

Governor Christine Todd Whitman Interview (August 20, 2012)

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Today is August 20th, 2012; I'm Marie DeNoia Aronsohn with former New Jersey Governor, Christie Todd Whitman for the first in a series of interviews for the Center on the American Governor at the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University. Christie Whitman is New Jersey's 50th governor and its first woman Chief Executive. She served from 1994 to 2001, when she resigned to take a position in the Administration of George W. Bush as EPA Administrator. We begin with Governor Whitman at the beginning.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Tell us about your family; tell us about your siblings, your parents, and your earlier memories.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well I grew up in a very political family, because my parents were both very involved in politics; never ran for office but they were very involved in the political-- in the party, in the Republican Party. I mean my grandmother on my mother's side had been head of the Federation of Republican Women for New Jersey, as was my mother and Ma was National Committeewoman, Dad was State Chairman for 10 years total here in New Jersey. Actually they were introduced by their parents at the 1932 Republican National Convention because both of their fathers, each of their fathers had been involved giving financial support and as the youngest of, excuse me, of 4 by 8 years, I was the one that was kind of the tail end, so I got to do all the things that the others didn't, because Mother and Dad were tired of shipping around kids and they didn't really have anybody, so I got to stay at the dining room table and the conversation was always about, you know, what was going on in the world and the state and the local government, so I grew up being interested in policy and politics and campaigning from day one kind of thing.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Can you recall as a child, any particular issue that really struck you that kind of drew you into that conversation?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well probably one of the things that I remember the most was when doing a door to door when I was about 13 and going to this one door where they opened it and they said, it's my right not to vote. And I thought, you know, yeah but you might not have it forever if that's your attitude, but that was the kind of thing that spurred me to want to get more involved, because that kind of attitude while correct, was very troubling, even to me at that age.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you have a sense even back then that this would be a big part of your life?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well even younger than that, I mean I got to stay up late and go with Ma when we'd go up to Oldwick to count ballots in the days of the good old paper ballots, so I got to stay up way past my bedtime and that was always fun and I went to my first National Convention in 1956 when I was 9 and met Dwight Eisenhower there and I remember going to the Inaugural Ball and dancing with Senator Smith who was our US Senator at the time at age 10, so kind of been immersed in it, steeped in it from the very beginning and as a kid, that's the exciting part; that's the fun part. You know I was a page at the conventions and I can't remember whose convention it was, it must have been a Nixon convention where I was a page for Efrem Zimbalist, Junior, who at that time starred in *77 Sunset Strip* and I was madly in love with him so it was-- the poor guy, I mean he-- every time he turned around, there I was; I was his page and he couldn't get-- I practically followed him into the men's room. I didn't quite go that far and he would send me-- to do things like send me off to get cigarettes, I think just to get me away from him <laughs> for a while. Those kinds of things stick in your memory when you're a kid and then in '64, that was the other thing that really prompted me to stay involved with the Goldwater Convention, I was very much for Nelson Rockefeller and had worked for him and I was a page in the New Jersey delegation and when he spoke, I'll never forget one of our delegates standing up on a chair and spitting at him and I thought these are adults and that was the time when they booed him terribly, and Rockefeller just stood there and said, "Look, I've been given 10 minutes to speak and then you can do this all you want, but I'm staying here until I've spoken my 10 minutes." But I was just appalled at the behavior of the group that we called the Rat Finks, back in those days, who were very, very conservative and that was not terribly different from some of the things we see today.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: I was going to say, would you consider that a very formative experience for you, watching that speech?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh yeah, very. It's just-- it strengthened my resolve that this was not the way you should be doing politics; you can disagree, and that's fine, but you don't get up as an adult and boo a Governor who was a Presidential candidate; you don't spit at them, I mean that's juvenile behavior and demeaning to the system and it made me want to get involved and ensure that that's not the way the party went. I haven't been terribly successful with that, I don't think, over the long run.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What was it about Governor Rockefeller that really drew you to want to support him?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: I liked his attitude I mean he had an openness about him; he had a caring for the average person; never mind that he came from an enormously wealthy family. I can remember being in a cavalcade with him through Newark; I've never seen anything like it. I mean people would-- men would come out of the barber shop with their faces half creamed up for a shave to wave hi and women came out of the hairdresser with their hair still in curlers just to wave at him, because he had that kind of personality; he related to people and I thought his record as Governor was a good one. I agreed with most of the things he did. My father thought he was a big spender and wasn't at all supportive and my mother was very supportive of him. I tended-- I was-- I felt that Ma had the right take on him at that point.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Were you the only one of your siblings to choose a political path?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No, my next oldest brother, Danny Webster Junior ran for the State Assembly here in New Jersey and became a State Assemblyman and the two older ones, my sister and older brother kind of eschewed it as younger people. Actually my sister ended up working at Department of Treasury in Washington and brother John was on the council in Far Hills. So they all-- you can't get away from it; it's kind of a civic commitment that everybody participated in to one degree or another. It wasn't-- they weren't as interested as my brother Danny and I were, because then he worked in Washington and was at the State Department and did a whole bunch of different things in government. He stayed very involved and made his career. But I will say my sister in her last iteration, working iteration, was all in government at the Department of Treasury.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: At what point did you consider or perhaps commit to the idea of being involved in elective politics?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well I was always involved in campaigns and I loved that for other people. I never really considered it for myself. Probably when I went to college that was something you thought about. I majored in international government because at that point I figured I knew all I was to know about domestic politics and they weren't going to teach me anything. I mean typical 18 year old bravado, but I did know-- we'd lived overseas, I'd lived overseas at that point and had traveled a great deal and I knew that one of the holes that I

had in my education was international government, so that's what I majored in at college. I wrote my honors thesis on Nigerian Constitutional Development just to get outside my comfort zone and get into things that I didn't know about. Then ran the Republican club there; was involved in policy things, knew I wanted to be involved in policy making, but not thinking specifically about running for office. I think I probably always fantasized that that would be incredible if it ever happened, but I didn't see a path. You know I wasn't planning out a path to do that.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: As you were working on campaigns and you would fantasize about it- I know campaigns can be so exciting- and see yourself in that role, would you say you were pretty young when you started thinking about that?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No. No, no, no; I didn't start thinking about myself in that role until much later. It just-- it was always working for other people and I enjoyed the process, but I don't remember thinking, if anybody asked me what would have been the ideal job, it would have been, always actually the ideal job was governor of New Jersey, even when I was in college, if they asked me I would say, governor of New Jersey but then it never occurred to me that I actually was ever going to do that or ever run for office at that point.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Why did you idealize that particular...?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well you know I grew up with some terrific Republican governors here in the state and you know I was watching Tom Kean's future at that point, and I just-- I loved New Jersey and if you were going to serve. I didn't consciously know at that point the power of the governor of New Jersey and its ability to really affect change but you could sense there was something about the office that just being a governor was an incredibly important position. I worked in Washington at the Republican National Committee for several years and you know when the governors came into town, that was a big deal and you were always terribly impressed by that, so it never occurred to me that I'd ever be one of those or that when I was it would be impressive <laughs> to anybody so you know it was just one of those things that you were around them all the time and could see the kind of work that a governor could do. But it didn't occur to me that I would ever be there.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Can you recall any specific New Jersey based issues that you found really compelling at an earlier point?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well a lot of it was open space. Because growing up on a farm, you could see the change that was going on around you as we lost farmland, so that was always something that concerned me. My mother was on the Regional Plan Association, so planning and government planning was also important and how that impacted on open space. She was very involved in the National Parks and , some of the National Park development and in preserving open space around here so that was something that had always caught my attention. She was also on the Board of Higher Education, so that was another aspect, totally different aspect with which I was involved but you know it was the diversity of the state and the challenge of meeting the needs of all those people. It always seemed so extraordinarily daunting and yet incredible if you could ever come close to trying to find a way through some of the tangles that existed. I don't know that I-- how consciously I thought about the problems that we had in our inner cities when I was younger, but certainly before I ran, I did a lot of-- I made it a point of going and researching things. I mean I spent a day with a mobile clinic up in Newark to see what they were faced with, what they had to do and went around and did immunization in various housing projects. I'll never forget seeing all these little kids come up to us at one housing project and I noticed, they were-- it was summertime, they all had shorts on and they all had these huge scars on their knees and I wondered why on earth they had these scars? I looked around and the place they had to play was concrete covered with glass shattered bottles and stuff and that really, really hits home when you start to see that kind of thing and say, this just should not be and how can a child possibly grow up in this kind of an environment and how difficult it is so but that really didn't come-- that part of it didn't come until later.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Open space became such a signature issue for you and seeing your farm here <laughs> I'm wondering how much of it impacted that, just your appreciation of just being in such an environment.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh yeah; it was everything. I'd come home from school and I'd grab my pony and put a bridle on it and mostly rode bareback and my best friend lived at the farm next door and we'd go together and just ride or I'd go down to the river; I had a favorite tree that had kind of fallen across the river and I'd sit there for hours and write stuff and things and I just always loved the outdoors and both my parents are very outdoorsy and we used to go west and we'd travel overseas and Dad always had a very strong feeling about you always left a place better off than where you found it but also that anything you wanted to do you had to be good at it and you had to try to be the best, so I could spend hours on the front lawn trying to learn how to cast a fly rod, a fly fishing rod and things like that. So I could go with him in the rivers when we were out west, but we did pack trips and all that kind of stuff, so I grew up with the outdoors and had

appreciation of it and an understanding of man's ability to impact for good or ill, their natural environment.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Who outside of your family encouraged you to get involved in politics; to actually run?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well the first person that actually came forward was our county chairman; when-- after we got married, John and I got married and we moved to London for two and a half years and when we came back from that, because I'd had to stop working; I couldn't get a work permit there. When we came back, our county chairman, a fellow called Luke Gray at that time, approached and said would I be interested in going on the county college board of trustees. It was Somerset County Community College it, became Raritan Valley Community College and I said yes and that got me the opportunity to start to meet all the players in Somerset County; get to know people and from there. There was an opening for a woman; they only had one woman slot at-- not officially but you know, unofficially on the county Board of Freeholders and he asked if I would run for that, which I then did and won. And then it was really Tom Kean who gave me the opportunity to serve at the state level as President of the Board of Public Utilities and that then got me some statewide experience that I wouldn't have had and some exposure. I was a member of a cabinet, his cabinet then and I had a great deal of respect for him, obviously. It was really my parents - they were as supportive as anything but -- it was always my brother they were kind of looking at to be the one who really made his future, at least from my father's point of view, made a future in politics. And he was doing fine until he described the legislature as a zoo, and said they were all a bunch of monkeys. He couldn't get anything-- they weren't taking issues terribly seriously and that was the last time he got a bill through. <laughs>. So it was a bit of a short lived career, shall we say, in that elective office for him.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Tell me about Ray Bateman and what role he played in pushing you in this direction.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Ray was somebody that my parents were very supportive of. He really didn't feature that largely for me in the very beginning. Later on, yes; Ray was very supportive, but early on it was really Luke. Luke Gray talked to Ray Bateman, and if Ray had said, no way, then no way. But because of the history of my family with his family and I'd known him for a long time, and we'd known Joan and the kids. My parents had been very supportive of him politically all the way through. I think that certainly helped.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What was it that if you can think back, that Luke saw in you that obviously you said it was a slot for a woman, but beyond that, did he have a chance to see you speak at some point or was there a moment that you can recall?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: You know, if I'm dead honest, I think it was probably that he thought that my parents had been very supportive financially of the party and I wasn't going to step on it. I had to go before a screening committee and there were 2 slots. There were 4 people I think competing for the 2 slots. There were really 2 that were designated by Ray-- by Luke as the 2, but the thing I remember from that was, I was the only one asked if I'd-- the others were all male- and I was the only one asked if I had a college degree. I answered, it didn't make a difference to me. I did have one and it was only after I got on the board that I discovered that only one other member of the Board actually had a college degree. So a little bit of the women discrimination but it was the old boy network; this was the power of the county chairman and frankly if Ray had said, not Ray, excuse me, if Luke had said no way, it wouldn't have happened. So it was from that. I cannot take a lot of credit for that. I think he had watched me at the county college board. Ray actually had come on the board. Ray and I went on the board at the same time and he became President of the board right away, I had worked with him and we had worked together well. So again I think that was having his support for that next step was very important. It certainly did help me but he wasn't someone who spoke to me privately saying, "You ought to do this," that wasn't the kind of relationship we had.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What was that first campaign like for you, for you to be the star, if you will, after having supported so many candidates?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well you worked your butt off and even though it's a very Republican county, we were running against an incumbent Democrat. There was one Democrat on the Board and we were running against the incumbent Democrat and a fellow who had been a Democrat freeholder so it wasn't a given at least I didn't feel it was a given. John Kitchen was a running mate and he and I really worked hard. I mean we were out every weekend. We did the door to doors and we had all the good experiences and the bad experiences. We had the comeuppances and the times were really good. It was a learning and growing experience I think without a question, there's a vast difference between being supportive of a candidate no matter how involved you are and how vested you are in their winning and being the candidate yourself. There's really isn't a comparison.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Exhausting or exhilarating?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Both; the kids were young at the time and I'd take them around when I think they were 2 and 4, maybe or 3 and 5. I'd take them when they wanted to come. When I was doing fun things at parks and stuff, and actually they were great because they were right at knee high, Kate was a little taller and Taylor was about knee high. If people didn't pay attention to them they'd, , I won't say kick them in the shins but they basically bumped up against them so that they'd pay attention and then they could hand them a pamphlet for me. They had a good time. I tried not to force it on them, but you know when you were doing the county fairs and that sort of thing, they loved that.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: I'm sure they're so proud of their Mom. Who were your role models, would you say? I know we've talked about your parents of course, but beyond that.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: They really were the big role models, particularly my mother and grandmother who had both been very involved. Their was attitude that you could do anything and be anything you wanted to be. In our family, there wasn't a woman's role. Even though my father was kind of-- I think he was kind of torn by it, because initially he said to me, well after college you really have to learn how to type. And I said, I don't want to learn how to type because the minute I put that down on a resume, that's all I'm going to end up doing. He said, well then go to law school. So I mean it was either be a support person or be a lawyer. He didn't care really, it was instinctive; that's the way he was raised. I mean he was born in 1899 so he was older and that was the way but he wasn't prejudiced. He would say, well, you're going to have-- to be a nurse, or a schoolteacher. Be a lawyer. You know, so it was-- they were both very supportive and they were important to my feeling that as long as I worked hard at anything, I could really do it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Frame if you would the rising importance of the women's movement? I think you're touching on that now, but with respect to your decision to enter politics how were you observing that movement pick up momentum.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well you watched. I'd go back to Margaret Chase Smith. I mean you watched the strong women who were serving. You watched Millicent Fenwick, obviously we knew her pretty well and spent time with her. We watched her and all that she did and accomplished and you know it gave

you a sense, again, there was a role for women. There just weren't nearly enough women playing that role. When I ran for governor, women were terrifically important. There were a number of women who really pushed me and supported me and got me going. Actually, it started when Kathy Donovan was the State Chairwoman for a brief period of time. We had a female State Chairperson and she is the one who came to me and asked if I would I run for the United States Senate against Bill Bradley. She asked would I consider that and that's what led me actually to the governorship. At that point I'd been 2 years as President of the Board of Public Utilities. I knew that I didn't like the appointive position nearly as much as the elective because it's such a different relationship with the people you serve, I was looking for a way to get back into elective office for New Jersey since -- at that point there was no Lieutenant Governor. There was no other way to run statewide and to get to know the whole state except run for Governor or run for the US Senate. It sort of raised an eye to say I've done freeholder and President of the Board of Public Utilities, I can now be Governor. So I said I'd give it a shot and take the chance that the same thing wouldn't happen to me that unfortunately happened to Mary Mochary which kind of stopped her in her tracks because of the size of her defeat and it was a challenge. I was taking a risk but it worked.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It was always the Governorship though that was your goal?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Yeah, yeah. I mean I would have been honored to have served in the Senate but I kind of knew that the legislative side was not what I wanted. My temperament wasn't as good for the legislative as it would have been for the executive. You know -- I'd spent a lot of time in politics. I'd interned for Cliff Case, Senator Case in Washington: I knew how the legislature worked. My brother had been a Legislator. The idea that when you have an issue you want to address that you have to convince a whole bunch of people in a subcommittee and then they change everything around. Then you have to go to the full committee and explain it to them and get them to agree then, by the time it gets to the floor of the House or the Senate, it's something totally different and you have another battle on your hands. I like to get things done and so even back then -- it would have been obviously a high honor to have won. But I did assure my children they didn't have to worry about moving to Washington.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: How would you describe the New Jersey political scene at that time; at the time when you were serving at the BPU? I know it's Governor Kean at that point, but in terms of the Trenton scene at that point, and -- do you have a recollection of how things were?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: You know we were up in Newark at the BPU. I spent the first six weeks overseeing a trial. We were in a quasi-judicial on the garbage industry in the state and some fascinating things. Learning about godfathers who were real godfathers who were called Matty "The Horse" Ianniello who happened to be in the state penn or the federal penn. These were relations of the people we were having before us every day -- I was focused on that sort of thing <laughs> and what might happen and it was right after Judge Green had issued the decision breaking up AT&T so we were trying to figure out LATAs and inter-LATAs and stuff that I had no clue about. I didn't actually go to Trenton alot except for occasional Cabinet meetings and I didn't have legislative priorities that I had to worry about and it was about really all regulatory things that the Board was doing. Obviously we had issues where the legislators would weigh in, if you were talking about a rate hike. But I didn't have to do a whole lot of lobbying, and the Kean administration left us to do our own thing. I mean obviously you had to check in with them. But if they thought you were going in the right direction, they didn't micromanage, which is actually a lesson that I've always taken. In a way, it's an approach I've always had. I'm not going to know all the answers; there's always going to be somebody smarter than me, who has been doing this particular whatever it is for a long time: know which of the ones-- that you can trust, lay out the broad policy outlines and then let them try to figure out how to get it done.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was your appointment considered controversial at all?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No, no. It was toward the end of Governor Kean's term, and I don't think anybody much focused on it. I don't think anybody thought much about it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was it a tough decision to leave Somerset County Board of Freeholders for an appointed position? Your first elected position for an appointed position?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: I'd been there five and a half years. I'd been head of the Board for two and a half of that: I have a short attention span. Five years is a long time to be in the same job and so I was ready for something else. The opportunity to be in a cabinet, in Governor Kean's cabinet and to serve statewide was attractive. As I said, I didn't, until I'd been in it a while, realize that I really did enjoy the elective office better than the appointive office. But it was again, way outside my zone of comfort because I knew nothing about regulating things. I knew about garbage because actually, back in those days, we had handled it at Somerset County and we'd put in the first recycling program. We

voluntarily put in the first mandatory recycling program in the state and we'd established the Farmland Preservation Program. For the first time, we did a bunch of things like that which I'd been very involved in. We started to introduce some smart growth planning. We'd done that and so I was ready to try something different.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: You say it was Kathy Donovan who approached you about running against a very popular US Senator.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Yes

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What was that conversation like when she brought this up to you?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: If I can remember she put it out there and I kind of thought about it for a little bit and she said she'd make sure that there was party support, which she did from her end: There wasn't national party support, but she did what she could. There wasn't a lot of other. There was not much sentiment for supporting me. Kathy did it because I think she wanted to have a strong candidate. I think a lot of the men went along with it because they thought, well we'll show how nice we are to women. We let them run for important offices but she's not going to win, so we don't have to worry about it too much. Then she'll go away so we don't have to worry. That maybe me being overly cynical but that's kind of the way it came across. Kathy was, to her credit, very supportive. She said she'd support me and as I said, at that point I was ready to get back into elective office. I had started to be think about Governor, as being the best job. I really thought I would like to be Governor, damn it, you know, that kind of attitude so I said I'll take this chance.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It's tough to run a campaign when you don't have the national party behind you, I would think.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh well there's a thing up there, it says, "Under-funded, unknown," and that's how I was known. The under-funded, unknown, because you didn't get any earned media. The press just didn't cover the race. They thought Bradley was in a walk, so that I wasn't going to make any difference. We didn't have any money to pay. The national Senatorial Campaign Committee had promised me some 300,000 toward the end of the campaign and so we had counted on that as being our media money and then in the last 10 days

they said, nope, sorry. We have other campaigns that we think will do better, so we're sending the money there. So we had nothing, really, to go on. It turned out that I got closer than anybody else that they supported, any of the other guys who were running at the time. But anyway, be that as it may. So we knew it was going to be hard, the fundraising part was going to be very hard. People just weren't dying to give money to a candidate they thought was going to go down. But there were enough people who were supportive enough and through my parent's help and the people that they knew, we had less than a million, but we had almost a million dollars and Bradley had 12. But we had almost a million so we were almost there.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Describe that campaign. Did Senator Bradley ever turn around and take aim at you?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No. No. The thing you have to remember is that was during the Florio years and it was after Governor Florio had raised taxes on everything and the people in the State of New Jersey were just furious. I mean they were going down and demonstrating and throwing toilet paper because there was a tax on toilet paper. They were going out of their minds and so the one issue I had was the tax issue. Now Senator Bradley had absolutely nothing to do with that. A United States senator has nothing to do with New Jersey taxes. But I kept asking where he stood on the New Jersey taxes and for some reason, and I think it was because he'd won in such an easy walk, he was the first re-elect; at that point he was widely being considered as the next Presidential nominee for the Democrats, that he just didn't think about worrying about it, and so he never answered. I'd wake up every day and say when is he going to say, "Look, I hate taxes as much as the next person, but I'm not running the state and I've got to respect the difficult decisions that Governor Florio has to make," and leave it at that. Then he would have blown me out of the water. I would have had no issue. He never, ever did it and as I say, I think that's because he had let himself get isolated in Washington. That's the only reason I can explain. Then we were trying to get debates, which of course every challenger does and every incumbent tries to avoid them and so we had not gotten any response from them. So finally toward the end of the campaign and we were really on a shoestring, a group of us put out a press release that said, and it was the first time and only time I think I've ever used the gender card. We started it out with saying how important debates, were using quotes from him from previous campaigns, saying how important debates were to the electoral process and then ended up with saying, I can only conclude that he's afraid to debate me, or thinks it's beneath him to debate a woman. Well we had two debates within 24 hours. They'd agreed to 2 debates; one on foreign policy and one on domestic policy. I think their thinking was that domestic policy- okay maybe I knew something about domestic policy. But on the foreign policy I wasn't going to know a thing, particularly military policy, I looked around and thought, okay who can brief

me on this? Who is the best person? Richard Nixon was living in New Jersey at that point and so I went to him and I asked would you brief me? And he not only briefed me; I spent an hour and a half with him in his office. He took me around the world, He told me about missile systems. He really gave me an enormous grounding and then he did a fundraiser for me and he wasn't doing fundraisers. He refused to do fundraisers, but he did a fundraiser for me that people to this day who were there say was one of the few times they'd been at a political fundraiser and it was really worth it. I mean he stood up and with no notes, no chair, no nothing, for an hour, took that group around the world, and then he answered questions about anything. In fact, the last question was about the World Series, because it was October and he went through the entire lineup of both teams and said if so and so is batting well, they're going to win. I mean he had it all down and so people were fascinated by it.

When we got to the debate, Bradley would throw out the name of a missile system and I'd know what he was talking about. I didn't beat him in the debates, but I held my own enough that people could see that I wasn't just a flake. I, could put two sentences together. Fortunately the expectation for women was very low. If you put two sentences together, you were looked on as brilliant. I made it through the first loop because I could put a couple of sentences together. I spent enough time learning before those debates. They were horrifically nerve-racking but I got through them alright to the point where I was considered a legitimate candidate. That combined with his unwillingness to touch the tax issue, which was foremost in everyone's mind, and the very last ad he ran, and I don't know how many ads he ran because I didn't think he had to spend the money, but he started to toward the end and he had this ad and I don't remember what it was about, but he was sitting behind his desk in Washington and looking very formal and talking about whatever and then at the end of it, he kicked back and put his feet up on the desk and he has his basketball sneakers on. I was just so supercilious that I think it really annoyed people and they got mad, and they said, damn it all, I want to teach him a lesson. It's not that they didn't like him. It's not that they didn't want him as their Senator or that they really preferred me. It was more saying, "Hey, damn it. We're here. These are the issues that we care about. You won't even talk about them." He didn't come in and campaign much: I don't think, I don't remember his coming in and so that's why it was as close as it was.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: If I recall correctly it was kind of tough economic times during this campaign; people were suffering right?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh people were really suffering. We'd lost-- well in the first three years of the Florio administration we'd lost some 350,000 jobs

and New Jersey traditionally does better than the national average on unemployment. We come out of a recession faster than the surrounding states, and we'd been in a recession in this country and we were lagging behind in both those indicators at that point and so people really were hurting. People really were upset. They just wanted to know he understood how upset they were and he was focused on the international, he was focused on the big tax stuff that he was doing in Washington or had done on the income tax. He just didn't ever kind of come down-- try to come down to their level and tap into that anger, which is what I tapped into. As I say, totally unjustly, because there was actually nothing he could do as a US Senator or I could have done as a US Senator to deal with New Jersey taxes and state taxes but by not talking about it, he missed a chance. And then of course we had position papers on everything. Nobody ever read them, but we had them on every other issue.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And with your experience from childhood being out in the campaign among people, you probably could really sense that was resonating.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Yeah, oh yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: When did you-- was there a poll or any hint to you that you were going to do as well as you did?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No. Even toward the end as I recall; there may have been one right at the end that showed the gap closing but I think it was pretty formidable. I'm sure you got the feeling that and the same thing with the gubernatorial that sometimes when people do the polls, people lie, you know, just because they want the surprise factor on Election Day. I'm going to vote for you and then you don't and say, oops.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: That's funny. But so can you just recount for us the moment when you saw how well-- I remember <laughs> the moment when the numbers were coming in and you were doing so well.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Yeah we were actually at the hotel. It was the headquarters for election night and I was downstairs having dinner with my Ma, my mother. My father was deceased., Dad wasn't there for that. I was having dinner with my godmother and my mother. My husband and the kids were upstairs: watching television and our son, Taylor came running down to the dining room and he said, "Mom, Mom you've got to come upstairs. You've got to see, you're leading.

You promised we wouldn't have to move to Washington." I just said, "Don't worry, Newark hasn't been counted yet, don't worry." -- <laughs> I never thought we were going to win, I didn't. I just hoped we'd run a decent enough campaign that I'd still have a political future in the state.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And then when you found out how close...?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: It was amazing. And Kayla Bergeron, who'd been my campaign manager, and for that one, we had also Larry Purpuro and Bill Palatucci. It was funny because I'll never forget, as we walked into the hotel before any of the polls came in, Larry was saying how he really didn't have anything to do with the campaign and how I wouldn't listen to anything and all this kind of stuff and then toward the end it was, "I did it all," and, "Look at how brilliant this one was." And I was here, okay. You know, come on; you don't think I'm going to hear this? You've been saying one thing and then all of a sudden you're saying the other. But that's the way it works.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It must have been quite a sense of accomplishment.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well we went off to-- we took the kids off on a vacation, John and I, after the campaign and Kayla would call and say, you know, this TV show wants you, that TV show... we've got to put something together, you've got to keep going. So that's what we did.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And you began to get a lot of attention from the media.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well that was the worst nightmare for the good old boys because they thought-- they really hadn't supported me. I mean the party hadn't supported me. Kathy had done what she could but the party, per se, had no money coming in. They really hadn't been a bastion of support. I mean some may remember it differently, but that's how those things go. Then the national-- the Senatorial Campaign Committee had taken the money away at the end so I was one of those people that had done well enough. I was still attracting a lot of attention, national attention because Bradley had been such an icon and this really kind of knocked him for a loop. It took a while for him to readjust himself and he didn't run for the Senate again. The only other campaign he was on a short lived running for President many years later. But you know I was still alive and I didn't owe anything because they hadn't been helpful. So I didn't owe anybody

anything and yet I was a political force, to a degree, to be reckoned with in the state.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you know on election night that you'd be running for Governor?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No, but at that point you don't think about anything but that race. You're concentrating on that race. You're not thinking about the next thing at all. When I decided to run, I knew it was going to be such a long haul. The chances of my winning were so slim. One of the reasons that led me to do it was to get the statewide exposure so that I would have a platform if I could ever run for Governor. But once you get into the campaign, it's all about that office and that campaign and how you'd serve.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Absolutely so how did that come about? How would you link that, your gubernatorial campaign to your victory? I mean your near victory <laughs> for the US Senate.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: In the Senate campaign? Well after the Senate campaign, what it did was put me on the map as someone that couldn't be just dismissed, I used that. We established a political action committee. What I wanted to do was issue research on issues relevant to the state of New Jersey for local candidates who didn't have the resources. I could get resources. I could actually attract some money. So we set up a political action committee. I was able to raise enough money to go around the state to get people who understood the more complicated issues of the state, to do position papers that I'd share with local candidates. I campaigned with local candidates because again, I was someone who would bring the local press. I was new. The new face always gets attention for good or ill. And so I was able to do that. Political IOUs are not always very reliable, shall we say, but in fact it worked. I locked in with a lot of the county chairmen and one county chairwoman, in Morris County, Joan Bramhall. She was one of those women who were extremely supportive of me. One of the things that it did is exposed me around the state to the party organizations as somebody who would work for them and help them. I got to know them. They got to know me and I got the support of the majority of the county chairmen. When Cary Edwards, who had been the State Attorney General, decided to run in the primary against me, he found that in fact, I'd locked up a lot of the County Chairmen and they stay-- they were loyal to that and I was very appreciative of it. Obviously it was still a tough primary. We had a third candidate in as well so that it made it a real battle and I always kind of thought, if I'd been a man who had just run the Senate campaign that I ran and

been as close to beating Bill Bradley as I'd been and done the kind of fundraising for the party in the interim (I'd done), I bet I -- wouldn't have had a primary, but that's just--

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It's an interesting point. So it was Cary Edwards who was your other opponent?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Lark and Lyric were the wife and daughter. He had been a State Senator...

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: I can't remember either.

<crew talk>

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh that's right, Jim Wallwork, yeah, very nice guy; very nice guy. Very conservative. Very nice and very supportive afterwards. We had a unity breakfast right after the primary. Everybody got on the team and we were fine after that. But I wasn't at all sure that that's how it was going to work out. It wasn't a given that I was going to win the primary.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was that the toughest race, I mean when you consider the fact as you mentioned--

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, there was one really, really bad moment. It was during the primary when Zoe Baird had been nominated for Attorney General Bill Clinton. And she had had a nanny problem. Turned out she had an illegal nanny. We had a couple working for us that were in the process of becoming legal. We put them in touch with lawyers. They were in the process of getting their green card, but they didn't have it yet. And the law was such that you weren't the criminal. They were. But still I mean it wasn't a good thing. And that was something that we knew about and got right on top of during the senate campaign. But during the gubernatorial one of the people who had worked in my senate campaign knew this and was working for Cary Edwards- and decided that he was going to take this public to get me. The only problem was he didn't vet anything. And it turned out Cary had the same problem. And Cary tried to blame it on his wife. We went out before it got out and said, "Look. We've done this. We need to pay more in taxes. We've been withholding for them and stuff, but we haven't paid in everything that we needed to pay in." We said, "We've got this problem. Before anybody said anything about it, we want to be dead." But it was

awful. I just felt so badly when I was thinking about it. How I let down my parents 'cause my father was so dead honest. I felt I'd really let them down by doing this at all. And yet I hadn't really thought about it. We had them in the process. They were doing things with them. Their son had just died. I mean it was just an awful time. But it turned out we left, came back from Florida, made the decision, released everything and told everybody, got ahead of the curve, came back, and walked in the door here at the farm and Kayla was on the phone saying, "You're not going to believe this, but Cary has the same problem." And then his response to it was, it was his wife who did it all. You know, he didn't pay attention to this kind of stuff. And he was a former Attorney General so that became a wash. But that was just a reality. I still remember it and shudder because it was something we never should have done. But, when you're young and you have young children, and you're doing stuff, you're desperate for help and when you get the help, you do everything that you can do to get them legal. But we weren't doing everything we should have done.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Was there ever a moment during that situation where you thought, "Why am I doing this?"

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Not why am I doing it. I thought maybe I should just withdraw. And John and I had a long conversation about that. I don't know how we decided no. We'd stick it out. See how it goes.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: In terms of your thinking?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: We thought long and hard about it. It was embarrassing. It was humiliating. It was a whole lot of things. At least I felt that way. And I just hated it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: I don't recall, but imagine because it was such a hot contest there were probably other negative claims thrown back and forth in it. Do you recall that?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: I don't remember it being a hideously negative campaign, no. Not the primary. The general was a whole other ball of wax, but I don't remember the primary being that negative. It was tough, but I don't remember it being that negative.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: You mentioned a discussion about withdrawing with your husband. What role did he play in the campaign?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh. I don't think anybody can run for these kinds of offices without a strong, supporting spouse. I mean that's part of the reason that we got married as he said. We knew each other for a long period of time before we got married. Our paths crossed a lot. We didn't always like each other. There were times when we didn't at all. When I was down in Washington and working in Washington for the government he came down on a Harvard fellowship and he was going to redo the whole transportation trust system. He knew how to do it and I thought, "You know, come on. Who do you think you are?" So we had these moments, but as he said, we kept-- our paths. We were clearly going in the same direction 'cause our paths kept crossing. And I think, and you'd have to ask him, it never threatened him to have me do what I was doing. He understood about it. He cares very much about what's going on in the country. He cares about politics. It's kind of-- we have a good partnership. But I could never have done it without him. And he didn't have a role model in that there weren't many political husbands I mean he had a ball. Once I was governor, he had such fun with the other political spouses. I mean he had some good stories on things that went on 'cause he was the only male there for a while. I was the only female governor for a year or so. And in the first year, the other female governor didn't have a husband, so he was it. There are some funny stories about that. But he was always supportive, never threatened by it. Always willing to play Mr. Mom, which was great for the kids because he did so much with them. And I think -- it was so good for them to have both of us play significant roles -- I mean when I grew up, I got very close to my father at the end. But I can remember growing up, I really never saw him. I mean he'd be off in the morning first thing to commute to New York. He'd come home. We'd sit down for dinner and then that was that. And then weekends, he and my mother played golf. And so I don't really remember him. I mean he was a force clearly. But I wasn't close to him in the early years because I just didn't see him that much. Whereas Kate and Taylor saw a great deal of their father even though John was commuting to New York. And during the early years, that's when I was the mom at home and doing things. When I had to do political things, I tried not to do them at night. But then it was at night, he'd be home and he'd take them but it wasn't a regular thing. So it wasn't the same kind of strain for him. And then as my career started to develop, the kids were getting older. When they got ready for college, he's the one that did most of the college trips with them. But we always had a division. I mean I drove the horse trailer and my daughter to all the horse shows. He drove our son and daughter when they played ice hockey more than I did. I drove the boys too. I mean, I know what stinky hockey equipment smells like when you have a bunch of little boys after a game. So I did some of that but he did more of it than I did. We kind of had that division of understanding 'cause he didn't

care about horses or know about horses. Two hundred fifty under the hood, those are the horses that he likes, not four-legged. So we had that kind of a partnership and that kind of understanding of different roles without having a rigid, "This is your role and this is my role." There were never those kinds of rigid boundaries.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you find that he was a top political advisor to you or ?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No, he tried to stay out of that. He was an emotional advisor. When we did the- the economic stuff, I'd bounce ideas off him all the time and we'd talk about issues. But, no, he never tried to take that role on. The assumption that might have been very difficult for us to handle as a marriage, giving advice to one another is not necessarily the best thing to do except when asked for. I'd tell what we were doing, ask him if he thought this was a good way to go. But it was more the emotional support that he provided. And I say when there were the economic and the tax issues, I was talking to other economic experts and tax experts, but I would always bounce those ideas off him too.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: But after a tough day on the campaign, he was the person you could come to?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, I try not to bring those things home. I mean that's one of the things where I've tried to be very careful always on dividing my life. When I get home, it's about the family, John, and the kids. And I love to cook so whenever I get a chance to cook I'd do that. But I try not to rehash the day. What was I doing during the day. This is for them. It's why we, for instance, have always taken a vacation the four of us, when the kids were growing up, to someplace where none of us had been so that we were doing everything, experiencing it for the first time. And we weren't off with our friends playing tennis or golf, and they weren't off with their friends swimming or something. We were all together. We'd rent vans and drive around national parks, that kind of thing. As they got older, we did more adventurous things. But that sort of thing we did all the time. And, in fact, when I was running for governor, after the primary, which had been a tough primary, I had done a lot of campaigning in August when nobody really cares about the gubernatorial election. We campaigned all through July. Then we went out west for a week. And I can remember one of the editorial writers saying I clearly didn't have the fire in the belly to be governor if I were going to go off for a week in August. And I said, "You don't get it." I mean at the end of the day I may get a lot of titles throughout life, my family is always the thing that's going to be there. Those will change. I mean the kids were part of this too. And it changed

their lives and they had to be aware of it. And I don't think when they're young-- when you're a teenager you ever really -- understand what the impact is. No, but John has always been a wonderful support. And without him, no way could I have done any of this. And he's put up with a lot. We sort of said, our wedding vowels were for better, for worse, and for politics because his grandfather had been governor of New York State. And his father was an elected judge in New York City. The only Republican in Manhattan elected to the circuit court. So he knew about politics. He wasn't involved in it at all. He was strictly on the financial side, not a lawyer, a business school graduate. But he always has been terrifically supportive. The first years of our marriage were about his career and getting it going and then I got to do my thing in politics.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: So it was, "I'm going to run for governor, John." And he was like, "Yes, do this."

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: No, I mean, we had long conversations when I ran for the S8enate. But for when I ran for freeholder we--

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And what it could mean down the line, right?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Yeah.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Yeah, that's a big talk, right?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, yes, they're big talks. Each step along the way they're big talks. And, you know, it's what you do with the kids. Fortunately, for me being a Freeholder was part time. I treated it pretty full time, but the children were old enough to be in day care or school and I was always able to get out to meet them, pick them up from school when I needed to. And that was the one of the early things that I learned at the freeholder board. I had said to them at one point-- there was some big meeting coming up or something. I said, "I can't be there. My daughter has an event. I'm going to go to that." And there was the usual huffing and puffing about, "Well, what did you expect from a woman? I mean, you know, they're going to go do their children thing and all this." And so I did it. And I came back and I got briefed on the issue and then we had the big public discussion. Everything was fine and you could see a light bulb go off in their head? And after that I noticed that the guys started doing this. They'd take time for their children or their grandchildren. And it wasn't as if they didn't want to. It was just sort of not the masculine thing to do. But once they saw that you could do it and

the world didn't come to an end, that things were just fine, they started doing it too, which was kind of satisfying to see.

At the freeholder level, the other thing about the county courthouse, which always made me laugh because the guys put me in charge of constructing a courthouse. I had been on the board of something called the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. I was very interested in crime and delinquency. I'd done a three-day training institute for a nonprofit that I had worked for on criminal justice, and juvenile justice, and what do you do with the system to try not reinforce criminal behavior when you put people away. And how do you intervene earlier with kids. But anyway because I had been on this board, I guess, to the other freeholders meant that I knew something about prisons. And -- there had been this issue for a long time of building a new courthouse in Somerset County. And they picked the architects but they hadn't picked the site for the courthouse. So they said, "Okay. You're the one. You- you build the courthouse." Okay. Well, I was just new on the board. And they gave it to me. We had a vicinage judge at the time. In Sommerville, there is a wonderful old church. And the vicinage judge wanted it torn down. It's historic. He wanted it torn down and he said, "If you try to save the church and have it in any way part of the judicial system, I'm going to sue you." Okay. Well, you know, whatever. So we looked at sites. I did and was very open about looking at sites all around the county and decided that downtown Sommerville, which is where the court system was located where we were going to do it. We picked the site. And we said, "We're going to do it." And I said, "Oh, by the way. We're going to keep the church and it's going to become the jury holding area. Let's change the inside so the jury could be there." And everything worked out fine.

But the first couple of meetings that I had with the labor guys as we talked about construction. You could see it in their eyes when they first saw me, "What's this 30-something female going to tell me about building a building?" And one of the things I think they figured out very quickly, is I said, "Look, I don't know anything about building a building. I haven't built buildings. I mean my father was in construction. I know something about construction but I'm not a builder. You guys are the builders. But I will tell you what we have to have. And I will tell you what we're going to do about that." And after they figured out that I signed the checks and I was going to be respectful of what they said they absolutely had to have, we got along fine. And we brought that building in on time and under budget. And one of the reinforcing messages I got from that was by looking them in the eye, admitting what I didn't know, and saying, "But you know what? You're not going to be able to pull the wool over my eyes entirely." And I had this vicinage judge too who was insisting on all kinds of stuff. I had to have a little conversation with him from time to time. And he was used to being-- 'cause they're kings! I

mean they are kings of the judiciary. And he was a shorter fellow. A very good guy and a very bright judge, but a little shorter. So he had to make sure that his bench had an extra step in it, so he would be higher than everybody else. Little things like that I had to go through with the architects and construction guys. But it worked out. Once you can identify people that you can trust and you respect the expertise that's around you, it's amazing-- it would be amazing to many people how much you can get done and how people would be willing to do things for you when they understand that you respect what they know and you know what you don't know, and you're willing to, but you're willing to take some guidance from them as well.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: So identifying people you can trust. Did you find that that was something that your experience would lead you to? Were you able to--

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Yeah, pretty much. I mean when I went into the Board of Public Utilities, as I said, I knew nothing about regulating gas, oil, telephone, water. And there were experts in all those fields. Some of them were ones that I had more respect for than others, but you pick that up pretty quickly. You get to know people pretty quickly. And I spent a long time trying to learn about the issues. I went in and-- again, it's something that I have done everywhere really and I did it at EPA when I went down there was sit down with the people in each one of the divisions and say, "Okay. Tell me what are your big issues. Tell me what you're working on. Tell me what's going to be coming before the board, what your concerns are about? And then you kind of sort through that. I never tried to be the expert 'cause I knew I wasn't going to know which lata or interlata was the right one, and how you configure this data, or the other. But I could get the big picture. And I could tell where things were going and I could do the broad policy outlines of what was acceptable and what wasn't. And then within that, you try to get to know the people to know who's analysis really is good and who's analysis is got a motivation that you don't want to trust.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: So that first experience when you were a freeholder must have been very instructive to you.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: It really was. I mean it was something I thought was the way to do things, but I didn't know until I got it reinforced by the fact we were able to do this. It's something they had been kicking around in the county for some four or five years before I got there. And they never seemed to be able to get it to the point of moving it along. And then we decided when we had the new board that this is what we're going to do. And that was my baby, totally my baby. And, I mean, obviously all the rest of them had to approve the funding stuff,

but as far as overseeing it and getting it done that was my responsibility and we did it-- I didn't do it. They did it. We did it well as a team.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Who are some of your earlier supporters in terms of campaign money, basically fund raising?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, there were a couple. I mean, you know, you start listing people and you always forget and then somebody gets all upset. But there were a few, Lew Eisenberg, Cliff Sobel were always there and did a lot of fundraising. Candy Straight has always been a very supportive, very effective fundraiser. But there were a lot. I mean there were a lot of people who were very supportive. Nancy was very supportive, Nancy Becker, Hazel Gluck, Judy Shaw. There's just a long list of women who were supportive and they all did fundraising. They all helped with fundraising. So it was a big network of people. And a lot of it was women who were just excited to see a woman running, who was marginally credible at least.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: How did that feel to have that support to be that person to those women?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, it was great. I mean they were, again, very encouraging when things were tough. It was a nasty campaign because Jim Florio had James Carville and Paul Begala as his two campaign managers and advisors. And they had just come off the Clinton campaign, beating an incumbent. They were the hot ticket. And I actually talked to Paul Begala afterwards. I was on his show. And he said, "You know, we don't know how you survived that campaign because we didn't want people just not to vote for you. We wanted them to actively dislike you." And so the attacks were very personal. They made me look like I drove drunk every night driving down the highway, leaning out the window with my Uzi to shoot up watermelons. I mean they were taking bits and pieces of positions and trying to make it that I wanted everybody to have an Uzi and I loved drunk drivers on the road.

And then the really fun one was. I knew they were going to come after the farm because it was always called an estate. It's been a working farm since 1930—well before my parents bought it in '33. But be that as it may, we did two things— one, we had a press day here. We invited all the press here. And we took them on a tour of the farm and we fed them in the barn-- in the new barn we put up. And then at the end of the meal, we told them, "Oh, by the way. Everything that you've eaten"-- we had hamburgers. We had lamb chops. We had steak and we had

vegetables. I said, "Everything you've eaten just - came from this farm just so that you know that we actually do farm on the farm." And as John said there was one reporter in her spike heels and her tight skirt, who was out there with a-- I'll never forget watching her. She had a microphone and she was going out to the cow, to the Jersey milk cows we had then and, "Say 'moo, moo.'" You don't quite get it. That's not how a farm works. But the other thing was since I knew they were going to do it, what I would have done had I been Florio, was send a plane up and get some pictures of the farm, but isolate it to just the house and the swimming pool and say, "This is the farm." And, of course, that's the part you pay full taxes. You don't get farmland assessment only for the farm part. So what I did is I had big banners made up of the amount of taxes that we paid and property taxes, some \$20,000-- just under \$20,000 I think a year in property taxes on just the small parcel that's the-- that's a couple of acres here not the-- at that point 234 acres of the farm, and put them on the banner on the roof of the house and the roof of the garage here. So they couldn't get a clean picture of the place without-- 'cause back then Photoshop wasn't available." So they couldn't Photoshop it out.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: That's a quite an elaborate response from you. Obviously, you saw them as perhaps getting trash.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, I've always been portrayed-- they were portraying me is the rich bitch from the hills as I put it. And a lot of people still. I mean they still-- this farm is always called an estate. It's not called a farm. It's called an estate and somehow-- I know. Did I grow up well? Yes. Were my parents well off? Yes. They worked hard for it. My dad worked hard. My grandfather had worked hard and my mom's parents. And were they privileged? Of course. Not nearly as rich in the sense of some of the people who live around us. But well to do, yeah. But I don't apologize for that. And my husband the money that he's made and the money we're living on is money we worked for. So it is annoying. It hurts. It makes me mad when they do that, but it's just a fact of life. I'll never get over that.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Did you find that that press day that you described was effective?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: I think I opened up a bunch of people's eyes. They still couldn't get away from the estate, but they emphasized it less. They were less inclined to accept some of the stuff that the Florio campaign put out about it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Where did the Florio campaign go after that?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, they still said “rich bitch from the hills” type of thing. It was still driving drunk and-- because I think I put out a proposal that we ought to have different colored license plates -- guess what? What they're talking about now. Put something-- an identifier on license plates, so that police would know when they went by a bar if they saw a car with that tag on it that somebody who gotten a DUI was where they shouldn't be or somebody with that car. That somehow became I wanted drunk drivers back on the road, which was not what I was talking about. It was a first time DUI that kind of thing. And we own guns. I have guns. I have nothing against guns' per se. I do not believe a hunter needs an Uzi. Everybody does not need an automatic weapon and you can make sure that the chamber of a semiautomatic does not hold 20 rounds or 50 rounds as we just saw in the recent shooting. You know, 15 is just fine even for competitive shooting 'cause I understand about competitive shooting. But because I wasn't willing to say that nobody should have a gun anywhere that meant I liked Uzi's and I wanted everybody to have one of those too as far as the campaign was concerned. And so it was that. It was lack of experience. I don't remember. Those were the things that really stuck out, the personal attacks of being rich and out of touch. And I had spent as much time as I had with people in places that you wouldn't think you'd find a rich bitch from the hills. You know, and part of it is an understanding that I did grow up with a lot of privilege. I did grow up on this farm. It's a pretty special place to be and not everybody has access to that and I couldn't walk in their shoes. I certainly couldn't sympathize but I could never empathize and I don't think you ever can if that's not part of your life. I mean I don't know what's it like to truly be hungry. I'm fortunate that way. I can sympathize with somebody who is. I can imagine, but I don't know what it's like. And until you recognize that you don't ever know those things, I think, and you try to go out and find out more about it. You really don't know. You're missing a lot. You make assumptions that are just incorrect.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Who were your campaign staffers?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, we had Lyn Nofziger, who was an old friend that I had known from my days in Washington. And even though Lyn was much more conservative than I was, always called me “goo-goo,” good government person. He provided the gravitas. At that point, it was still Kayla who was largely involved. We were still pretty much amateur night and in order to convince people that we were serious we had to have gravitas. So then Lyn said, “Bring Ed Rollins on board,” which we did. And Ed was effective. We had our really rough moments with him even during the campaign, not just after the campaign, which was almost

a disaster. But even during the campaign. I mean some of the biggest mistakes that I made were when I didn't follow my gut and I let him persuade me to do something. One of them was to hire as a PR consultant the fellow who had done the Willy Horton ad a few years before. And I said, "I don't want this guy. I mean this is going to be hung around his neck. And this is not the kind of campaign I want to run. I don't want people to think we're running that kind of campaign." And Ed kept saying, "You're crazy. He's run several campaigns since then. It's never been brought up. People aren't going to think about it for a second and this is the best guy." And I figured, "Hey, I'm paying this fellow big bucks. He's supposed to know all the stuff that I don't know. He's run all these campaigns. Okay." I want to tell you-- I don't remember the guy's name. We were at some stop-- some warehouse somewhere and he gets out of the car. The press take one look at him. They start after him. I said, "You get him back in that car and out of here." I mean there was just no question that this was not going to work. And, you know, we had an extra day of bad press, which we didn't need. I knew deep down inside we shouldn't have ever done it. I just knew, but let myself be persuaded.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: That's interesting that that was your gut. Do you think the fact that you're a woman was an asset, liability?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: A toss up. A toss up. You know, it's one of those things-- it's hard for me to really assess that because I didn't think about it a lot at the time because I wasn't going to do anything about it. I mean, you know, I was a woman. I was not going to have a sex change operation, thank you very much. And so if I didn't-- don't worry about things you can't change. Go after the things you can. What I did do is pay attention to the kinds of things that I would say feed the beast, is the way I refer to it. When they refer to me as the Tom Kean in pearls, I just never wore pearls again. And then the article that said that I looked too put together in my tweed suit with my-- oh, I can't remember what all the garbage was. My every hair in place, everything. Well, I didn't go around with my hair out of place but I did stop wearing tweed suits. Or they'd say that John was the one-- well, that really came after the election- John was the one doing all the financial stuff. So he just never came to Trenton. I mean, you don't feed beast. But basically if they're going to have that prejudice you have to think, "That's their problem, not mine. I'm not changing and I'm just going to go ahead with the issues as they are." But it seemed my campaign brought out the inner fashion-- the hidden fashion editor in the political people- because the number of times they talked about and commented on what I wore. And if they talked about Jim Florio as being a Christie Whitman in cufflinks or commented on the predictable power tie, the starched white shirt, and power red tie that would have been fine. Then we would have been on an equal playing field, but they didn't do that. So those are the things they did and you just can't do a whole lot about it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: What were the major issues during that campaign?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, taxes. Taxes were the number one issue without question. I mean we put out blueprints which were literally takeoffs on architectural blueprints. And we had one on every single issue that you could talk about facing the state. But the issue that overrode everything was taxes. And that's when I came out with my 30 percent tax cut over three years and just ran hard on that. And then I talked about property taxes and auto insurance rates. But those auto insurance and property taxes were the big, big issues.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And again as we discussed earlier, this was a time when all people in New Jersey were hurting.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, as I said, we lost 350,000 jobs. You could drive down any street in the state in any of the towns and see shuttered businesses -- especially small and mid-size business. So it all fed into the unemployment issue. I mean that was an issue that we talked about obviously. But it was the overall economic malaise of the state and the fact that we were not in our normal position of leading the region out of a recession and having an unemployment rate that was lower than the national average. And so economics was the overwhelming issue.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: It's always considered a challenge here in New Jersey to run a statewide campaign because of the expense and the difficult media market you have. How did you cope with that and what were some of your strategies?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, you have to raise a lot of money. And you have to understand that you're going to waste a lot of it. I think I could have been mayor of New York or Philadelphia by the time it was over because so much money was spent in those two cities. You have to be careful and targeted. We used radio more than probably you do it today. We didn't have the internet the way it is today, which allows you to get to people. But you did a lot of local. There were a lot of mailings; a lot of the old fashion type campaigning rather than the big heavy television media because you just couldn't afford it. You have to be very careful with that. We obviously did it, but tried to save it and be very judicious about it.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: How did you feel about negative advertising? Is that a decision that you _____ something you knew you needed to do?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: I just never was into negative campaigns and did not want to do it. We finally had to. The Florio ads were taking a toll. We could see it in the polls and so we finally went out with an ad that we considered negative, laughable in today's day and age, and even back then, because the final line was, "Jim Florio is probably the worst governor of New Jersey since Ben Franklin's son who had been ridden out of the state on a rail during the revolution." And that was the extent of the negative. The interesting thing about that is when we ran it my positives went up. And what that said was that the public wanted to see whether I was going to be strong enough to fight back. New Jersey is a tough gritty state and if you can't stand up to it, you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. I think there were doubts of me, a woman, whether I would ever fight back. The minute I did my positives went up. It's very interesting.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: Absolutely. Tell me about the election.

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, that was a nail biting time. Kate was up in boarding school and we were losing. We were having a hard time because of all the things Jim Florio said. They sent an ad up to my daughter to record for radio. And Kate rewrote it, as Kate will do, and did her own ad. And -- it changed more minds. I mean there were two things in that campaign that made a real difference. That was one of them at the end. I had so many people come up to me and say, "Your daughter, wow." She ended it by saying-- she didn't say who she was through the whole beginning of it- I don't remember what was in it, but she ends up by saying, "I know these aren't true. She's my mom." And it just got people. It was terrific. It really turned things around. And she did that herself. She didn't like what they had sent her, so she made it her own words.

And the earlier one, for better for worse, was Howard Stern. I was doing a street walk in West New York and had just gone up and down, shaking hands. And my aid at the time hands me the phone, says, "Say hello." And I said, "Who is it?" "Howard Stern." I said, "Who's he?" He said, "Never mind. Just say hello. He said he will endorse the first person for governor who called him and he's a big deal." So I said, "Hello." And God bless Howard Stern. He absolutely lived up to that promise. I was the first person to call him. We chatted. He was never inappropriate with me. I mean I never listened to him and he knew that. I told Howard, "I don't listen to you." But he would say things, after I got off the phone. I was just so glad he hadn't said them to me, but he never was inappropriate with me. He pushed the campaign constantly. He was always talking about it. And I had more people, normal looking people in business suits, who would come up to me and say, "I loved you on Howard Stern." I'd sort of go, "You listen to Howard Stern?" It was amazing, but he was absolutely true to his word.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And how did that endorsement play out?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Again, I was on the phone just said "hello" and that was it. I mean he didn't have terribly high standards. He said the first of the two candidates who called him he would endorse. And I was the first one to get through. I don't even know whether Florio tried, but I called him.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And then he just kept mentioning you?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Then he kept mentioning me and I went on with him a couple of times. We talked about issues. He'd ask me about the campaign. Then of course he asked what I was going to do for him when I won the election because clearly he was going to be the reason that I won the election. And so I said I'd name something for him, which was a whole other story after I got elected.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: I remember that. Interesting. So what was the polling like going into election?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Very tight. Very tight. It showed us trailing but close. So it was a very long night and we-- it was up and down. There were a couple of counties that really did a bang up job for me and other ones that you needed to come in, like Morris County, and down south. It was tight, but they get out the vote was a really major effort that we put into it. And we went and did the thing that you do on election night. You go have dinner with the family, try to ignore everything until the very end. But, oh gosh, it must have been around midnight or 11:30 when I was literally in the bathroom of the hotel room that we had as headquarters, with all the counsels about to sign papers impounding the ballot boxes in Newark because we had gotten all the results. It was neck-and-neck or I was slightly-- ahead but there were-- I forget how many polling places, maybe 10 or 12 polling places in Newark where we couldn't get results. And they said, "Well, the poll workers have gone to bed. So we can't get you the results until tomorrow. They've all gone home. So you can't get results until tomorrow." And we said, "Okay. That's it," because we were ahead, but not that far ahead. So I was about to sign the papers to impound the ballot boxes until the next morning when Governor Florio called and conceded. And his words were, "We've taken a look and we've done all we can do." So I figured, "Okay. You know what's in those ballot boxes and we don't know." And in any event, it- it was a late night and a last minute concession.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: And what was that conversation like?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Very short. I mean it was literally, "I'm conceding. We looked at it. There's nothing more we can do and congratulations." And I said, "Thank you." It was gracious. He's been very gracious and we actually get along really well now. That's just fine.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: So you get that phone call. What's the next thing that you do?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Oh, then you go down to all the supporters that have stayed 'cause it was close enough that everybody stayed. I was ahead but nobody would call it for me because you had this gap and it was a gap that tended not to go Republican. So it was just a question of how many votes they got out of those districts, and they didn't get as many as they hoped for. And the gap narrowed, obviously, when those ballots were counted. But still-- it wasn't enough to overtake my lead at that point.

Marie DeNoia Aronsohn: So you're standing-- I imagine you're standing on the dais as balloons are coming down, the crowds are cheering. How are you feeling at this point? You've just won and you're the first woman to be governor of New Jersey?

Governor Christine Todd Whitman: Well, you don't think about being the first woman to be governor. You think about, "I'm governor. Okay. It was such a high. It was amazing and you have the kids and you had an extraordinarily enthusiasm because it was such an upset. It was the first time an incumbent governor had been beaten in a general election since the constitution had been redone in 1947. I mean it wasn't just the first woman governor. I was the first person to defeat an incumbent governor at that point. And it was a big deal. I mean the thing that really brought it home was walking outside the hotel room and having the EPU, the Executive Protection Unit, there and suddenly doing things moving people around all that kind of stuff. And you said, "Okay. This is real." It was just very exciting. But it's a whirlwind. I mean it is. It's such a whirlwind. You go down and there's so many excited people. You give your remarks, whatever you say. I haven't a clue what I said and try to remember to thank the right people which you never do. You never get everybody thanked correctly and everybody that's done everything for you. And then you try to digest it a little and it was late and go to bed 'cause you knew then you were on all the early morning shows. Because the thing that that sets aside and makes this race sort of more prominent is that we're the only off

year election. Its New Jersey and Virginia are the two gubernatorials and then the mayor of New York and the mayor of Los Angeles. Those are the four big races. That's all that year. So just by nature of the timing of the election, you become more prominent than you would be if you were elected during the year when there 32 governors up for election. And so that meant I was going to be getting up early and do a whole bunch of interviews. So then you try to go get some sleep, which is sort of difficult to do. You say, "Okay. Now, where do we move? What do we do?" We have to set up transition headquarters. We have to get everything in place and that became the next challenge.

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