

Jane Broomfield once had dim view of politics

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SHE IS OUTSPOKEN on the abortion issue — "I really think that should be left up to the individual. I don't think we have enough women in Congress. I don't see how men can be deciding women's issues."

Last fall her husband changed his stance and voted to override the President's veto of a bill to ease restrictions on Medicaid abortions in cases of rape or incest. "I think I have been doing a lot of lobbying," she commented.

Since their three daughters — Susan, Nancy and Barbara — are grown, they no longer have to worry about getting a baby sitter to go into Washington for a social engagement, or back to Michigan for a weekend of politicking or to one of the countries Broomfield visits as vice chairman of the House Foreign Relations Committee.

"There was always a sitter problem. We didn't have parents to come in and take over."

Early on the Broomfields made the decision to make a white, brick colonial house in Maryland their home. "It's the best way for most (congressional) people," Jane said. "Going back and forth was just too hard on the children."

But, "I feel home is Michigan — all our thoughts are there." They recently gave up their apartment in Birmingham, and now stay in the Lake Orion lakeside home of Broomfield's brother, Robert, and his wife.

"We're there once or twice a month — and in the summer. We get along so well."

THROUGH THE YEARS, Jane has had a number of causes: "Whatever is immediate. I worry a lot about the drug situation. I think about it a lot. I would like to come

up with a solution."

Programs for illiteracy, mental retardation and mental illness, and cystic fibrosis have also drawn her support. "I guess the next one I'm going to be interested in is spina bifida. Our youngest granddaughter has it."

Her hobbies include needlepoint and bridge. Bored with doing small needlepoint pieces, she is now half way through a three-panel floor screen depicting their family history, which she envisioned then commissioned an artist to sketch.

She describes herself as eclectic — in the causes she champions, her decorating and in her dress.

"I sort of like to do my own thing."

Her home "is kind of a hodge podge" of pieces they like, many from their travels. She prefers clothes shopping in Birmingham to Washington. "When we first came to Washington there were very few shops. I couldn't wait to get back to Michigan to look for a dress."

SHE STILL seeks out Birmingham stores — "They carry what people in Michigan are wearing." She favors a tailored style and buying things that mix and match.

Although strapless is back, the Jane Broomfield of today might wear to the White House a black velvet jacket from a favorite suit put together with a chiffon skirt.

Where, by the way, she expects to be attending affairs for some time. By most accounts Bill Broomfield, who will be 60 on April 28, is expected to win his 18th Congressional term this fall. There has been speculation for the last 10 years that he would retire.

There's no substance to that, according to Jane. "It's so conscientious and works so hard at it. He just loves this job so."



Family photos and memorabilia from Rep. William Broomfield's 34 years in Washington flank Jane Broomfield as she recounts her life as a political wife.

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Her view of Washington:

● On Washington nightlife: "People in Washington are all business when they go to social events. They go to bed early. They get up early. Your social life is nearly all work-oriented. April and May are the busiest months."

● On Washington society: "It's different than any place in the world. I find you get all the tidbits of gossip in the (newspaper) columns. It's sort of like the movie colony in California."

● On belonging to Washington's Capitol Hill and Congressional clubs: "I like to do the nitty-gritty work. The social part doesn't particularly appeal to me."

● On new administrations: "The style of doing things will change. The caterers change the type of food. The clothes style will change. The entertainment changes. I'm not great on

Tex-Mex food, but I may learn to like it."

● On a President and First Lady who move up from Congress: "The mood changes with Congressional wives. It's so great when it's one of our own. They just know how you feel."

● On Barbara Bush: "Barbara is just so down to earth and a lot of fun. You look forward to doing things for her."

● On Washington friendships: "I've always tried to have friends outside government. It helps you keep your perspective."

● On major events: "They're all exciting. There's something new going on all the time. One of the most exciting times was when China was opened up."

● On traumatic times: "The Vietnam War. Watergate — a very sad, sad era."

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