Carol Cronheim Interview (February 26, 2015)

Nancy Becker: It is February 26th, 2015. I am Nancy Becker at the Eagleton Institute of Politics. I am with Carol Cronheim, former Acting Secretary of State, former Deputy Director of Policy and Planning in the Whitman administration. We are here to continue our series of conversations on the Whitman administration for the Center on the American Governor. Let's start this afternoon, Carol, by asking you to tell us about yourself. Where did you grow up, where did you go to college?

Carol Cronheim: Okay, well I was born in Long Branch in Monmouth County, and my folks have built themselves a little house in Deal, my mom grew up in Deal and went to Asbury Park High School; my dad went to Newark Academy in Newark. And when I was about three, they moved up to Short Hills in the winter. And I wound up going to Kent Place in Summit, which is an all-girls prep school. Now it's the only non-religious girls' school in the state; very interested in leadership and other things. And I was there from nursery school through senior year. And from there, I went to Princeton University, and majored in Classics, so I studied ancient Greek and Latin.

Nancy Becker: Interesting. So tell us a little bit about your family.

Carol Cronheim: Well, we're all New Jerseyans; been here a long time. I have three siblings, and I'm the youngest. I have a brother and two older sisters.

Nancy Becker: So I'm going to go back to your education for a minute, because I understand that you are a fairly recently minted PhD. So finish telling us about your graduate school education.

Carol Cronheim: Okay. Well after Princeton I went to work, and then I came back and did my masters degree here at the Eagleton Institute of Politics, and I got a masters in Politics; and graduated in '93. It was a wonderful experience. And then ten years later I started school again-- I started school in '82, '92, and 2002. It was the end of the Whitman administration, and Cliff Zukin who had been one of my professors at Eagleton said that the Bloustein School was looking for a guinea pig public policy student who wasn't a planner, because the planning school was broadening to a planning and public policy school. So I went to Bloustein and worked on my PhD, and finished in 2011. So I'm a young alum.

Nancy Becker: Young alum. And your family now?

Carol Cronheim: I am married to Bill Flahive, who is an attorney out of Lambertville. We met working for Governor Kean. He was also in the AG's office for a number of years. And I have two sons, I have a 17 year old, Sean, and a 14 year old, Kevin.

Nancy Becker: So what was your first interest in politics?

Carol Cronheim: Well the very first was probably Millicent Fenwick. I'd have to be honest, my parents moved when I was just starting high school from Short Hills to Somerset County to Watchung. Of course, Somerset County is Millicent Fenwick's stomping grounds. And having gone to Kent Place, too, an all girl school experience, she was really well-regarded and had spoken at our school and was well known. And also Governor Kean's campaign in '81, a lot of people in my school were involved, a lot of their parents were involved. So when I was old enough to vote, I registered to vote and registered as a Republican so I could vote for Millicent Fenwick against Jeff Bell in the primary in '82. I was pleased that she won the primary and unfortunately she didn't win the general election. But that was probably the beginning. And then I put it out of my mind in college because I was studying Latin and Greek. I did take Roman history though and Greek history, and there was a lot of politics involved in all that; a lot of emperors and other things. My career path took me to Governor Kean's office when I graduated. It was sort of a fluke; I had a friend who'd worked there and was going on to law school and he said, "Hey, there's an opening, you should apply for this." And when I first decided to major in Classics, one of the things that clinched it for me was they said, "Oh, we have a young woman who graduated last year, and she's a speech writer for Governor Kean." I remember it was Katherine Brokaw who was a speech writer for Governor Kean. And I said, "Oh, that sounds cool." But then I put it completely out of my head and did not think about it. I had applied for a job teaching Latin and got that job the same week I got the job in Governor Kean's office. I was going to teach Latin at a prep school, and I wound up taking the job in politics and figured I'd teach in a year or so, and I never went back to teaching Latin.

Nancy Becker: That's great. So I'm going to jump ahead to the Whitman campaign. Were you involved in her campaign, either for the Senate or when she first ran for Governor?

Carol Cronheim: No, when she ran for the Senate, I was living in Washington, D.C. At the end of the Kean administration, I'd gone from the governor's office to Jane Burgio's office, which was a great honor and privilege and pleasure for me. I'd worked for her Assistant Secretary of State Al Felzenberg. Al got a job at the National Endowment for the Arts, and brought one or two of us down with him to the NEA. So I was living in D.C. But I followed that race that night. I had voted for her. I voted absentee and I followed that race very closely and was very excited about the outcome; even though I have to admit that I voted for Bill Bradley in '84 because of the whole Princeton connection. By '90, though, I knew better and I voted for Christie Whitman and I was excited to see she came in close. But I wasn't here for the senate race. The next race, though, the governor's race, interesting thing, Eagleton played a huge part in that for me because between working at the National Endowment for the Arts and coming back to school, I worked for then-Assemblyman Leonard Lance. I was his first Legislative Director. And through Leonard I had met Governor Whitman. She had had some fundraisers. They obviously had known each other since they were children; his father was Wes Lance, the senator and the judge, and very involved in Republican politics. And of course, her parents were the Todds, and they were very involved on the state and national level. And they were all from Hunterdon County. So I'd gone to a fundraiser for Governor Whitman and Leonard where I got to meet Richard Nixon. I still have a picture with Richard Nixon. It was pretty cool. He was extremely brilliant, especially when he talked about baseball. It was so interesting. And then I was at Eagleton. And in Eagleton then, it was a one-year master's program, and your second semester they really encouraged you to do an internship. So my internship was with the primary for Governor Whitman, and I was in the policy office in the primary. It was an extremely small policy office. And it was funny

because Dan Todd, the Governor's brother, kept saying, "Well really we need to pay you; this is ridiculous. We can't just have you here working." I kept saying, "No, you can't pay me because if I get paid I won't get course credit, and I need course credit to graduate." So it was part of my graduation-- fulfilled part of my graduation requirements for Eagleton.

Nancy Becker: Interesting. So once you graduated then, did you work in the campaign?

Carol Cronheim: They rolled me right over into paid staff right after I graduated, yeah. So I graduated in May and I started, you know, pretty much the next day.

Nancy Becker: And this was still during the primary?

Carol Cronheim: Yes, during the primary. So I worked from January with Liz Murray who was running the policy office, forward through the primary, and then we just kept on going through November. It was a very small primary office; it was just Liz and me, and a young man whose first name I remember, Steve, but I can't remember his last name. We used to just call him Baby Wonk, because everyone just called us the Wonks-- we were the Wonk office. And you know we were in there, just answering any question on policy people sent us; and setting up round tables, doing other things.

Nancy Becker: So would you say this was your first job in politics? No, this wasn't your first-- no.

Carol Cronheim: No. No, I had about seven years.

Nancy Becker: Before. So you were already experienced. Once Whitman became governor—we talked a little bit about her campaign—you were one of the policy people during the whole campaign.

Carol Cronheim: Yeah. And that was interesting because we had a lot of help from people on the outside. I think in one of our other panel discussions about Governor Whitman's office we discussed this. We particularly had good help from the Assembly side of the aisle, you know, the legislature. I was with the legislative surge when we took over the legislature. I was working for Leonard [Lance] and we had Republican majorities in both houses for the first time in a long time. The Assembly side and the staff on the Assembly side were extremely helpful. Chuck Haytaian was extremely helpful. We could call them and talk to them as we were putting together these blue papers on things; blueprints for this, blueprint for that. And on different areas-- environment, economics, education, and all sorts of things. And we worked with a lot of people, and we would bring people in. I remember Debbie Poritz came in on an insurance sit down we had. We were trying to find out what we were going to do about insurance. I mean we'd have all sorts of different people coming in. Then there were people coming from all over adding in to that. We were very much dealing with the policy, not at all with the political. So that was very separate. But there were other people who would kind of swing in and do a lot of policy with us. Jim Kennedy was one I would say. And the Assembly staff people like Judy Jengo, extremely helpful. During the campaign, I'd raised the issue that they should really do a blueprint for the arts, because Governor Florio famously eliminated, or cut the arts by 50 percent after Governor Kean had been such a huge supporter. That was really devastating. We lost a lot of organizations. There was a rally. It was a big deal. So they very nicely said yes, you can absolutely do this. I drafted something. I worked with a lot of people about what should be in

it. They approved it but they wanted to release it the Saturday before the election because of her reputation sort of the old Tom Kean and pearls sort of thing. They didn't think a blueprint on the arts-- even though I would say, and said then and still say now, that it's crucial for education, economic development, quality of life; and they said, yes, that's good, but release it on Saturday. And I have to tell you that I heard from more people and more Democrats voted for her on that Tuesday than you could imagine. And many of them were artists and arts organization leaders.

Nancy Becker: Interesting. So once Governor Whitman was elected, what job did you hold during her first term?

Carol Cronheim: Well, during her first term I held two jobs simultaneously. I was a full time speech writer. The first year we just had three. It was Mike Maher, who had written for Governor Kean and had been at Drew with him; Jim Gardner, who'd been a newspaper guy, I think he was with the Asbury Park Press immediately before that; and me. We were the three speech writers. And then in addition, among those three I was the one who was split. I also was the policy advisor on the arts, history, tourism, the humanities. It was a role that Jane Kenny who was made the head of Policy and Planning knew that I was the right person to do. Otherwise it wasn't like they were going out and hire a separate person to do what then was a relatively small area.

Nancy Becker: So you held two jobs simultaneously.

Carol Cronheim: I did. And speech writing was in Policy and Planning, because they had a viewpoint at the time that it was important that the policies be communicated effectively. And we worked, we sat in with them, and always sat in with them the rest of the time.

Nancy Becker: So who were the people that you worked with at the time? Who were the major people that you worked with?

Carol Cronheim: Well, Jane Kenny was the Chief of Policy and Planning, and Eileen McGuinness was the Deputy Chief. It was an interesting thing because once the campaign was over, it wasn't as if the campaign staff then became the transition staff. A lot of people sort of swooped in, but swooped in from other places, some of whom were our supporters in the primary, some supported Cary Edwards. Because it was a family affair, these primaries. But as it went forward, you know, they were vetting and doing a lot of things. But they made sure-- the Governor-- and I have to say to his credit, her brother and other people made sure that the people on the campaign moved over. But at the same time we got the best talent in other areas. And we didn't have people on every area. Jane was the main person, Eileen McGuinness then as the deputy were the people we were working with. Judy Jengo came in from environment; one of my favorite people, Bruce Stout, came in as our crime guy. He still is the leading expert in the state, and he really is a person who, with the Governor, because she'd been on that board that used to be out in California that was somewhat controversial when she was running-- but he and the Governor brought drug courts to New Jersey. We also had various people in education, there was a-- this name is escaping me-- our second education person was Jackie Stevens, the first one was Christy but I can't think of her last name at the moment. But Liz Murray and Leslie Anderson were working on the CCC concept in the cities,

eventually we had more and more people coming through and policy advisors. Some were pretty consistently there, though, throughout the term.

Nancy Becker: And what were the major issues you dealt with?

Carol Cronheim: Well, as a speech writer, we dealt with all the issues. We were in a lot of meetings on what was going on and what we were dealing with, and how to communicate it. One of the first things was the tax cut, and then speeches about the tax cut. And then the next-- we really didn't write that speech, because that speech was so soon at the start of her term. But then, you know, almost immediately we were writing the budget speech. So budget was critical. And the Governor really believed that your budget document was your biggest policy document. So that was a huge thing. So the writing of that first budget speech, people were coming—Christy Sanchez—that was the education person. People were coming and realizing that what's going to be said in the speech is what's going to happen. And so they were kind of coming to us saying, you know what, this should be in the speech. And we had to start saying, wait a minute-- has that been signed off to be in the speech? Or not signed off to be in the speech? And it was funny, there was a higher education policy that wound up being signed off, then no, it was, they had no go; then it was go, then it was no go. And at the end, as it turns out, I think it was no, but it was still in the speech. So it became the policy. It had to do with grants, and still jokingly call it Sanchez grants.

Nancy Becker Talk about your policy area, your policy area in terms of arts and culture, etc. So talk to me about the major issues in that area.

Carol Cronheim: Well as you know, the budget and the economy was kind of slow in the first year, because we had been coming off the recessions of the early 90s. In the blueprint for the arts, we laid out a bunch of things that we wanted to do. One was to slowly, gradually, build the Arts Council budget back up again. But that first couple years wasn't really the place. But what we did do is guarantee that it wasn't reduced any, so that first year it wasn't reduced. And then eventually it did get up to 20 million by 2000. She did jump out in front of the legislature, even though the treasury was ticked at me, and I made the case to the Governor, because I said, "We never say what we're going to do before we do it." I made the case to her, the legislature is going there. They'd been doing it and doing it, doing it, Leonard was still in the legislature, he was a big proponent. I said, "You might as well jump out in front of the parade in this, because we're going to agree; we agree with it, so we might as well do it that way." One of the first things we did was that economic plan, and I was working with the tourism and gaming committee, and I asked that we create a subcommittee on the arts history and the humanities, so I was able to bring together the head of the Arts Council, the head of the Humanities Council, and the head of the Historic Trust I think on that. And they really didn't work much together, so this was bringing them together and we put together plans of things we were going to do moving forward. A couple of things that I wanted to jump in on right away was the PAC, the New Jersey PAC because we hadn't finalized the fact that the State was going to spend the 180 million dollars, and so that was top on my list. The other was to get Morven back on track again, because the previous administration had stopped the restoration of Morven, so we-- that was on my list, and Jane used to laugh and say, you should just have a stamp that says, oh by the way, don't forget we have to fix Morven, because I would keep sending her these little memos, by the way, we should be looking at this and that. So there were a lot of issues that had come up. And also how to get tourism reconnected to the arts and history. I had the pleasure when I was a speech writer, and I wrote speeches

up until I became Acting Secretary in July of '98. I had the pleasure of writing the tourism speech every year. So that was great. My first tourism speech is still my favorite, and in it I was trying to lay out the policy direction for tourism with the Governor that we need to not just promote the shore, but look at our interior, western, parts of the state, and all the great arts and history and culture that we have to offer in the rest of New Jersey, and natural beauty—something along the line of, have you ever taken a wrong turn and gotten lost in the most beautiful place you've ever seen—that's what New Jersey is to a lot of us. So we were laying out how we were going to try to move forward on tourism and other things.

Nancy Becker: So you had a great deal to do with the creation, establishment, and administration, of the Cultural Trust. Will you spend some time in telling us about it, and how that came to be?

Carol Cronheim: Yeah. The Cultural Trust is something that I'm very proud of, and I know Leonard Lance is very proud of, as he sponsored the bill. The Cultural Trust actually sprang out of an idea that started when Governor Florio cut the funding for the arts by 50 percent, because in the early 90s, they started having conferences, "What can we do with the downturn, the recession," every state was looking at this. And some states were coming up with creative ideas. I remember Missouri was really out in front on this. And the Arts Council hosted a conference, and the conference had people from a lot of different states including Missouri and some other states. One of the things—trusts were one of the big issues. And we figured if we had a Cultural Trust, it wasn't to do the operating support, but to do all the other things that we weren't able to do. In the Kean administration, there'd been a bond act for capital. We haven't had capital funding for the arts since that bond act. So the Cultural Trust sprang out of that, came through the 90s. We worked on it when I was a policy advisor. We worked a little bit with it; and then when I was Acting Secretary. It was something we were able to try to put together better. But in the meanwhile, you had the people from the outside who wanted it, the cultural groups, organizations. ArtPride, really had done a lot. They co-hosted that conference. Then you had Josh Westin coming from the other side as a donor and someone who was very interested in the long term health of the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, Liberty Science Center, the New Jersey Symphony. He had an idea that we should come in and create something that would ensure that those institutions would survive and flourish no matter what.

Nancy Becker: Just let me interrupt you. Josh Westin-- the former CEO of ADP?

Carol Cronheim: Yes, correct. The former CEO of ADP. And his idea coming through that, we just want to support these other groups, and then ArtPride and the other organizations, groups, we wanted to help all groups with this, and maybe work on an endowment concept. And then internally we don't want to do something just for arts and not do it for history, because history did not come along with the arts in the 80s. For some reason, they just didn't get the same benefits out of the 80s that the arts did. They were much less funded. And we wanted to make sure this was something that would bring the arts, history, and humanities together. So with Josh's idea from here, sort of an outsider, and then the internal groups, if you ever read Kingdon's book on agenda setting and policy, it's the different groups that come in that make something happen, and then the policy window opens, and you can quickly go through it if you're ready to move. So even though the Cultural Trust would seem like it was the fastest piece of legislation that ever flew through the legislature, it actually was almost ten years in the making by the time the window opened and we were able to do it. And it was interesting because it called for 10 million annually for 10 years. Unfortunately we didn't get all of that because the administrations changed. But Leonard introduced that

bill probably in March, and treasury didn't bother to fight it that much because they didn't think it would pass. And then it did. It flew through. He got it through the Assembly, he got it through the Senate, it passed, she signed it in July of 2000 and with that, we had arranged working with David Grant at the Dodge Foundation. The Dodge Foundation would be the first foundation to contribute to the trust, and the trust is a public/private partnership. At the bill signing, they gave Governor Whitman a check for a million dollars to start the trust. So the trust now has about 22 million dollars in it. In 2000 after she signed the legislation, she started appointing the board. She appointed-- I was happy to say I was the first appointment, Josh was probably next. And by 2001 we were having our first meetings. Judy Dawkins was our first chair, then she and Josh became co-chairs pretty quickly. Then Josh chaired for about the next ten years while I was vice chair, and then when Josh left I became chair, and then I was offered this job and had to step off the trust. But I sit ex-officio on the trust for the Secretary of State, who is also the Lieutenant Governor. And I still stay very close to the trust. They promised me that when I left the administration, they would re-appoint me to the trust, so we'll see. Let's see if we hold them to that, Nancy.

Nancy Becker: Now in Governor Whitman's second term, you became Acting Secretary of State. How long did you serve in that position, and what were your responsibilities?

Carol Cronheim: A little more than six months, and I started July 1, and I was finished on January 4th or something like that. To run the department, at the time it was bigger than it is now even. But the cultural agencies were brought into the Department of State under Jane Burgio; most of them are there. Not all of them; the DP and then the Historic Trust is in DCA still, but the Arts Council, the State Museum, the Archives, the Historical Commission and the Cultural Trust are all within the Department of State. It was a good and interesting time period; I just had-- my son was a year old, my older son, so I was busy. I had two children during the Whitman administration, so it was cute to see him on the floor of the office, you know, rolling things around and playing. But running the department which was a bigger job than just advising them over time, I was amazed at how much the Secretary of State is required to sign. Pilot's licenses, you know, river boat captain, like tugboat licenses. I had a stack every day and just so much signing to do by hand. We signed the bonds, that when a bond in finished and comes due, you sign them. And they're beautiful-- the artwork on the bonds are gorgeous. And I signed one that I think Governor Hughes was the other signer on, and I was just thrilled, loving history, I thought this is so neat. And I looked at the guy and said, "Oh, so when you cash this in, can I keep this?" He said to me, "No. No. No, you cannot." I found extradition papers or something; apparently the Secretary of State has to sign off on. There was one case where they had these extradition papers they wanted me to sign. Someone from counsel's office, who I guess just did this, and she didn't want me to see what I was going to be signing. And I said, "Well, I won't sign that without seeing it." And it turned out to be a pretty controversial figure they were trying to figure out how to extradite who was away from where she usually was. It didn't work, but still, the Secretary of State signs stuff like that. Who knew there are so many small constitutional things like that? And at the same time, when you're Secretary of State, you're expected to be out at events, out in public, cutting ribbons and talking to arts groups and working on a lot of different items. In that way, it's a very public role as well. It had a lot of policy things going on and a lot of detail, paperwork things, and then you have all the usual civil service, division directors, issues, office issues that you have to deal with. But it was also a very fertile time for us in two areas, doing some work behind the scenes to get the archives opened, which was Bob Littell's, Senator Littell's baby, his project over the years, and

that's the building I work in now, 225 West State Street. So working hard behind the scenes to get some of the last little details there, working to get the shovel in the ground at Morven. There was one little hold up. There was a contingency fee that treasury said, "Oh, yes, you've raised all the money, friends of historic Morven. Good for you. You've raised that money. Oh, but we can't do it because you need another 50,000 contingency fee to do this." Much to their dismay. I called the governor and said, "This is what's holding this up. I have talked to them and they just won't budge." I called Edna. She wound up calling them and doing it and the treasurer was not happy with me. Then in the other very fertile period, to work on the cultural trust. We were able to really put together more what we thought it was going to look like.

Q: Who were the major people that you worked with at the time as Secretary of State?

Carol Cronheim: Well, Barbara Moran who was the executive director of the Arts Council and later was the first executive director of the Cultural Trust. Mark Mappen was the head of the Historical Commission. I think Mark was head of the Historical Commission then, but there are still a lot of other people there like Giles Wright, Dick Waldron who had been there. Sarah Curran eventually. The head of the museum was Leah Sloshberg and I'd known Leah since the Kean administration. So Leah and Karl Niederer was the archivist and his deputy was Joe Klett, who's now the archivist. So we did a lot of work with all of them. And then there was also the elections folks and the Assistant Secretary was Lauren Robinson-Brown. So it was a good group of people, the department was a little bigger.

Q: When you were in both roles, both as Secretary of State and in policy, what would you say that Governor Whitman's objectives were in these areas?

Carol Cronheim: She saw the benefit of making the arts and history, putting them in service to the rest of the state. She saw how they could be an engine of economic development. She signed off on the pact because she thought it could do everything that it has done in Newark. If you've been to that area, there used to be methadone clinics there and now that is a nice, beautiful area of Newark and it's a destination for sure. I think she also appreciated the arts and history for their own sake and that it was important that we preserve our historic sites for the future. One of the things I did was the Garden State Preservation Trust. That was something we worked on from policy and planning and then Maureen Ogden had been the head of the commission that said we should go for a million acres. Leonard had been working on that, was in that group and the two of them agreed that we should fund the historic trust through that too. There was some pushback. The environmentalists don't like to share their money too much. So they were getting $2.8 billion and they carved out $6 million a year for ten years for the Historic Trust. So we were getting $60 for the buildings that were on a lot of that land that they were preserving. So that came to be a valid issue, I think while I was still in Policy and Planning. But then when I jumped over to being the acting Secretary, Art Brown who was the Ag Commissioner and Bob Shinn, who was DEP commissioner, and I would go a lot of places together, the three of us, and talk about why we need to do this. I remember we went to Washington Rock Road in Watchung where Washington surveyed the troops, but it was a great environmental area. Then we were up in Fort Lee, the same thing, talking about why it was important for farming, why it was important for the open space and why it was important for history. We went around the state doing what you'd call a dog and pony show, but we were happy to see that that bond issue passed by overwhelming numbers.

Q: Terrific. Did Governor Whitman make a difference as a woman and for women, from your perspective?

Carol Cronheim: Yeah, I really think she did. I think one—it was just the example she set for young women coming up. I think that was tremendous. But another was how many women she had in her administration which to hear some of the people in the legislature describe it, they couldn't believe how many women there could be. But when you realize that there were so many men before and that women are more than 50 percent of the population, it probably wouldn't even add up to 50 percent, most of the time. But she did not care if you were male or female. But on the bright side, she hired a lot of women who wouldn't have gotten the chance before. She hired a lot of women in "first" positions—first woman ever to do this, to do that. First woman Chief of Staff, first woman Attorney General, first woman Supreme Court Chief Justice. She put a lot of women in role model positions, which I think is important. But I think it just also brought a different perspective. Working for her was really a great thing because she understood that people had to balance their lives and their work and she didn't want people working 20 hours a day. She didn't think good decisions would be made that way, and I think that's true.

Q: You answered this a little. My question was, did it affect who held power inside and outside the administration? Clearly what you've just said is, there were a lot of firsts.

Carol Cronheim: There were, and I actually think she had impact outside the administration because in the past, you would see people coming in to the governor's office. There would be a group of men coming in to talk to the governor. I had a little experience, because I'm on my fourth governor now and Governor Whitman was my second governor. People seemed to bring a woman along. I think women in companies and corporations got to go places they necessarily may not have if she hadn't been the governor. You'd be surprised at some of the things, especially on the campaign, that we would hear about women. A woman can't run the government. It was really as if it was the 1950s, except without the polite 1950s language.

Q: Do you think you faced different expectations because the governor was a woman?

Carol Cronheim: No, I really don't think so once she became governor. I don't think it was different expectations. I think she really expected you to be prepared; to know your stuff, not just be a hail fellow well met sort of political type. She wanted you to know your policy and know it inside and out and keep her informed. She really was interested in policy. She herself would admit to being a closet policy wonk and she was really interested in the details of policy and would sit, and we would talk a long time about what the right course was. We'd do a lot of memos and a lot of back and forth. I remember writing a half page memo once because the Library Association talked to me and they were talking about the terrible condition that a lot of libraries were in. They really needed a capital bond. So I wrote half a page and I said, "They've come to me. This is what they want. If the money's there, it seems a good idea. They'd like $40 million." So then she just signed off, "Okay. CTW." And I came down to Eileen. I guess she was the Chief, at the time and said, "Wait, wait, if I could have $40 million for anything, I might have picked something else. This is good, but can some of that go over here?" She said, "Nope, that was it, $40 million, that's what you get."

Q: From your perspective, what were Governor Whitman's greatest strengths?

Carol Cronheim: Well, one is that she had a quick mind and she was willing to do the hard work and study and was interested, really interested in policy, which I think comes from really being interested in people. She had a lot of charisma. People would meet her and they would really be impressed. They didn't expect her to be warm and have that sort of charisma. But at the same time, she was very good about being private. A lot of the really nice things she was doing for people and individuals, without blowing her own horn about it. She didn't seem like she was always angling for the next better thing. She really was in the moment. But she also really didn't say, "I'm only interested in the environment. I only want to work on that." She wanted to make sure everything was covered. She was really thorough and I think that's what made our policy office such a great, high functioning office. Somebody had a horse in the race on every issue and knew something about every issue and were able to come out and address it. She really thought everything is connected. I think she saw the interconnectedness of everything and that if we do this, it will help this, which will help this, which will help this. That's why it was so important to her that she had an office that worked like that.

Q: What would you say were her greatest accomplishments as governor?

Carol Cronheim: Well, I think she would say, most people would say, the million acres was probably huge. Any state, in New Jersey, with the history of sprawl and the '80s had so much sprawl. So important, I think. That was such a huge piece of it. But at the same time, she did some great things in education and for the arts. She brought us back into a really good place. The same thing with the cultural trust. It was huge for us. Drug courts were probably high up on her list. She did a lot in law enforcement. She did a lot in human services too, which is more complicated, more group homes. There were some legislators who were very interested in that and she really was trying to chip away at that list and deinstitutionalize. I think she closed a few places. She did a lot. I think she had the budget balanced really well, despite all the Monday morning quarterbacking. When she left, the pension was fully funded. People forget that. She tried to do something by investing the pension which treasury was very keen on. Not everyone thought it was a great idea, but it was an effort to try to improve the pension system, not to just raid the pension system. When she left, she also left the budget with a billion dollar surplus. She probably shouldn't have left that last year. Bad things can happen.

Q: Which leads me to the next question. What do you think were her most significant weaknesses?

Carol Cronheim: Well, one, she has a competitive, athletic and action spirit, where she wants to be moving and doing new things. And maybe the biggest problem was, after seven years, she'd sort of hit the wall on her learning curve and then she wanted a new adventure, a new something to learn in DC. That was probably the biggest problem. She should have stayed, put in one more year and I think people would be speaking much more fondly of her. They really should, because she really did a lot of tremendous things. I can see, after seven years, it does get to be a grind, but I think that would probably be her biggest problem. She should have served that last year. And we would have had an incredible year for her from the arts. They were going to fete her everywhere and really throw parties in her honor for all the things that she had done, just the way they had done for Governor Kean. It would have been a nice

year to take a bow on some of the things that she had done. Then I think they would be more firmly set in people's minds.

Q: Can you elicit for us, were there any significant failures?

Carol Cronheim: Oh yeah, the auto insurance reboot. That was during '97. Since then, Candidate McGreevey only said two things ever. One of them was, "I'm going to fix auto insurance." Governor Whitman, because of her competitive nature, said, "Oh, we've got to go at him on auto insurance. And some of us, she may recall, said, "No, no, don't do that. Let's just talk about our strengths. Let's not play to what he wants to play into." So that meant (and I was still speech writing) we speech writers sat down with all these insurance people. We had a table full of insurance people from the Insurance Department, good intentioned, very knowledgeable in their areas. They said, "All right, this is what we think you should do." It was unexplainable. You could not explain this at all. It was just-- we kept saying, "Well, why don't we just eliminate auto insurance like New Hampshire and see how the chips fall?" It did not go anywhere. It was not a successful reboot of auto insurance. And then the other issue would be the Pension Bond Act. It was well intentioned but it turned out it was not a good move to make. Now we had that other pattern here in the Treasury. People still say that was the right move to make. Having worked for Leonard, who was not a fan of the Pension Bond Act, I agree. There were some of us inside and other people who said (for the speech writing office again) it was unexplainable. We could not explain it. I found over the course of the four and a half years writing a speech and even doing policy, if you can't explain it, then it probably isn't great, because it's too complicated to get across. You're never going to sell it. But at the same time, it probably is too complicated to work. That seemed to be the problem. It wasn't for want of wanting to do the right thing and wanting to come up with a really clever, innovative solution. I think that was the goal of both the auto insurance and the pension bond. I think that was the goal. But sometimes you can't hit a ball out of the park.

Q: How would you assess her administration as a whole, when you look back on the entire seven years?

Carol Cronheim: Well, I'm obviously biased, but I think it was a very good seven years. I think a lot was accomplished. Each of the departments, she gave everybody in the departments enough leeway to really try to come up with creative ideas and to do things. She also was very determined that once they had come to her and she signed off on something, that if it didn't go well, she backed them up. She would say, "No, no, this was not my department going off the rails. I'm behind this. I take responsibility for this," and I think that was really refreshing. Now if they did go off the rails without checking in, then she might say, "Hey, what are you doing?" But if she agreed on something, a decision, and it didn't go well, she stood by it. I think that made the cabinet members and the staff, all of us on the staff, feel like we were supported all the way through. I really think everybody just worked their hardest, because everybody really believed in what they were doing and what she was doing. Just like on the campaign, there was such a belief among a lot of the women working in the campaign, and women outside on the campaign, I know you've interviewed many of them, who it was really meaningful and important to, to put a woman governor in. She was the perfect person to do that.

Q: Did you experience yourself as part of a historic change?

Carol Cronheim: Well, it's hard to say while you're in it, "This is a historic change," but clearly, since history was my area--

Q: In retrospect, right.

Carol Cronheim: Since history was my area, I knew what was going to happen 50 years from now. When there were the meetings would devolve into, "What is she going to be remembered for? We want to make sure this is her historic legacy," I said, "No, there's going to be a tour guide. There are going to be all these portraits of men, and then there's going to be a woman, and then--" They're going to say she was the first woman governor. That's why it's important, and why she did go to such a degree. She went out and spoke to girls' groups and women's groups all the time and she really went out and inspired people. It's important. Although she may not say it's her most important legacy, in a lot of ways, just the very start of it was important. And then to be reelected is sensational. I've looked through Eagleton's list of women governors and I'm not sure there are too many who've been reelected.

Q: Once Governor Whitman left office, what happened to the changes in policy and personnel that had occurred in her administration?

Carol Cronheim: Well, it depends. Some of the policies were constitutional, like the million acres, and others were more ephemeral, but that's the way it is in any administration. You can't set everything in stone. Government keeps rolling along. A lot of it stayed the course and a lot of the same people stay in administrations. Not in her own office. We all had to skedaddle, and that's true most of the time in the cabinet but there are a lot of good people who stay in or near government, like Jennifer Velez. She lasted over several administrations and she was with human services. She'd done that kind of work for Governor Whitman. People find a way to stay involved in the policy issues that they're interested in. I left and went to graduate school, but I immediately joined the ArtPride board and I stayed on the cultural trust. So people that she'd put on boards and commissions were able to help shepherd things that they were doing. So there's always a little bit of slippage and some things that stick, and hopefully it's the best of the things that stick that go forward.

Q: You've continued to have a very interesting career since the Whitman administration. Please tell us about it.

Carol Cronheim: Well, let's see. I've said I went to graduate school and during that time, I did a little sideline speech writing and I popped into NJN and helped them during a transition when their foundation director stepped down. I did a little work there. I helped Governor Whitman a little bit just on the chapter on being the first woman governor on her book, though she really took that over and just-- she didn't want to write that chapter. Bob Bostock, who also worked on the book with the governor said, "Yeah, she doesn't want to do the chapter," but when we came in, we wound up talking for hours and I wrote a draft and she really warmed to working on the draft, so that was a great experience. And then I worked at Leadership New Jersey for four years. I was a seminar director. That was great, because it allowed me to keep my hand in on all the policies. I wrote basically a 15 to 20 page paper every month on all the different policy areas that we would do. We would take them to Camden to study education. We would come to Trenton to do politics. We would go to New Brunswick to do healthcare and Paterson to do human services. I

switched it so we were going to Newark to do the arts and in June, we would go to New Jersey state prison and take them through and do corrections. Environment, we'd go canoeing through the Pinelands and to Atlantic City. There were all sorts of interesting topics. I did that for four years, and that was a really good experience. Then I graduated and I was going to teach. I had something lined up at a university and I was invited to join the Christie administration about two years in, April 2012. I came back to the Department of State of all places, and I'm working on the arts and history.

Q: And what's your position there now?

Carol Cronheim: I'm the assistant Secretary of State and my in portfolio are the cultural divisions in the department.

Q: Is there anything else about the Whitman administration that we may not have asked that you'd like to tell us?

Carol Cronheim: Let's see, very dog friendly. On the campaign, I'll never forget, because we always believed in our heart that when push came to shove, people were going to go into that booth and they were not going to be able to pull the lever for Jim Florio. They were going to vote for Christie Whitman. We just felt it. Maybe we were naïve, but we just felt this in our heart that it was going to happen. But come election-- and Eagleton had her 9 points down on Saturday. Our internal polling had her much closer, neck and neck, Sunday night and trending her way. So Tuesday of Election Day, I remember a big issue erupted about this dog, Tara the dog, who had bitten somebody and she was out on the road on her campaign bus. Someone had actually given her a puppy on these travels and she took it. People were calling in and at this point, you're exhausted. You've been working 24/7 for a long time. Normally, we always checked on policy. We just said to these people on the phone, Liz and I looked at each other and said, "She's saving that dog. There's no way that dog is going down. If she becomes governor, she will save that dog," and you know what, she did save that dog. We didn't have to check. That dog went to a farm in Connecticut and I don't know about what's eventual, but we knew she would save that dog. It was so funny, because all of that just piled up. I remember there was an article early in the administration about her kiddy corps of people who helped her. She had all these young people working on it, and it was her advance people and her schedulers and all these other people, five or six people. But they were all talking about people in their 20s. Liz and I were in our 20s but we were not included in that. Somehow I don't think we were considered in that grouping somehow. Maybe it's because we were policy people, but it was enough distance for us in our work careers I guess, that we weren't considered that, which was funny. But I think the Whitman administration was also a very family friendly administration. People really knew each other. People really got along well. It wasn't all sunshine and roses. There was a lot of, like all administrations, especially the first year, there's a lot of jockeying for position. But by the end, it ran extremely smoothly. I would say that the last two years were so smooth. Everybody in the chief positions all ran along smoothly, the cabinet went along smoothly. Everyone knew what was expected of them. So I think it was a really great time in New Jersey and we were fortunate with the other things going on in the country economically and everything else that it was a good time.