

**Kathy Coyle  
Narrator**

**Janet D. Gallagher  
Interviewer**

**March 1, 1988  
Heritage Education Commission Oral History Project  
Concordia College  
Moorhead, Minnesota**

**JG:** ...Kathy Coyle. Kathy is a producer and anchorperson with Channel Four KXJB television. Kathy was the first female to anchor news on a regular basis, nine years ago, primetime. The date today is March 1, 1988. This interview is taking place at the recording studio of Concordia College. The interviewer is Janet D. Gallagher, [unclear], Minnesota, representing the communications committee of the oral history project sponsored by the Heritage Education Commission.

Kathy, when were you born?

**KC:** October 20, 1950.

**JG:** And in what town were you born?

**KC:** Well, I really grew up in Moorhead, but I made the big trip over the river in order to be brought to this earth, St. Luke's Hospital in Fargo.

**JG:** And where are your parents from?

**KC:** My parents are originally from Minot, but then as young people they moved to Moorhead. So my entire life I have spent in the Fargo-Moorhead area except for going away to school.

**JG:** And that includes walking Concordia campus many times.

**KC:** Right. Right.

**JG:** What is the area of communications you are involved in right now?

**KC:** Well, hmmm...the biggest part of my job is producing and anchoring the noon news on Channel Four, which is the CBS affiliate, KXJB. Then I also do live remotes on the six o'clock news because two years ago our management decided they wanted to beef up their metro ratings, how they do in the Fargo-Moorhead area. So they figured the way to do that was to have me do

around town interviews, doing live remotes, especially cultural type events, previews of them. I also do a “student of the week” feature once a week, because I really do have a strong interest and respect for young people, which some people evidently don’t have, [for] teenagers, especially.

And then I do two half hour shows. One is once a week, which is a public affairs show, *KX4 News Conference*. It deals with a variety of topics from child abuse to politics, all sorts of topics that are pertinent to our area. And then I do a show once a month called *Your Good Health*. We have one or two doctors on the air with me live talking about a certain illness or subject. Tonight the show is on hair transplants. And then the public is invited to call in their questions live to the doctors.

**JG:** Are either of these shows your idea?

**KC:** Well, *KX4 News Conference* existed before I got there, but it’s changed a lot, I think, since I’ve been there, because I have a different attitude about the show compared to former hosts of it.

**JG:** You seem to really enjoy the student section.

**KC:** Yeah.

**JG:** You kind of [unclear] in your...

**KC:** That is something new, too.

**JG:** Well, not to say you don’t enjoy the health one.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** Because that’s of benefit to all of us. But I thought you especially liked pointing out and showing that there are good students out there.

**KC:** Right.

**JG:** And we need the positive...

**KC:** And everyone is different. And sometimes that’s a challenge to make everyone look different, because so often there’s a pattern, if they’re good in school. And I’ve interviewed lots of straight A students; many times they’re excellent athletes, very good in the arts, especially music. But you don’t want the Twin Valley student to look just like the Valley City student looked last week, so sometimes that’s a challenge. But I think so far I’ve done this for about two and a half years now, the student interviews, and I think they’ve been well-received.

**JG:** Have you had any funny experiences that you can relay, too, in getting the students on the air? Are they scared? They usually seem to be pretty professional in the way they respond to you.

**KC:** Well, I think that's one of my strengths, is that I think they realize that I do respect them and put them on the same plane as myself rather than look down at them. So I think that does help put them at ease before we start talking, because many times they're not at ease. I can think of one young fellow who I didn't succeed with because he perspired through the entire interview, with water dripping down his nose even, he was sweating so much. He was so nervous! [Chuckles] And he was the class officer. Right after the interview, he gave a speech in front of the entire school assembly. And so in the story I did do kind of a dichotomy of what he was like in front of the TV camera compared to what he's like with his peers.

**JG:** Hmmm.

**KC:** But I like to think that usually I put them at ease. I think that's my strongest point in broadcasting in general is that I try to put people at ease. I was out at Tower City doing a story on kind of an underdog, in the sense that she wasn't an athlete herself. She was...hmmm...overweight, frankly, and...but the team *loved* her, so they made her the trainer. So here we were with the track team practicing in the gym, and the girls...and I was all dressed up for my TV job. And the girls said, "Well, sit on this piece of carpeting on the floor." And I had no idea what I was getting into. All of a sudden, one of the girls started running, and it was like a chariot effect. She was dragging me all around the gym floor. Now that was...

**JG:** [Chuckles]

**KC:** I will remember that for a while. That was pretty fun.

**JG:** Now you much have become a little bit of a health expert. You must have had to do some studying and some research for these health shows. I think that's got to be a little bit tough.

**KC:** Well, I do a lot of probably cramming, especially the day of the show. I worked with both Dakota Medical Center and St. Luke's MeritCare is our new sponsor now. They send me a lot of information (some of it is very technical) from their medical library. So some of it you understand, and some you...but it's interesting. I kind of over-study and I have far more questions than I'd ever need just to be very well prepared. And I've found a couple of times that I've had to add on to what the doctor said, because I've studied it, you know, to such a degree that I can do that. [Laughs]

**JG:** Do you have any trouble with the doctors?

**KC:** Hmmm...

**JG:** Are they pretty responsive or are they...?

**KC:** I've only had trouble with maybe one who when he arrived at the studio he said he really didn't have anything to contribute. But you know, on the exterior they're trying to pretend that they are confident in every field, and they're not. They're confident in medicine but not

necessarily broadcasting. So then, as a broadcaster, it's a challenge to put them at ease within twenty minutes of visiting before the show goes on the air...

**JG:** What'd you do with them?

**KC:** ...to help them do well.

**JG:** What did you do with him that night? Did he go on anyway?

**KC:** Yeah, he went on. He didn't talk as much as the other doctor, but...

**JG:** Do you usually have two for a particular reason? For that reason?

**KC:** Well, it's kind of in the nature of the show. Now tonight will be interesting because for the first time we're having one doctor. So we'll see what happens. But it is nice to have two because then it's better pacing, too.

**JG:** You're live, aren't you?

**KC:** Right. And in the past they always had people call in their questions, and then they would just write them down (the secretary would) and give them to me. That way I could screen the questions and make sure they're intelligent ones and this sort of thing. Now the viewers get to be on the air with it, their voice is live, which is a risk. And that is something that makes you nervous. Because we don't want to publicize it, but there is no delay, so if they called in and said a naughty word, it would be heard by many thousands of people!

**JG:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**KC:** But so far we've had absolutely no problem at all, and very good questions. I've had a couple of viewers who have started their sentence by saying, [speaks loudly] "I want to tell you about this doctor!" And then you worry, oh, my goodness, they're going to blast the doctor live!

**JG:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**KC:** But then they went on to compliment him because they had firsthand knowledge of his practice. So...so far, things have gone real well.

**JG:** What are some of the subjects you've covered?

**KC:** Oh, Parkinson's, hair transplants tonight, various aspects of heart disease, skin cancer. Many times it's a...I don't want to say a down topic, but you know, it's not something to smile over.

**JG:** Sobering.

**KC:** Whereas I'm looking forward tonight to hair transplants because it'll be a little lighter, something that you can actually smile at or not grimace anyway.

**JG:** You did a story on Alzheimer's.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** I'm sure that was well-received because it hits so many of us.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** Have you done AIDS yet?

**KC:** I want to mention about Alzheimer's, now that was a subject that maybe we wouldn't have done, but I got a call from a man whose wife has it. And he felt so badly that people didn't understand her, and she would just kind of vanish and show up hours later many blocks from home and have no idea where she was. And so I really did that as kind of a favor to him. And he's just a viewer. He was no personal friend or anything, but...and I agree that, you know, it was a very worthwhile show. I'm glad we did it.

**JG:** Yes, I'm glad I saw it.

**KC:** No, we haven't done AIDS yet. Hmmm...the way *Your Good Health* is set up is unlike any news show in that the medical institution usually decides the topics because they're on top of it rather than us. And they're the sponsor of it.

**JG:** Are they afraid...are they afraid to start...to have that show air yet?

**KC:** To talk about AIDS?

**JG:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**KC:** Oh, I don't think so.

**JG:** In the community?

**KC:** I don't think so.

**JG:** I heard a talk show last night with a man who had AIDS.

**KC:** Mmmm.

**JG:** And was in a small town in Iowa.

**KC:** Mmmm.

**JG:** He couldn't find a doctor right now to treat him.

**KC:** Mmmm.

**JG:** Because he needs some kind of a...[unclear] throat...and you might know the term for it and they don't want to touch him.

**KC:** Mmmm. Tracheotomy, I bet.

**JG:** Something to do with that.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** But it wasn't exactly tracheotomy.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm. A subject that I did in an unusual way, I just completed it these last two Sundays on *KX4 News Conference*. A sexual abuse treatment team made up of five different agencies in Fargo-Moorhead who help people who are abusers, or are victims of family violence, or abuse in general, approached me and asked me to do something on their organization. And so often we have the counselors on TV. Their message is good but it doesn't really make an impact. So I said, "If you could get people who have been perpetrators, have been abusers themselves to be on, it would really...well, people would really go out of their way to watch the show." So they set me up with two men who had abused. One had abused his daughter when she was eight years old until she was fifteen and finally told somebody. The other man abused his son when he was young.

And so I did the interview, and you know my background is that I almost went into counseling. So I...I think that's kind of a valuable background in a situation like this because I think it comes through. Hmmm. Plus, I had the counselor there with me in case I needed him, but he didn't have to speak up. But the interview went real well. The men are trying to turn their lives around because they have gone through treatment, and so far they've done pretty well. But we had to go through quite the extremes to change their voices so that the public wouldn't know who they were and silhouette their image. So...

**JG:** One thing that I'm intrigued with is that in 1987-1988 *Wheel of Fortune* has been one of the biggest and best, most watched...

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** ...game show on television. And once a month you preempt that.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** What kind of a reaction are you getting from the public?

**KC:** Hmm...people do call in. And hmmm, you know, some are pretty upset. But I think it's interesting that my management is willing to drop...It is number one in the nation. And but it's also interesting that...well, during ratings periods, which we have four times a year, in the past they have not allowed *Your Good Health* to be on that month, see. They've delayed it so that it won't count in a ratings period. But now the last...well, since I've been hosting the show they've decided to allow it in the ratings period. And it doesn't do as well as *Wheel of Fortune*, but it does do as well as the news prior to *Wheel of Fortune*, which is quite an accomplishment, about twenty-seven thousand homes. So I'm pretty proud of that.

**JG:** I think it's unusual.

**KC:** [Chuckles]

**JG:** And I know that I have a relative that just waits for *Wheel of Fortune*.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** You know, when they're home all day long. But then they get into the health show and they're glad they've seen it.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** But they get into their routine.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** It is embarrassing when I'm seeing the doctors to the door and the receptionist is on the phone saying, "No, it's just once a month that this show is on!" And you know that they're calling in to complain. But then a lot of people participate in the show, too, so they offset the people who are calling in to complain. So I don't take it personally or anything like that. Sometimes people don't realize what's good for them anyway! [Chuckles]

**KC:** Now I think you got your start at KTHI.

**JG:** Right. I started in 1973 as a reporter and photographer at KTHI. If you want to hear a little humorous story...Hmmm. At that time, there was just one female in each news room in Fargo-Moorhead. They call it tokenism. But they didn't call it that back then because they didn't want to be sued. So the news director at KTHI, which was a dismal third place in the ratings at that time, said he had a great gimmick that was going to bring up the ratings. He would hire me to do the weather. Because at that time they never had females do the news, but they'd have "weather girls." He would fire the current one and he'd bring me in if I would come on in different costumes. Well, I listened to it, because I thought, well, this sounds kind of interesting. Well, then he went on to explain that in the summer when it was ninety degrees in the shade I would come on in a snowmobile suit and people would think, wow, is she ever bizarre! Isn't she fun?

Let's see what she does tomorrow night! And so they'd keep on watching more and more. People would watch and the ratings would go up. The other side of that is when there was a blizzard, he would expect me to come on in a bikini.

**KC:** Of course.

**JG:** I *couldn't* believe it. You know, and I was just out of college, I really wanted this job, but I knew that there was no way that that was the right thing to do. So I turned him down, went home dejected thinking my television career ended before it started. But then he did call me a few days later and decided to hire a man fully clothed to do the weather and hired me to do news reporting and photography.

**KC:** Were they trying to compete with a weatherman on another station who had a lot of gimmicks?

**JG:** Well...

**KC:** I suppose they were trying to get a rating up from [unclear]?

**JG:** They were trying anything.

**KC:** Mmmm.

**JG:** And this fellow didn't keep his job that long. And he was very much a ladies man. [Chuckles] So it was a bizarre situation to start working in an atmosphere like that. But I worked there for three years, and then when the female from Channel Four left to follow her husband to Minneapolis, then I got her job at Channel Four in 1976. And shortly after, many females were hired. Because as I was telling you before we started that a lot of the good candidates are female. Not...it's...it's kind of interesting, it's kind of swung the other way that not as many men are applying for news reporting jobs.

**KC:** Now [unclear] your background is in psychology.

**JG:** Hmmm.

**KC:** You're a graduate of the University of Minnesota. How did we get into this crazy field that you're in?

**JG:** No, my major is speech communication, education.

**KC:** So psychology is...

**JG:** But I had planned to be a guidance counselor eventually.

**KC:** So this really...it was your plan, where you are right now.



**JG:** Yeah. Journalism and English minors. I planned to teach. Teach and coach and be a guidance counselor. I just got...I just strayed a little bit.

**KC:** Well, and you did teach. You substituted for a while at Moorhead High School, right?

**JG:** Right. And I have a...I had a real strong background in track. Track and field, which was unusual at that time, because there weren't a lot of...Well, there wasn't...the High School Activities League did not sanction our state meet, although Moorhead High did win it. Hmmm. But yeah, there wasn't organized sports for girls. That's what I'm trying to say. But I competed for eleven years even on a national level, so when it came time to apply for TV jobs, I was different than the rest of the many applicants because I had a sports background. So I was really two in one. I mean, they could hire me as a female doing reporting, but they could also have me doing sports reporting. And then sports was *just* becoming recognized for females at that time.

**KC:** Okay.

**JG:** So that really helped me get the job. And I always like to mention that to young people, because you never know. You know, sometimes I would almost apologize for being an athlete because it was almost embarrassing back then, with a lot of your peers. But you never know what you've done that really is a talent that will make a difference later to get a job.

**KC:** Title IX came in in 1979 making equal sports for women. You talked about there are more and more women coming in as reporters. But what Title IX has done, what I understand for sports for women, has created a lot of jobs for men.

**JG:** Mmmm.

**KC:** A lot of the jobs for men, a lot of men coaches on the women's sports scene.

[Brief interruption]

**KC:** Ah, what happens, so many times...Now you talked about sports relating and helping, you would do several jobs in your station. Quite often in sports the coach will...ah...to get another job and then they'll have a part time coach of a women's team.

**JG:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**KC:** And so it has brought a lot of jobs for men, but the females are not in the top administration.

**JG:** They're not in the top administration in television either! In Fargo-Moorhead right now it is exciting, there is one female radio manager, Nancy Odney, at KLTA radio. That is a first. She was just appointed within the past year. But we have proven ourselves as talented news announcers, interviewers, photographers. But we haven't been recognized yet for management.

So hopefully, you know, by the time somebody listens to this tape in the *future* that will be changed! But that's definitely an area where we need to grow.

**KC:** You have grown though, in the last ten years, haven't you, as far as women in television? As you've like...

**JG:** As far as numbers of women in television?

**KC:** Well, they start out as weather people and now they're...

**JG:** Oh, yeah.

**KC:** That's changed.

**JG:** Definitely, you know. And Barbara Walters was a major reason for that. The irony is she did not really succeed as a co-anchor with Harry Reasoner on ABC. He really disliked her and was jealous of her million dollar salary that got so much publicity. And she is...she has a speech impediment and she's not a good reader. Her strength is interviewing and getting the interviews, getting people to talk to her who wouldn't talk to somebody else. But...so in a sense, she didn't succeed as an anchor, but the fact that the network put a female on as a co-anchor, I knew myself that, hey, I bet this will happen in Fargo if it can happen in New York. And sure enough, a few months later, Channel Four decided to go co-anchors, so we were the first, in 1979. Channel Eleven went co-anchor six months later. Channel Six went a year later. So she really did make a major impact, even though it was short-lived. She wasn't on that long.

**KC:** Now you are a noon anchor as well as your shows.

**JG:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**KC:** You do anchor at noon. Isn't that kind of neat to not have to come back at six o'clock and come back at ten o'clock? I always wondered how that daily work...

**JG:** Yeah.

**KC:** The daily workweek goes for the people that have to come back at odd hours.

**JG:** Well, they kind of go in shifts. Whereas I pretty much work constantly unless I leave in the afternoon to do other things. And I do a lot of volunteer work during that time. But what I'm really proud of is I produce my own show. At night there are about three or four people who do what I do during the day. So I produce my own show. I do all the background, all the writing of the scripts, all of the editing of the videotapes, all the decision-making. And then I actually present it, anchoring it. So it's my baby by the time it's on the air. Whereas the evening news is the work of about...well, seventeen people as far as reporters, photographers, and anchor people. And then there's a separate producer for that show as well. So...

**KC:** I don't think many of us out there realize that though. That noon hour is so...

**JG:** So my morning is real, real hectic. [Chuckles]

**KC:** Yeah. What is your day? Do you have an eight o'clock to something deal?

**JG:** Well, I start at eight thirty, but I've had other people fill in for me who start at seven. I mean, it just gives you an idea, because I've done it for so long. So I can...I have learned to do two things or three things at one time. Get it done.

**KC:** You can *never* get sick.

**JG:** [Laughs]

**KC:** Can you? [Chuckles]

**JG:** Well, and you can never be late for your job, that's the big thing.

**KC:** Yeah.

**JG:** *One time* I didn't realize that the...I was so short on time. And I wasn't sitting there. They had to go to an ID of KXJB for about twenty seconds. And I heard about it right away, you know. So you learn your lesson. But hmmm...*one time* in fifteen years, that's not too bad. But you can't be late for this job. And you can't be...you can't go over either, so you always have to be watching the clock. You have to get off on time, too. So and then in the afternoon then I do my other projects, and it really depends on what I'm working on. I'm really...I think that I'm a self-starter. I don't have to have anybody standing over me saying, "Work, work, work," or, "Do this, here's an idea for you." I...I'm not that way. Plus, I really get into the community, and I do get out, and I do volunteer work. And you do learn more about your community and what's going on that way, too.

**KC:** What are you volunteering in right now?

**JG:** Well, what I'm proudest about is Campfire. And I really have felt as strongly about that...

[Recording interruption]

**JG:** I've really felt as strongly about Campfire work as my own television work, because for seven years I was on the board of directors. We went from a situation where we were having a lot of personnel problems; our camp enrollment was really down. Our camp, Camp Trowbridge, was built in 1929 and hadn't been kept up. And so I really...I guess I just kind of felt like it was a calling at that time for me. So I really poured myself into it. And many, many weeks I would put as much time into my volunteer work as I would my TV work. And now the camp enrollment has continued to go up for the last four years, we're accredited by the American Camping Association, we've raised about eighty thousand dollars and then matched it with our own

money, so we've put at least a hundred and seventy thousand into that camp. So it's...it's really a first class camp. And now...our dream was to get it to really be a regional camp, and I really think it is becoming that way. We get kids as far away as Williston and Dickinson [North Dakota]. We're getting Fergus Falls and Detroit Lakes Campfire people to realize that, hey, maybe our camp really isn't that bad. They don't have to have their own name on it; they can come to ours.

And hmmm...we've done a lot of work with underprivileged kids, so that many, many children who normally couldn't afford to come to camp are able to because of..Well, last year we spent six thousand dollars in regular camperships we raised. Not to mention the fifteen thousand dollars that we received from the Teamsters the last three years for Camp Casey, which we started a few years ago for children with cancer, one special week for kids with cancer to come. And that's been a real special thing that I think the community in general has taken pride in. And we've gotten both hospitals that usually compete—unbelievably compete—to work together, Dakota and St. Luke's, sending volunteer doctors and nurses to camp to supplement our staff to work with these children. So we're real proud of that.

**KC:** Are you a director of some sort in this group? Or you're certainly not sitting back in the back of the volunteer group.

**JG:** I was on the board of directors for seven years and that's the max. Actually, the max is six years. [Chuckles] I...somehow, I sneaked in another year. And then I was president during a time period where we had some personnel problems, so we didn't have an executive director. And we had some financial problems. So actually, I was the executive director...or doing a lot of those duties for free as a volunteer for six months. So that was an extremely busy time, continuing with my *paid* job and my volunteer job. So yeah, it's kind of my middle name is Campfire right now. But and I learned when...in my twenties I...I'm thirty-seven now, and in my twenties I tried to be in many organizations and do a little bit for each one. And then I made the big decision to go heavy into one. And I really feel good about that. Because then you really can see an impact, a change.

**KC:** What do you do if and when you have spare time?

**JG:** Ah...[Chuckles]

**KC:** [Chuckles] I mean, your volunteering is done in your spare time, but you must have some kind of a sport that you get into or something to escape.

**JG:** It's almost like I got...hmmm...I OD'd on sports or something. Because now that it's "in" for women to work out all the time, I...don't do that. I have an exercise bike in my living room, but that's about it.

**KC:** Does it have any miles on it?

**JG:** Oh, yeah. About twenty-five hundred.

**KC:** And I love to be down at the lake, and put on blue jeans and a flannel shirt and just do chores down at the lake. [Sighs] And I think that's *really* important for your mental health to have a separation, something completely different from work. And manual labor, whether it's at the camp or my own family's cottage, just doing manual labor is...I think it's really good for the mind.

**JG:** Did your parents have something to do with your getting into Campfire Girls? [Unclear] this volunteer...?

**KC:** Well, my mom was a leader when I was a kid. My parents have always been involved in volunteer work and very supportive of the community. Yeah.

**JG:** Do you want to talk at all about how salaries have changed for women since you first started? You've been the...in now that you said, fifteen years.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm. I started at four hundred dollars a month. And there was no overtime pay even if you did work twelve hours, which oftentimes was the case. Four hundred dollars a month as a reporter-photographer. The same day, a male was hired doing the exact same job. He did not have a college degree. I did. He was paid about five [hundred] sixty, five [hundred] sixty-five a month. So that gives you a little indication that...you know, there was definitely discrimination going on. And part of it is that you're so naïve you don't realize it's going on to ask for more, to do something about it. And even when you got to the point where you did realize it, it didn't do that much good. But anyway, since I've worked at Channel Four I've had...hmmm...I think I've been treated real well as far as salary. I don't publicly say how much I make, but there was a major change in my salary after 1979 when I was promoted to the co-anchor position.

**JG:** Did you gain a good deal of confidence and become a more assertive...to...stick up for yourself?

**KC:** Hmmm, not in 1979. That was, frankly, a low point. But maybe in the last five years, definitely have gained a lot of confidence. The irony was that another female who is anchoring on another station now was with me at Channel Four and we were set up as competitors. The news director did this on purpose. He was really into mind games, the fellow at that time. So he had us competing for...to become the first female anchor. So it was really a...really a low time. So when I was selected, instead of being ecstatic and happy...it really wasn't that way at all! [Laughs] And then you're going into a situation...I always kind of compared it to the male locker room. You're joining three men who are very close; they have worked together every night for years and years. And they've...you're not on TV that much. You have a lot of commercials, you have a lot of videotapes, and you end up visiting during those videotapes. So all of a sudden there's a female sitting between you. And I don't care for dirty jokes, and that really...it was really an awkward time there for a while, the first year especially. [Laughs]

**JG:** [Chuckles]

**KC:** But it's improved. I mean, there is no comparison now.

**JG:** Are you at a high point?

**KC:** Well...

**JG:** Have you had high points?

**KC:** I had a real low point two years ago, so I...you know, it just depends on what you compare it to. Now, I guess, hmmm, I feel pretty good about a lot of things. But I really expect a lot of myself. And I also expect a lot of the people I work with, too, so I guess I'm never really satisfied.

**JG:** Don't you have to be that way to be in your business?

**KC:** Probably.

[Recording interruption]

**KC:** I was just going to add on here that I find myself the happiest when I get *out* of the newsroom. Because as much as I...I *really* respect the people I'm working with. Our reporting staff, in particular, is by far the most intelligent group of people I've ever worked with. You know, you see different phases over the fifteen years, but right now we've got a really good, mature, intelligent group. And the average age is probably about thirty-two, which does make a difference compared to, you know, years ago. Like seven, eight years ago, we were a lot younger, and people were kind of at an icky stage. You know, they talk a lot about adolescence being a bad stage, but frankly, when you're about twenty-five or so and you're struggling in your career and wanting to prove yourself, it's really an anxious time. And if you have a whole room full of twenty-five year olds...[Laughs] It can be kind of bad.

But hmmm...I really...I think that it's most rewarding when you get out and you interview people. And whether they're the young people that I interview, or others, that's when...It takes more effort, and it takes more effort to go out of town. I'll put about seven hours into a two-minute story for a "student of the week" feature if I go out of town. But those towns, many of them don't get any kind of publicity, especially positive stories done. Usually, it's just the fire and explosion or something [chuckles] if somebody is going to come with a camera, not a positive story. So they really appreciate it.

**JG:** Do you have to do those in the evening or on weekend in order to get them in?

**KC:** Well, I do editing whenever I can. So especially in the winter I'll find myself going in on Saturday mornings a lot to edit.

**JG:** So you do your own editing of your tapes.

**KC:** Oh, yes. Do the whole thing. Whereas by the time late spring comes, I concentrate on being nicer to myself and not taking on such a big load. But in the winter I drive myself nuts working. [Laughs]

**JG:** Are you ahead of the game on those “students of the week” then? Do you do more than one at a time? You’re always right on...?

**KC:** Well, it depends on...now when I went to Grand Forks a couple weeks ago, I went for Easter Seals, which is something I should also mention, that I host *The Easter Seals Telethon* now for about the eighth or ninth year. And so when I go up there a couple months before the *Telethon* I interview recipients of Easter Seals care. So while you’re in Grand Forks, you want to make the most of it, so then you interview a couple of students, too, so in that sense you work ahead of time. But lots of times you’re just doing it each week.

**JG:** What is the biggest, most memorable event that you have covered that you can think of since you started?

**KC:** Well, in the viewers’ eyes, I suppose, they’d say, oh, the biggest event would have to be your first day at Channel Four when Ronald Reagan came to town. He wasn’t a successful candidate then, he was running against [Gerald] Ford. But he came to the airport and hundreds and hundreds of people were there to greet him. And I thought, boy, I’ve really arrived! I’m at a first rank TV station because they’re sending *two* crews out rather than one! Well, Phil Johnson our political reporter at the time got to interview Reagan, whereas I got to interview Festus, the guy from *Gunsmoke*!

**JG:** [Chuckles]

**KC:** And he was just a celebrity traveling around the country saying, “I like Reagan.” Well, you know, from the viewers’ standpoint, they would think that would probably be maybe the most exciting. Or when George Bush came to town, I interviewed him, along with other reporters. But truly, the more positive ones that really stick in my mind, make an impact...this little girl I interviewed a couple weeks ago for Easter Seals. I have been thinking of her every day since. She’s ten years old, her mind is perfectly fine, but she has cerebral palsy so she’s in a wheelchair and has trouble talking and moving. Now that little girl means much more to me. And if I can get on the *Telethon* next...this weekend and tell her story in a positive way, and in a sense help her through getting people to call in with their pledges, that will mean a lot more to me than interviewing Ronald Reagan...or Festus! [Laughs]

**JG:** [Chuckles] Have you ever interviewed the little boys that were burned in the camper?

**KC:** No, I haven’t.

**JG:** Their story is...so [unclear] sad.

**KC:** Yeah, Kathy Bock from the [*Fargo*] *Forum* did a beautiful job on that article.

**JG:** Yeah. She's been doing some health stories in the paper.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** That you're doing on TV. [Sighs] How did events influence your job?

**KC:** Well, I guess I talked about Barbara Walters' impact already. Viewers...you know, I like to think that the viewers are our boss, and that...people should call in more or write more if they realized how much impact they have. Because, you know, not enough people really take the time. They'll see something they like or dislike and then they'll wonder, well, huh, why did the management make that kind of an idea...make that decision? Well, they should have expressed themselves. So...

**JG:** Because they are open to change? They are open to ideas?

**KC:** Yeah. Well, because they're there, they *want* the viewers. Because it means money, higher ratings, so they want to please the viewers. [Chuckles]

**JG:** I'll never understand their rating system because I'm never...I'm never called.

**KC:** Well, you get sent a diary. So if you...if you receive a diary and are asked to keep track of your viewing habits for a month...

**JG:** Please do so?

**KC:** Well, you represent five hundred people. And in your case, you would represent a rural female of 'X' age.

**JG:** One that comes in is counted as five hundred?

**KC:** Yep.

**JG:** Hmmm.

**KC:** So you have a lot of impact. And then it's dissected for the whole day from the time we go on the air at six o'clock in the morning until like one-thirty in the morning. So you can look at any time. So when people say, well, how do you do in ratings, they have to be more specific, you know, what time of the day. This *KX4 News Conference*, my own peers, I worked my tail off on that...that abuse show that I told you about. My own *colleagues* didn't watch it. But that show beats out Connie Chung on network news and then the other network newscast, too. So...somebody's watching it out there! [Laughs]

**JG:** [Chuckles]



**KC:** See, that's the positive, getting out in the community and doing volunteer work or just widening your circle, is that then you get feedback from people that keeps on feeding you and keeps making you want to keep on going. Whereas if you just went by what you get back at the station, you'd be in a vacuum, because you don't get that much feedback.

**JG:** I suppose that you've noticed over fourteen years a change in the electronic age changing your job.

**KC:** Yeah.

**JG:** The beautiful studio that you people have built. That's...you weren't in that studio when *you* started, that's just in the last few years...

**KC:** No, we've only had it for about three years. We were in a glorified Quonset hut to begin with that existed from the beginning of television, you know, in the early 1950s. Until just three years ago, Channel Four was located in this dumpy building on Maine Avenue. And on TV it looked very nice because our set was always nice. So it always baffled people. We entertained lots of student groups, especially I do at noon. They'll come and watch the noon news and then stay afterwards, and I visit with them and answer their questions. And they don't say anything, but you can...you could tell that they were just baffled by how...what dump we were working in! [Laughing] But now we're in a five million dollar building. Everything in it is new from the desks to the equipment, everything. It's beautiful.

**JG:** Is there really a reason for every one of those little television screens?

**KC:** No. They're mainly for looks. We had a set designer. *The* set designer for CBS News in New York came to Fargo, North Dakota, looked at our competition's news sets, went back to New York and designed that set for fifty thousand dollars. Just the news set itself. And the television sets that you are referring to, it's just kind of a sign of...of the 1980s or whatever that that's "in" right now.

**JG:** Now I'm talking about the technical room where they're doing...

**KC:** Oh!

**JG:** ...they are doing all of the...

**KC:** No, they really have a function.

**JG:** They have a function?

**KC:** In the control room.

**JG:** Because the wall is just full of them.

**KC:** Yeah.

**JG:** Every single one of them has a reason...

**KC:** Sure. [Chuckles]

**JG:** [Chuckles] I guess that I was surprised when we took a tour and sat in on a telecast. I was surprised that you do that a lot, don't you?

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm. *A lot.*

**JG:** Every day of the week just about, do you have some [unclear] watching you?

**KC:** Well, you can count on the spring, there'll probably be a student group maybe every other day or even more often. Because they take them as their...fall and spring especially, when the weather is decent, they'll take them as their field trips.

**JG:** Do they give you a better feel that you are with people rather than [unclear] just looking into a camera and reading...?

**KC:** Definitely. And it makes you a little edgy, it makes you actually nervous, because then there's real people. Because you don't think of the thousands really watching you.

**JG:** Do you ever think of it?

**KC:** No. I mean...

**JG:** You just...you're just trying to make everything on time and do...?

**KC:** Yeah. I mean, you know...you know, logically, that they're there. But since you can't see them, they don't make you nervous.

**JG:** So the skaters in the Olympics are just skating and not thinking of the billions of people...

**KC:** Well...

**JG:** ...that are watching them? [Laughs]

**KC:** [Chuckles] I can't speak for them, but...[Laughs]

**JG:** Oh, my. [Chuckles]

**KC:** But we have lots of...lots of student groups. And I love that because I love the contact with kids. And I think that that is a gift of mine to be able to talk to young people. Whereas some of my colleagues will talk to a third grader the same way they would talk to a college student and

that just doesn't work. So I enjoy that. That's...that's a regular part of my job. But see, I create lots of parts of my job. I just enjoyed visiting with tour groups years ago so it just becomes part of your job.

**JG:** When you first started out?

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** Did you like it? Or did you have to grow to like it?

**KC:** Television?

**JG:** Your tours of the...

**KC:** Oh, no. I always liked it. It makes you more nervous, but...now it doesn't. But it made me extremely nervous to begin with when they were in the studio.

**JG:** Are you called on to go out and speak at different places?

**KC:** Yeah, I do quite a bit of that.

**JG:** What do they have you speak on?

**KC:** Well, it's pretty well open-ended. Usually, it is youth audiences, and they want a motivational speech. And you figure that they want to hear a little bit about broadcasting, because that's why they've invited you. But then I always pump in volunteerism because I like to give a plug for that, so that we'll *have* volunteers in the future! And hmmm...and kind of tips on kind of the steps to take at an earlier age in order to be successful later. My latest speech was to the State Convention of Elementary School Principals in North Dakota. Now that was a challenge, because you wonder what they want to know. There was a big group, maybe four hundred principals from all over the state.

**JG:** How did that feel compared to being in your TV studio?

**KC:** When you do well, it's *really* exhilarating. It's the highest high you can have, *much* more rewarding than television. But if something goes wrong...It ended up during that speech, because it was an adult audience, they had drinks before the speech, before the dinner.

**JG:** Mmmm.

**KC:** And they were...it ended up to be three men who were book salesmen, they were not even principals. And they were disruptive, they acted like they were in about seventh grade, on one side of the room. And when you're busy speaking, you don't zero in and see that there's just three people who have had too much to drink. Instead you just...you think, oh, my God, why aren't I relating to that side of the audience? What am I doing wrong? So on the outside you're

trying to be confident and continue on, but on the inside you're really questioning, maybe I'm too longwinded, maybe I better drop part of this? So I did cut it down a little bit. But then I found out afterwards—and I'm glad I did—that it was just three boozers.

**JG:** And they probably...somebody probably apologized for them.

**KC:** Yes. Oh...yeah, I got a very nice letter from the people in charge who wanted me to be assured that I was appreciated...just not by those three guys! [Chuckles] But by the four hundred I was! [Laughs] But you are really putting your...really, your ego on the line. You put your ego on the line all the time in television. Because, you know, it's...what's great is that if you do something well then you can share it with lots and lots of people. And how many people have that opportunity in their jobs? But if you do something poorly, if you make a mistake, or if you just don't reach people...In television it's aggravating, but in public speaking it can be devastating, but usually things go well though.

And then with youth audiences, it's real interesting. I addressed a regional Future Homemakers of America convention in two different places. In Fergus Falls the girls were really mature and interested in communications and very verbal with their questions. In Thief River Falls they were scared to death and very quiet. And at first I thought I had bombed with them and hadn't reached them. And afterwards I realized that many of them were in junior high rather than high school. They were a younger audience. And they were scared to death of me because I was, to them, a big celebrity. To the Fergus Falls girls, they admired me but they didn't put me on a *real* high pedestal.

**JG:** [Chuckles]

**KC:** So it's interesting. And I used the same speech, so it was a real interesting...and just analyzing the different audience reactions.

**JG:** Do you feel different...? Hmmm, now you were with the adult audience and you were with the two different age groups.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** Do you feel that...?

**KC:** I much prefer teenagers.

**JG:** You feel more confident and you're not intimidated by it at all.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**JG:** Not that you are...maybe you're not intimidated by anything, but...

**KC:** No, I was intimidated by the adults. Because as soon as I arrived they said, “Oh, Kathy, we’ve had the greatest day! We had so and so from such and such.” You know, an outside speaker came in. “And he was *so* dynamic, he was the best I’ve ever heard!” And I just thought, *oh!* Now I’ve got to follow this guy! You know.

**JG:** Kind of what [Olympic figure skater] Debbie Thomas felt on Saturday night!

**KC:** [Chuckles] Yeah!

**JG:** [Chuckles] Ah, you must have a lot of memories you cherish or people that...who are your mentors.

**KC:** Sally Hilleboe Adelson, I always say, is a mentor. Not in the sense that...hmmm...she was not a news reporter. And you know, I’ve got different strengths than Sally does and she has different strengths than I do. But she was always...hmmm...she’s retired now. She’s always such a...oh...supportive person and very kind. And you know, if you had a bum day you could just jump on your bicycle and pedal over to her house and she’d treat you like she would her daughter, who is my age, too. And I think that’s really important that you do have a mentor. And I didn’t need her every day. I don’t mean to say that I cried on her shoulder every day. But when there was a major change or a major disappointment, you knew that you had somebody to talk to who you respected and *understood* where you were coming from.

My parents are really, really important in my life, and even though neither one was in broadcasting, they’ve been the most important support system for me. They’re truly my best friends. And hmmm...whenever I’d get down, my mom would always say, “Now if you get to the point where you think you really want to quit, you be sure and come and talk to me first!” [Chuckles] And that was important because...eh, things can be bad one minute, but then you talk them through, and you get a little distance from it, and then you can go on, and you can build on it. So...

**JG:** What are you going to be doing in ten years?

**KC:** Well, hmmm, in the past year I’ve been broadening...trying to broaden my talents—doing more public speaking—that you’re not putting all your eggs in one basket. Doing some magazine writing, which I had never done before, never done a...never had a published article before, so that was something new and exciting and...

**JG:** And you interviewed the president of the college. [Chuckles]

**KC:** [Chuckles] Yeah, President [Roland] Dille of Moorhead State was my very first assignment. So that was real nerve-wracking after fifteen years in broadcasting, here I’m doing my first written assignment. Hmmm, but that...that’s a thrill. So what you have to do is...after a while you’ve established yourself. You can always do better in anchoring or interviewing, but you are doing a good job. And then you need to...so that you don’t get stale, you need to try

something new that *is* challenging, that is...does make you a little nervous, that you kind of wonder, can I really do it? So I look for those kind of things.

I haven't done radio yet. Eventually, I'd like to do radio but I don't know when I'd do it because I don't have a lot of free time. [Chuckles] Hmm. Fundraising, you know, it's not broadcasting, but *that* has really been an eye opener for me. Because I started in, you know, wanting to renovate this camp. And there's really only one or two of us who really were committed to the whole idea. And the other person said to me, "We can't do it alone." And I said, "Yes, we can!" I mean, once you get it going, then other people want to be a part of it, and that's *really* true. Now people call *me* asking me, "Will you come and talk to our group? Because we want to know more about your camp." Whereas before I was begging to come and talk to them. But that has been exhilarating to me. When you say, what will I do in ten years? I might be in business. That interests me. Hmm. And fundraising made me feel that way because I think it's probably a lot like sales.

**JG:** Fundraising brings you into development office and businesses.

**KC:** Well, mainly fraternal who have charitable gaming receipts have lots and lots of money to work with and they get a ton of requests. So first of all, your biggest challenge is getting invited to speak to them, because they don't invite very many people. They get lots of written requests but not many get invited to talk. And then to try to sell them on it. And then I use my television background with videotapes. I have nice videotapes of the camp that I have done. So then I bring visual aids with me. And then I never forget them. I don't just ask them for money when I want it, I remember them throughout the year with a thank you or a cute picture of them with some of the children or that sort of thing, so that they get to be part of the accomplishment, too. So I don't know what I'll be doing in ten years. [Chuckles]

**JG:** Do you think women are going to move up in television? Do you think that they'll be more in management or there will be bigger doors opening for them in this area?

**KC:** Well, in some ways we've continued to grow, and then some things have been happening in America in the last few years that have been negative. So I...I really don't know what the answer to that is. I think we need some really strong women in high places nationally to get us back on track. Because we have a whole new generation who has not had those kind of mentors.

**JG:** I don't think I'll ever see a woman president. Do you think you will see one?

**KC:** Well...[sighs]

**JG:** I'm fifty-two years old.

**KC:** Yeah.

**JG:** And I don't see a woman president in the future.

**KC:** I think that I'll see a woman president but...[sighs]...but I'm not sure, you know. But I think that will happen.

**JG:** I think a [Robert] Dole and [Elizabeth] Dole ticket would have at least piqued a few...pique a little interest somewhere.

**KC:** Well, that's exactly what I was thinking, you know. I tend to vote more Democratic rather than Republican. I definitely do. And my brother's also in politics in Minneapolis as a Democratic council member on the City Council in Minneapolis. But hmmm...I do think that Elizabeth Dole could do a lot. Because I've been looking; nobody has been talking about the candidate's wives at all. But I have been looking at all their wives. Now Dick Gephardt's wife was on TV recently, and I'm sure she's a nice lady, but she's not charismatic and she's not a leader. And Kitty Dukakis has had her problems with chemical dependency. I just think that Elizabeth Dole is by far...And Mrs. Bush, I think very little of her after the way she treated Geraldine Ferraro. So...[Chuckles]

**JG:** And Paul Simon's wife wasn't real impressive coming into this area, was she?

**KC:** Well...you know, the trouble is...See, I'm impressed by her. But America is not impressed as a mass of people by intelligence and by intellect. What they want is a pretty package. I mean, they want intellect but in a very marketable way, a very...oh, kind of sexy way. Whereas the Simon couple is extremely bright and could do a heck of a lot for America but they'll never get elected.

**JG:** He's so boring. His voice.

**KC:** Mmmm-hmmm. It's just like Fritz Mondale. He and his wife are real worthwhile, but he's not handsome. And my business is a lot to blame for that. Because if you watch the network news stories, you can watch every day for a month and not know any more after that month is over about the issues, about how the candidates feel about various things. All you know is whether they wore their bow tie, or whether they were in Iowa, or who is in front in the poll. All you find out is kind of this superficial junk.

**JG:** And the women are still wearing red at Reagan's news conferences.

**KC:** [Chuckles]

**JG:** That hasn't stopped.

**KC:** Mmmm.

**JG:** Now you think that news is more of a showbiz now? Do you think that news...?

**KC:** Well, we're definitely going through that phase in Fargo, which has been hard...to put up with. And it's kind of funny, because America went through that phase on a more...not a national

level, but in bigger city markets years before Fargo did. And now it's out. Now intelligence is in. And now anchors who go *out* and do reporting is in. I mean, Dan Rather has been to South Dakota and done the news in field, literally, in the field. Tom Brokaw has gone to Mexico and reported right from the earthquake site. But in Fargo, North Dakota, people spend a lot of time combing their hair and putting on their makeup, and go out and read what other people have written for them. See, what...two years ago when we made the change that I would no longer be on the news, instead I'd be doing the live remotes, I said, "Well, why don't you combine the two so that you have a working anchor? Sometimes I'm on the set, sometimes I'm out in the field." "No, no, no, no, that's not what we want." So. And now nationally that's exactly what's happening. [Chuckles]

**JG:** Is it going to come here? [Chuckles]

**KC:** Well...don't hold your breath!

[End of interview]