PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Daniel E. Beren (R)

153rd District

Montgomery County

1967-1976

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
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Heidi Mays (HM): Good afternoon. Thank you for being here with me today.

The Honorable Dan Beren (DB): It's my pleasure.

HM: I'm here with Daniel Beren, who is a former Representative from Montgomery County, which became the 153rd Legislative District. He served between the years 1967 and 1976. Again, thank you. I wanted to begin by asking you about your childhood and your family life and how that prepared you for public service.

DB: Well, that's an interesting – I grew up at an interesting time, and I've always been interested in politics, and I can remember as a youngster being on the boardwalk in Atlantic City when Hitler invaded Poland, and that sort of caught my attention, and I never thought I would end up in politics. My family were Democratic. I remember in the 1944 Presidential Election, our next-door neighbor said to me, "You know we had four votes for Franklin Roosevelt [US President, 1933-1945] at the polling place," and that was the first time that had ever happened. Well, I knew who two of those votes were: my parents. As I began to grow up, I was much more attracted to people doing things for themselves, and the Republican approach, and, I can remember staying up all night listening to the radio results of the Harry Truman [US President, 1945-1953]/Thomas Dewey [Republican Candidate for US President, 1944 and1948] election, so that had always been part of an interest that I had. And, as my life progressed, I still wasn't thinking about being involved in government. Although, when I was in Germany in the Army, in essentially the peacetime Army then, I can remember writing to a couple

of famous columnists and asking if they had any interest in somebody like me. Well, I never got an answer from any of them. But, all those were, in hindsight, were just telling me where I wanted to be. And, as I started practicing law and getting more and more involved, I finally woke up one day and said to myself, "Stop complaining. Do something about it." So, that really was how I got involved.

HM: Could you tell me a little bit more about your education and your experiences before coming to the House?

DB: Well—

HM: Where were you educated?

DB: I was educated at a wonderful high school: Cheltenham High School, which is located now in Wyncote, Pennsylvania in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. We had a very unusual – that was unusual, too – we had a wonderful mixture of race and religion, and we had people that just got along from all over. And, I was astounded years later when I saw a picture in the [*Philadelphia*] *Inquirer* about the Philadelphia police, and how detectives in the [19]50s – African-American detectives – really served together. They didn't intermix with the Caucasian policemen. This was in Philadelphia. And our schools were integrated back when I was in grade school, so that was shocking to me at that later date that I would find out that even in those days, meaning the [19]50s, that that type of segregation was going on. So, we had a wonderful high school class. It was so

good, that I forgot to study, and ended up going to prep school for a year, and that prep school was Pennington Prep School, located in Pennington, New Jersey, which is near Princeton. And then I picked my college for reasons that I trust my children didn't do, or my grandchildren won't do, but they probably will. And, at that time I was participating in running track, and I picked a school in the Midwest that was a small college, but had one of the most famous runners in the world going to school there. His name was Harrison Dillard, and they competed at a very high level, what would be a Division 1A level now. So, I went out to Baldwin Wallace and spent my four years there, and, again, had—by that time I had learned to study, so things went easier, but I had, again, I was very lucky. I had a wonderful experience there. I decided, however, that four years of college wasn't enough, and decided to go to law school. I ended up at Temple Law, and then as I was studying for the bar exam, I got my draft notice and went into the service.

HM: So, can you tell me about your military background?

DB: Well, I was fortunate enough to be placed in the finance corps. The finance corps was an elite group, not in the sense that they were elite troops. They were elite because they held the paychecks and they were treated very, very differently from the other troops that were in Europe. I was very impressed with the preparation and the ability of our armed forces then. They spend six months in the field, and they were top-notch. And, in middle of my service, I got married, and my wife came over, and joined us, and so, we spent a year in Europe.

HM: Where were you stationed?

DB: We were stationed in Frankfurt, Germany, and, of course, had the opportunity to travel. It was an interesting time because we've just read in the newspaper about the fiftieth anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution. And I can remember sitting in the movie theater at our base and having the troops alerted to get ready to go to Hungary, if that was necessary, and then it wasn't very much after that – this will prove what an easy time I had – that my wife and I taking a vacation, if you will; taking leave and going down to the Mediterranean in France and lying on the beach and looking out at the fleet, and two hours later, the fleet was gone. And that was when Eisenhower sent them over to Lebanon. So, it was a fascinating time, and, as you can tell, I was more of a spectator than a participant.

HM: Well, can you tell me a little bit about – where did you practice law then?

DB: I started out in Philadelphia and I really didn't care for that, and I was with a firm that was a fine firm, but thought 'in the box,' and I'm not an 'in the box' thinker. So, I went to Montgomery County, and then one of my classmates was Vince Cirillo, who eventually became a judge in the higher courts in Pennsylvania. And then [I] went off on my own, started a firm, and we practiced in Abington, Pennsylvania. [I] got involved in politics, and then somewhere in the middle of that time when I was in the Legislature, decided it would make more sense to be in a larger firm, so I joined the firm of Waters, Fleer, Cooper, and Gallager, and I stayed with them until I left the Legislature.

HM: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit about your political background? When did you first become interested, and what were the steps you were taking to – ?

DB: Well, I think, and, in hindsight, as I look back and as I've explained to you, I was always interested, I just didn't know it. And I was convinced that our nation's way of solving problems was wrong, and it wasn't working. And it was the era of big government. Little did I know how big it would become. And I became very impressed by Bill Buckley. That's when he was beginning to speak out and talk in terms of the Conservative approach to governance. And so, that became more and more of an interest to me, and [I] became active in the Young Republicans. And then, that led to an election for Chairman of the Montgomery County Young Republicans, and we had a very, very heated contest between one other person and myself, and I think we out-organized them, we out-counted their votes. We had an excellent team, and, so, that was 1965. And again, I always like to do things differently. I can remember putting on a big Young Republican event in Willow Grove at one of the motels there, and we had the Kingston Trio (or a similar group) come in and perform, and that was when I first met Arlen Specter [US Senator, 1980-Present]. Because, I met Arlen, he was DA [District Attorney] of Philadelphia [1963-1973], and I invited Arlen out to be our main speaker, and that, of course, was 1965, re-apportionment occurred, and they went from a multi-person District to a one-person District, and they created a District right where I lived, so we had a contest internally in the Party to see who would be nominated, and I was fortunate enough to get the nomination, and part of the same group that was with me in

the Young Republican Chairmanship situation stayed with me and helped put a campaign together and that was my political career.

HM: Well, what made you decide to run for the Pennsylvania House? Did somebody ask you, or was this just a natural – ?

DB: I had the bug. You know, you get the political bug, and being Young Republican Chairman, I was in the mix already, and when the seat opened up, I mean, that was like an invitation to get more involved.

HM: Okay. Could you talk about that first political run for the House?

DB: Well, the first political run, in some ways, was the easiest one I had. I think the Democrats probably just put somebody up to put them up. Now, I know it was somewhat embarrassing because – not for me, but for one of my children – because the son of my opponent was in the same class, and so, that created its own little problem. But, it was an easy campaign. And, I guess, looking back one year before that, or two years before that, it was the [19]64 election, Presidential Election, and I was running the Barry Goldwater [US Senator, Arizona, 1953-1965, 1969-1987; Republican Presidential Candidate, 1964] campaign in eastern Montgomery County and, shocking as this may be, we had one of the few districts – I was a committeeman then – that carried Barry Goldwater. And, again, you just meet such interesting people. So, that fed into my interest in politics. I just wasn't going to be denied.

HM: So, who helped you with these elections? Was your family involved?

DB: Well, yes, probably in spite of their best interests. I had a wonderful wife, and one of her blessings was that she didn't take politics as seriously as I did, so that helped keep an even balance. But, you know, she was involved, and we have pictures of the kids doing that stuff. But, I had a great team, some of whom I still keep in touch with, and part of it was the Young Republican team. There was a fellow by the name of Bill Hall who, today, still has the best memory of anybody I've ever met. [He] handled the PR. And, we had people like Roger and Vivian Steel, and many, many others, Paul Aloe, that were the basis of our group that stayed together, and we eventually became the leaders in the Abington Township Republican Party, as well as their supporting me in the State Legislature and so on. But, as we – talking about my wife – as we get together now, there's still three or four of us that meet on a fairly regular basis: Bob Butera [Robert J. Butera; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1963-1977], who was Majority Leader at one time, Bill Yohn [William H. Yohn; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1969-1980; *currently,* Outstanding Federal District Court Judge] and Tony Scirica [Anthony J. Scirica; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1971-1980; *currently,* Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals,], who are just very, very distinguished jurists. And we would get together with our wives three times a year. What I learned then was that my wife was looked up by the other wives as "How do we deal with this?" And the fact that they had a more realistic opinion of us than we did, it was a great leadership on her part, and I think it played a role in how we all handled

ourselves, so that was an interesting sidelight, that I learned about more afterwards than I realized was going on at the time.

HM: Do you remember how much it cost to run your first campaign?

DB: No, but I remember my last campaign, and it was in 1974, and it was when Joe Hoeffel [Joseph M. Hoeffel, III; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1977-1984; United States Representative, 1999-2004] first appeared on the scene. He was running against me. And, I remember raising seven thousand dollars, and I just couldn't believe that political campaigns could be that expensive. So, obviously, before then, you know, it must have been one thousand or two thousand or three thousand. It is just bizarre now to think of the type of money that you have to raise.

HM: Yeah. I don't know what it costs now to defend a House seat. I was just wondering. Did you enjoy campaigning?

DB: I did. I enjoyed meeting people. I still enjoy meeting people. I really love to knock on doors. The first door I knocked on, however, was slammed in my face. And, this was not a House campaign. I'm thinking now. I sought local office first, and as I left that house, I said, "Now, what do I want to do? Do I want to quit, or do I want to go on?" So, obviously, I went on, but it was a good lesson.

HM: Could you describe your legislative seat?

DB: Well, it was a Republican District, although we had – in local elections, you know, we went up – the Party went up and down, and I think soon after I left, there was a period when the Democrats controlled Abington Township, and then it went back to Republicans. It's probably going to go back to Democratic now. But, Abington Township and Rockledge Borough were a wonderful mix. Again, we had the very, very wealthy areas of Abington. You had the areas of Abington that were less wealthy. You had an area that was predominantly African-American, you had areas that were working-class, you had areas of people in between. It was a reflection, in many ways, of our country, and one of the things I always tried to do was to make sure that we included everybody in our campaigns, in the political Party, and so on, so that we could, you know, we could recognize people, build a party that people recognize for their abilities and not because they were rich or because of something like that.

HM: Talking about the diversity of the District, was it hard to represent such diversity?

DB: No.

HM: Were the issues the same?

DB: No, there were different issues, and I never thought of it as hard. The African-American area was called, and probably still is called, Crestmont. And, it was a time when we – meaning the country, the nation, the state, the District, and so on – were able

to have more openings for African-Americans and others. And I can remember I always made it a point to make sure that I was as helpful as possible to people of talent, and so we probably never carried that district, but I think we did very well there. Looking again, looking through that scrapbook, I can remember when we got the first African-American detective hired by Montgomery County. And, there was a picture of us at that time, and I thought, my gosh, that's back in the, again, back in the [19]60's. Now, Montgomery County was a very Republican County, and very much a part of the white Anglo-Saxon approach to government. And before I became a lawyer there, it would take years for somebody who was Jewish to be admitted to the Bar association – this was the County Bar Association. That one of our most distinguish jurists had to read rather than take the Bar Exam, and had to wait seven years to be admitted to the Bar, ended up being the President Judge. But, we were going through change then, and so it was, in hindsight, I didn't realize it at the time, but it was exciting to be part of that. And, one of the things that we did – when I say we, I mean those of us who were active politically and active in the Legislature or whatever – did was we were very open and we believed that the people we wanted to run for office had to be qualified, really outstanding people. And, I don't know whether this is the time to mention, when we were first elected, one member of our delegation just didn't show up in Harrisburg. We went out and knocked him out at the end of his first term, because he wasn't doing the job, and replaced him with an incredible candidate, who, today is the Chief Judge of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, Tony Scirica. So, we didn't put up with foolishness. We tried to pick the best candidates we could. Again, I felt it was very important to open up the judiciary to people other than just the group that was running the courthouse then, and I can remember a very close

friend of mine who we wanted to have become a Common Pleas Court Judge, and the Bar Association met and picked someone else. Now, there was no reason to pick someone else, other than the fact that this person was Italian. And, that's when I decided that I was going to get active in County politics as well as in State politics. So, we became active. We were successful. He became a judge, so things worked out, and we got the first African-American judge on the Montgomery County bench. And, in doing that, I worked with Dick Gerber. Dick was an active Democrat whose son is now a Member of the House. But, we were all the same age and we had a lot of similar interests, and so we always had a great judiciary, and there is one funny story that we had. The President Judge of the court was hard of hearing, and so was one of our Senators, who was Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. We're sitting around talking with the judges and the Legislators about a pay increase for the judges, strange as that may sound, and Dick Tilghman [Richard Tilghman; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1967-1968; State Senator, 1969-2002], who was the Senator said, "There is as much chance of getting a pay increase as there is for a dog walking across the street." The President Judge, who was also hard of hearing, said, "Who are you calling a dog?" We got that quieted down, but it's something I haven't forgotten.

HM: Well, I'd like to go back to talking a little bit about Montgomery County politics, and would you consider your District a swing District?

DB: Now. Well, I trust it is.

HM: Well, I've been looking back at – historically, as you said, Joe Hoeffel replaced you, and then Jon Fox [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1985-1992] who is a Republican replaced him, and then Marty Laub [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1993-1994] served, who is a Republican, Ellen Bard [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1995-2004], then, who is also a Republican, and now, Josh Shapiro [State Representative, Montgomery County, 2004-present] is serving. So, I was wondering what your thoughts are on that?

DB: Well, Joe, of course, Joe Hoeffel, who succeeded me, was an incredibly active politician who was successful when being elected as a Democrat, Township-wide, was an upset. He worked for two years, knocking on doors and being everywhere. So, he was very, very, very bright. And, he was a very good Legislator, and then decided to move on, I think to County Commissioner. Now, he was succeeded by –

HM: John Fox.

DB: John. John, I first met John when he was sixteen or seventeen and interested in politics. First he got involved in the Teenage Republicans, then the Young Republicans and he, I think, had a very high position in the Young Republicans at Penn State. So, John was another person with a tremendous amount of energy, and bright, and he, too, decided to move on, becoming, also, a County Commissioner. And, Marty was, you know, a very nice guy. Ellen—Ellen was a very, very hard worker, and she also decided to move on. So, now we have Josh. And Josh, I think, many of us feel that Josh is like

the way we were when we were active in politics: very bright, very good, high standards, very effective. So, he carries on the tradition of being an outstanding Representative, and we'll see what happens in the future.

HM: I have a feeling you just wish he was a Republican.

DB: Well, yeah. That's not possible.

HM: Right.

DB: We used to talk to Joe once in a while about changing Parties, but he was home in the Democratic Party, and so, of course, is Josh.

HM: Well, I was wondering, could you tell me how you felt during your first Swearing-In Ceremony?

DB: Well, you know, we still had a lot of – the first thing that strikes my mind is that we still had a lot of veterans from World War II serving. And, I'm sure it made an impression on me as it did on my children and some friends who came up to see people who didn't have an arm, didn't have a leg that survived World War II and were Members of the General Assembly. It was a wonderful experience to be Sworn-In.

HM: What about the number of women that were serving?

DB: Well, there was a very limited number of women, and a couple of them were, even in those days, very outstanding. I say 'even' because I don't want to create the wrong idea that they weren't. But, I think there was a Legislator by the name of Marian Markley [State Representative, Lehigh County, 1951-1968] who was the first woman member of Leadership in the Republican Party, and she obviously was effective. We had women in our Delegation, probably before most of the other Delegations. Having said that, it was still back in the [19]60's and [19]70's, and we had a tradition in eastern Montgomery County, which was Cheltenham Township, and Jenkintown Borough and Abington Township where they would have a hanging of prominent people. Horse-Thieves Association. And, the year that I was honored to be hung, two or three of my friends, woman friends, protested out in front that no women were allowed. So, it changed. We had very, very effective women, politically, and they began to play a bigger role within the Party, and during my stint as County Chairman, I always felt it was very important to get them involved and not treat them as just mailing letters, but to really have them hold office. And we gradually increased the number of women who were office holders. And, so, in hindsight, it's a shame we weren't as sensible then as people as we are today.

HM: Could you tell me what it was like serving as a rank and file Member during those times?

DB: Well, again, the Republicans were a very progressive, not necessarily on the issues. Somewhat on issues, but very progressive in their approach. So, in this, Bob Butera was elected two terms before I was and was moving up to Leadership, and I think he had a big role in what happened. But, they turned around, and as young Members were brought in, they gave them responsibility; gave them legislation to push, made them available on important committees. So right away, you were part of what was happening, rather than somebody sitting back and learning by watching others.

HM: Could you tell me what your first office was like?

DB: Yeah. The first office was, we had no office. And, Leaders, of course, had offices. And, we would share these huge rooms. Your desk was the desk on the Floor of the House. And, you would go into this large Caucus room, and you would wait in line to get a chance to return phone calls, and you would wait in line to have somebody in the secretarial pool take dictation to answer your letters, so it was far different than it is now. By the time the second term came around, we began to move into some offices. I think our office had probably six or eight Legislators and two or three secretaries, so the staff began to build. And, eventually during my period of time we moved up into smaller offices, much better help. So, it was very progressive. And that, to a degree, that also was bipartisan. Ken Lee [Kenneth B. Lee; State Representative, Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties, 1957-1974; Speaker of the House, 1967-1968, 1973-1974] was the Speaker then, and Lee Donaldson [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1955-1970], Herb Fineman [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker of

the House, 1969-1972, 1975-1977] from the Democratic side, [K.] Leroy Irvis [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker of the House, 1977-1978, 1983-1988]. All – as I said, I talk about Bob way too much – were all very active in trying to bring the legislation, or Legislature into becoming a much better group in terms of services that were available to them and ways that you could better serve your constituents.

HM: How did your constituents get a hold of you then?

DB: Well, they could call me at home. They would call, you know, I'd get a call up there, and they'd have the messages waiting for you. At that point we didn't have District offices, but I would use my law office as a place where I would return calls, see people, hold meetings, and so on.

HM: Okay. Can you comment, maybe, on how you feel the House is most different today than it was in the time when you served?

DB: Well, the first thing is just what I said. And now, there are what? One thousand employees of the House?

HM: I don't even know.

DB: Yeah. Now, the good side of that is that now you are able to get a lot of good research done and you can be up to snuff on, or up having great information, which is very helpful. The bad side of that, which I've discovered, is that some of the Members who have been elected since then, who are excellent Members, didn't necessarily turn out to be people that I could bring into our lobbying group because they were used to having people do their work for them, rather than do it for themselves. That was one difference. The second big difference, I think, is that reapportionment turned into a situation where each Party was able to draw their own seats, and that meant that there was less competition. I'm speaking now as a political scientist, not as a Republican.

HM: Okay.

DB: Or a Democrat, or whatever the case may be. That meant there were probably less opportunities for people to come along and challenge seats. There were less opportunities to get discussion going about issues because Members would be in safe districts. And, I think, as you look back at the turmoil that's occurred this past year, and may or may not continue into November, is the fact that people were used to winning their seat, holding it for twenty years, not having to campaign, being twenty years older, and having to go out and knock on doors, doing things that they haven't done, so that, that changed the scene politically in the sense that perhaps you didn't get as much legislation accomplished as, I think, we did, because we were always being challenged. So, I think a lot of the losses that occurred – now, I'm going back-and-forth on this – a lot of the losses that occurred in this past Primary season were because people had lost the

appetite of getting out and knocking on doors and seeing people. They lost the energy, they're not as healthy as they were twenty years ago. And so, that's changed. Now, as a political scientist, you would say that it's much better to have competitive races, because you really don't end up with a one-party control in some form of governance. This is more true, I suspect, in Washington than it is here, but that's a fact of life.

HM: When you served, would you say that your colleagues and yourself were full-time Legislators or part-time Legislators?

DB: Well, I think it was a mixed bag. And, you couldn't do your job well if you didn't devote the majority of your time to being a good Legislator. And, what happens is that as you get elected and you move up and you get appointed to more committees and you do more work, that has to take your time. So you have to make the choice, are you going to be a Legislator or not? Now, some people chose to be whatever they were. By the way, that's not a bad idea, because the old theory was that we were an elected body of the public and it was important to have farmers, schoolteachers, lawyers, whatever because you brought with you that experiences and that helped in the discussions about issues and so on. Now we have full-time Legislators in many cases, and I suppose, on the one hand that's good, but you miss having that participation. I don't know, are there any schoolteachers, for example, in the House or the Senate now that are still active or something like that? Well, it was important to get their views on issues, and it was better to get that, rather than maybe to learn issues second-hand. So, that's a big difference.

HM: How was the seniority system whenever you were here? How did you elect your Leaders?

DB: County Chairmen played a big part in the election of Leaders. Let's get back to that in a second, because what's happened since the [19]60's, is that the political organizations were much stronger then. And the county, large counties or small counties that had a strong political leader would help pick the candidates, would raise the money, or the candidates would raise the money on their own, but most likely, the county committees did, picked the candidates and move, and that's how the system worked. And, if a Governor had a hard time getting some votes, he would call the County Chairman and say, "I need these people's support," and the County Chairman would round up the votes. That may happen now in probably less than half a dozen counties. During the time that I was active politically, it began to change, and the County Chairmen began to lose some of their power. We, as candidates, began raising money on our own, and that brought some more independence. That subsequently changed to where the County Chairman, except in, perhaps, places like Delaware County, and perhaps still Montgomery, and so on, didn't pick the candidates, the political leadership of the Republican House and Senate and the Democratic House and Senate (so there were four groups) would raise the money and pick the Leaders and pick the candidates. So, that has changed in the selection of candidates, the power of County Chairman, and whatever other changes occurred. So, that's been a big change. The first part of your question that I strayed from was?

HM: The seniority system. How did that help with, maybe, Chairmanship, or just anything that comes to mind?

DB: Well, the seniority system probably in DC works a little bit better because – or worse, depending on your point of view – because they put limits on who can be a chairman for how long. And that opened up the process in the sense that it gave other people a chance to move on and it weakened the incredible strength that somebody who would be a Chair for twenty years had over whatever would get out of his or her committee. I would guess that, unless there were bizarre cases, which of course there are, that there is merit to the seniority system. I'm not in total support of it, but there is merit in the system.

HM: Could you describe what a typical Session day was like whenever you were a Member?

DB: I don't think that changes much, and I don't think that will change much. It could be very boring when you are just going through the technical part of a Session, where you are moving bills from first consideration **[END OF SIDE 1]** to second consideration, where people are making speeches that are good for their reelection and so on. So, that still exists. Once you get over being excited about the fact that you are there, you realize the pluses and minuses of it. So, there can be days when it is very boring, and there also are days when the debates are wonderful and very exciting. But, the work that's done is really, by-and-large, done before bills get to the floor. So, a lot of times people who are

unfamiliar with the process say, "Well, they only work seventy-eight days," or something like that. Well, that doesn't take into consideration the committee meetings, the study, the traveling around the state to investigate issues. There are some people who are elected to office who do incredible jobs as part of government, but get criticized by the newspaper because they are only here for a stated amount of days, but they are back doing work in their district that is very, very important, and I wish there was some way that those people could get some recognition when the stories occur about people who don't show up. Having said that, you know, the people who don't show up should be replaced, by-and-large, but I think you need a realistic assessment of, "Are these people public servants?"

HM: How did you feel whenever you had to stay late for, maybe, the budget, or – ?

DB: Oh, I loved it. I loved it. Should I tell the story about – ?

HM: Please do.

DB: Well, my first year in office up here in Harrisburg, late sessions were commonplace, and there was only a one-vote difference between the Republicans, who controlled the House, and the Democrats, who had recently lost power. And, we were voting on a bill that then-DA Arlen Specter wanted to get passed, probably to help his reelection campaign to get a better handle on the Magistrate system in Philadelphia. And, everybody knew this was going to be a vote that was going to come at about three

o'clock in the morning. So, we had one Member from Erie County who was a notorious drinker. And, because it was important to make sure everybody was there, the Leadership assigned three people, or four people, to go out and make sure that they got him back in time for the vote. Well, three AM came, the drinker was there, and the people assigned to him weren't. They were still out drinking, so, then they had to send people out after them to get them. But, Harrisburg was much—it was a very small, compact city then. We didn't have the suburbs that you have now.

HM: What about turning back the clock? I've heard you tell this story.

DB: Well, yeah, I forget whether it was a matter of law, or in the Constitution, but when Session ended, it had to end at midnight on the last day of November because that's when you Constitutionally went out of Session, and there was some very important legislation being voted. And, this time, this was the Democratic Party that was in control, and Herb Fineman was Speaker, and every time the clock got closer to 12 [AM], he would send someone up to the clock, rewind it to get more time in order to get the votes together, maybe to get their people who drank too much back to the Floor. So, that would happen from time to time. You would –

HM: Pretty long days, huh?

DB: Long days.

HM: Could you talk about the major pieces of legislation in which you were involved?

DB: Well, yeah, I was very fortunate to be involved in some really good legislative accomplishments. The first one was something that I just created myself, and it was called the Neighborhood Assistance Act. And, when I was running for election for my first term, there were articles in the newspaper, the Philadelphia papers, about SmithKline and French, a Pharmaceutical Company, and what they were doing in their neighborhood down by Spring Garden Street in Philadelphia. And they were in a predominantly Hispanic area, and what they were doing was they were having people come into their building, holding classes for them so that they would learn English, trying to help them solve problems with Philadelphia City Government because they weren't getting any answers to their problems, and it seemed to me that that was a much better way to try to help the community than to rely on some governmental systems that just weren't working. And so, I thought, well maybe the way we should do that would be to offer companies a tax credit so they would take part of their staff and use them to help serve the community and help the community members better themselves, better the community. And, so I was elected. I had legislation drafted. Ultimately, we got it passed. It became the first tax-credit legislation in the nation to encourage the business community to solve social problems. And, over the years, it's been very effective. It doesn't necessarily get a lot of publicity, but they've done a marvelous job in keeping communities stable, offering the community members make decisions, together with the business community, on what is good for their neighborhood. And, it can not only be the neighborhood, it can be the schools, it can be education, it can be any number of things.

So, you had the tax credit that helped the Smith – Tastykake became a very big participant in this approach, and, so they could get a tax credit. That way, they could get some of their employees who would help the neighborhood. The neighborhood stabilized. Homes got better. They could provide some assistance in getting mortgages, and it could be effective in many, many ways. So, it combined what I thought was the way things could work, which was to get the private sector involved, and try to get people involved in solving their own problems, rather than having some outsider come in and tell them what was best for them. So, that became the first –as I said- the first piece of legislation like that in the nation. I went down and testified before the Republican Platform Committee. This was when Richard Nixon [US Vice President, 1953-1961; US President, 1969-1974] was running for his first term and we had parts of that program as part of the national platform, and it caught on in several states. And it still continues to this day, and it's an effective, effective program.

HM: What do you think the hardest issue you ever encountered as a Representative was?

DB: Well, I want to come back to the Committee on Gang Violence, but Charlie Mebus [Charles Mebus; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1965-1978] was a member of our Delegation. And, Charlie, he was from Cheltenham Township, and he was a very forward-thinking person, and when the abortion issue first came to play, Charlie was very pro-abortion rights, and there probably wasn't more than two or three members in the Republican Party then who felt the way Charlie did. Charlie taught me two things. Charlie taught me, one: that you know it's important to have your own thoughts and

beliefs and to adhere to them. And the second was, whenever you don't know what to do, do what you think is best. And that's a piece of advice I've been able to pass along to others when they are torn about how they should handle a piece of legislation. On the abortion issue, it was one that I struggled with. And, I can remember driving back on the turnpike listening to KYW and hearing Marty Mullen [Martin P. Mullen; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1959-1982], who was then from Philadelphia, the Appropriations Committee Chair, and the leading fighter against abortion, swear that he was going to defeat me and Bob Butera because we supported the Governor on his override on the bill. But, that was a learning experience for me, too. So, the toughest issue, however, wasn't a legislative issue. It was an issue that dealt with gang violence in Philadelphia, and that's not unlike today, the number of killings that are going on in Philadelphia and in Harrisburg and some other cities. We, the Republicans were in control of the House. Three of the distinguished, really distinguished, members of the Democratic Party, Hardy Williams [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1971-1973, 1977-1982; State Senator, 1983-1998], his son is now in the Senate[1], Lucien Blackwell [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-1976], whose son is now in the House[2], and Dave Richardson [David P. Richardson; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-1995], went to Ken Lee, who was the Speaker, and they asked him to appoint a committee to look into the gang violence. And, I was quite surprised when Ken made me Chairman of that committee. It was a seven-person committee: four Republicans and three Democrats, and we went into the neighborhoods. We held our committee meetings at night, and we learned a lot about what was going on, including

[1] Anthony Hardy Williams, Philadelphia County, State Representative, 1989-1998; State Senator, 1999-present.
[2] Thomas W. Blackwell, Philadelphia County State Representative, 2005-2008.

some instances where the police would pick up somebody from one area and drop him off in another gang's area, which was an invitation that wasn't very nice, and that person could be subject to anything. We must have spent two or three months in that committee, going from neighborhood to neighborhood, holding our hearings, listening to people who were involved in trying to solve the problem, listening to some crackpots. And, I would dream about it at night. It was a very involved situation, one in which I learned a lot about it. We got to the end of the year, we didn't get any legislation passed because some of the people who wanted to have it looked into wanted to make a political statement rather than a legislative statement. Years later, it could have been four or five or ten, Hardy Williams, who then became a State Senator, said to me, "You'll never understand how helpful those hearings were, because we got the community involved, and they came out and they participated in solving the problem." So, I think that that was a wonderful lesson for me, and it was something that I'll not forget, and I think it's something that I can look back on and say, "You know, you did something good there." So, that was a big lesson.

HM: And, hopefully they'll maybe take your heed and hopefully solve some of the problems that are going on today in the same cities.

DB: You've got to get the communities involved, it's that simple. Well, it may not be that simple, but –

HM: Right. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the camaraderie in the House? You've mentioned some of your relationships already. I was wondering if you'd like to talk about how people got together, and – ?

DB: Well, that's changed drastically, too, because it used to be that Harrisburg was a smaller city, a small city, and there weren't any suburbs. So, when Session was over, everybody would head for a watering hole, or a bar, and Republicans and Democrats would be at the same bar, and you developed relationships and friendships across the aisle. And, so, if there was any bitterness or any problems, they would pretty much disappear. That doesn't happen anymore because of two reasons, I think: politics, of course has gotten much more personal. There is less camaraderie between Republicans and Democrats than there used to be. People are spread out so that if people want to go to one bar or restaurant – there was only two or three restaurants in town – so everybody would be there, and you'd be talking with everybody, and I developed good friendships with people who were Democrats, and they did the same, and they were friendships that lasted for a lifetime. I don't know how much of that occurs now, and, again, the reasons are twofold: one is the really partisan nature that exists now because political parties appeal to their base of support and so what they do is they support those issues and demonize the opponent, so you're elected into office and you think, "Oh, those dirty people on the other side," and they just don't fraternize the way that people used to. I suspect that – I hope that that will change somewhat.

HM: What was your relationship like with the media?

DB: I had a good relationship with the media, by and large. And, my approach to the media was: be as open as you can be, try to answer their questions, and you recognize that it's a two-way street. They have something to do, and Legislators or elected officials use the media maybe more than the media uses them because they are getting their press releases out, getting their point of view across, and then that creates the danger. The danger is you start reading your own press releases and you think you're somebody different than who you really are.

HM: Who were your mentors whenever you first came to the House?

DB: Well, I think that I have mentioned Bob Butera several times. Ken Lee, who was the Speaker of the House. They're the two that leap out to me now, but I was fortunate in maybe being a lawyer and so on, and having a sense of what was going on. So, they provided the opportunity, and it was up to us to take advantage of the opportunity.

HM: Do you feel like you served as a mentor to anyone?

DB: Well, I hope so. I would be hard-pressed to name somebody, but I think I've always been open to holding and opening advice and so on.

HM: What is your opinion of the technical changes?

DB: Oh, they are incredible. They are incredible, and a large part of that goes to John Perzel [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1979-present; Speaker, 2003-2006]. John came up here, he was elected right after I left the General Assembly, and he was pushing computers and all this technical stuff, just as Bob and Ken and Herb Fineman and Leroy Irvis pushed to reform the House and open procedures, the technology has changed things incredibly, and I would think Pennsylvania was the leader in many ways in getting computers on – now, I think probably every state has them now – but have them on their desks, and have the technology available. So, I think that's very effective. I wish I could use some of it.

HM: Do you recall any memorable events that occurred while you were a Member?

DB: Yeah. I think the most memorable was the [19]72 flood, when the Susquehanna was caught in this terrible storm that lasted for several days, and we actually had to evacuate the city because of the floods, and so that was a memorable event. I'm remembering bringing Robin Roberts up to address the General Assembly when he was elected – he was a neighbor of mine back home – and when he was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame and he won everybody's hearts over when he attacked the press. I remember Jesse Jackson coming up when Richard Nixon was running for election, and supporting him, which people find hard to believe. You know, you got to meet, every once in a while, a presidential candidate or a President. So, and, after I left and got into lobbying, how could you forget the Three Mile Island and talking people to get out of town and do that? So, we've had, like everyone else has, it's been an interesting time.

HM: You've already shared several stories. Do you have a favorite story that you like to tell people about the House?

DB: Well, there was certainly the one story was the story with regard to the late-night vote and there was the story, too, about a very entertaining Member we had from Montgomery County who had a wonderful sense of humor, and I don't know whether anyone who sees this program would ever remember Jackie Gleeson and his show, but he used to have a character that he played called "Reggie Van Gleeson", and Reggie Van Gleeson was a drunk and carried on only has he could be portrayed. And, at the time, we were voting, we spent three days arguing on whether or not we should have Sunday sales of liquor, and the arguments were bitter and they were long and if you can imagine, they went on for three days. Finally, Pat McGinnis [Patrick J. McGinnis; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1973-1978] got up and, you know, called for the Speaker's attention so he could make his statement. He said, "You know," he said, "I had a father who lived to be ninety-seven years old. He drank a pint of whiskey every day of his life, and three days after he died, he looked better than the people who are opposing me on this bill." So, that was a very funny moment. It's one that I'll not forget, because it brought down the House. It was always important to have people with a sense of humor who, when debates got very, very tight, had the ability to get up and tell a joke and get the tension out of the air. So, that was the one that I remember most.

HM: What aspect of your job did you enjoy the most?

DB: Well, I think I've always liked to be creative, and I think the fact that I could create the Neighborhood Assistance Act, that was very, very effective, and looking back over notes, I realized – notes or whole newspaper articles that were gathering dust at home – I realized that in the late [19]60s I was calling for things legislatively that would allow sidewalk cafes, which are now quite normal, that called for tax credits for dealing with the environment and other issues, so I liked the chance to be creative. I loved working with people. Right now, I'm working – I love, as a lobbyist, to work on legislation that is new and different, so that, that's the part that's given me the greatest satisfaction. What can you get done?

HM: What part did you like the least?

DB: What did I like the least? Well, eventually what happened when I was a Legislator and County Chairman, I had no life. I couldn't go out without having people come to me and say, "I've got this problem. I have this, and I have that." And, eventually, I didn't like going out, and for a social person that wasn't a lot of fun. So, that led to my decision to get out of politics, too. You just couldn't get out and not have somebody come up to you with a problem, so, it was fine for a while, and then it got to be too much.

HM: How would you like your tenure as State Representative to be remembered?

DB: Okay. Well, I think, as somebody who was conscientious, creative, and effective. So, that would be it.

HM: Well, you've already told us what you've been doing since you left the House. You're still a lobbyist with Buchanan, Ingersoll –

DB: And Rooney. We just merged with another firm, so –

HM: Okay. So, how does that work? And one of my questions, generally, is "How do you feel about lobbyists?"

HM: How did you feel about lobbyists, and did your opinion ever change?

DB: Change. Of course. I can remember early in my legislative career, probably when I was County Chairman, making some sort of remark about lobbyists talking to us or doing something like that, and a couple of lobbyists came up to me afterwards and set me straight. But, lobbyists are an important source of information. You know, when you have thousands of bills coming across and being introduced in a session, even with staff, you have to be able to get both sides, or as many sides as there are to a story, and that's essentially the role that a lobbyist plays. So, of course, my views have changed. I think, you know, lobbying is a challenging occupation, and it was interesting to see the number of women that have gotten into lobbying who have become incredibly effective lobbyists, so that has changed. In my office, before we merged, we always had women lobbyists,

and they're very, well, like any lobbyist, they are creative, create, have good thought processes as it relates to strategy and planning. And, so I think it's a good profession.

HM: Well, I was reading on, I think, the Web site that you had successfully secured passage of many pieces of legislation in your role as lobbyist. "He accomplished victories in the areas of taxation, transportation, banking, insurance, thoroughbred racing, the environment, and funding for healthcare, higher education and stadiums." So, that is quite an accomplishment.

DB: Well, it's over a period of time, so you'd better have some.

HM: Yeah. So, you know, listing that as an accomplishment, you know. I guess my question is, do you feel like you have been more successful as a lobbyist than you were as a Legislator? Because that's –

DB: Well, that's interesting. I never thought of that. I've been at it longer, so I'd better be more successful, but I trust that I've been successful at both, and the difference, in part, is that in lobbying now everybody has teams, and we have a wonderful team. I have always been surrounded by great people, and I'm not ashamed to say that I can pick people who are better than me who I can listen to and learn from, and put a team together that's effective.

HM: Okay. Well, my last question is, do you have any advice for new Members that will be starting soon?

DB: Yeah. I have a couple, if asked.

HM: Yes.

DB: The first is: don't forget where you came from, what you were before you were elected; that you're just a person just like everyone else. Keep your balance. Don't get swallowed up by the idea that you're reading your own press releases and you think you're better than you are. That's number one. Number two would be: don't do anything stupid. And, I think every incoming legislative session should have somebody come in and talk to them about code of ethics about what's proper, how you get into trouble, as well as how you be successful and be good. And, the third is, you know: let your imagination drive you. And, the fourth is that Charlie Mebus advice, which is: if you don't know what to do, do what your insides tell you is right.

HM: Well, thank you very much. I don't necessarily need to have the last word, so if there's anything else you would like to add to this interview, please.

DB: No, thank you for this interview. It has been very enjoyable. And, I've been lucky enough to do things that I like, and I don't think everybody gets that chance. So, I've been lucky.

HM: Well, I appreciate you coming in today. Thanks again.

DB: Well, thank you.