing in the community. So women who were active in the community were getting their pictures in the paper. Never by their own name though, always as Mrs. Paul A. Olson, never as Dawn. So you never developed your identity though of course people were familiar with your husband and with you as a team. I was active in civic, very different civic things.

In 1952 you may be aware that we changed things for the charter for the city of Tacoma and that was the result of an election that my husband did not win, but five commissioners were elected at that time for a commission form of government where the mayor was just one of the five commissioners. The commissioner of public safety, who I believe was Roy Curr, and I hope my memory serves me correctly, who hired one of his employees to be Chief of Police, and this sort of confused the people of Tacoma who then began to realize that we had a rather corrupt administration down at city hall.

Al Rosselini was an ambitious young man as I believe a state senator at the time and he headed up a committee that came to Tacoma and in those early days of television he televised hearings with the madams and the people who were running the gambling houses and Tacoma received nationally a very bad reputation as a result of these people telling how much they were paying the police and so forth for

protection. As a result of that there were people telling who felt we should have a city manager form of government because then the manager would be hired from outside the city and come in with fresh ideas and new ways of doing things and then we would reform ourselves as a community.

Of course I was brand new to all this and so it was very fascinating to me. I didn't have any idea that these things really existed in this our little town and nobody, and very few people, well at least the people I knew didn't either. So I became actively involved in that because I thought that a strong mayor form of government was a better form of government than a city manager because you could elect somebody that you could respect and trust and they would lead the city. I have since had a change of heart on that but we did have a couple of three interesting city managers after that past.

Labor was very strong in those days and a committee of 100 was formed to fight the city manager, the idea of a city manager form of government. That committee maintained its identity through many, many following years up until 1972. And so the years from 52 to 72 were marked by a lot of infighting and difficulties in city hall.

I had supported a fellow by the name of Ben Hanson for mayor in 19..probably 59. There was a vacancy ... and I knew other people of course on the city council.. and a vacancy occurred and to this day I can't remember why, but a vacancy occurred on the city council and I was appointed to fill that vacancy.

Andrew: What year was that?

Dawn: That was 1960.

These were as I said very tumultuous times but a group of five of us on the city council of us formed a sort of coalition and so we were able to thwart any efforts by other people to who were trying to do things that we didn't think were right. Those were extremely productive years. I served the balance of that term which ended in 62 and during that period we authorized the Tacoma Mall, and we authorized

the Cheney Stadium and there were several very interesting, prominent things that occurred during that period of time. There was the airport, did I say the airport over on the peninsula which I objected to the location. I thought it should be out on Thumb Field and not across the bridge but I was in the minority on that position.

Of course what I didn't realize at the time and confessed to our current city manager, Erik Anderson, when I met him after he came to Tacoma, was that I had a guilty conscience all these years for voting to allow the Tacoma Mall to situate itself because downtown totally depleted as these businesses moved to the mall. What I didn't realize was that there was a clause in the contract that should have been discovered by somebody on the staff of the city hall. I didn't have the good sense to ask the question to read their lease. The lease stated very simply that you couldn't have a business within two and one half miles of the mall and that's what depleted downtown Tacoma. If we had approved the mall without that lease the businesses would have moved to the mall but they would have stayed downtown. So there was a slip up at that time. Somebody was not reading the fine print. Erik Anderson said I shouldn't continue feeling bad about it because if they had not located in the city, they would have located outside the city and all of that tax base would have been lost. So I feel better about that.

Andrew: So 60 to 62, what happened in 62.

Dawn: Oh I ran for Congress.

Andrew: In the 60's. Lots of different changes. Tell me more about that time in the city of Tacoma and that type of government.

Dawn: Well the city manager form of government was working from the standpoint of the citizens having a sense that there was somebody down at city hall who was in a sense, trustworthy and above reproach. But there were a lot of issues that created dissention in the community. So they never quite

got over the fact that we didn't elect a strong mayor form, this group that had opposed it, and they kept wanting to reinstate that. As a matter of fact in 1958, I failed to mention this, there was a board of freeholders elected to write a new city charter. I ran for one of those positions and I was elected by the voters and I was elected Secretary of the Board of Freeholders. We met for six months I think and wrote a new charter, which I have a copy there, and put it up for a vote of the people. The person who chaired that committee was a very interesting local attorney and he had been the sort of the moving force behind getting this group elected , approved by the city to elect a group. After we wrote the charter, and it was passed by a 13 to 2 vote, there were only two dissenting votes, about putting it forward to the people to vote, in I think it was probably 1959. This particular person came out against the charter after he had voted for it, and that confused the populace to the point that they rejected the new charter. And I never did understand why he did that and at one point I remember some years later he said to me, "I know you don't understand why I did what I did and maybe someday I will explain it to you." But he died before he ever got around to explaining it to me. *(laughs)* So I will never know what changed his point of view.

One of the bones of dissention was the utility board separate from the city council and of course that was a very well thought out plan. At the time I believe I did agree with that because Tacoma Public Utilities is the seventh largest public utility company in America. It supplies a huge amount of income to the city, actually more than a third of the city budget and I would say a half if I had my facts in front of me comes from the sale of public utilities to the people of Tacoma and a little bit outside the city of Tacoma. We own all these dams and it is worth billions of dollars. Because there hasn't been that much conversation about it in recent years the people of Tacoma don't realize how fortunate they are to have this huge, tremendous asset which they produce not only their own power which is the cheapest in America but, and their own water supply.

Now with Click Television there is no reason why any member of the community, anybody who lives in Tacoma should not be a Click subscriber because they own it. It is like having stock in a company and then buying supplies from some other company. Click Network is actually owned by the citizens of Tacoma and of course I am a subscriber to Click. And of course that happened when I was on the Utility Board in the 90's.

Andrew: (general agreement about the value of Click in the history of Tacoma)...

Let's go back to, you ran for Congress in 62 and later, I know that you were also the District Manager for Congressman Norm Dicks. What happened in between that time?

Dawn: Actually it was the second time I ran for Congress. I ran for Congress in 1958 and John Coffee was still running for it, he had been defeated by the way, and he would run every two years. He was a very strong candidate and he would get the nomination but he would be defeated by the incumbent who was Thor Tollefson, who was a Republican, was an oddity, in that a Republican would represent a district that was Democratic, cause this had always been a Democratic district. But he voted with labor enough and with the Democratic interests enough, so that he kept his options open and he was reelected. He had served for [ten] years when I ran against him 1958. I did not get the nomination at that time.

(much of the following has been organized for clarity)

So I decided to run for Congress again ... and I got the nomination but was not elected.

In 1964 Maggie called me up and said you have to run for Congress and I said Maggie I've run twice and lost and I just can't beat him and I don't want to be known as a loser. He said you will be sorry you don't run this year and I said well. And after I had been on the city council, and those were pretty, we accomplished a lot but those were also very difficult years. I had three little boys in grade school and

every afternoon when that newspaper would hit my porch I would think, Oh, what are they going to say today. I was thinking about my children having to defend me to their friends and neighbors. It just seemed that it was not right for me to run for reelection to the city council where there was so much sort of notoriety at the time.

They drafted a fellow by the name of Floyd Hicks to run for Congress that year and that was the year that they found out that Tollefson had his wife on the payroll for 10,000 dollars a year and she was not showing up at the office to do her work and two or three other things developed in the course of the campaign. And Floyd got elected. He came by my house after and said, he grew up in Prosser too, I knew him when I was a little girl and he was older -- He came by my house and he said, "I don't know what I am going to do I have never even been to Washington DC. (laughs) I said, oh Floyd, you will be just fine and he was. He served ten or twelve years, I don't know, five or six terms up until Norm Dicks ran in 1976. 64 to 76, six terms, and he did do well. He had an administrative assistant who came to see me not a year ago who works for the city of Seattle now.

Andrew: How did you get involved with Norm Dicks' office?

Dawn: Everybody knew Scoop and Maggie back in those days.¹ We had two Senators who were outstanding. Not only were they revered by the people in their own state but highly respected by people all over the nation. Both of them had been in the Senate long enough that they achieved positions of extreme power. Maggie became the senior Senator. But at the time Norm Dicks was his administrative assistant in the early or mid 70's. We knew Norm as Maggie's administrative assistant and when we would go to Washington we would see him and talk to him but I never knew him well. When he decided to take a year off in 1976 and run for Congress he came knocking on our door to ask us if we would help him in his campaign. Floyd had declined to run that year so it was an open seat for

¹ Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson and Senator Warren "Maggie" Magnusson

the first time ever maybe. And so seven people from the county of Pierce filed for that position and Norm was coming from Bremerton. Not only did my husband and I feel he was the best qualified person, should he get elected, but we also looked at the numbers and the chances were that seven people splitting the vote in Pierce County would give Norm the nomination because he would get the majority of the votes from the other side of the bridge and that is exactly what happened. Norm did get the nomination and he asked me if I would be his office manager. I said that I thought that would be fun for a couple of years. His campaign manager had been a fellow by the name of Tim Strege and so Tim became his District Manager and I became the Office Manager and we were the two persons in Norm Dicks' office starting in January of 1977. I became his District Manager in 1984 when Tim Strege left that position. By that time we had six employees in our office. Norm was visible enough that a lot of people were coming to us for help and we were helping him. Now the one thing I said to Norm when he asked me if I would be his office manager is that it would be a non partisan office. We would never ask anybody their politics. I would not ask anybody when I hired them what there politics were. I said I need you to agree to that in order for me to go to work for you and he said OK. So that is the way we ran our office and that was the way he has always run his office. It has been bipartisan, everybody gets the same treatment no matter what they might think privately or for whom they might vote.

Andrew: (I shared a story of when I met the then new Congressman Norm Dicks in 79 and we determined that we had probably met then.) How long did you stay with the Congressman?

Dawn: I stayed with him until 1989. I worked with him for a number of years and I discovered I was interested in it. It was fascinating job. Norm was very good to work for and thought alike on almost all issues. He was a doer, you know. I remember one time, just before one of the elections he said, "I have got to get a new project." I said, Norm, the election is next week. And he brought [the construction of Interstate] I-705 and the Union Station renovation. I mean major, major things that happened.

Oh I forgot to tell you I was working on the restoration of the Pantages Theater when Norm came to call in February of 76 to ask us if we would support his candidacy. And I said, Norm, how do you feel about the Pantages and he said, "What's that?" I said it is an old theater in downtown Tacoma that we want to restore. I said, will you support it? He said, "well tell me more about it" and of course he did.

I had asked Maggie for a million and a half dollars and I had asked [Washington State Legislator] Slim Rasmussen for a million and a half from the state legislature and we had a pair of local gentlemen who were trying to raise a million and a half locally. We renovated that building for four and one half million dollars which doesn't sound like very much today but back in those days it was a lot of money. Norm helped us get a million and a half from the Federal government and [District Representative] Lorraine Wojahn was helpful in getting us the million and a half from the state of Washington and the two people who were running the local campaign, Bob King and Archie McLane were successful in raising their million and a half. But not quite when the doors opened, we still had a little left to raise when we opened our doors in 1982. I was President of the Pantages board that year. That was an exciting time for Tacoma and that was a very worthwhile project.

Andrew: You sang and you were in a swing band. How long did you perform and when did you stop.

Dawn: I performed of course during all my high school years I sang and we had a little band in our Prosser High School. We performed wherever we were asked to perform which was fun. I sang when I went to Mills College, matter of fact I took opera lessons at Mills College [Oakland, CA] but my range wasn't quite that, I'm not quite into that operatic range although I had a pretty good range of sounds that I could produce. I sang for the troops while I was at Mills and that was a lot of fun because I would go out to Saint Mary's [College of California] and they would invite me to come out to where the troops were being trained and when they would have their evenings we would invite the Mills girls to come out to dance and then I would perform for the troops which was fun. So when I went down to the

University of Southern California after two years at Mills and a friend from Mills who was a couple of years older than I was getting married in February and she asked me to sing at her wedding. So I told her I would. Well in January I applied to Pan American Airways and as I was accepted I had to come home for training. I had to come back to Seattle so I called her up and I said I'm sorry. So her father was in ... it had something to do with the movies, I don't know what but he had something to do with them. So I called her up to tell her I was leaving and that I was sorry but I could not sing at her wedding and I was really very sorry about that but I had to come back to Seattle. And she said, "Oh, you've got to sing at my wedding." And I said I am sorry and back in those days you didn't even think about making a special trip, or flying for doing things like that and I said I just can't I have to go to Seattle and all that and be there for my training. She said, "Oh, I have a talent scout coming to hear you sing that day." So, someone was saying the other day how their life had taken a turn at a point and I said, you know when I look back at my life I think that might have been a turning point in my life had I stayed and been good enough that I would have been a Hollywood star. My life would have been a totally different, totally different kind of life.

Andrew: It is amazing how entertainment and politics have so much in common. There is that being out in front of the public and a communicator. One of them is trying to tell a story and one is trying to dictate organization and process.

Dawn: And I have never had an occasion to sing in Tacoma.

Andrew: Who knows, maybe that will come up. Now you mentioned you were active in Norm's office until 89, now have you been active in the political arena after that?

Dawn: Oh yes, I ran for Mayor. The year I left Norm's office, I left in January. My husband and I decided to take an automobile trip in Mexico and we were even discouraged in that by the AAA who said you can't get unleaded gas, but we decided to do it anyway. We drove all the way down to Acapulco, so that

was a 5,000 mile trip we took from Tacoma, down through Mexico and back again. So we drove a lot in Mexico and had a great time and when I came home I decided to run for Mayor. That was the year when three women were in the Mayor's race as well as two or three men. It was so mixed up and Karen Vialle was the one who won that year and was elected Mayor so it was a woman but it was not I.

She appointed me to a position on the Utility Board, which, she came to me after she got elected and she said "would you like to be on the Arts Commission?" and I said, I've been on the Arts Commission, I have been on the Planning Commission and I have been on the Historic Preservation Commission. I said if you want to appoint me to something I would love to be on the Utility Board. She said, "Oh, OK" and I had five wonderful years on the Utility Board. I really truly enjoyed it. The employees out at the utilities are so dedicated and Mark Chrisom, who became the Director of Public Utilities during that period of time. I think about the second year I was on the board Ted Coates resigned and we appointed Mark Chrisom without doing any kind of a search because we felt we had the best person right here in Tacoma so why waste tax payer's money looking for someone you weren't going to hire anyway. Mark performed beautifully until he left just a couple of years ago now. Now he is the head of the whole National Association of Public Power with offices in Washington DC. Those were five wonderful years where we were able to secure a second pipeline, move forward with an opportunity we had for a second pipeline. We were trying to relicense the Cushman Dams which was finally resolved as an issue this last year. All that time. We had our hundredth anniversary I think for Tacoma Public Power during those years. It was really a very special time for me, I look back on those five years as being very productive.

Andrew: If you had to pick four things that helped to transform the city of Tacoma, and we are spanning decades, (meandering on my part) they were running the T1 cable for TCI and Tacoma found out it was

sixth in line before they would receive it. Then I heard that at that time Tacoma decided they would lay their own cable and invested quite a bit of money in it. Were you involved in that?

Dawn: Yes, those decisions were made during that time, big major decisions and that's why we have Click cable today. We were laying cable anyway and it only made sense to be able to provide cable service to people. I think it is one of the most undersold, and I don't really understand why the people of Tacoma don't realize that they own Click Network and they would be very well advised to buy their cable service from Click Network. It's like owning stock in a company and then buying product from another company if you go with some other server. And that is why we are the most wired city and have been able to capitalize that to a degree. It may not be as true today and it may not be as important now that we have other ways of getting wireless and so forth. But at the time it was very forward looking and of course Tacoma Public Utilities has been forward looking from day one when the city was smart enough way back in the 1800's to purchase the -- electric utility.

Andrew: When we think back the sixties were that tumultuous time, that were you on some of these boards then as well?

Dawn: I have always served on numerous boards. I am on eight today I think. So I have been on the UWT board for twenty two years and of course that is an achievement that I just think is one of the most remarkable because when we formed our little group in the eighties called the South Puget Sound Education Council to bring the University of Washington branch campus to Tacoma the University of Washington didn't want us. We had to convince the legislature to talk to UPS and PLU, the various universities we already had in this area who looked at it as a rival. It was an uphill, really an uphill fight.

Fortunately Sam Smith who was the head of Washington State University came over here during that time. He did a helicopter tour of the city and he said I would love WSU to have a branch in Tacoma. And

that's when the University of Washington perked up a little bit and said "well, if there is going to be a branch in Tacoma it had better be the University of Washington.

So then we began to get a little bit different feedback and Liz Heath and I were the two pro bono lobbyists down in Olympia for three or four years in a row talking to the various legislators and committees about this. I was President of South Puget Sound Higher Education Council the year that in 89 when the legislature agreed that we should have this branch campus. So that was a very exciting year and I have been on the Advisory Board every year which has been 22 or 23 years. I got to watch that thing grow from nothing, and reform the whole of the lower part of Pacific Avenue from what was still a little part of a dicey area back in the 70's even though we had a city manager form of government and thought we had gotten rid of all that kind of stuff.

Andrew: Story about a trip to Pacific Ave etc, and how it has changed.

Dawn: You know my second son is a four star admiral in the Navy Seals and he graduated of course from Stadium High School and has never actually lived in Tacoma from the time he graduated in 1969 and went back to Annapolis and the Naval Academy. He is in charge today of all Special Forces in the military and one of the top 16 military people in the nation. When he comes home and we go down to that part of town he says mom I can not believe the transformation that has taken place since I was in high school. And look what it is today. And he said any city would be proud to have this district.

Andrew: I met him, I went to 9th District Day with Adam Smith and he was there speaking. I wouldn't be surprised if any time someone from Tacoma meets him, who is a four star admiral, they say "I know your mom. She is so great."

Dawn: Well and my grandson, Dan, is working at Norm Dicks' office right now as we speak as an intern and having the time of his life. Actually, it is a life changing experience for him and they all think that he

is just wonderful and he thinks they're wonderful and they're all getting along so well. Several people have told me that they have been in the office and they have met Dan.

Andrew: And what is amazing is you trace it back to those dinner table conversations and your reading the newspaper and wanting to be involved in politics.

Dawn: And my father.

Andrew: And your father - - and there is that germination of an interest in politics.

Dawn: And I am so grateful for it. I tell you it is so fascinating is when you know interesting people you never know what you are going to read in the newspaper the next day because things can change overnight as they have drastically in the last few years as we have discovered.

Andrew: In looking things up I saw you associated with Vice President Hubert Humphrey.

Dawn: Oh yes, Hubert called me up in 1968 when he decided to run for President and asked me to come back and set up his announcement luncheon which I did and then he asked me to come back again and be the number two person in his national citizens for Humphrey campaign so I worked for Hubert in Washington DC from May of June of 68 through November. Those were exciting times of course, Bobby Kennedy was assassinated, the convention in Chicago was a disaster. I had met Hubert first in 1949 when I was the youngest delegate in America to the Philadelphia Convention. I had gone to every convention between 49 and 72 actually, as either a delegate or an alternate or an observer. So I would keep running into Hubert every four years and we would renew our friendship. So when he was running in 64 for Vice President he sent me a little note, I didn't get to see him at that convention but I got a little hand written note in my book there from him saying how sorry he was that we didn't get a chance to chat while he was being nominated Vice President.

Andrew: So 1949. That's the earliest year I have heard now that you held a political position of some sort -- So you had three boys?

Dawn: Three boys. Kurt is here in Tacoma and works with US Oil and Refining Company and he has a wonderful wife, Ricki, and I tell them they are my best friends.

Andrew: I was very pleased to have met him and even have a few students of my own helping him on a project. We have talked about a lot of transformational things in regards to Tacoma. What do you think was the earliest transformational one on the Tacoma side, one you recollect? The change of government structure?

Dawn: The change of government was certainly a huge, yes. You know Tacoma has never had a strong Mayor form of government. It has had commission form. It has had a weak Mayor form where all the council members had the same kind of position. And anyway, a City Manager form but it has never had a strong Mayor form.

Andrew: Even in this terrible economic condition that we are in, I think Tacoma is in the strongest position, and who knows where that is going to go, and yet, I still feel Tacoma is a vibrant place.

Dawn: I am very much interested in the campaign of Jim Merrit for Mayor at this time. I had a fund raiser for him and I am working very hard to help him get elected. I think he is a businessman, he is an architect, he has run his own business all these years. I think that a businessman in the Mayor's office would be someone who could provide service very well. To bring together people to realize that Tacoma, we can build and grow here no matter what is going on outside there in the other parts of the world. We just need somebody down there who is excited about the possibility of bringing us all together to do those things.

And I am on the board of Urban Waters, we just broke ground last week for a new Green building down here on the Thea Foss Waterway on the East Side. So things are happening in Tacoma.

Oh, and I am trying to make it the conflict resolution capital of the world through UWT and the Puyallup Tribe. I talked with the tribal people and they are very interested. That could be something very interesting that we can work on.

Of course the LeMay Museum² will be a huge transforming thing and it looks like that is going to happen. That will bring, that will put us, that will bring people from all over the world who are interested in old cars.

Andrew: For anyone who didn't think the Glass Museum was going to have an impact. Boy, I have seen clippings and articles early on. Where I have seen in other newspapers, other magazines that are doing features on Tacoma. When have we seen features done on Tacoma as a destination?

Dawn: My son Erik saw, when he was flying someplace a magazine on the airplane that said the five best three things in the nation, in the United States to visit, one of them was the Chihuly Glass Bridge. So he was excited about that.

Now we have this new [maritime] museum down on the waterfront her, in the old warehouse. And now for the first time we can have cruise ships in Tacoma. So look at what would happen if those big cruise ships came into downtown Tacoma. A thousand people get off those and wander the streets, so this is entirely possible. We are a much more user friendly city than Seattle to a person who is coming in on a cruise ship. I know when we cruised we loved the smaller ports because you can get around. So I hope Tacoma can be a destination for the cruise ships before too many years have gone by.

² Harold LeMay Car Museum

Andrew: We have been going on for a while now. Is there anything that you would like to mention in regards to the idea of your part of the history of Tacoma?

Dawn: Well, I just look forward to the future. I think we have exciting times ahead. I think we can take advantage of this down turn in the economy to focus on our community and make it a better place. I think people who are finding that their employment is being diminished can work as volunteers in helping with community projects. I think we need the leadership from City Hall that will get people excited about doing that kind of thing. I think that we can elect a person, Jim Merrit, who could make that happen.

I believe that, as I think I said, I think that Tacoma is the most beautiful situated. When you look at the mountain and it comes out I get so excited. And it is surprising how often it does come out, when you are living where I do, where I see it every time it appears. Oh, and we are going to change the name of that back to Mount Tacoma (chuckles) and there is some excitement out of the News Tribune about that, I talked to David Zeek³ about it the other day.

So I think the best is yet to come you know. We have had some wonderful, wonderful, fulfilling times but I still look to tomorrow.

³ Editor of the Tacoma News Tribune