

CAN'T TURN ME AROUND: AN ORAL HISTORY PLAY
by Julie Pearson Little Thunder

This play is based on interviews conducted by Dr. Tanya Finchum and Juliana Nykolaiszyn for the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at Oklahoma State University. It includes first person accounts from nine of the forty-six women in the interview series, who served in the Oklahoma Legislature from 2007-2010.

Classroom curriculum and specific lessons are also included in the interview collection. To access written transcripts or audio interviews, go to

<https://library.okstate.edu/search-and-find/collections/digital-collections/wotol/women-legislators/>

This is a public domain play. No royalties are required for performances so long as they are given free of charge. However, any public performance must include a program acknowledgement of the playwright.

A NOTE ABOUT STYLE

This is a presentational play which can be done Reader's Theater style or as a memorized performance. Posture, voice and various costume elements such as scarves and jackets can be used to indicate the change from actor to character and vice versa.

Because this play relies upon these transitions for its theatrical effect, and to emphasize the fact that the women legislators lines are quotes from their interviews, I distinguish between actors and interviewees by listing one or the other first.

For example: Actor #3/LAURA BOYD means the actor starts as herself and then presents Boyd. When the notation is reversed, LAURA BOYD/Actor #3, Boyd gets the emphasis.

<https://library.okstate.edu/search-and-find/collections/digital-collections/wotol/women-legislators/>

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Bernice Mitchell and Hannah Atkins/Actor #1 (African Americans)

Lisa Johnson Billy/Actor #2 (Native American, Chickasaw)

Laura Boyd/Actor #3 (white)

Audience member/Actor #4 (white)

Kathleen Wilcoxson/ Actor #5 (white)

Betty Boyd/Actor #6 (white)

ACTOR #3

This is how Bernice Mitchell started out in politics.

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

When my youngest one started to school full-time, I decided now it's time for me to go back. So I did, part-time at first, because I had so many schedules to manipulate. I started noticing women in the cafeteria, and we'd chat, and we'd find it would really help. Not necessarily a griping session, but a venting kind of thing. We called ourselves, the Lunch Bunch. And our group kept getting larger and larger, and pretty soon some of the women faculty would see us—

ACTOR #2

What's going on here?

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

And we'd tell them. They'd say—

ACTOR #2

We need to do something about that.

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

Eventually, this got to the Office of the Vice President, who at that time was Dr. Boggs. He had an assistant, Sheila Avery, working for him, who said—

ACTOR #3

Let's do more than just sit around and talk. Let's take this to another level.

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

So we started having big group sessions involving students and female faculty. Even retreats where we'd go down to the City for a weekend. Just lock ourselves in a room and debate all of this. The outcome of that, knowing where to go and complain, became what's now called the OSU Women's Council at Oklahoma State University.

ACTOR #5

Formed in 1970, to study the needs and challenges faced by women students, and promote equal opportunity for all persons on campus.

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

From little acorns grow big trees.

ACTOR #6

Here's a bit of Bernice Mitchell's resume. First African American woman County Commissioner for Payne County, 1986. Oklahoma. Chair of the Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women, President of the Oklahoma Women's Political Caucus, Board member for the National Association of Commissions for Women.

ACTOR #5

And Oklahoma Women's Hall of Famer. Who do you play again?

ACTOR #2

Lisa Johnson Billy. Co-founder of Peacemakers, elected to the Oklahoma House 2004—2016. Chairman of the International,

ACTOR #2 (Cont.)

Federal and Tribal Relations Committee, deputy whip, vice-chairman of the majority caucus. How about you?

ACTOR#3

Laura Boyd. Oklahoma House of Representatives 1992-1998. Assistant adjunct professor for the University of Oklahoma, National Field Director for the Women Legislator's Lobby.

ACTOR#6

Not to be confused with Betty Boyd. Broke into television in 1955, one of the first women broadcasters in the state, elected to the Oklahoma House of Representatives at age 65.

ACTOR#1

Not to be confused with Hannah Atkins. First African-American woman elected to the Oklahoma State House of Representatives, 1968 to 1980. U.S. Delegate to the 35th General Assembly of the United Nations, Assistant Director of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Cabinet Secretary of Social Sciences the same year—

ACTOR #5

I'm confused. I thought you played Bernice Mitchell.

ACTOR #1

Mitchell and Atkins. Two powerhouse women played by one powerhouse actor.

ACTOR #5

Kathleen Wilcoxson, Oklahoma Senate, 1996 to present. Before that, Oklahoma City Teacher of the year. Member Ronald

ACTOR #5 Cont.

Reagan's National Advisory Council on Adult Basic Education,
co-chair of the Education Committee in the House.

Actor #4, planted in the house, stands up.

ACTOR #4

Yea, I'm sure these women are great, as people. But I think
politics is a bunch of —bull—

(Taking stock of the audience.)

Oney.

ACTOR#3

My character, Laura Boyd said she was afraid of politics.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

In high school, I was an artist. I was never interested in politics.

ACTOR #6

See, you're not alone. Come on up and join us.

ACTOR #4

That's alright.

ACTOR #1

Yes, you come on up here. What's your name?

Actor #4 joins them.

ACTOR #4

Elizabeth.

ACTOR #5

We all have our preconceptions about politics. But the best way to understand—

ACTOR #6

Why women leaders are important.

ACTORS #5&6
(Overlapping.)

Is to hear their stories.

ACTOR #3

You can read for Jari Askins.

She hands Actor #4 a script.

ACTOR #6

Gum, please!

Actor #4 surrenders her gum.

JARI ASKINS/Actor #4

I never was interested in politics. It was always a private subject to my parents. I didn't grow up with them putting campaign signs in the yard or working on campaigns. (*beat*) Sounds like my parents. But who's Jari Askins ?

ACTOR #2

The governor's race 2011? Mary Fallin vs Jari Askins.

ACTOR #4

Oh yeah.

ACTOR #1

Two women running against each other? That was a momentous occasion. A first for Oklahoma.

ACTOR #6

But voter turnout?

(She makes a thumbs down sign.)

ACTOR #5

What irritates me is people who complain about politics, but don't vote.

(Ad lib exchanges between the actors asking each other if they voted.)

ACTOR#5

Wait. Stop. We're here to tell these women's stories. And if some of us have never set foot inside a voting booth, well, maybe that'll change.

(To #4)

So what exactly has Askins done besides lose the governor's race?

ACTOR #4

That's cold.

ACTOR #2

When it comes to politics, it's amazing how rude people can be.

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR #6

Tell anything they don't like about you in public or private or anywhere else.

ACTOR #4

What has Askins done. For real?

(Someone points to lines in the script.)

Jari Askins. Served in the Oklahoma House. Democratic House leader. First woman Democratic Lieutenant Governor. Over twelve "Outstanding Legislator" awards. Member of the Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame.

ACTOR #1

Maybe we should hear from the woman herself. In her voice.

ACTOR #4

I don't think I can do this.

ACTOR #5

Of course, you can.

Actor #4 starts hesitantly, gradually gaining confidence.

JARI ASKINS/#4

I was asked by some friends, retired teachers, to run for State Senate in 1986. I wasn't through with being a judge! I remember sitting at my desk in my office looking at some laws I was being asked to interpret—knowing the judicial branch interprets the law and the legislative makes it. And thinking, "This is one of the stupidest laws I've ever seen. Maybe I needed to be part of changing it."

LAURA WILCOXSON, #5

When my predecessor, Senator Helen Cole, announced her retirement, some of my friends called and said, “Have you considered running for her seat?” To me, that was an amazing thought because all the senators I had known, except Senator Cole, had been very wealthy, very powerful, very tall men.

(Laughter)

ACTOR #6

One definition of politics is the art of redistributing power.

ACTOR #1/HANNAH ATKINS

And there’s a lot that needs to be redistributed. As Hannah found out when she ran for the Oklahoma house. “I was just a little shy librarian. They said, ‘Well, there’s a vacancy. And since you’ve been the law librarian here, you’d be the top-notch candidate.’”

ACTOR #2

They probably thought you were going to lose.

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

My opponent said, “She’s a tea-sipping lady” like it was something terrible.

ACTOR #5

It is. When everyone else is guzzling beer.

ACTOR #2

Don't let her fool you. Hanna was tough as nails. Went to jail during the Civil Rights movement for supporting striking garbage workers. When she ran for the House. . .

HANNAH ATKINS/#1

The FBI thought I was a Communist because my motto was, "Planning with People for Progress." If you're with the people, you're a communist. They even wiretapped my phone.

ACTOR #4

That's crazy!

ACTOR #3

(To #2)

I heard Helen Cole persuaded you to run.

ACTOR #5

Persuaded's not a strong enough word.

LISA BILLY

Senator Helen Cole changed my destiny. I was very stubborn in not wanting to go back into politics—

ACTOR #3

After six years in the Chickasaw Legislature—

LISA BILLY

She called me one fall afternoon and said, "Lisa, I have a question for you." Helen would often call me. I would help her, maybe if she needed a ride somewhere. So I just assumed it was

something along that nature. And I said, “Sure, what can I do for you?” She said, “I want you to run for the House of Representatives,” and I literally laughed. I was drinking a cup of coffee. And I was like, “I don’t think so,” And she said, “Now before you answer me, I know that you’re a woman of faith so I would assume you’ll pray about the matter.” So what do you say at that point? And I said, “Oh, yes, ma’am. I will pray.”

ACTOR #4

Pretty persuasive.

ACTOR #6

You ain’t seen nothin’ yet.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

I hung the phone up and I thought, “Well, I don’t hear any booming thunder from the Lord to tell me to do this. So I don’t think so.” She called me three days later almost to the exact time and she said

ACTOR #6

(as Helen Cole)

“Lisa, Helen—what did the Lord tell you?”

ACTOR #2

“Miss Helen, I haven’t heard anything so I’m kind of thinking that’s a no.”

ACTOR #6

“I believe you’re wrong. I believe you are supposed to run for the House of Representatives.”

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

“Helen, first of all, a woman’s never been elected in my House district, my party—

ACTOR #6

Republican

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

has never been elected, and a Native American has not been elected. I don’t come from a family of wealth or political prestige. I don’t have anybody in my family or my husband’s family that could even offer any advice in this arena.”

ACTOR #6

Well, I believe you’re supposed to run, and I’m going to make sure that happens.

ACTOR #1

And boy, did she!

(LAUGHTER.)

ACTOR #4

Wait a minute. Stop. Before we any further—shouldn’t Mary Fallin be in here somewhere?

ACTOR #3

Now you’re catching on. Go for it.

ACTOR #4

I can’t. I’m reading Jari Askins.

ACTOR #5

This is politics, remember? You have to be able to examine both sides. Fallin graduated from OSU. Served 12 years as Lieutenant Governor of Oklahoma—two terms in Oklahoma House—and was the first woman to represent Oklahoma in the U.S. Congressional House since the 1920s.

MARY FALLIN/ACTOR #4

(Reading from script)

A friend of mine invited me to the Young Republicans meeting and showed me the platform between the Democrat Party and the Republican Party and I actually read it. And determined I was really a conservative republican. I liked fiscal discipline in spending, and I was conservative on social issues and believed in limited in government. I remember going home and telling my father, who was still alive at that time, that I was going to become a Republican instead of a Democrat and he said,

ACTOR #3

Well if you want to do something that stupid, then you go right ahead.

ACTOR #6

He was a Little Dixie Democrat.

ACTOR #2

What'd he say when you got elected?

MARY FALLIN/ACTOR #4

He didn't live long enough to see it. But my mother did. When I ran for lieutenant governor, my mother and my aunt and my

MARY FALLIN/ACTOR #4 (Cont.)

brother and my grandmother, who was in her mid-nineties, actually all switched to be Republicans.

ACTOR #1

I don't care for party labels, as much as people's goals. What they plan to work on when they get elected.

LAURA BOYD/ ACTOR #3

Seeing every child has someone who cares about him or her for the duration of their childhood.

JARI ASKINS/ACTOR #4

Domestic violence issues. A lot of people, they're not really sure it exists.

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

Education. That we don't make it easy for students to drop out of high school.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

Issues that impact families and children. . .

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR #6

A breast cancer fund to help underinsured and uninsured women.

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

Equality for women because in most occupations, for the same job, employers paid men more than women

(Beat.)

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

Women run because they have a goal, something they want to accomplish. Men tend to run primarily for the power and recognition. We need more women.

ACTOR #1

That's where your mentors come in. Without Helen Cole, Lisa Billy would never have run for office.

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

Senator Judy Eason-McIntyre is from Tulsa. She's my Democrat co-chair, and we laugh because the only thing she and I have in common is that we are both short and we are both women. She's as black as I'm white and she's as liberal as I am conservative. On the conservative rating, she was 3% conservative and I'm way up in the high 80's or low 90's. Two women who are totally opposite of one another but we've also prided ourselves on being a role model on how two women can be so different, philosophically, yet our goals are very much the same.

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

I was one of the first ones to start an internship program at the capitol. I had interns from the University of Oklahoma, University of Central Oklahoma and I believe one from OSU in Stillwater. They would come for a semester, fifteen hours a week. They're still part of my family.

BERNICE MITCHELL/ ACTOR #1

I've had young women from Oklahoma State University, particularly some of the black women who've gone on, gotten their PhDs, who call up and say, "You may not have known this, but you were my mentor." It makes you feel proud to know that you've carried these women and they've gotten their wings and they're flying.

LAURA BILLY/ ACTOR #2

When I drive down Lincoln Boulevard, I look at the Capitol and think, "My gosh, I work there. I've got to make sure I'm doing it right so that when the next woman chooses to run for this House district, people will say, 'Well, you know, 'ole Billy, she did pretty good. I'd elect another woman.'"

(Beat.)

ACTOR #4

You know what I would hate the most? Campaigning. Trying to get people to vote for you.

BETTY BOYD/ ACTOR #6

Name recognition had something to do with my first being elected. After that, it was a hindrance. One of the ways you get known if you're running for office is knock on doors. When I'd do that, they did not want to talk about politics. Right off the bat, they would say

ACTOR #2

Oh, I know who you are. You're Betty Boyd.

ACTOR #5

You've been on television. How is Bob Barker?

(Laughter.)

ACTOR #3

Hannah Atkins had a secret weapon when she campaigned.

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

I went around with my sons, and of course, they were cute. That helped people open their doors. Oklahoma City was very much segregated. There were African American neighborhoods and whites, and on the day of elections, the big money folks would come with the limousines and pick up people—

ACTOR #5

White people—

HANNAH ATKINS/ ACTOR #1

And take them to vote in the black neighborhoods. But I changed that. I went to various churches and shook hands with people after the ceremonies. They had never been asked to vote like that, by a candidate. My dad predicted, "You're gonna be on the front page of the newspaper," and sure enough, I was. My son would carry a sign, "Vote for my mom"— that got people's eye.

ACTOR #3

You really do need the whole family's support.

LAURA BILLY/ACTOR #2

My mom would help take care of the children. My husband was out of state, working one of his five jobs to help pay for the campaign. I'd get friends that would drive me. That way I could just jump out at each house, run, knock the door, come back, jump in the car and we could go down the road—

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ ACTOR #5

I had the greatest campaign manager—my husband. He took such good care of me. I'll never forget the time—I was so tired and I was out in Mustang and it was pouring down rain, just pouring down rain. I realized how awful I probably looked—nobody wanted to answer their door to a wet woman. So, I went home, and my husband and one of our volunteers were in the garage, making campaign signs. And the sun was shining. He said

ACTOR #6

(as husband)

What're you doing home?

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON #5

I said, "Well it's raining in Mustang," and I started crying. I just started crying. So he said

ACTOR #6

It's okay, it's okay.

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

He took me upstairs and tucked me into bed and I felt so safe and so secure. I knew I'd never have to knock on doors again. Two hours later he came back.

ACTOR #6

Time to wake up. Here are your cards. You need to go knock on doors some more.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

Helen told me, “If you don’t wear out a good pair of tennis shoes, you didn’t knock enough doors.” So that was one thing—I could knock doors, and I could jog from house to house. And literally, I would jog from house to house. I got chased by a lot of dogs and outran all of them except one Chihuahua. That one got me on the back of the heels.

ACTOR #5

Mary Fallin has a story about her first campaign. When she ran for the House of Representatives.

ACTOR #4/MARY FALLIN

If I end up with a split personality, it’s going to be your fault.
(beat) My first campaign was ran out of the dining room of our home. I door knocked a tremendous amount of homes, pregnant. My former husband was helping me somewhat. As it got closer and I was too pregnant to go out. I had to do a lot of phone calling. I had big phone banks set up from which I would make phone calls. I came home one night from phoning and it was really close to my election day for my primary. I was so big and just miserable from being pregnant. That night my mother said to me,

ACTOR #2

Mary, why in the world did you ever decide to run for the legislature?

MARY FALLIN/ ACTOR #4

Mom, I just think it's important. We need to work on some of these issues facing Oklahoma. It's just what I feel in my heart is the right thing to be doing. What's wrong?

ACTOR #2

There were people calling the house tonight and wanting to know if you're the candidate, if you're the Mary who's running for office that is pregnant.

MARY FALLIN/ACTOR #4

Well, there's no way to hide this. I am. Just tell them yes. Why are they asking that?

ACTOR #2

Well there's someone doing a phone bank and they're asking "Would you rather have a pregnant woman or an attorney as your state legislator?"

MARY FALLIN/ACTOR #4

What did they say after that?

ACTOR #2

They said if you're the pregnant one, they want you. They don't want the attorney.

(Laughter.)

ACTOR #5

The first woman in Oklahoma to run for governor was Laura Boyd. She got 41% of the vote, pretty amazing considering. . .

LAURA BOYD/#3

I didn't have much support from the Democratic ranks which were run by men. I didn't have any opposition; I just didn't have support. I had so many people in high positions across the state, strong Democrats with money backing, who said to me afterwards

ALL

If we had known you were going to do so well, we would have gotten out there more.

ACTOR #2

Raising money is tough.

(Ad-lib agreement.)

LAURA BOYD #ACTOR 3

We were outspent about ten to one by Frank Keating. Keating taught me you cannot win a campaign if you do not have enough money. We taught Keating—

ACTOR #1

You will lose 41% of the vote—

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

If you don't have a message that truly resonates with people.

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

I refused to accept anything more than a hundred dollars. Most of my money came in at twenty-five dollars or less—lots of

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1 (Cont.)

small donations. I refused to accept big money because my dad said

ACTOR #2

(as father)

If you accept, then you're obligated to somebody and you should not be obligated to anyone. You should feel free to vote your conscience.

ACTOR #5

A \$25 limit might have worked in 1970. But not now!

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR #6

For a contribution—never, ever, ever, did I promise anybody anything. Except that I would do my best on everything. I wrote them “thank you” notes but I do not believe in trading your ideals for dollars. That is not statesmanship.

ACTOR #4

But donating money to a candidate doesn't have to mean they're trying to buy your vote. Maybe they're just saying they trust you to make good decisions for them.

(responding to the other actors' surprise)

That's just my opinion.

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

I had a driver who drove me into Tahlequah, Oklahoma about ten o'clock one night. We had never stayed at this person's house. I was tired and I came around the corner and it looked like Christmas. The house had lights on it. It had Boyd signs all over it. And this African American woman in her sixties came

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3 (Cont.)

running out the door with a hat that had “Laura Boyd” and she welcomed me into the house. We walked up the very modest steps and she was there with her husband. She had two grandchildren who were living with her for the summer from North Carolina. To this day, I do not know where the woman of the house slept that night because I had the room of honor. I had gotten into my room and was getting ready for bed and she knocked on the door.

ACTOR #1

Laura, I have something for you.

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

And she gave me an envelope. I said thank you very much and she went away and I opened that envelope. There was a check for a thousand dollars. And I lay in that bed—this was early in my campaign—and I said, “God don’t ever let me get discouraged in this campaign. Don’t ever let me forget this moment because if someone of these modest means believes in me this much, I have nothing to fear. I don’t have a right to ever get frustrated or discouraged. Just let me remember this moment

ALL

(Overlapping, prayer like.)

Just let me remember this moment.

(Long beat.)

ACTOR #4

I wonder what it would feel like to actually get elected?

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

We received the call around 9:30 that I had won. “You need to come to Oklahoma City.” I remember thinking, “I just want to go to bed.” But a good friend of mine who’s like a mom to me said, “Get in my car. I’m driving you up there.” And the excitement— just hardly believing what had happened because of the poverty my family’s overcome. My grandmother chopped cotton, and when the cotton season ended in Oklahoma, she’d move to west Texas. She would chop and pick and whatever new baby—she would tie them on her cotton sack and drag them through the cotton fields. It was really overwhelming. It was really a great moment when I won. I felt like I’d won for my family.

JARI ASKINS/ACTOR #4

My parents, my brother and his wife and their two kids and my sister were all able to come. One of my best friends from St. Louis who worked with me my first year being a judge. Families are exhausted and excited. They’re exhausted from tough campaigns. But everybody who’s up here is a winner.

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

I never walked into that chamber that I did not feel blessed to be there. You are aware that you are sent there by people to do their work and there are so many things you get to do that others don’t.

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

Of course, my husband was there. It was very moving.

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR #6

Have you ever seen great mountainous goose-bumps? Every two years I wore a nice warm sweater and held onto myself because I never walk into that House chamber—now still—and do not feel those goose-bumps.

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

For me to get to walk onto the Senate chamber floor as a Senator for Oklahoma and swear to uphold the Constitution of the United States, Constitution of Oklahoma. And to realize the support and trust that 70,000 people put in me. . .

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

It was very moving.

(Beat.)

ACTOR #4

So what do you say to people who think politicians don't do anything? Except sit behind a desk and talk on the phone all day?

ACTOR #1

You don't say anything. You take them to the Capitol, to see for themselves.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

During session, I'll get here 8:15, 8:30. I'm generally already on the phone and talking to other House members about what committee work, what bill's coming up in committee, and how can we make this flow—

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

I'd go out to the Capitol early and have breakfast with the "good 'ole boys" between 7:00 and 7:30 every morning. I got more of my bills passed, just by getting up early and going out there with the other legislators.

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR #6

I would go down on Sunday night and stay in Oklahoma City Monday through Thursday nights because we did not have session on Friday until the last week or two. I was there till midnight in committee meetings, particularly in Appropriation events.

ACTOR #3

The only drawback as I understand it is too much food!

LAURA WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

We have meetings all morning in our various committees and somebody will have lunch for us—associations and organizations. Then we vote on the bills that have passed the committees, debates happen, and we're sometimes there till 5 or 6. After that we go to receptions. And after the receptions, we go to dinner. They say on the average, a person will gain thirty pounds their first year in the legislature.

(Laughter. Long beat.)

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

I do think there is prejudice in the Legislature to this day against women from men who do not think they are biased against women but they truly are. The women see it and they know it. It's very small and very subtle.

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

I was inside...outside. Not quite inside, but enough inside to get things done. They weren't accustomed to having women involved that much in politics. They would get women to help with their campaigns, but they weren't inside negotiating on who's gonna support this bill and who's gonna support that.

JARI ASKINS/ACTOR #4

For me, there wasn't a gender barrier. I don't think I acted on the floor, as a representative, any differently than I acted as a judge. If people asked me questions, or debated against me, or voted against me, no matter how many times they tried to make it personal, I wasn't going to let that happen.

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR #6

I would drive into the parking lot down at the Capitol where I'd been assigned a spot and the nice, wonderful sergeants—they are great people, but they would come up very apologetically and say, "I'm sorry M'am. This lot is just for legislators." I would say, "Yes, I know." And they'd say, "Well are you someone's wife? Are you a legislator's wife?" No. I'm a legislator.

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

When I ran for Governor, the news articles would talk about what I had on as well as what I was saying. They didn't do that for male candidates.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

I think being a woman, if we're assertive or we really work hard and we want to get things done—we have certain names or titles

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2 (Cont.)

stuck to us. I did have people who just would not vote for me because I'm Chickasaw Indian, and that hurt. I'd always say, "Well, I'm half Irish, too." I'm not sure they believed me. I'm a person, I'm a hard worker. Whether I'm female or Indian, I'm going to vote what my district wants.

ACTOR #4

So really, the best way to fight that kind of bias is to run for your office yourself.

ACTOR #5

Or vote.

LAURA BILLY/ACTOR #2

I think women bring a wonderful balance, a personal perspective of what it's like. When we talk about children and families, who better than a female to bring those perspectives forward?

BERNICE MITCHELL/ ACTOR #1

I don't know if you even remember from New York, Bella Abzug? Bella was part of the National Women's Political Caucus. Came to just about all of our meetings. Always with her wonderful hats. And she would tell us about this dream of the Supreme Court. There being eight women dressed in purple and one male suit. It was her way of giving us hope.

(Beat.)

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

I passed the Ryan Luke Law in 1996. I had tried at least four to five years prior to pass the same legislation. We would debate

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

for three days whether we should change the length of quail season! We would debate for three days whether your dog could ride free in the pickup truck much less your child! Nobody cared about what we called kid's bills until little Ryan Luke died at the hands of his caretakers in 1995.

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

The law today—this is unbelievable to me—the law says that if parents and the school administrator think it's in the best interest of a young person to drop out of high school, all they have to do is sign a waiver and that student can drop out. I lost this bill last year. When is it ever in the best interest of the student to drop out of high school? It's never in their best interest—never. Why would we have it in state policy?

HANNAH ATKINS/ACTOR #1

The nursing home situation was atrocious. They weren't giving people proper food, they weren't getting the baths that they needed. And the prisons and correctional centers in the state. Some, the conditions were unbelievably bad. By making unannounced visits, I got them cleared up and got a few people fired.

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR#6

I was presenting my breast cancer bill—everybody in the family is affected when a momma or sister or grandma or aunt has breast cancer. And the Speaker said, "Does anyone want to debate against it?" And this one man held up his hand. And the Speaker said, "Is there anyone who wants to debate for it?" Almost every hand in that chamber went up. That is a moment I

BETTY BOYD/ACTOR#6 (Cont.)

will never forget. The support from everybody on both sides of the aisle. I will never forget that, ever.

(Beat.)

BERNICE MITCHELL/ACTOR #1

When you've figured out what you really want to do in life, go for it. There are going to be bumps. There are going to be hills and valleys, but stay with it, just persevere. Kind of like an old spiritual, "Can't Nobody Turn Me Round." Get on that journey and go for it.

KATHLEEN WILCOXSON/ACTOR #5

If you do decide to run, you have to know that you have to work harder than you've ever worked in your life. You have to have a fire in the belly because you can't win unless you have that passion and that fire in your gut.

JARI ASKINS/ACTOR #4

If women don't run, then that's not a fair representation of the population. Oklahoma continues to rank in the high 40's for the percentage of women in the legislature compared to other states. I don't think men or women should win just because of their gender. But I think we have to cultivate good women and help them win, help them make good decisions.

LISA BILLY/ACTOR #2

I've lived in poverty, I've lived in middle class. I prefer middle class, I don't like poverty. But I know how to survive in poverty. When a Native American can run in Oklahoma and win, it's a great day.

LAURA BOYD/ACTOR #3

I believe as women leaders, it is incumbent upon us to make issues of fairness and health and well being for all generations our goals. Because if we do not do it, no one else will.

HANNAH ATKINS (ACTOR #2)

Everyone has something to offer. Each person is unique, and they have something to offer. You can learn something from everyone.

ALL

We did!

--THE END--