

**Lt. Governor Marlene Johnson
Narrator**

**?
Interviewer**

? Date

**Marlene Johnson—MJ
Interviewer—INT
Unidentified voice—VOICE 2**

INT: As Patrick said, we're doing this for the Center for Integrative Leadership, and we very much appreciate your time and your willingness to do this and working us into your busy schedule.

MJ: Let's hope I still feel that way at the end.

VOICE 2: We really hope you do.

MJ: I said to Pat—I hope I remember something, because I don't think about this very often, and I also do know that memories don't always reflect accuracy. We'll see.

INT: And we're going to be real casual about this, too. We've got some chunks of questions we want to talk to you about, geared toward leadership, but we really do want to capture anything that you remember, so if you want to backtrack if something comes back to your mind—it's all pretty casual.

MJ: What did you read in the archives?

Voice 2: Oh, we read a lot. In the archives went through a lot of the files from that time. Some of Rudy's work, some of your work.

INT: It's amazing, actually, what they have in those boxes. There are planners to look through and speeches—we read quite a few of yours and his speeches.

MJ: In my case, I don't think ... I doubt that any lieutenant governor before me had kept records like I did. I'm pretty sure about that, and the reason we did was that in the '70s, when Nina Archibal first came here, she observed that all the archives were boys, and it was all lumber, railroads and iron ore ... and trains. She said—I think we should get some girls' records here. So she got a grant to start archiving, to identify—I'm making this up now, because I don't remember how many—but ten or twenty female leaders in Minnesota. And I was selected as one

of them; I was the youngest, I think, if I recall correctly. Most of us were entrepreneurs of some version. A couple of the women, like Louise Saunders and Mrs. Smead, had taken over the businesses when their husbands died and things like that. And so they came and taught us how to keep records.

INT: Oh, that's fabulous.

MJ: So all of my records from my little business are in there also.

Voice 2: We did see that, from Split Infinitive?

MJ: Yeah.

INT: We were looking at those, too—they were in there.

MJ: So that's why they're there. So my first day as lieutenant governor, I said to Dorothy Dahlenburg, who was my first chief of staff—OK, we've got to get somebody from the historical society over here to tell everybody how to keep the records, because I know there's a system, and I don't want to be the one to tell you. ~~so~~ So we did that. And then my concluding chief of staff was Shirley Bonine, who was obsessed with this kind of stuff, with legacy, and so as a volunteer after we left office, because there was so much going on, she spent six months, pretty much, going through everything that was left, so the historical society wouldn't have to. I mean, she essentially gave them pretty much clean boxes of stuff.

INT: Wow, that's impressive.

MJ: And she just did that as an act of love. So that's why my records were so good.

VOICE 2: Well, the files were amazing.

MJ: The only thing they (MHS) turned back, really, because they go through it then—the only thing they turned back was tchotchkes, when there were too many plaques and crap like that. They (MHS) wrote to me and said—do you want them back, and I said—no way! But I never dared throw them away, because I was afraid somebody who gave them to me would find them in the trash. I still have a few in Washington that I can't quite figure ... I'm just so paranoid at the thought that somebody who gave it to me would find them in the trash is just mortifying, so I keep moving them.

INT: That makes a lot of sense. To just kind of spin off of that, do you think learning how to do that before you were lieutenant governor changed anything about your leadership style? I mean, did you have to change the process of how you went about your day?

MJ: No, no. I mean, you really don't think about that much. I had always kept a journal, a personal journal, and so when I did this job, the lieutenant governor's job, I started keeping a journal, a working journal separate from my personal journal, which is, they're in the archives. You probably saw them, and some days are more complete than others. But in many cases, my notes are the only notes that existed from that meeting if Governor Perpich was in it. Because he never had a staff person in a meeting. I would say ninety-eight percent of the time he did not have a staff person in his meetings, unless it was a meeting with staff. But if it was a meeting with a constituent of any kind, he would be agreeing to things without staff present.

INT: So your job kind of became to make sure he would doc ...

MJ: Well, it was unofficial, and I wasn't always there. I was rarely scheduled to be at those meetings. It's just that he told me at the beginning that I was welcome at any meeting in his office. If I looked at the calendar, and there was a meeting I thought I would like to be at, I was welcome to walk in. I didn't have to ask permission of his staff. So I often did attend. And one of the things that I did was, I would be meeting with my own staff in the morning, and I'd be looking at the governor's schedule. And then we'd keep meeting, and then all of a sudden I would have this thought, and I'd say—I have to go. And they'd say—where are you going? And I'd say—to the West Wing. Why? And I said—I don't know; I'll tell you when I get back. So I would walk over and walk into this meeting, literally, I would just walk into the meeting, and ninety percent of the time something was happening in the meeting that I should know about ... or that I should, in my view. But more than that, something where I could influence something that if I wasn't there I wouldn't even know about, and if I wasn't there, nobody would know. Because then I was taking notes. I always had my journal with me, and so once staff found out that I was there, Terry would call or Lynn would call and say—did he commit to anything in that meeting? [All chuckle]

INT: Did you realize this right away?

MJ: Very soon.

INT: Just woman's intuition? Or did that rhythm change as you got into it?

MJ: It's still true. I have always had really strong instincts about things. In my job now, too. I know strategy without knowing that I know it. I know what the strategy should be, and people say why, and I say—well, I'll tell you in awhile. I have to think this through first. We have to talk it through so I can get the rationale clear from talking, but I know it's the way we have to go.

INT: That's very interesting.

MJ: I don't know where that comes from, exactly—hanging around my dad, perhaps.

INT: Ah, so it's inherited, not necessarily that woman's intuition.

MJ: You know, I don't know, because I've never quite understood what women's intuition was, but I know that I have it, and I have it a lot. I will think about somebody for three days, and then know I have to call them. And I call them and they're terminally ill, or something good has happened to them. Usually it's bad, because that's when people stop checking in. And that's always been the case. I can't remember that not being the case.

INT: That's fascinating.

MJ: I didn't trust it for a long time. I started really understanding it as an asset when I was lieutenant governor.

INT: But not before that?

MJ: I don't think ... I mean, I was only thirty-six, you know. You don't have that much ...

MJ: I mean, really—I was too busy trying to keep a business afloat and all that stuff, so I don't think I really thought about it that much, but once I was in that situation, and after the fourth time trekking to the West Wing and realizing that I was supposed to be in that, it was really good I was in that meeting. And it always happened the same way. Once in awhile I would look at the schedule the night before and say—I'd better go to that meeting. But more often it would happen that I would look at the schedule and not see anything, and then an hour later it would come to me that I should be in that meeting. And then I would go down.

INT: Was that sort of an open door policy, more or less, or a kind of welcoming relationship—was that a different way of operating for that office?

MJ: It certainly didn't happen between Dayton and Yvonne Prettner. I mean, she wasn't allowed in any meetings, really. And I don't think it happened with any of my successors. And the reason it happened with me, I believe, was because of Perpich's experience as lieutenant governor with Wendy Anderson. He and Wendy didn't have one private conversation in the six years they worked together.

INT: What other sort of things do you think were of benefit for your administration because Perpich was a lieutenant governor prior to being governor? How did that impact you?

MJ: Well, I think it's why he picked me, directly. In the first conversation we had at the Brothers Deli in Edina, whenever that was, he said—I believe the only reason I was governor the first time was because I was lieutenant governor and moved up. Because, being a Catholic and a non-Swede, I would never have been selected by the party as the candidate. But at that time

lieutenant governors ran separately from governors. So he said—I would like to facilitate the first woman governor. So he was interested in my being governor.

INT: Did he have a long-range plan? Did you talk in detail about how that was going to work?

MJ: [Chuckles] We'll keep going and I'll decide whether to say that.

INT: Gotcha. OK.

MJ: But I was already interested in being governor at that time, before he called me. I had been having meetings with a couple of friends about this. It was pretty obvious to everybody. In some cases it was obvious to others before it was obvious to me that I was suited to political leadership, and that a lot of what I was doing in terms of organizing feminists and in organizing women business owners was really focused on a bigger picture. And I was largely bi-partisan, even though I was understood to be a Democrat, and I never pretended to be other than a Democrat and a pro-choice person. I believed—still do, actually—that the Democratic Party is not the best friend of women. That there are too many liberal men who are competing for the same space, and so it's very hard for the party to select women as a strategy. Republicans have always recruited women candidates as a strategy.

INT: That's interesting.

MJ: And they did it in the legislature in the '70s and '80s, when it was just beginning. They weren't any more feminist or pro-women than anybody else, and certainly not in their policies. But if there was a district which was really tough for Republicans, they would select a woman candidate, because they believed, correctly, as it turned out, that women could more easily get votes from the other party. And Democrats had a very hard time with that notion in the early days. So there's a little bit more of it now. And now there are enough women, and there are other forces. But if you look at it, the numbers are still pathetic. I mean it's just pathetic.

INT: So when did you first get the inkling that you might be approached to be on the Perpich ticket?

MJ: I believe there was a column in the Minneapolis paper on the Monday of that week. It was a Leonard Inskip article. Anyway, I'm pretty sure. I might have that wrong, but I think it was Leonard Inskip, and I knew him. He knew me. He wrote some things about business once in awhile. You could find this—it was in the Tribune anyway. He wrote a column about Perpich coming back, running around mumbling about running for governor, and Perpich had said he was interested in having a female running mate, and the article mentioned Joan Grove and Linda Berglin. I forget who else—I don't remember who else, but not me. And all elected women, and I remember saying to myself that day. I believe I wrote it in my personal journal, but I honestly haven't looked back for so long I don't remember for sure. And I haven't given my personal

journals to the historical society for reasons that are probably obvious. I have a dark side. [All laugh]

INT: Thank goodness. We all have a personal side.

MJ: At any rate, I remember saying to myself—well, if he wants to win, he will call me, because none of those women can help him win. I knew them all, I was friends with most of them, and in Linda Berglin's case, she was a fabulous legislator, but she didn't have a clue about statewide ... I mean, you just can't move to a statewide thing from South Minneapolis. It doesn't help, it doesn't work. And so I had actually helped Linda run the very first time. I campaigned with her five days a week, door knocking for the entire campaign. I had left my little business. I knew her because she had been a graphic designer working for our company. And she took so much crap from the party when she was a candidate the first time because she was single. You know, they were running around complaining about who she was sleeping with—oh, it was just—so I was forever just taking them to the woodshed to tell them to shut the hell up, and it was just gross. So Linda and I would go door knocking together. She would take one side of the street and I'd take the other, and they didn't know if they were talking to me or her, because we were both the same age, and we were young. So I campaigned with her every night after work. I just left work and met her over there, and we had supper at this little pub at the end, hamburger and a beer at the end of every day. Anyway ...

INT: So you were pretty sure you were going to get that call.

MJ: Well, no, so I wasn't sure. What I knew was that he was in the wrong direction. Those names were not correct, and that if he was smart, he would call me. But I thought—I hadn't talked to Perpich, at this point, in a couple of years. I had stayed in touch with him. I don't know if that's in the files or not, but when he lost the election in '78, in that election I gave a fundraiser for him at my apartment. I think the tickets were a hundred dollars, which was a lot of money back then, and I think—no, they couldn't have been that much. We raised a thousand dollars, which is a lot of money, so maybe the tickets were fifteen dollars or something, I don't know. Turned out that my fundraiser was the only time that they were offered a fundraiser. Somebody asked if they could do a fundraiser, and they did all the work. Usually if somebody offered to do a fundraiser it meant offering their home, and the campaign had to do the invitations and all ... and I did everything. And so that was pretty special for a guy who hated to raise money at that point. So he remembered me, and I did that because he had appointed Rosalie Wahl to the Supreme Court, and I wanted women to acknowledge that. Even though he was not pro-choice. It wasn't an issue in '78. He was personally pro-choice. That's the dirty little secret— the dirty little action is that he never [lived] to it. But anyway, so he left Minnesota then to go work for Control Data. And when he was in New York in training, I decided I wanted to be in touch with him. I have no idea why.

INT: Um-hum.

MJ: So I called George and said—how do I reach Rudy? So he gave me Rudy’s phone number and I called Rudy and said—I’m going to be in New York, which was not the truth. The truth was I went to Washington pretty much every month for Women Business Owners, because I was on the national board—treasurer, and then the chair. And so once I had a commitment for him to meet for dinner, I flew up from Washington to New York, just to do that. And I don’t remember where we ate, but we went out to a restaurant. It was with Lola, also. So that was the last time I’d seen him. And I have no idea what we talked about.

Joe Perpich told me later—their younger brother—that Rudy always remembered that. Because what I understood later, of course, is that when you lose an election you have no friends. I mean, people just aren’t interested. It happens very quickly., (OK, maybe the Leonard Inskip article was a different one) But there was an article, somebody wrote an article on Monday. And then on—I want to say Wednesday, but I’m not sure about that—maybe Tuesday ... actually that’s true. The Monday article was a regular article, and then either the next day or the next day, Tuesday or Wednesday, there was a column by Inskip on the page with the columns. That was the Inskip piece, I think, in which he wrote about the founding of the Minnesota Women’s Campaign Fund, which was Kathleen Ritter and me. So I am mentioned liberally in this article, and there is a dated photograph of me, the one I tried for my whole life to get out of the files of the Pioneer Press, and even when Deborah [Howell](#), who was his [Patrick Coleman’s](#) step-mother, was a dear friend of mine, and even she wouldn’t take it out of the files, because, she said—it’s part of the record, I can’t take it out of the files. And I said—well could you put a sign on it that says—do not use? I mean, it was the very first photograph I ever took when I was twenty-six years old. It was just ridiculous. Oye oye oye. Anyway, that was the picture they used in that article. But at any rate, it talked about me and starting this campaign fund. And I said to myself—he’s going to call. This is a sign. Later that day I had a call from Bruce Quackenbush, who was his campaign manager in ’78, and had become a good friend of mine, and he said something like—Rudy might want to call you—or something. I said—well, if he wants to win he’ll call me. Or something irreverent like that. And Bruce, a lawyer, said—well, you wouldn’t say yes, would you? I said—yes, I would. He said—that’s ridiculous. Because everybody thought Rudy couldn’t win. Warren [Spannaus](#) was a foregone conclusion. They just thought it was ridiculous. I said—well, if he calls me, he’ll get a yes. I mean, I didn’t say it quite like that, but—if he knows I’m interested, he’ll call. So you can tell him I’m interested. Well, it turned out that he had had a call not from Rudy directly, but from—I just lost his name—he had run for state railroad commissioner, I think, and then Rudy eventually appointed him a judge from Park Rapids. I’ll think of his name. But anyway, then on Wednesday we had the organizing meeting at the Minneapolis Club of the Women’s Campaign Fund, and everybody who was going to be a founding member on the board had to come with a thousand dollar check. And when I left the meeting, I pulled aside two people, Jean Heilman and Karen Desnick, both very good friends of mine. Jean is a lawyer and Karen is an entrepreneur. Karen was a co-founder with me [at-of](#) Women Business Owners. Jean at that time was the assistant attorney general for consumer affairs. And I said—I need the two of you to be available tonight. I didn’t plan to say that when I walked in... and Jean said—well, I have something else; I can’t do it tonight. And I said—I need

you to change it. And she said—why? And I said—I cannot tell you, but, trust me, I need you to change it, and you won't be sorry. So I'll call you later. I came back to the office. At that time my mother worked for me as my bookkeeper and my aunt worked for me as the administrative assistant, and I walked in and my mother followed me into my office and closed the door and handed me a pink slip that said call Rudy. And I said—you know what this is about? And she said—I've got an idea. I said—you can't say anything to anybody. I'll call him, but I'll see what happens. So I called him and he said—can you meet me at the Brothers Deli in Edina? So I just left the office and watched him eat chocolate cake. [All laugh]

INT: And what happened in that meeting? What was that like?

MJ: He said—well, I want to run. And that's when he said—I wouldn't have been governor if it hadn't been for being lieutenant governor first, and I really believe that it's possible to defeat Spannaus. In '78 I would have been elected if it hadn't been that people were so angry at Wendy for appointing himself to ~~be the~~ senatorSenate. And the truth was that all the Democrats lost that year, and Rudy was the highest vote getter of the Democrats, and that many people felt bad about Rudy losing. Nobody felt bad about Wendy losing, but a lot of people felt bad—they loved Rudy. He just had this warm personality that people gravitated toward. And also, in a primary the Iron Range is very important, and a Democrat cannot really win a primary without the Iron Range. You can win statewide without the Iron Range, but you cannot win a primary. It hadn't been tested very much, because ever since Hubert Humphrey created the caucus system there hadn't been much in the way of Democratic primaries. So that's the other gift that Perpich gave was reintroducing primaries to the Democratic Party, which they have never forgiven him for. And therefore, they haven't forgiven me. But anyway, he said—I believe that I can't win this without a woman on the ticket. I think it would be a competitive—I think it's going to be very close and I'm interested in you, I think. And I said—well, I'm interested, and the reason I'm interested is that I'm interested in being governor. I wouldn't do this just for an entertainment or for an interruption, you know, interim. Because I have been thinking for a couple of years about my interest in being governor, but I haven't figured out the best way, because I really don't want to serve in the legislature. I'm not a legislator. My temperament is not suited to that process. I knew that. And every time there was a vacancy like when Nick Coleman died, I thought about it, and I lived there, in the right district, and I was mentored by him in my business, but I just couldn't bear the thought of being in the legislature. So I was interested. And he laid out a plan for my role in the administration, and he wanted me to ... and by law I would share the Capitol Area Planning Board, and then he wanted me to create a tourism agenda for the state. When he was lieutenant governor before, he knew two lieutenant governors who had essentially established their creds with creating a tourism agenda, and he wanted to do the same for Minnesota as part of our economic development strategy, because the theme was jobs. Things were the pits economically. So I said that I would like a week to think about it. He laughed and he said—Marlene, I can give you a day, but a week is not possible, because the fact that no one has noticed that we are sitting here is a miracle. Everybody is watching me, and I've already

| been talking about this, and we've got to get this show on the road, there's no time. So I need to hear from you tomorrow. I can shut up for a day, but that's it. [Everyone chuckles]

So I went back to the office, got my mother and my aunt in my room and said—this is what's happening. I'm going to meet with Karen and Jean and Bruce tonight and meet with Rudy again tomorrow. And my mother said—well, you're going to do it, right? And I said—yeah, probably. And so that was it. So I called Karen—she has a husband who is in business with her, Leslie, and I'm close to both of them, so they came and Jean Heilman came, and Bruce Quackenbush. And Bruce and Jean, the two lawyers, took out a legal pad and wrote a line down the middle—pros and cons. And they had started writing the list of cons right away, of course—that was easy for them. And then Karen said—excuse me, but why are we having this conversation? Haven't you already decided you're going to run? And I said yes. And she said—well then, why don't we figure out how we're going to help you, instead of worrying about all this bullshit? And the two lawyers, I thought they were going to throw up and Jean was particularly upset, because she worked for Warren Spannaus. And I had already been on a fundraising invitation for him for women ... She was beside herself. I said—well, I understand if you have to stay out of it. I don't understand if you have to campaign for him, but you can use your job and just say—I didn't think she would influence three people anyway, so it didn't really matter, because she's not political.

So the next day I called Rudy and said I was ready to talk, so he and George came over to my house, my apartment, and I lived on St. Albans in a building literally next door to Melinda McLaughlin, who was a political media person. Very close to Perpich in the past. I don't remember what she was doing at the moment, but she was paying attention to these issues, and she was home when they came by, and she missed it. She never forgave us. She couldn't believe that this was happening next door to her and she hadn't seen them come in. But they came in and we sat at my kitchen table, and I said—I'm interested in doing this, but first of all I have to tell you all the dark secrets... so I told him every man I'd been with.

INT: Yup.

MJ: You know, everything I could think of that wasn't pretty, and he looked at George, and he said—I think we can weather all of that, don't you? He said—if that came out, that probably would help us, actually. [All laugh] So we agreed to announce it the next day. So that was it.

INT: Wow, that's a really different story for the times.

MJ: Yeah, and he wanted ... I mean he said directly—I want to get credit—I don't know if that was his language, but—I want to be recognized for having facilitated the first woman lieutenant governor.

What are you going to do with this oral history?

INT: It's for the Center of Integrative Leadership, but it will stay here and it will just be for people to do research, archive research, just like the papers.

MJ: Well, his initial plan was only serve six years, and then he got waylaid, so.

INT: He got waylaid by ...?

MJ: His son's illness.

INT: OK. And he felt staying in the governor's role ...?

MJ: Well, he just never, ever came back to that discussion.

INT: OK.

MJ: He was totally distracted the second term in general, but the last two-and-a-half years of the second term were totally distracted by his son's health. And so it wasn't pretty for anybody.

INT: Did you guys ever have a conversation about it?

MJ: Never. Never. Never.

INT: What was that like for you?

MJ: I never felt I had a right, you know. He was elected, I wasn't. I never felt ... from my standpoint it was a great opportunity if it worked, and I never believed I was owed it or anything like that, so I don't, I have no regrets about that. I had a lot of regrets, along with everyone else in the administration, about how our last term ended, because it was so painful for everybody. He was in such pain and he was not functioning well as a governor, and we all tried to make do. You know, you do the best you can under a very difficult situation, and it was a shame because we had such a completely successful first term. Very successful first term.

INT: For you, what were some of the biggest achievements from that first term, then?

MJ: The tourism agenda was great. And the Capitol Area Planning Board. I mean the location of this building here is me. I cast the vote. It was very controversial. I cast the deciding vote on the architect and the bridges... you know, we had a better plan. The bridges are part of the plan, but the whole plan didn't ever get executed, because it was way too expensive and we couldn't get it into the capitol budget. But I did accomplish the bridges as a way to connect the capitol with this part of town. And that was all done by the Capitol Area Planning Board. And the Supreme Court—the history center used to be where the Supreme Court building is, and the Supreme

Court chief justice, whose name I'm forgetting at the moment—an Iron Ranger, friend of Rudy's—Popovich—he wanted that for the Supreme Court building. And Perpich caved. It was very painful for the historical society. But then in the end, when we sited it here, it was actually better, because it had better sight lines. I mean, this was much better because it had better space and better visibility, so it turned out really well. But I lost sleep every time I had to cast one of those votes, because it was so controversial.

INT: Oh, yeah.

MJ: It was ridiculous how people get excited over these things. Anyway, the tourism agenda was really rewarding, because we started working on that almost the week after the election in '82, before we took office. I called a meeting of professional sports, all the arts organizations, the symphony and blah, blah, blah—the historical society and the state parks, as well as the tourism office, and they had all never been treated as part of the tourism package in Minnesota before. Yeah, never. Now it's accepted, but it had never been done. So we met in the round room in the basement of the capitol, under the rotunda, straight down. I just made a speech about how we were going to figure out how to put us all into the tourism package. And the tourism office, of course, was thrilled, because they had never had this kind of leadership. And Perpich increased the tourism promotion budget, and we raised private money for the tourism promotion. So, I worked on that for the whole eight years. It was fun.

And eventually I also established a children's agenda, which the governor supported, but he did not encourage me to do it. He thought it was a mistake for me to do it. In the first term I realized that one of the disadvantages of not coming out of the legislature is finding an issue that you can have impact on. In my case I had the tourism issue, and no one wanted that. But the other important issues that I cared about—environment and stuff—they had Roger Moe and all those other wannabe governors. So I didn't feel like there was anything there where I could make a difference. And then one of my former employees at the agency, who was involved in some children's organization, came to me and said—I think you should take on a leadership role on children. I said—I don't know anything about kids and I don't have any, and it's my sister's thing. You know, she's a child psychologist. And she said—it doesn't matter. It matters to have the visibility, and so she and—I can't even remember her name anymore—Nan Skelton, who was an assistant commissioner of education at the time and an old friend of mine, used to run Face to Face Health and Counseling Center, which I was on the board of, so I did know that much about children. I talked to my sister. And so I figured what role I could play, sort of. I went to the governor—I said, this is what I want to do and would he support it? And he looked at me and said—well, yeah, if you want to do it, but that seems like a women's issue. Everybody knows you're a woman. They're already complaining because you're too much of a feminist, so I don't see how that helps you politically. And I said—well ... then I gave him my rationale. All the other issues that I care about are taken up by Roger Moe and all these other wannabe governors, and I feel like this is something where I can make a difference, and that ultimately demonstrating leadership, the issue doesn't matter. It matters how you cause change to happen.

And he said—OK, it's fine with me. So from now on you tell us what we're going to do for the administration on children. So that was the extent of the conversation with that. And then I started doing the State of the Children speech. I don't know how many years I did that—I can't remember anymore. And then in the second term, without telling me in advance, at the first press event after the election, the governor announces that I am going to direct the budget process.

[All laugh]

Surprise! I had always been in the budget process, which I don't think a lieutenant governor had been before me. I was at every bloody meeting. Every morning at eight o'clock, whatever time it was. I would sit there and have opinions if I wanted to, and sometimes I was just learning. I always came prepared so we knew in advance which agency's budget we were going to work on, and I always had friends in the NGO community who were advocates on these issues, so they would come in the day before and give me lists of questions to ask. So I would come in with all these questions on five-by-seven cards in my lap, asking questions. And everybody said—how does she know all of that? So I did that from year one. So by the time I got to the second term I understood the budget process quite well. I decided that since I was going to lead it now, we would do an interagency budget for children. So I told all the agencies that had any programs for children in them that their regular budget meeting would be done as usual, but that we wouldn't be discussing the children's part of that agenda. We would come back and do a whole half-day, just the children's agenda, with all the agency people sitting at the table, so we would all know what was there and we would decide whether some money should go other places or whatever. And Brian ~~Roherty-Roherty~~ was our budget director at that time, so this was his ... I mean he loved this kind of creativity. It would have been harder with previous budget director, but ~~he~~ Brian liked it a lot, so that's what we did.

INT: So you very clearly have a grasp on taking a big idea and being able to implement it. But, as we know, Perpich was known as a big idea personality. How did you lead, in your role, through the manifestation of his big ideas, big ideas, big ideas—and then what was that like? Because that's a different dynamic.

MJ: Well, I mean on the children's stuff, if I was in the room and the press asked a question about the children's agenda, he would just say—Marlene, it's yours. I mean, he just didn't take those questions unless he had a particularly good ... I don't know. I shouldn't say he never did, but I mean he never did anything that undercut anything that I was doing in that way. And the tourism agenda he had more opinions about, because he had been thinking about it for so many years ... but in that way it only enhanced it, too. Basically, he took my lead on all of that stuff, and everybody knew he did, so people came to me with questions and the tourism director, if he was called by the governor's office, he would always let me know that that had happened, so I could be there or ... usually it was just something—the governor's going someplace and he wants to do something tourism related, which was fine.

INT: So that would apply to, like, to the stadiums and the international kind of presence and all that?

MJ: Yeah, I mean, we didn't have stadiums in our term.

INT: Or the sports events.

MJ: The big event ... he wasn't a big sports person, except the stadium, and the first baseball stadium got built when he was governor the first time. I mean that was the first one that came in under budget and within the time frame. But the big event that happened without me being involved at all—I wasn't, I found out about it from my staff, because I was on vacation in Europe, was the Mall of America. That was his, completely his little negotiation with the ~~Ghermezian~~ Ghermazian Brothers. When I heard that, I thought—oh, my God! That is over the top! That is over the top! Of course, little did I know.

INT: So, what was it like leading through those big ideas that came in and the first reaction is—Holy Cow! Because, through the administration some worked and some did not.

MJ: Absolutely.

INT: What was that like for you?

MJ: Well, I liked it, because I believe that you have to be willing to fail. So he never got upset if things didn't work. He just had another idea around the corner, you know. And there were a number of ideas in businesses that started and did well for awhile. What was it called—some kind of a stick factory up north ... what was that one?

INT: The chopsticks.

MJ: Chopsticks, yeah—I mean things like that. And the windmill, the Danish windmills, too. I mean, the only reason the windmill operation didn't succeed is that it was ahead of its time—the timing was off. Because it just took longer to get wind energy in. The forces, the energy forces in this country were anti-wind.

INT: Sure, now you drive into ~~Virginia,~~ Minnesota, and all you see are windmills.

MJ: Exactly, exactly. So his ideas were rarely wrong. Sometimes the timing was off because he was so ahead of his time, and I think in the wind, I think he probably under-appreciated the negative forces. He didn't usually ... he had a very good sense of corporate resistance. And he used to say to me—the corporate leaders who are with us will be with us as long as there's no controversy, but as soon as there's controversy, they won't return my phone calls. And that was true, and I've never forgotten it. It guides me even now. I do fundraising with corporations a lot for things having to do with the White House. Just a month ago I said—let that go. That's going to be too nasty, and they're going to run. Just don't go there. Let's just listen to Rudy Perpich on

that one. [All laugh] So I mean I still—he had very good understanding, and he had good instincts, too. Not perfect, but none of us have perfect instincts, but he was a very creative guy and instinctive.

INT: So it's interesting to hear that you both really functioned on a lot of instinct.

MJ: Yeah.

INT: How did that complement? When did that not work?

MJ: Well, I think the big difference between us—I think I am actually better at execution than he, and that's, I think, because I ran a business and I am a little—a lot—interested in outcome. He just didn't understand what it took to do it. To get it executed, so sometimes he didn't allow enough time, and he didn't push to get adequate management resources in place. I think if I had been on his staff maybe I could have helped him with that. But I really couldn't help from where I sat, and there are certain things you can't do when you're not staff. And there were things that I could do, which was I could disagree with him, ... and if governors don't want people disagreeing with them, that's the kind of staff they get. I mean, governors get exactly what they want in the way of staffing. And Terry Montgomery, who was his chief of staff, who I liked a lot, said to me after the election of '82—I want to give you a one-hour coaching session in working with Perpich. Because he had worked with Perpich before. And he said—he does not communicate directly very often, especially with negative news. So if you get a message, a directive from somebody that seems totally unrelated, that doesn't usually come in and talk to you, you might just as well assume it came from the governor.

INT: Do you think in that situation, that style, your roles, not being staff—were there big ideas that were missed? I guess the question I'm trying to ask is were you picking up the pieces a lot or did that fall to staff, or were there things that just couldn't be accomplished?

MJ: I don't think I picked up ... well, I don't know; I haven't thought about that, but I wouldn't say that. I think there were some execution opportunities missed by the administration. I can't think offhand what they are, but I felt that way at the time. The other thing I felt and I still feel is that we did a lousy job of getting credit for what we did. I felt that very much at the time. We were the opposite of the Obama White House. We just didn't have a ~~a~~ communications person who was strategically competent.

INT: Telling your stories.

MJ: Yeah, I mean, we had a good media person, people, working with the press corps. That wasn't a problem, but to tell your story about these cutting edge things, these big picture things, you need a strategy beyond the press, which we didn't have. We never had it.

And I didn't have it either, but I couldn't afford ... the only way I could do it was if it came from the governor's office. Because I had no staff, and if it had been up to Phyllis Kahn I wouldn't have been in business, you know. [All chuckle] She got her way when Arne Carlson brought this lieutenant governor into the governor's office. And she tried to do that to me, and I went to Rudy and said—this is what I'm getting pressure to do. And he said—well, if you want to, of course, fine. But let me tell you, if I were you I wouldn't want it. And I said—why? And he said—because if you are in this office, you will have to take direction from my staff, and that won't be fun. You need to have your own stationery and your own staff at the other end of the hall. You're welcome ... that's when he said—you are always welcome to come into any meeting at my office. There's no problem. But if you want any independence at all, you do not want to be in this space. And so, that's all I needed. I didn't need any more advice than that, and that was downright the truth.

INT: Well, it's very strategic as well on his part.

MJ: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. And he understood that, because of his own experience before. That nasty relationship he had with the governor's staff. And Tom Kelm had worked actively to keep Rudy out of the picture. And I don't think that he ever felt that Terry or Lynn would do that to me, and I don't believe they would have, but still the nature of being in the same space is that you don't get to do other things, because you're in the governor's space. When people walk in it's the governor's office, it's not the lieutenant governor's office. But when Arne won the election after us, Joannell Dyrstad—I knew her from before when she was mayor of Red Wing, so I called her and said—come and talk to me. I liked her a lot and I understood she would be different than me. She was not my kind of person at all, but I told her what Rudy had said to me, because she was already getting pressure. And I said—I am not going to have any opinion about this publicly, I won't talk about it, but I want to say to you—don't go down the hall and sit over there, because you won't have any independence, if you care about that. But she ... I don't know. I'm not privy to what happened. She never called me and said I lost the fight ... she wasn't the kind of strategic person that I was, and she didn't have a goal of being governor, so ...

INT: The independence maybe mattered a bit less.

MJ: It did, I'm sure it did. And since then, it's always been in the governor's office.

INT: You talked a lot about the change and about how difficult the last administration was. It sounds like your working relationship with Governor Perpich stayed pretty much the same, even though things around changed. Would you say that's true?

MJ: The second term I had much less contact with him, especially the last two years. Everybody did. I mean it was ... and in the end, he felt that I had not worked in his favor.

INT: He was feeling that way about everybody at the time. What was that like for you?

MJ: It was sad, it was very sad. He didn't tell me directly until after the campaign. He invited me for breakfast and told me. And I've never told this story. I didn't know I hadn't told this story to anybody, including George and Connie, until a month ago. I mean, I'm sure I told ... my husband knew, of course. And I was shocked that I hadn't told George and Connie, but anyway they said they hadn't heard it before. He had me to breakfast and it was just the two of us, and after the eggs he said—so why did you turn on me? And I said—what? And he said—you've been working against me in this campaign. And I said—no, I haven't. And he said something else that made no sense, and I realized that ... all I can think of is that his son got very convoluted and started making excuses for the impact he was having. I don't know—nobody will ever know. Anyway, I just said—Governor, I regret so much that you feel that way; it's not the truth. It is true that the last couple of years have been very tough for everybody in the administration, as it has been for you, and I am so sorry that you've gone through this. As for my role in your administration, I am only grateful for the opportunity you have given me. I have thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity, and I think that I have contributed a lot to you personally, but also to your agenda and to the state of Minnesota, so I feel really good. It makes me very sad that we depart on these terms.

INT: Did he have a response?

MJ: He just kind of looked at me sadly. And that's the last time I talked to him. It still makes me sad.

INT: It makes me sad. Because you guys did some brilliant work and left such a legacy...

MJ: Exactly, I mean, we did. And for most of the days it was fabulous. The last two years were tough for everybody. There was not a person in the administration, career or political, that wasn't affected by how things deteriorated. And we all just got through it as we could.

INT: How did your leadership change because of that? Do you remember a point where you started really realizing that this wasn't just a moment, that something was really changing, and how did you change with that change?

MJ: I just kept doing what I did. To the outward appearance, I just kept my schedule and kept doing what I did.

INT: So there were big events that happened in the end—I mean, the Gorbachev visit is a big one. And that's near the end.

MJ: Well, that was really special, because the governor had announced that he was inviting ... he thought Gorbachev should come. And the press just behaved ... they trashed him for it; they thought it was a joke. And in the week or two after that I was at a dinner party at Marilyn

Carlson Nelson's home in Minnetonka. I don't remember the purpose of the dinner, but I sat next to ... anyway, I don't know who I sat next to, but I talked to him—the chairman of Cargill, whose name I cannot remember at the moment.

INT: Whitney MacMillan?

MJ: Yes, thank you. And he came up to me and said—Marlene, tell Rudy that I think it's brilliant that he invited [Gorbachev]... now Whitney wasn't a big fan of Rudy's; he was a Republican. But he said—tell Rudy I think his invitation to Gorbachev is brilliant and I'm going to see Gorbachev next week in Moscow, and I am going to tell him to accept the invitation. Do you promise to tell the governor that? And I said—of course, I think he'll be thrilled, and thank you very much. So I went in to see the governor the next day and I said—Whitney MacMillan was at Marilyn's last night for dinner, and he wants me to say to you that blah, blah, blah—and the governor said [inaudible]. [All chuckle] So then it turned out to happen, and the governor's office started planning the schedule and the luncheon at the residence, and it turned into a family gathering, the luncheon. So none of the people who expected invitations were invited, including the US senators, and Mondale went and did the greeting at the airport, as did I. The governor wasn't there. Mondale and Joan Grove and I did that, and there's a photograph of that that's actually in the—did you see it? It's in the archives here, along with my suit that I wore that day. Did you hear that story?

INT: I did not know that the suit was there.

MJ: Because it was designed and made by a Minnesota designer. And I never could bring myself to throw it away, even though it didn't fit me anymore. But I couldn't ... I just loved that suit. And then one day I was sitting in my office looking at the photos on my credenza, and the Gorbachev picture was there, and I—oh, my God! That's the suit! Maybe the historical society would like it. So I wrote them an e-mail and said—I just realized that the suit that I'm wearing in that photograph ... I don't even know where that designer is any more, but I know her name. Well, they tracked her down. They took the suit. They were thrilled. They wouldn't have taken it if there hadn't been a photograph, but because there was a photograph that was already in their archives, it was documented and it was a Minnesota designer, [Karen Heddins](#), and so they found her. She's now in Nebraska. She's a Gustavus graduate, so they found her. It's cool. Anyway ... so there was so much negative stuff from the community about who wasn't being invited. So, Carole Faricy and Shirley Bonine—Shirley was my chief of staff and Carole Faricy was still living here, ~~still~~ a friend of mine—she did a lot of my political fundraising—we decided to create a separate event at the University Women's Club, next door to the residence. So if Marlene's instincts held true, we could figure out a way for Gorbachev to connect. But at least there was a place for people to go to celebrate that this was happening. So that's what we did. And I raised private money to pay for it. It was a luncheon and, I don't know, we invited—I'm making this up, because I don't know, but maybe a hundred, a hundred fifty people? However many people fit in the house. At some point we got a message to the security over there, Gorbachev's security,

that Durenberger and Boschwitz and other important people were next door. So he said—I want to see them.

INT: Wow.

MJ: So there was a little ...

INT: Field trip. [Chuckles]

MJ: Field trip. There was a little receiving line on that front lawn.

INT: That's cool. Brilliant.

MJ: Yes, that was one of the more brilliant things. And there are letters in my files, thank you letters, from people.

INT: Was there any negative fallout from that?

MJ: I don't know. If there was I don't remember it.

INT: Rudy's response?

MJ: I don't know—he never said anything to me about it. If I were imagining it, I would say he would go—well, there she goes again. I mean, he would have just said ...

| **INT:** Good ~~y~~for you, Marlene. [All chuckle]

| **MJ:** Yeah, good -for you, if he had been Irish. Yeah, I mean, it wouldn't have offended him. He would have probably been amused that I got my way somehow. The best on that score—I mean, I just adore so many wonderful memories of him—one of my first budget meetings with him—I'm rambling now ...

INT: No, just go—it's all great.

MJ: This is a good story. So we are meeting, our budget meeting is over at the administration building, and I'm generally prepared for this, and Gus Donhowe is our commissioner of finance at the time, who I just adored. The best thing that ever happened in Minnesota, as far as I'm concerned. Anyway, so whatever budget we were looking at, there's a line item that says—fire fighters. And I'm thinking and thinking—where do we have state fire fighters? So finally, I don't know, an hour or two into the meeting, before we closed the section, I said—I just have one question. There's a line here that says fire fighters. I didn't know we had state fire fighters. And Rudy looks up, he looks over at Gus, and he looks at somebody else, and he says—who's going

to be the one to tell her? [All chuckle] And I said—yes, what’s the answer to that? Well, it turns out that that fire fighter line is for the fire fighters’ pension, the volunteer fire fighters’ pension. So all of these volunteer fire fighters all over Minnesota, they don’t get paid, but they get a state-paid pension. And I said—does anybody know but the guys who are getting it and you? And Rudy said—no. And I said—that means that none of the wives know. That means that in a divorce this is something he takes with him. Deafening silence. And I said—OK, let me be perfectly clear ... [All laugh]. This is the last day that’s going to be a secret, because I’m going to talk about this in every speech I give in rural Minnesota for the next four-to-eight years, however many years I have, I’m talking about it every time, and I’m going to start with—who knows about the volunteer fire fighters’ pension? Because it is still a male bastion, and I want women fire fighters. I don’t mind about this pension if women have equal access to it, but this is ridiculous, and it’s not OK that it doesn’t get part of the package when there’s a divorce. And Rudy said—go for it. He understood exactly, because he was radicalized initially by the lack of women teachers ...

INT: On the school board and all.

MJ: ... teachers having to resign when they got married and all that stuff, and the abuse of Indian women. So he was fine, but it was just that it wasn’t one of those details he was going to be the one to expose. So I did that—every time I gave a speech the rest of the next ... I was out there finding a way to weave in the fire fighters’ pension. [All laugh] I just love it, I just love that.

INT: You were the first female lieutenant governor for the state, and probably the first female in a real role like that. Were there any challenges that you think were specific to being a female in that role or any achievements that you think were specific to even just the way you approached things?

MJ: I think that it helped a lot to be a woman to be able to do things differently. Because having a woman in the role was just different, so then you might as well do everything different, because nobody will say ... even if you did things the way the previous guy did it that you wouldn’t be seen as doing it the same way, so you might as well just take advantage of the disruption. So I got a lot of visibility, and I was very young, but then I wasn’t any younger than John Kennedy when he became president, so it was just that I was a girl. And I remember a person, head of the chamber in Duluth, who was a friend of mine, actually— Chuck Henderson—I can’t believe I remember that name—he said to me privately—do you think you’re ready to be governor? And I said—yes—do you think you would ask me that question if I was a boy? And he said—probably not. And I said—there you go. But, I mean, it was hard. It still is hard in some cases for people, because you get so used to seeing it one way. It’s less difficult than it used to be, I think, but, still, we all get stuck with what people in certain roles look like. And it’s a big problem. It’s still a big challenge for people of color and immigrants, so ... but I think I saw it as an opportunity, and I don’t think I spent much time worrying about it.

There were times in meetings when there was no question that people were behaving differently because I was a woman. And particularly in meetings with legislative leaders, you know, with Roger Moe and Doug Johnson and those guys, who, I liked them all, but they really never understood why I got that job. And the Iron Range crowd was pissed as hell, because I was pro-choice. After the primary—what's his name—Begich came up to me at a meeting. We were having a campaign meeting, post-primary, so it had all these new Spannaus people in it, and he stood out in the lobby of the hotel with Perpich and me and somebody else—I think Connie and George were there—and he was so pissed at me. I mean he could hardly breathe at the thought that Rudy had picked me. And he said—what the hell did you contribute anyway? And I said—twenty-four thousand votes. Well, we won by twenty-three. And Rudy kind of looked at me like—go, girl. [Laughter] He didn't say a thing, and Begich just looked like—oh, he just wanted to punch me, but he couldn't. I remember a meeting, I wouldn't say it was typical, but it happened some, they would call each other senator, but they would call me Marlene. Or they would come into the room and pinch, you know, go like this on the shoulder or something like this. You don't get anywhere commenting about that, but I had to do something. So the next time we met, I would go in and I would go up to them and pull the tie and say—that's a really nice tie. [All laugh] And then it stopped. Then they would get it. I never commented, otherwise. ... sometimes I would do that in front of other people, but otherwise they would be there alone... I never did it to any person more than once, because you didn't have to do it more than once. They got ...

INT: You made a point.

MJ: They understood it. And one of the things I'd learned from Rudy that I still use is that when there was a group meeting around the table, legislative leaders and staff and others, before the meeting ended he would go around the table and ask everybody to comment. Is there anything else you wanted to say? So that the people who hadn't gotten in during the conversation got a chance to be heard. And it was a very good, respectful way of ... and everybody ultimately could count on that. I mean, they knew that would happen, so if they had trouble getting in, they knew they would have their chance to say something.

VOICE 2: Right, so in the end it wasn't about male or female or black or white or whatever, but just that everyone gets their say.

MJ: Yeah.

INT: Do you think, I mean, there were other examples during the administration of appointments and whatnot of women in leadership roles?

MJ: That was one of my, the other thing I should have mentioned. One of my big contributions was the appointments commission, because it was still a governor's appointed commission at the time. It wasn't by legislation. Ultimately it became by legislation, but in our case it was co-

chaired by Sam Grace and myself—Sam was the volunteer. We were instructed to not give him any lists that didn't have diversity, and his goal was to integrate by gender and race every board and commission he appointed. So that's a very clear directive, and he doesn't care how you get there, he just says—just don't give me any all-white boy lists. And I didn't do judges. There was another commission to do judges. And we spent a lot of time. I mean, we interviewed people and recruited, and the first and virtually every time we integrated the commission for the first time, it was controversial. The medical board, for instance, the first person we appointed was an African American doc from Saint Louis Park. I'm going to not remember his name now. It may come. Wonderful, wonderful person, and he ultimately became chair of the board, elected by the board itself. He was so well-regarded. He got a second term without a blink and was the chair. He was a brilliant guy. On the board of accountancy, we appointed the first woman, and she was a young accountant, not one with one of the big firms, somebody I knew from my women business owner days. And when she was appointed, the staff, executive director of the board, came into my office hysterical that we had appointed her, because he didn't know her, she didn't know anything about the field, she hadn't been active in the association of accountants. I mean he was in tears, he was so upset. He was upset. And I said—did you recommend somebody to me? And he said—yes. And I said—and who was that? And he told me. And I said—well, do you remember in the campaign when the governor publicly said I was going to chair this appointments commission and that his goal was to integrate by gender and race every board and commission? Do you remember that? Well, yes. And I said—well, did you not take it seriously? I thought he would do what we wanted. Governors always do. And I say—well, then, why wouldn't you have given me the name of an African American or a woman? I would have been happy. I had to do too much work. I would rather do less work. So I have no problem taking your advice as long as you respect the governor's parameters. So if you want me to take your advice in the future and give the governor what your recommendation is, then help me out here. Well, she ended up being a very valued member of the commission, but, of course ...

INT: Probably for all of the reasons that he was nervous about. [Chuckles]

VOICE 2: She wasn't part of the club, she didn't have all of the structures in place, she wanted to do things creatively.

MJ: We did that one right after the other. By the time we left office I don't think we missed a beat on any of them. And it was wonderful. But, the governor ultimately didn't take the abuse. I took the abuse, which is how it should be. I mean, we never told him who to appoint. One time I tried to [appoint] a judge. And he said—do you remember who makes the appointments? [Chuckles] Yup, I do! He said—OK. But I was very involved with him in judicial appointments, and especially with women. There was an example, the first woman in Dakota County was Leslie, Leslie Metzen, and there were three-~~in-a-row~~ vacancies in a row in Dakota County, and she was on the list in the first round. And I really wanted her appointed then. We had never had a woman judge in Dakota County, but the Siebiens were the power, and he was the speaker, and he had another idea. So before the governor appointed, he called me to tell me in person that he was

going to appoint somebody else, because he had this thing with [Unclear], but he'd appoint a woman the next time. So would I please call Leslie and tell her she wasn't going to get the appointment. And I said—OK. So I did. And I said—so hang in there, Leslie, we're going to get it for you next time. She knew there was somebody else retiring.

INT: Yeah.

MJ: So the next one came and I got another call from the governor, and he said—I can't do it this time. I said—Governor! He said—I know. I can't do it this time, but I promise there's another one coming up, and I'll do it then. I said—are you asking me to call Leslie again? And he said—yes. I said—OK, I will call her again, but I think she's going to withdraw her name for the future. And he said—don't let that happen. And I said—well, I will do my best, but I don't want to have this conversation a third time. I really can't stomach that. And he said—no, we won't have it a third time. So I called her up. I still remember the call like it happened yesterday. And she was so discouraged, and she said—I can't do this again. And I said—I know how you feel, I really do, but I need you to do it again. It's really important to the state. I'm sorry, all I can say is I'm not making excuses, I'm just telling you ...

INT: [Unclear] situation.

MJ: Um-hum—and the governor asked me to ask you not to withdraw in the future. And I subscribe to that request, and so then the next time she got it. And then she became the chief judge. She's retired now, I think I just heard that she retired. She was a fabulous judge. She was a fabulous judge.

INT: Did you get to call her to tell her she got it the third time? [Chuckles]

MJ: I think I did, but, you know, as we're talking, as I'm telling the story, I'm thinking did I call her or did he call her? So I'm not sure. I guess it's in my journal somewhere, because I'm sure I would have written it down. So I'm not sure. She might remember, but I don't know.

INT: Do you think that it's made a difference for the state?

MJ: Oh, my God! Absolutely. I mean, we've had ... Perpich appointed a lot of good judges, a lot, both men and women, a lot of really good judges. Not everybody—there were a couple of less-than-stars, no question. But he did way more on quality and diversity than most governors in the country. I mean, he did a fabulous job. Because we had the new court of appeals, I mean, he appointed the first entire court of twelve appellate judges. Harriet Lansing was in that second cohort, and she was a good friend of mine, and without me being there she wouldn't have gotten appointed because the Iron Range crowd was against her because she was pro-choice. I've never said that out loud—that was a tough one. But she was an outstanding appellate judge. Many of my lawyer friends told me she was the best judge in the court.

INT: I'm curious—Rudy was very much part of the Iron Range history as well, and right now in the state there's such a conversation around rural and urban leadership. Do you think there was a part of the legacy of your team or the administration that set a course for that or had an impact on sort of that rural and urban ...?

MJ: That's always been the case. I mean, now it's a challenge, but at that time half of the state was rural and half was urban, so it was more balanced. Now it's less—urban is bigger, and so the rural areas are even more vulnerable. I believe the governor made a couple of mistakes on that, one of which was that he did not support the light rail transit, so the light rail transit was delayed by fifteen, twenty years, and cost a lot more and would be further along, I think that. And he could have done that differently and he didn't. And I believe that he didn't really understand it. I don't think he understood urban development issues. He was always on a learning curve, so he learned a lot, but he just didn't get there on the urban stuff, and I was not in a position or didn't see an opportunity to help him on that. I think it's a shame. But he did a lot of other things that were fantastic legacies. You know, these issues of rural-urban exist everywhere in the country, and it takes political leadership every time. You don't get it fixed at one point and fix it for good... this is just the way life is; you have to keep working at it. Now, issues like immigration issues—the conference that I run happened last week in Boston, and Earl Potter, who is the president of Saint Cloud State, was there. He was making a presentation on the internationalization stuff that they've done at Saint Cloud State, and he mentioned that the Somali population is now ten percent of Stearns County, and you think—really! That bastion of conservatism. He said it's not that there aren't problems, but that there is a lot of good stuff going on between the Somalis and the community, and twenty-five, thirty years ago that was unthinkable. That's really unthinkable. If you had told me that it was OK to send fifty thousand Somalis to Stearns County I would have said—are you inviting a death trap? ... it just wouldn't have made sense. To me there's change everywhere. It's like there is no family that doesn't have a gay person in it anymore, so attitudes have to change, even though there's always somebody in the family who rejects the person, there's other people in the family for whom that's an eye opener, and forever are they changed. I think, generally speaking, the governor did so many good things, Governor Perpich, and he missed a few. But we all do.

INT: I want to kind of touch on that, what you said earlier, too, the legacy that kind of went unnoticed. Can you maybe talk to us about what you think the general public would tout as your legacy and what you, being on the inside, what you feel the true legacy was of your administration?

MJ: Well, I would say at the time that there was ... everybody felt that Rudy was very focused on job creation. That was the underlying issue. And he was a compassionate person, and he was the education governor. We were spending more per capita on education than any other state in the country—not true today. We had the highest high school completion rate in the country—not true today. He talked about that in virtually every speech. We had the lowest incarceration rate in

the country—not true today. He talked about that in every speech. He talked about the inverse relationship between education and incarceration. That’s still true. That’s the problem here. So he often talked about education is the pathway out of poverty. He used that language all the time, and that if he hadn’t had an education he wouldn’t be governor; he wouldn’t have had the opportunity that he had.

MJ: So, I think that he was also recognized for pay equity. I mean, it was the first time in the country that pay equity was used in speech language, and Nina Rothchild was selected for that job because of her work on the Women’s Commission. That was it. I was there in the meeting when he asked her to serve. It was for that reason he asked her to serve, because he wanted to be the pay equity governor. He said to her—you probably know that Rudy was a hugger ...

INT: [Chuckles]

MJ: He never hugged me in public, but he did hug me. He understood that hugging me in public was crossing the line, given our two positions, but he was a hugger. When he offered Nina the job, he said to her—the one reservation I have about offering you this job is that I don’t feel like I can hug you.

INT: [Chuckles]

MJ: I mean, she’s not a warm person, and she was like ...and he said—but I really appreciate what you’ve been doing, and I want your leadership in the department. And later, in the second term—I think this was in the beginning of the second term when he re-upped with her, he said—Nina, I’d like to give you a hug. I was there for that, too. So that was very sweet, because it was his affirmation to himself and to her that he’d made the right choice.

INT: What about the unspoken legacies—what about the legacies you’re aware of that maybe the general public isn’t? What trail-blazing, what change that you made that really may have been credited the wrong place or goes unspoken?

MJ: I don’t know. I mean, it’s so long ago now that I think most people don’t remember anything, except the ones who are my age. The younger people don’t have any clue. But I think that the diversity of leadership in the courts and on boards and commissions—I don’t know if he gets as much credit as he should have for that. It seems kind of normal. He certainly gets credit for having introduced the idea of a woman lieutenant governor, because they don’t have any other ideas now.

INT: Right. [Chuckles]

MJ: But I don’t think that they used anything other than the model of gender as opposed to the model of the role after me. I knew all the women lieutenant governors, and I don’t know Tina,

but I knew the others, and none of them had an opportunity like I did in terms of a role in the administration, but I don't think they ... well, let's put it this way—Yvonne should have had one. She was interested and capable of it, and she was very badly treated, I mean very badly. That would be another really interesting piece of history ~~history~~.

INT: Really?

MJ: I mean, coming from her background, both on the city council and the legislature—well, to be treated like that was unthinkable, anyway, and then to bring that amount of experience to the job and be treated that badly is unforgivable. But in between I don't think the lieutenant governors were treated badly, but they didn't have a designated leadership role in the administration, and I don't know that they wished one. I can't say, because I just don't know that much. I didn't have sit-down conversations with any of them after they took office, in the middle of it, so I don't ... my observation, and from what I heard from others, I never had the feeling that they were poorly treated or unhappy with their role. I just don't know that. My observation is that Tina has a different role. In my view, the way that it's being written about, is suggesting that it's the first time any of that stuff has happened, is simply not true. And that only reflects ignorance on the part of the people who are saying it. As basic as a comment in a newspaper article that she's the first lieutenant governor to ever publish her schedule, I mean, my schedule was distributed to the press office every day for eight years. So, it's little things like that, which, the fact that they are saying it means that they think it means something, but it's not accurate. So I don't know what that's about, except that they're pushing, expecting that she's going to be governor, which would be fine. I think we should have a woman governor one of these days.

VOICE 2: I'm noticing the dynamic in your relationship was ... and are we good on time?

MJ: Um-hum.

VOICE 2: You kind of were the bad cop role. In a lot of ways you had to deliver those tough messages. You make those bad phone calls. Were you comfortable with that? Did that work for your leadership style?

MJ: Yeah—totally, totally.

VOICE 2: Did you guys ever have a conversation about it?

MJ: Well, when he asked me to call Leslie, yeah, I mean, that was ... when I did those kind of things, yes. And, I mean, I didn't find it fun, but I had no problem doing it, and I still don't. I deliver difficult messages all the time and I don't have ... I have less trouble today, I suppose, than I did then, because ... but, you know, that comes with the work, the job.

INT: Do you think that was a choice, or it was just natural leadership style for both of you? Or do you think that was how he wanted to be perceived as governor, or it's just innately Rudy?

MJ: Well ... hmm. I think on some level it was innately Rudy, and I think when I wasn't the person making those difficult calls, it was Terry. Terry did most of them, because that was his job as chief of staff. And I only did the ones, these few that had to do with judges or something. That's the chief of staff job mostly, so I only did those things when there was a specific rationale, that I had been involved with something. Terry took a lot ... I don't think I ever really took heat for delivering difficult messages. Terry took a lot of heat. And when people would complain to me about Terry, I would just say to them—look, governors have the kind of person they want. They all do. Every governor gets the kind of staff they want, so if Terry is doing the bad cop stuff, it's because that's the job he has. I mean, the governor knows that, and it's working, because you're not pissed off at the governor, you're pissed at Terry, and you're under the illusion that Terry made him do it. Well, if that's what you want to think, fine, but I know Terry doesn't deliver a message that's not the governor's. He doesn't deliver his own messages.

INT: So how did that change then when Terry moved out of that role?

MJ: It was hard.

INT: And was there really a bad cop at that point? Do you think that was some of the dynamic change that went on the second administration, too?

MJ: Well, I don't think he wanted anybody at that point. I mean, it was a blow to lose Terry—no question about it. He was very close to Lynn, so it wasn't that he didn't have anybody, but ... and Lynn could deliver tough messages, no question about that, either. But at that point I don't know that ... things were different in general.

INT: Technical difficulties again. You're still recording, though, right?

VOICE 2: Yeah, the recorder's on.

INT: OK. I think in my research that's something that's been kind of fascinating to me about the timing of Terry leaving and the change in Rudy. How was that for you in your leadership—Terry leaving his position? Because they had such a good working relationship and a good dynamic, and it seemed like you were really in a flow, the administration was really in a flow.

MJ: Yeah. You know, I haven't really thought about that, the relationship between Terry's leaving and what was going on, because to me the change was so related to the governor's son's illness that ... but I mean I don't know. I don't think there's a direct relationship between those two events, because Rudy Jr.'s illness happened before. It was already underway, I think. Do you remember the dates of Terry leaving?

INT: I believe I have that.

MJ: I haven't thought about that for awhile. It was tough. It was really ...

INT: Because, was Rudy, Jr.'s illness public at the time?

MJ: I don't know if it was public public, but it sure ... there wasn't a person in the administration that didn't know.

INT: Right. And that's ... I don't have that specific date. I remember looking at that and noticing there was a parallel, with a lot of the changes shifting at that same time.

MJ: That's interesting. I haven't, honestly, I haven't thought about that.

INT: Because it seems like the three of you on that leadership team just had a really strong dynamic.

MJ: Yeah, I got along with Terry really well. I was aware that he had all these interesting habits. I didn't know the extent, but, you know ... I was in a situation recently in my work, my current work, where someone was accused of inappropriate conduct, a consultant we used, and I didn't say it them, but I said it to my staff, I said—you know, I don't really see this as the same. In my view this is not sexual harassment. When a guy, a construction worker whistles at you on the street or calls out lewd comments to you on the street, that is not sexual harassment. It could be annoying, but there's no power relationship there, and you have a choice about how to deal with it. You can say something back to them, similarly inappropriate, or you can smile and say—you're cute, too—or you can do whatever you ... you have lots of choices about what to do, but it's not a power situation, and I feel that we have to be ... we, as a society and leaders, have to be really careful that we don't put everything in the same pot. Misuse of power is very different and very serious. But it's not the same as inappropriate flirting. It's just not. We need to get over it already. But for me, personally, Terry did a really good job for the governor and was very fair to me. More than fair, many times, but always fair.

INT: I'll make one last follow-up—do you have anything?

VOICE 2: I'm curious what ... Rudy had such a big personality, and that was a big part of his ...

MJ: Bigger than life.

VOICE 2: ...leadership. So do you think that kind of style still works in today's government—you know, the ideas we have of governance—and how would Rudy fare?

MJ: I think it does, and I wish we had more of it. We don't have much of it anymore. Part of the problem is we have too many people who spend their life wanting power, and if your goal is power, then you don't get connected to what you believe. And I think it's a huge problem. It's a huge problem to spend too many years wanting a job—without naming names. It's a huge problem for our society. When the job becomes more important than the work, then you second-guess everything. Everything goes through a filter of where the money is and it's ...

INT: Well, that's a systemic ... in my opinion that's a systemic issue, that's ...

MJ: It is, but we're allowing it to happen, because we sort of say that somehow it's OK to have a legacy. Just because your father was or your spouse was doesn't mean it's your job. Enough, already.

INT: Well, especially if you're losing sight of the work.

MJ: Yeah, and, you know, none of us are owed a position. There's no question that I was very disappointed to lose the opportunity to be governor, no question. But it wasn't my right to be governor, and the reason I ran ... I mean, I was tainted by my service with Rudy, by the Democratic Party, because they never forgave me for defeating, they blamed me for defeating Warren Spannaus, and even though from the minute we won the election they were all embraced and included and got good jobs—everybody got pretty much the same jobs. There were very little differences in who got appointed. There was a lot of differences in the style of leadership. So they didn't all get so much involved in the insider conversations as they would have if Spannaus had been elected, because Spannaus was a more deliberative, traditional decision-maker. He's a lawyer, for goodness sakes. But otherwise there wasn't any difference, and the policies, because Rudy was not pro-choice—he played games on that issue to keep his coalition, which was tough. That was hard for me, too. But he never asked me to not be pro-choice. And, in fact, in his mind he needed me on the ticket because I was his proof that that wasn't his personal point of view. I mean, sick, but it's the way it was. Sick isn't it ... but, you know, convoluted. Convoluted is the better word. But it's the way it was. Connie Perpich, the lobbyist for Planned Parenthood, always had his ear, so what can you say? So I knew I knew that I was tainted, but I didn't know how much. A lot of people wanted me to run for governor in '94

MJ: '94. And I was interested, but I would have had to figure out how to keep myself alive financially, and I wasn't a lawyer, so no law firm was going to cover me, and that's how the boys do it, and my business—I'd lost my business by then. So, I went to Washington part-time, and I got a call from somebody who will go un-named asking me to come back and run for mayor. And I thought about it and decided that it would be a way for me to find out how much damage I had. There were already six candidates for mayor in the Democratic primary, so I was the

seventh, I think. Or maybe I was the eighth—there were too many. And Andy Dawkins was going to get the party endorsement, although it hadn't happened yet, but that was a foregone conclusion. And there was one other businessperson, Mannillo, and me. So I decided to do it because I'd lived in Saint Paul, run my business here, I knew the business community, and I started making calls to the businesspeople that I had worked with, and some of them were already committed to John Mannillo. And I said ... and they'd been clients of mine ... and I said, you know, John's not going to be elected. It's not possible. The only possible person who could defeat Norm Coleman is me. So I ran, and I was door knocking the week before the primary. I was raising a fair amount of money, but not large, but I was competitive, but none of the other candidates, who were clearly not going to get anywhere, would drop out. So we just went into the primary with this motley group of boys and me. The week before the election, the primary, George Perpich and I were door knocking in Frogtown. He was on one side of the street and I was the ... he went out with me three days a week for the whole primary campaign. And I went to this door, a woman answered, and she said—hi, Marlene. Well, I was going to vote for you, but I have to vote for the pro-choice candidate. And I said—well, I am pro-choice. And she said—well, I thought you were, but then I got this brochure from the party. And I said can I see it? So it was a brochure paid for by the Democratic Party, signed by all the women legislators in Saint Paul, saying that Andy Dawkins is the only pro-choice candidate running for mayor.

INT: Wow.

MJ: And I said, well, this is not the truth. I'm sorry, but it's not the truth. I have been a pro-choice person my entire life. I was the chair of the Women's Political Caucus, the Women's Campaign Fund. Both are pro-choice organizations. I was pro-choice the whole time I served with Rudy Perpich. I'm really sorry, and I hope you will reconsider and vote for me. But when I left that house I thought—it's over, because there's no way that I can pull all that literature. And, you know, you can't do a press conference on that issue. So I met George coming across the street, and I could tell by the look on his face he'd seen the brochure, too. And I said—are we going to take the weekend off? And he said—might as well. It's over. So that was when I knew that I couldn't run for governor, because the party was so deeply angry with me that they would never let it go. If they would do that, they would do anything.

INT: From a female perspective I don't feel like they were angry with you. I think they were angry that a female broke the boys' club. And you were the first one, so you took the tumble.

MJ: Yeah, but the girls participated in it. Because it was the women legislators who put their name on that brochure.

INT: Why do you think they did?

MJ: Because they had to honor the endorsement process. Above all else, the endorsement process was their bible, and it wasn't mine. So there you go. That's when I decided that I had to move on and that I wasn't ... Minnesota wasn't my place anymore, that I had to move on.

INT: it's interesting to hear you talk about some of the press that's out there about what is being done in this administration that you guys did that is not being credited. When Minnesota gets to a point of having its first female governor, are you personally going to be able to know that you broke the mold, that you cracked some of those glass ceilings?

MJ: I already know that. I mean, I do. I regret that Perpich didn't get as much credit for some of the breakthrough things he did. As I said, I think we did a lousy job of communicating our leadership and our accomplishments. But on a personal basis, I know that I feel really good about what I did, and that's all you can do. I mean, you can't control everything, and you do miss things. We didn't do that well, but I don't think I had a position from which I could have fixed that part. The communication strategy had to come from the administration, and with my staff of four we couldn't do that. And so that's just the breaks, and I am thrilled that I had the opportunity. I wouldn't be doing what I am doing now without it. It was a graduate program in leadership from my standpoint, so I couldn't be happier. And I'm thrilled now. I have a good life, great job. That's all you can do—take it one step and do what you can, and then move on.

INT: You've kind of said it, but to encapsulate the whole thing—if you could write the script for your legacy, what would that include?

MJ: That I created opportunities for women and people of color in ways that hadn't been before, and that I helped ... that I demonstrated integrated ways of doing things—the tourism agenda and the children's agenda—both of them I think were excellent examples of engaging disparate parts of the community toward an agenda that wouldn't have happened without my leadership. Wouldn't have happened. So that feels good.

INT: Any advice for women in leadership who are following in your footsteps?

MJ: Well, I think the most important thing is not to get stuck by what the job description says. I've always had jobs where the job description was inadequate to the work that needed to be done. So you just have to look around and say—well, how can I play a role here, even if it's not in the job description? In my current job, we've redefined what it means to be advocates for international education by taking a very strategic role on immigration reform and opening up Cuba and all these things. That's what we should do, and making a case. My case now, making a case to the board so that they don't freak out when we end up doing something that's off the charts. So it's good.

INT: It sounds like you learned a lot of that in that role as lieutenant governor.

MJ: Yes, absolutely.

INT: And you had the team mate that allowed you to do that.

MJ: Exactly. I will always appreciate the opportunity that Perpich gave me and not just the initial opportunity, but the support in the first term was without comparison. The second term, you know, we all were in the same tough soup, and we all did our best. It wasn't as much fun, but it was rewarding, nevertheless, because we still accomplished a few things. It just wasn't as unified, or whatever ... what the word is.

INT: Anything you want to ask?

MJ: No, it's great?

INT: Miss anything, stirred your mind?

MJ: Well, if you've missed anything, I haven't a clue.

INT: If there's anything that you think about that you'd like to say—and you'll have the opportunity to get the transcripts as well. But anything else that you want to share with us about leadership or the experience or hindsight?

MJ: I think the one mistake I made ... well, I'm sure I made many ... but the one that's really clear to me is that I didn't have my own strategy with the press in terms of relationships. And so the press really didn't understand what I did. The one possible exception is Lori Sturtevant, because she and I had special relationships because of a number of reasons. But in general I didn't, and I didn't sit out in the press room, and I didn't give them rumors. I never gave them stories, and the reason I didn't was because of that warning from Terry, that I didn't want to ever be accused of leaking something from Perpich. He leaked things all the time, but I felt that was his place and not mine. As a result I think most of them did not understand the role I played, didn't think I was doing anything, because they observed me through the lens of the traditional role. And like Bill Salisbury I don't think ever took me seriously. I mean, I got along with him fine, but I don't think he ever had a clue. And that was true for many, many reporters. So when Rudy, in that final conversation we had, said that I had let him down, I said—the thing is, Governor, I think that I actually did myself a disservice by never leaking a story. I never told anybody what you were up to if I thought it was a secret, because I felt it wasn't my place, but as a result none of them think I did anything. And that part I did not understand at the time. I didn't understand how to build relationships with the press in a way that it could add to my legacy or their understanding of what I was doing—my agenda. So I regret that, but I just didn't get it, I didn't understand it at the time.

VOICE 2: And the press was very different at that time, too.

MJ: Yeah, but I mean I still would have ... now in Lori's case—I don't know if you saw the piece she did in the picture magazine?

INT: right after the first election?

MJ: Yes,

INT: When he said you both had fire in your belly?

MJ: Yes. Well, one of the things she was trying to accomplish in that piece was to let everybody know I was not a lesbian.

INT: Oh!

MJ: Because there was a lot of lesbian baiting at the end of the first campaign. It was really ugly.

INT: Did not pick up on that at all.

MJ: I mean, there wasn't anything written about it, really. There wasn't anything written. As far as I know it never ended up in the press, but it was rumbling a lot. And one night Rudy wanted to drive me home from the campaign office, and I thought—I know what he's ... because I'd been hearing all these things. So he's driving around in my neighborhood, not dropping me off.

INT: [Chuckles]

MJ: And finally I said—Governor, I am not a lesbian. And he said—I don't care if you are. And I said—well, I appreciate that you don't care, but I'm not. I said—if I had been I would have told you that in that meeting we had with George. Instead I told you the names of the men I have slept with.

INT: Right.

MJ: And I can assure you I have never slept with a woman, number one. Number two, I haven't wanted to. So there isn't anybody out there—I promise you that. And I appreciate very much that if it were true, you would still support me, but you should know it's not true. So on this issue you don't have to protect yourself from me, because it's not true. There is one person that I haven't told you that I have slept with, and if it gets too bad I will probably tell you that, but I don't want to. Because it was somebody he knew. And I was a single person, so it wasn't ...

INT: Not too dark.

MJ: Not too dark, but it wasn't public, anyway. So I could tell he was relieved. So anyway, but it kept on, so I called this person, whose name I didn't give him, and I said to him—OK—we weren't together anymore, but he was very well connected politically, and I said—OK, this is how it's going to go. You are going to call Doug Johnson and all the other boys who are spreading this rumor. And he said—how do you know? And I said—I know who's saying these things, and I'm sick of it. So if it's not over by the end of the week, I'm going to have a press conference, and I'm going to give them the names of all the men I have slept with. I'm thirty-six years old and single, and I've only slept with single people, so it's not illegal what I've done, and I'm sick of it—this is ridiculous! And he said—that's not funny. And I said—I don't think it's funny, either, so you shut them down. You tell those boys whatever you—I don't care what you tell them, you just shut the ... I was swearing at him, I was so furious. It ended.

INT: Interesting. And that's because of the times. That would have just been something ...

MJ: And they couldn't understand how I could be single. Thirty-six-year-old single woman. It was not thinkable. They couldn't understand it. Even Rudy had a hard time understanding—not being single, but how I could do what I had done without a husband. Because for him Lola was so important he couldn't imagine life without her. And he said it to me. He said—I don't understand how you can do what you do without a partner. That was on the good side. That's part of what people couldn't get, because for men who'd accomplished things, they couldn't imagine being alone. Because there really weren't any single men in leadership. If you think back, there still aren't very many. I mean, the governor is ... but there aren't very many single men who are in leadership.

INT: Well, you were breaking molds at the time prior to lieutenant governor as well—entrepreneurial, woman-owned and run business, all those things were cutting edge.

MJ: Exactly.

INT: This has been fun—outstanding. Thank you.

MJ: Well, it's fun—rambling on is ...

INT: What an inspiration you are—your story needs to be reminded. You've done so much for women.

MJ: I think all the time about whether I'm going to write something. I just haven't had ... it's hard to write when you're working all the time.

INT: That's what ghost writers are for! [Chuckles]

MJ: Yes, exactly.

VOICE 2: You have a very empowering story.

MJ: I might ...

INT: For this state, in particular, I mean, it's really

VOICE 2: It gives women the courage.

INT: Well, it is, and even, as you have said, the numbers of women in leadership in this country are dire and ridiculous. Our state is quite ... at least we're on the front end of that, and I think that's because of strategic and pioneering people who ... for decades who have known that that's important, and believe it's important for the right reasons, not just because you have to have balance. It's like—no, you need to have balance because.

MJ: My little agency in 1972, we were the agency, the ad agency for Rosalie Butler's campaign for mayor, which was against the party. So even then I was against the party. During the campaign she had a kidney removal ...

VOICE 2: [speaking to someone entering room] Hi—we're done.

INT: We've wrapped up; we just can't stop.

MJ: I don't know how to stop talking!

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