

Roger Ackerman
English 3/7
Huttar Pd. 7

Second interview with Hesper Raymond
on Wednesday, February 23, 1977 at 4:00 pm.
182 West 11th Street
Holland, Michigan. 49423

Topic discussed:

How she was elected vice chairman of Ottawa County.

Various organizations she belonged to.

How she broke her hip

Women in politics

Her experiences in the Republican headquarters downtown

Presidents in Holland

Mrs. Raymond's views about:

The opinion that you can't trust politicians

How this opinion has changed over the years

The news media and Republicans

Problems in Holland

Women presidents

Lincoln Day Dinner

Election time and voters

R: How were you elected vice chairman of Ottawa county?

M: Well in politics I started right down at the bottom as a block worker. That's someone who goes around the block, takes an information from the people who live in the homes you ask them. You don't ask them their politics, that'll be too bald to say, but would you care to state which party you favor, and most of them don't mind. Some of them get kinda snippy and say it's none of your business (laugh) but, ah, I did that and then I would, I joined the, ah, Womens Republican Club, in fact I was, ah, one of the starters of it.

R: When was that?

M: Lets see, I believe that was back in 1956, that we started the Womens Republican Club, but its gone now, I mean they don't keep it up, but, ah, then they elected me president and while I was president I got all the workers to go around the blocks. We cut the city up in wards and each ward was supposed to have a block worker who would go around, it's called voter identification, and they did a very good job and really worked awfully hard - all my telephones just never quit ringing and on weekends why, oh my groceries (time out) They deliver my groceries, isn't that nice of them.

R: That is. So back to politics - you were President of the womens club.

M: Oh yes we organized the town and we worked like mad and I know when we, my husband came home I was all bagged out from politics so he'd take me over to Detroit for the weekend where I couldn't hear the telephone, but anyhow, ah, we won big in Ottawa County and made quite a record for the state. (Really?) Uh huh.

R: What would you do with all that information from making those calls?

M: Well during election time we'd get all that information catalogued and we'd call all the Republicans, cause we were working for the Republicans, and ask them if they voted and say be sure they vote. Some people we'd call two or three times, get 'em about eight o'clock at night and they'd be kinda mad - "Well yes I'm just on my way" (laugh) - but they were good and we did make a very good record. So then they asked me to be on the county committee, which I was all enthused, I was anxious to do that.

R: What did the county committee do?

M: Well the county committee is made up of people all over the wards and precincts all over the county, and they get together and just have business - who's gonna be speaker at the Lincoln Day Dinner and all that kind of thing, and the main thing is how to win elections.

R: So they asked you, did you accept?

M: Oh yes sure, I was honored and about the same time they asked me to join the Womens Rep. Board of the State that meets in Lansing, met in Lansing, not any more. It was rather hard to get over there and back all the time, but I was very anxious to do that. And then after about a year they, ah, were going to elect a new chairman for the county and asked me if I'd be the vice chairman. It's usually a man thats the chairman, so sure I would do that. So that's the way I got started in politics.

R: What did you do afterwards?

M: Then shortly afterwards I broke my hip.

R: Was that at a Republican Convention?

M: It was coming or going to the Rep. Convention, err, Rep. Meeting in Grand Haven, going with another woman, and a woman out in Walkazoo wanted me to pick her up, and the roads out there are always just terrible. It was slippery, we slipped on the ice and banged into a tree. I didn't get to the meeting, I went to the hospital that night.

R: You broke your hip in the accident?

M: Yes. So I tell these bright young boys once in a while who are running things, well after all I gave up my health for the Rep. party(laugh)

R: As a woman in politics, how did people treat you?

M: Ah, that isn't any, oh, that isn't any great thing anymore, to be a woman in politics and run for office.

R: But years ago it must have been different?

M: Back in the fifties, that wasn't so long ago, it seemed eons to you.

R: Were there many women in politics?

M: Oh yes, on the planning committee, which I would say is about fifty people, fifteen or seventeen would be women. But my mother was the real pioneer. She started working for the womens suffrage movement way back in 1912. (Really) And she had a great big sign, VOTES FOR WOMEN, yellow and black and she got dad to put it on the back of the car. He took alot of ribbing on that. But, ah, she was one of the first workers for the vote for women, she was very strong for it.

R: How about you?

M: At that time I didn't care, I would get into arguments, of course, with school mates because most of the boys thought that women voting was the last end of every thing. They thought that was terrible that women wanted to vote.

R: You also worked in the Rep. Headquarters downtown?

M: Yes I did, I used to work and you know just before election they always opened up the headquarters and they'd always give away buttons and literature and pennants and things like that. But I've often felt that's kind of a waste of time because mainly the people who came in were kids after school. They want to come in and get buttons, and they'd come in every day for a button. But real work was done in the Rep. H.Q. up-stairs. That's where we did the telephoning, we had around six tele-phones going and we'd send out literature. I remember one time just about five or six days before election here we get thousands of pieces of mail from the State Central Committee. We had to get that in the hands of the voters before election day. So I sent out word that we certainly needed help and that word got around and the women just flocked in and they sent out all that literature. We had all these names you see that we have identified by the block workers and we send

everybody whose name we have some literature. One of the main things was this Supreme Court Justice that was in Michigan or anyplace, they never get any publicity, and yet they're elected by party, either Democrat or Republican. So what we did was send out these little folders that would identify the Republicans who were running on the Supreme Court ticket and we would say stick this in your pocket and take it with you when you go to the polls.

- R: Was it very hard to get people to volunteer to pass out these tracts?
- M: Not just before election but six or eight before election everybody gets steamed up you know, and they want to do something for the party. If I'd start out now and do that it would be almost impossible, but, ah, just before election people get real interested in their party and they do something for it.
- R: Is that place open all year?
- M: Usually just a few months before election. My husband kept Congressman Vander Jagt's office and that was open all year. He was just in there in the mornings for three hours, but, ah, of course there were lots of things to do there. Oh I don't know how many people would come in there and want to get help from the congressman on some matter - legal or how to go about a certain business - and then he would get in touch with Washington, he had a line that would go to the office and usually they could do something for this person. So it got to be a very busy place - and then for months after he died and when he was in the hospital I would get all these calls because they'd call here if he wasn't in the office. And I'd get all these calls and I'd say you'll have to call the Washington office I can't help you.
- R: So have any presidents ever visited Holland?
- M: Oh yes, just last spring President Ford for Tulip time. (How about for elections?) No, they go to Grand Rapids, but Holland is pretty small potatoes for electioneering. And Holland and Ottawa County for many years has been overwhelmingly Republican, so they feel they don't have to work too hard here. Now I don't know how long that will last lets hope it lasts a long time, but the, it's pretty Republican.
- R: Now a days there's a popular opinion that you can't trust politicians. Is that really true?
- M: No I don't think so, no more that you can say you can't trust ministers. A few bad apples get in the barrel and then there's a terrible human cry, but I think most politicians try to do a good job, they try to work for their constituents, and they, they're pretty square. Most people in politics realize that if you get too bold, they find out about it.
- R: Is there any difference between politicians back in the 40's and 50's from today?
- M: No I don't think so.
- R: Has the system got worse, about opinions of politicians?
- M: Yes I think its got worse, I think alot of that is due to the news media. I think they play up any little thing that they can find,

especially the Republicans. The thing that gets me is, if they can find something on a Republican they just blatt it on the T.V. for weeks. The same story over and over. But here, look at Wilber Mills and some of those others who womenized all over Washington. And look at Roosevelt, its come out since then, that - that he kept mistresses in the White House. (Really?) Sure, and so did Kennedy. But they hush that up right away. That gets short shrift from the news media, because they're all liberals. But let a Republican steal a hundred dollars and they scream about it for months. People think that's one dirty party.

R: Have you had any problems in Holland?

M: No I don't think so. We used to scrapple with the Democrats, just politics you know. And we used to - no I don't think there were any problems in Holland. When we would go around and take this door to door canvas, most people were kind of pleased and flattered that you came and that you were interested in them. We got more flact from the telephone that we did going from door to door. People won't say things face to face, but you call them up up over the telephone and they say something nasty and slam the receiver down.

R: Have you ever gotten to know any popular politicians or presidents?

M: We were, we are personal friends of Jerry Ford. (Are you?) Sure. When my husband was sick in the hospital, he was in his coma and he got a letter from Jerry Ford. I took it up to him and I don't know whether he understood it or not but I read it to him. I thought I really should make the effort to make him try and understand it. And yes, we've known alot of senators. Never knew Nixon, just met him. And I've never even met Eisenhower.

R: Do you think we'll ever have a women president?

M: Oh you can't tell. We have women senators, women in the Supreme Court and in the Cabinet. It may take quite a while but they may do it. They couldn't do a worse job than some of these men. (laughs)

R: Maybe not. How many years have you been in politics?

M: Well to say I really worked in politics, I started back in 1948 and then well, I suppose you could say clear up until last year when my husband died. I used to help him, and in certain things, go to county committee mettings, always went to Lincoln Day Dinner. This year I didn't of course.

R: What is the Lincoln Day Dinner?

M: Well they always celebrate Lincolns birthday. Lincoln was the founder of the Republican party. That is he was the first president of the Republicans. They always have a big banquet fot Rep. all over the country. Usually try to get an out of state speaker and they just have a good time.

R: They have it every year?

M: Oh yes.

R: Did you have alot of political meeting to go to?

- M: Oh yes, especially around election time. Busy all the time - and the thing of it is, you get to work up in Headquarters, telephone calling and the letter writing, addressing envelopes and all that kind of thing and then somebody in Lansing will get the brilliant idea that some politician should get more public exposure so they would call up and have a big rally for him. Well that is alot of work to get up a big rally. You did the best you could, it wasn't big always, the crowds weren't too big. Oh I suppose this sounds like I'm trying to be harsh but I have a very poor opinion of an awful lot of people who vote. I don't think they know anything about the issues, they know the president but that's all they're interested in.
- R: So you worked to try and let the voters know who they were voting for?
- M: Yes, I tried to educate them, put pieces in the paper, Corrie VanBoorst of the Centennial was awfully good at that. She'd write up what we wanted put in. Then I, ah, used to say that I thought some people all they voted for when they went to the polls was the elephant or the rooster, the,ah, donkey. The elephant would be the Republicans and the donkey would be the Democrats. They'd look at that and vote a straight ticket and that's all they'd vote. People need to be more interested to read up more about it. Of course, they get awful mad if a congressman senator or president doesn't do what they want him to, but as far as them taking an interest before the election - that would be farthest from their thoughts. (telephone rang) You always get a certain amount of people who just don't care.(excuse me)

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