PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Robert J. Butera (R)

150th District

Montgomery County

1963-1977

Interview conducted by: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
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Transcribed by: Erin Miller

Heidi Mays (HM): Good morning.

The Honorable Robert J. Butera (RB): Good morning. Good morning.

HM: I'm here today with Bob Butera who is a former Representative serving Montgomery County between the years 1963 and 1978. Thank you for being here with me today.

RB: Actually, I, I resigned at the end of 1977.

HM: Okay.

RB: Because I was running for Governor in [19]78, and I wanted to make a statement, so I actually didn't serve out that full term.

HM: Okay, well, thank you.

RB: That last term.

HM: Thank you for correcting me. I wanted to begin by asking you about your family life and how you feel that influenced your political aspirations.

RB: Oh, very directly, yeah. Let's see – where would I start? Start with my parents, I guess. My father is an immigrant, Italian immigrant, from Sicily; came as a little boy in the turn of the Century. My mother was born here, but she's also Italian, and I have seven brothers and sisters very close in age, so we were all raised together in the thirties, forties, and fifties, really, and my father was a very successful businessman as a real estate broker, but more importantly, he was a very, very active community person, and I told the story at his funeral – I gave the eulogy – that I discovered a commemorative plate celebrating the centennial of Norristown, where I'm from and where they immigrated to, and it was the hundredth anniversary in 1912, and my father had been here for a couple of years at that point and was not in school. He was already working at age twelve in the knitting mill, and I took the plate to them. I thought it would revive some memories, and my mother remembered marching in the parade at the centennial, and my father remembered watching the parade; very interesting time. Fifty years later, coincidentally, it was when I was first running, there was a sesquicentennial, 1962, in Norristown, and all the men wore beards, and they had a real celebration, and I had a campaign office on the parade route, and my father was the Grand Marshal of the parade. So, in fifty years, he overcame poverty, prejudice, and of course, he couldn't read – illiteracy as well. So, he had to teach himself to read and write, and he overcame it to such an extent that they made him the Grand Marshal of the parade, which means he was the number one citizen at that time. So, I had a lot of name recognition before I deserved it, because I was just twenty-seven years old when I first ran – and how did my family life affect me? Well, when you have seven brothers and sisters all within eleven years of each other, all attending the same schools in Norristown – we had someone at the high school from

1943 through 1956, and I was running in [19]62, so those people that we all knew in high school and grade school and so on, were now voting age, and we had a huge block of support. At least we were known, and we were all very active in high school, either in sports or in government and whatever, and plus, my father's reputation, it was a natural that I get into this political business and win. And, it wasn't nearly as hard as people thought it would be, because of family, and so on. So, that's the background. In those days there was no educational aid, so my father educated all eight of us; five of us went to graduate school, and he paid for everything, of course, and the three of us became lawyers, including me. I assume that's your next question.

HM: One of them. (*laugh*)

RB: Go ahead.

HM: Well, I wanted to know; do you always feel like you've had political aspirations then?

RB: Yeah, I often think about that, particularly in these days as you get older, you know, and I'm about to write memoirs as my father did, and I never lost an election until the last one in 1978 in the Primary, and that goes all the way back, as I can recall, to about the sixth grade, you know, and I was always president of my class in junior high and high school and even in law school; not in college. And. I think it was a natural thing for me

to gravitate toward, you know. So, it wasn't an unusual circumstance for me to be, you know, in the public realm.

HM: Well, I wanted to ask you why the Republican Party?

RB: Well, that's interesting. In Montgomery County from which I hail, of course, has been, and still is, a Republican county for the last well over one hundred years, at that point, very entrenched Republican Party, and my father was a Republican by choice, not because of where he lived, and I think it's very natural that you follow those instincts. At the time, in the Sixties now, at least in this state, the Republicans were the progressives, and I always thought myself as some, some kind of a progressive. Some people thought I was too liberal, to use that current term, but we grew up with Bill Scranton [William Warren Scranton; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1963-1967]. Dick Schweiker [Richard Schultz Schweiker; U.S. Representative, 1961-1968; U.S. Senator, 1969-1980] was our Congressman. He upset the party in 1960 in Montgomery County and became the Congressman. We were all – again, he went to the same high school, and we all knew each other, and we all worked in the campaign, and it was a, it was a youth movement, much like the Kennedy [John F. Kennedy; President of the United States, 1961-1963] movement on the Democratic Party – and we won that seat, and then we worked from within the Party to overturn it, and in fact, we did. Within six years, our group expanded, called the Schweiker Group – and I was part of that – expanded to capture every major office in Montgomery County, but we did it from within the Party rather than from

without, so we weren't Democrats. I think philosophically there was a difference, more so than there is today. But having been indoctrinated, I didn't have much choice.

HM: Well, that leads me to my next question about your education and your careers prior to coming to the House of Representatives.

RB: Yeah, well, there wasn't much career prior to coming because I was so young, but I went through the public school system in Norristown. Then, I went to the University of Pennsylvania to the Wharton School, and then, I went to Dickinson [College] for my law degree. I graduated in 1959, went into the Army just for six months at that time, and came out, and began working in politics locally, first in the Schweiker campaign, as I mentioned, and then also in my precinct. Excuse me. I was still living at home. I wasn't married, and I ran at age twenty-seven. Now, that doesn't seem like much today, but in those days nobody ran for public office at twenty-seven. As a matter of fact – and I was the youngest Member of the House once elected, although there were three others that were – including Matt Ryan [Matthew J. Ryan; State Representative, Delaware County, 1965-2003; Speaker, 1981-1982 and 1995-2003], and, of course, we're in the building today that's named after him. Matt was two or three years older than I, and there were two other people elected who were still in their twenties. Maybe twenty – I guess they were both twenty-eight or twenty-nine, but I was, I was the youngest, which, which was a big deal. The Kennedy election in our area in Norristown swept in a Democrat for the first time in years and years and years, as long as anybody could remember, so there was a Democrat incumbent in the State House. So, I was approached by Republican leaders

in Norristown as to whether I'd be interested in running, and frankly, I think a lot of it had to do with my ethnic background and my father's notoriety because they thought that they would go after one of my father's sons, and I was the only one who lived in the District, and I think I was the only one that would be willing to have done it, frankly, among my brothers. So, it was quite natural to me. I didn't think it was unusual that I was that age. You know, I had been through a fairly rigid educational system and emerged, and I was just starting to practice law, but I ran, and I ran in a very spirited Primary because this was a coveted seat. You know, when you – and, and it was pretty certain to go back to the Republican column, and there was a four-way Primary, that I won very convincingly, I think, largely because of family.

HM: I wanted to also ask you about your experiences as an attorney and your training. Do you feel that that aided you before coming to the House?

RB: Well, I think it did. Studying law is an interesting experience. I think basically what you learn is how to define a problem and then know where to find the answer. You don't really learn the answer. You learn how to define the problem, but it gives you a familiarity, certainly with statutes, and if you're running for the Legislature, there was an ease with which I could discuss what I was aspiring toward, even though I had never been there, because I had a familiarity with terminology, which body of law statutes controlled as opposed to common law, and I think, without question, it helped. You don't learn much about debate in law school, although there is some of that. You do get involved in competition, but I didn't debate my opponent, for example; I just ignored him

after the Primary, and we went on to win handily, because that's when Governor Scranton swept into office, and he really became my model, and he was, he was just a – I think he was our last great Governor, frankly, in this state, and a lot of us at that time were young, impressionable, and just molding our political thoughts and our approach to politics, and we modeled ourselves after him. I've told him that. It kind of embarrasses him. He was only in his forties at the time, but he was just a dynamic leader and set the tone nationally in many instances. As a matter of fact, he ran for President in 1968. He didn't win at that time – no, not [19]68. What's the matter with me? [19]64. It was the Goldwater [Barry Morris Goldwater; U.S. Senator, 1953-1986] year. Scranton was a candidate and lost in the Convention.

HM: I was wondering if you could characterize your first campaign run? You said there was a four-way Primary. Was there a party endorsement involved?

RB: No, there was no Party endorsement because there was an open seat, and I think the, the Party Leaders were afraid to endorse. As it turned out, there was a four-way Primary, but only one other candidate, other than myself, [who] scored a lot of votes – or captured a lot of votes – and it became kind-of a two-way contest, and the community was split among the political leaders. Now, what was happening without our knowing it was there was an evolution was taking place. The political leaders were changing at every level, including the local level, and it was becoming much younger. Montgomery County, having been such an entrenched Republican county, had gotten very old. The people running the courthouse, the Legislators themselves were, by my standards, were old.

They were my age now. They were in their seventies (*laugh*), which seemed awfully old, and there's a key I want to mention here, a key event that occurred that permitted me to continue my career, but there was a new wave of political leaders, and it was while we were Republicans and Kennedy was a Democrat, it was really stimulated by him. He ran a very youth-oriented, exciting, new ideas type of campaign with a lot of people-to-people contact. The campaigning, then, was not done on television and very little on radio. Some direct mail, but mostly in people's houses, coffee klatches, small meetings, small gatherings, and we did them too, fairly well, and we also knocked on a lot of doors in those days, and I guess people still do those things, but I think they rely on mass media a lot more today than was the case then. So, it was spirited, and I won easily as it turned out, and then in the General Election with Scranton capturing the Governorship back in the Republican fold, I ran ahead of him a little bit in my District, but still had no problem winning. Go ahead.

HM: No, you said that there was something that –

RB: Oh, well, that was 1962, so I took office in [19]63. In 1964, I believe that was the year, was the famous "one man, one vote" decision in the Supreme Court in Washington, and the "one man, one vote" decision had a tremendously broad implication, part of which was that we had to reapportion – the states had to reapportion – and Pennsylvania had been gerrymandered like every other State. Our county, for example, had three Districts in it. Two four-Member Districts and one single District, which was Norristown, where I was, but the rest of the county was covered by two four-Member

Districts, and that was pure gerrymandering to make certain that all Republicans got elected, and there was really no contest. They were so overwhelmingly Republican, those areas. I was in the only District that was contested at that time. Well, when we reapportioned, we had to make them all individual Districts. No, I'm sorry. That came – I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself. In [19]66, we reapportioned, and we created some two-Member Districts, one of which I was in, which really helped quite a bit because [19]64 was the Goldwater year, and that, that was the year I ran with a partner. It was a two-man District, so it was partially gerrymandered, and with Goldwater running so poorly in [19]64, I would have had a hard time winning my second term. It was the following reapportionment, then, that we went into single Districts. That would have been for the [19]66 election.

HM: Yeah, I think you're right.

RB: Yes, I think that's right, and then from then on. But, the key was this; that when we went to the single Districts, the older Members that I had mentioned did not want to run head-to-head with a Democrat, the older Republicans, so they all retired, one by one. It was very interesting, all about that same time. So, I became the senior Member of the largest Republican delegation in the state, and I was only thirty years old, and I didn't know anything, to tell you the – as I look back. I was very green. But, we still had the strongest delegation. We had to be recognized, because we were reorganizing the House, and I became the Whip at age thirty. Well, almost thirty-one, which I was the youngest Whip ever, and it was strictly because of those circumstances over which I had no

control. I had to perform; I'm not trying to be too self-deprecating, but circumstances play a huge role in one's political career. I've already given you a lot of circumstances that played in my favor. What would have happened had they not occurred I don't know, but I know what happened because they occurred. I took advantage of them; I became the Whip, and I was the Whip for six years, and then I became the Leader for five years, you know, so I had quite a nice career.

HM: Those are great stories.

RB: Yeah, well, there's a little bit of political intrigue in them.

HM: Yeah.

RB: And all the while I was practicing law, but less and less, because the more I got involved in politics, and particularly in the Leadership, the less I could practice. I was with my brother, my older brother, then my younger brother joined us, and we formed a firm, which is still in existence, and, you know, we were typical small town suburban lawyers that would do almost anything. As I became more and more involved, I became basically a real estate lawyer, because I could do a lot of that at night, having, you know, being in Harrisburg two or three days a week and all kinds of political obligations, I couldn't always keep a regular schedule, so I was actually working two jobs.

HM: But the Legislature was considered part-time at that time as well.

RB: It was part-time, but it was becoming more and more full-time.

HM: Even that early back, okay.

RB: Oh, no; in the Seventies.

HM: Okay.

RB: In 1970, we began expanding our influence in the government and began staffing to a level which would be just minor compared to today. But, we began developing research staff. I was in charge of developing the research staff as the Whip. I did most of the hiring, and we, we had an approach to a research staff, which was different at the time from the other three Caucuses. The two in the Senate, and, of course, the Democrats and Republicans in the House, and I think ours was, was the correct one. We all realized that none of us had ever run a business before, those of us who were then the Republican Leaders, so we got a large consulting firm. I think it was Peat Marwick – one of the, one of the large firms – to come in and assess our circumstance. What should we do? How should we manage this enterprise, which it was becoming, because we didn't have staff up until the early Seventies, of any magnitude. And now we actually had enough money appropriated to hire a research staff, and we took a very professional approach. We had certain guidelines for hiring. People had to have at least a Master's degree. Two of them had Ph.D.'s, and we decided that we were not going to do any individual hiring. Rather,

we were going to hire as a group, meaning that the people hired, some of whom are in the government today here and elsewhere, would not have their jobs controlled by a single person, powerful person, a Committee Chairman, a Leader, or whatever. Rather, they worked for the Republican Caucus. That was quite a different approach from the other three Caucuses at that time. They were more apt to have the Committee Chairman of XYZ Committee hire a staff person to do research, and so on. We did the opposite. We had a pool of very competent, research-oriented people, and we assigned them to certain Committees, usually two or three each, because we only had about fifteen or twenty in staff. But, we got a much better product that way, and people had much better job security, and they weren't as apt to flow with the political winds, you know, as things change, they'd be swept out. Rather, they stay for years and years and years. Two of them are still working – no, one of them is still working for the House Republicans.

HM: Well, you started down a path that I'd like to pursue a little bit further. You talked about some of the changes that the House was experiencing due to your Leadership and the Leadership of others.

RB: Yeah.

HM: But, what else would you list as some of the major changes during your tenure?

RB: Well, I think we became a much more open body than had been the case in the past. For example, it's hard to imagine this, but prior to 1972, all Committee meetings in the

House were private. They, they weren't public – the public was not permitted, I should say. There wasn't a public record of what took place in a Committee meeting, and anyone who understands how legislation is conceived and ultimately passed knows that the Committee is where the hard work is done; where compromise is sought, amendments are offered, the two Parties come together much more amicably than people would imagine, and when we opened the [19]73-[19]74 Legislative Session, Ken Lee [Kenneth B. Lee; State Representative, Sullivan, Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties, 1957-1974; Speaker, 1967-1968 and 1973-1974] was the Speaker, and I was the Republican Leader – Floor Leader – so, we were in charge; we were in the majority – we announced that we were going to change the rules and make all Committee meetings open. Well, you would have thought the sky was going to fall, but we did it anyway, and we were in control quite comfortably, and the rest is history. It worked beautifully. People became much better Legislators because their work was being scrutinized by the public. Earlier than that, we began the ethics legislation, which I championed. As a matter of fact, it's still the law, and it's a very weak ethics code, and I learned a lot during that experience. But, I drafted a Legislative Ethics Code, and an Ethics Committee, and we created an Ethics Committee in the House – there was none prior to this time – and my initial legislation was pretty tough, but I wanted to introduce it in a bipartisan fashion with my counterpart on the other side, and as what happened – and I'm trying to be as kind as I can be here – my original draft was watered down considerably, however, it was still better than nothing, I thought, and therefore, I agreed to introduce it. We passed the legislation. And what I learned was that when you have an opportunity for change, which we did, and I'm not sure exactly what year it was. I think it was [19]73 or – [19]73 it was. We had

this opportunity. We were in control. We had a Democratic Governor in Shapp [Milton J. Shapp, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1971-1979] who had some questionable background, and we were just going through Watergate, so ethics was in the forefront in people's minds, so we had this window of opportunity. What I learned was that when you have that opportunity, you must seize it and be really strong and go for more than you would have gone for under other circumstances. In other words, what was called for was a really tough Ethics Code that I originally had written. I should not have permitted it to have been watered down, and I would have prevailed, because once that bill got on the Floor, given the times that we were under, it would have passed, and we would have had a much stronger Ethics Code over these thirty-five years than we've had. But, the mistake I made was in thinking, "Well, compromise, compromise, compromise. Get something on the books which is better than nothing, and then you can always revisit the legislation in the future." You can't, because the circumstances are different. No Legislator wants to be involved in ethics legislation, because it's almost an affront. They say, "Well, I'm honest. I don't need to be told by law how to conduct myself. I've learned that at home," or, "I learned that in school," or wherever, but nevertheless, we all know it's necessary because for those who would abuse the privilege of being in public office there needs to be some guidelines and penalties should they do so. So, the majority of good, honest, hard-working people have to take their lumps to get at those very few that distort their oath, and that was a major bit of legislation. And then what I tried to do during the next several years in the Seventies was to change the method by which we made budgets in Pennsylvania, and I was only partially successful. That was really an uphill battle, and it's worse, much worse today than it was in the Seventies in that the

Administration controlled everything. The Legislature, which had to approve any spending plan, had very, very little input into the process, and I tried to change that by opening up the process and making us full partners in the fiscal affairs of the state, starting with the projection as to how much income we would have. How much money do we have to spend? It would surprise people even today to know that only the Executive [Branch] has that power. They determine how much revenue is going to come in through the various taxes, and then the Legislature has to fit a budget into those projections, and they're all projected as much as eighteen months in advance of when they're actually received, and I always thought that was improper, and I thought that Governors could very easily either hide money so they would end up with a surplus or distort projected tax collections, so as to generate increased tax rates. And, we had a lot of fights. We closed down the government twice during the Seventies with it, because we didn't enact a budget in time, and I was at the forefront of both of those efforts, and I knew we were doing the right thing, so I was proud of it, but it was very difficult. My house was picketed at one point, but that's a long time ago.

HM: Yeah. So, what do you feel about the budget process today? The Legislature is more involved?

RB: Yeah, I think now it's, in recent years, it's gotten much worse than what I was complaining about, because now each House – and it doesn't matter who the Governor is and who controls each House. It's the system now. Each House adopts a budget that they know the other House will not accept, nor will the Chief Executive, the Governor, so

as to force the budget into a Conference Committee. You know, when the two Houses disagree, there's a Conference Committee appointed, and there are six people that were appointed to that Conference Committee; two from the Majority Party, one from the Minority Party in each House, and then they decide the budget, together with the Governor, because he's the strongest Legislator of all because he has the power to veto, and in the budget he has the power to line veto. He can take certain things out without killing the entire piece of legislation. Well, now, we, in those days, oftentimes ended up – not oftentimes, but we did end up in conference on the budget – but there was much, much more involvement of the rank-and-file Member than there is today, much more, so that we didn't have, as Leaders, we didn't have the ultimate power to direct things that I see today. I think it's gradually eroding, however, and that's a good thing in the Legislature today, but it had gotten to the point where very, very few people controlled the whole circumstance, and I think there's a reason for that, which we can get to when we talk about today's politics.

HM: Well, I wanted to ask you; what was your relationship like with the other Leaders in which you served?

RB: Mostly good, but not all good. I got along very well with the Senate Republicans and Democrats, but I didn't have to go up against them every day. In the House, when I was the Whip for six years and the Leader for five, so as a consequence, I was on the Floor in debate a lot, and I would go head-to-head usually with my counterpart on the other side of the aisle in the Democratic Leaders; there was two or three of them. Leroy

Irvis [K. Leroy Irvis; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988] when he was the Leader we got along beautifully. I could trust that man forever, and as a matter of fact – I shouldn't do this, but I will. The week before he died, I talked to him just a few months ago, and he told me that I was the most honest person he ever dealt with in government, and I said the same thing about him, which was very nice, and it's nice to know, and I always knew he felt that way, and I always, of course, felt the same way, but a week before he died – he was in his late eighties – he told me that on the phone, and which made me feel very good. And I got along less well with others, including Herb Fineman [Herbert Fineman; Philadelphia County, 1955-1977; Speaker, 1969-1972 and 1975-1977] and Jim Manderino [James J. Manderino; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1989; Speaker, 1989], both of whom were Leaders opposite me. I think we, we got along all right. They're both very bright guys, as was Leroy Irvis, and they were tough, good debaters, and they took tough positions. I don't recall any of us ever running over the other, even though at times we were dominant, we were in the Majority. At times the Democrats were in the Majority. We would meet before every Session every day and discuss what was going to be voted on that day; which items on the calendar, which is printed every day, were we going to actually debate and vote on. And, once you get to know the legislative process, most legislation is voted almost unanimously without controversy, because once it has gone through a committee system, it's been amended, there's not much Party difference. It's only on that, maybe, ten percent of the legislation that's contentious, and that's where you bang heads with each other, and we did. We got along all right, but not as well as I did with Leroy Irvis. Never had any problems with the Senate Republicans or

Democrats; we got along just fine. And, I got along very well in my own Caucus, you know, I was elected six times by the Caucus, which is a tough election. I was opposed on some of those. I don't remember how many, and always prevailed, but we had – you know, I came, as I said, from the largest delegation. Montgomery County had the largest delegation in the Republican Caucus, usually on a par with Delaware County. We were about the same size. We were all very solidly Republican at the time. Not any more. But we had a very, very strong delegation, which I relied on, and we developed a system among ourselves. I think I'm going off on a tangent here, but it might be of interest. Where we would meet before every Session and determine what committees everybody wanted to serve on in our delegation, Montgomery County delegation, and then I as the Leader in the group would make certain that everybody got appointed to these key committees and there weren't any duplications. That way, our tentacles spread throughout the Caucus, because not only did we have tremendously talented Legislators in our group, but we had them strategically placed so they were influential throughout the House, and so to a large extent, our county group ran the affairs on the Republican side of the House: the key, the key spots, the key committees, the key special committees, the key investigations. And, as it's turned out, Tony Scirica [Anthony J. Scirica; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1971-1980], who was in our delegation, is now the Chief Judge on the – he's on the Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia, but he's the, he's the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court Judges and of the District Court in Philadelphia, the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. Bill Yohn [William H. Yohn, Jr.; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1969-1980], who was in our delegation, is one of the judges in that court. Dan Beren [Daniel E. Beren; State Representative, Montgomery

County, 1967-1976] is a very well known Harrisburg figure as a lawyer/lobbyist after his career, was a tremendous Legislator. Charlie Mebus [Charles F. Mebus; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1965-1978] was a civil engineer. Herb Maack [Herbert R. Maack; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1965-1968] ran a business. G. Pancoast [G. Sieber Pancoast; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1965-1978] was a college professor of political science. I'm probably leaving people out, but we had a just a wonderful group of talented people that all came together during this upheaval of the Republican Party in Montgomery County, which I mentioned when we first started. As we changed the Party from within, we attracted a wonderful group of very young, aggressive, smart people, and that all followed the Sixties election of Kennedy and Dick Schweiker as our Congressman, (*cough*) and with the older group retiring not wanting to face the tougher elections, and our aggressiveness, we were very serious Legislators. We had fun, and there's a key to it. I'm sorry. We were socially compatible as well as in business, and our Leader in Montgomery County at the time was Drew Lewis who was a phenomenal politician and went on to great things in his life. As a matter of fact, Dick Schweiker and Drew Lewis were both in President Reagan's [Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, 1981-1989] Cabinet, and I don't know that's ever happened before; that two people from the same high school were in a Presidential Cabinet. I doubt that it ever happened, but anyway, we used to socially see each other regularly. In those days entertainment was basically in the home, and we would have house parties, and we would all get together. Our wives got along exceedingly well, and that made our away from home time, our compatibility in legislating, as well as seeking positions on committees and so on, much more tolerable,

but it was almost a strategy that worked. We fell into it naturally because we really liked each other, and we still are very good friends. This morning I had breakfast with Dan Beren, and this is forty years later. Forty, yeah – wait a minute – yeah, forty years. Forty years later, he's still my close friend. I regularly get together with Tony Scirica and Bill Yohn and others. It makes a big difference if you enjoy your colleagues.

HM: Well, you talked about the Democratic side of Leadership. What about your Republican colleagues as well? I'm thinking of Ken Lee and Lee Donaldson [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1955-1970], and did you ever have any aspirations to be Speaker?

RB: Well, I did, but the pecking order was such that I never – when I was the Leader of our Party, we were in the minority. Ken Lee and Lee Donaldson basically taught me everything I know. They were just spectacular Legislators. Different; Ken being rural, Lee being from Pittsburgh, but both very bright and both very knowledgeable at a time when I needed that kind of help because frankly, I was in over my head as a young, green Legislator. I would sit in awe. I think I was smart enough to keep my mouth shut, because I didn't want them to find out how little I knew, and that's the truth. I used to sit in these meetings and listen to these guys talk fast about strategies and legislation and so on, and sometimes we'd be in the Governor's Office and I'd be almost in awe rather than act as an equal. I overcame that quickly, but for the first couple of years – but I learned from both of them, just on how to conduct oneself ethically, with intensity in your beliefs, knowing when to compromise and when you just couldn't compromise any further

because you've hit your rock bottom, your bedrock in whatever, whatever the position was. They were really very, very, very helpful to me. I remember Ken Lee calling me to the podium. He was the Speaker more than once. This was probably his first time as Speaker in the Sixties, and we were voting open housing, which today doesn't seem like an issue, but it was a huge issue at the time. Open housing meant that you could not discriminate in the sale of your house against minorities, and at the time it was basically African-American, or it was the predominate, so-called, minority. I hate that term, but it's, it's a commonly used term. He called me to the podium, and he said, "Bob, if you ever want to run for a statewide office," which ultimately I did. At the time I wasn't thinking about it. He said, "You vote for this concept." Now, here is a rural Legislator that probably didn't have a black person in his District. If so, it was insignificant. I had intended to vote for it anyway because I grew up in a mixed community, I was fortunate enough to know and go to school with and socialize and play sports with, African-Americans, some of whom are still very close friends. I say "fortunate" because most Americans didn't have that experience, and not most, but many, many, many particularly suburban and rural people, and so I understood that, that to me that was already the law. We weren't allowed to discriminate. You know, my father had been discriminated against, and where I live today, he had a hard time – I live in the house that he built, his dream house. When my mother died, we moved into the house, and to me, it's sacred ground because he had a hard time buying it. They didn't want him to buy it in the Thirties as a Italian immigrant, you know, still not quite accepted, and even though he could afford it, you know. So, who was I to discriminate? But in any event, he called me and gave me that advice, which he doesn't even remember it to this day, but I do, and it

was very good advice. Lee Donaldson, I remember distinctly, we used to meet – there was a board of the General State Authority, and that was the board at that time that controlled all state building projects; dormitories at universities, gymnasiums, stadiums, not only at the state schools, but also within the government itself. Well, before every meeting there was a separate meeting; two meetings. The Democrats that were appointed to that board of the General State Authority and the Republicans would meet separately. Now, we were all on that board by virtue of our titles in the Legislature, and then the Governor had appointments as well. Bob Casey, Sr. [Robert P. Casey, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995] was the State Treasurer at the time, so he was on the board, and that's how I really got to know him. Anyway, they would meet ahead of time to determine who was **[End of Side A, Tape 1]** going to get what. Which projects the Democrats could name, the architects, the engineers, the bond council, and all the, so-called, pinstripe patronage, too, and then which projects the Republicans would name. Well, that was not considered illegal at the time. Today, it would be, I think. Lee Donaldson had an instinct for those meetings, and he said, "I'm not going to any of those meetings," so I never went, either. First of all, I didn't care who got those projects, but that's not why I didn't go. I didn't go because he said it was wrong, that we shouldn't be dividing projects by Party, which has the implication of political contributions. Quid pro quo; you give me this project, I'll contribute this much to your Party. So, I never, I never went to those meetings, but what good advice, what good Leadership I got. Otherwise, I would have gone. I wouldn't have known any better. I would have gone and participated, and if anything had ever happened, and if there was proven a quid pro quo for a certain project, I would have been implicated. Now, as it turned out, there never

was such investigations at that time, because it was the way business was done. Today, I think there would be very distinct investigations, but that's, that's Lee Donaldson, you see. So, I had wonderful tutelage. And then I worked with a lot of people as I matured as a Legislator and in the position of Leadership. Then I had a chance to hopefully give advice to others. Matt Ryan was my roommate for five years. He became the Whip when I was the Leader, and Ken Lee was the Speaker, and then when Ken Lee retired, we went into the minority, and I was the Leader, and Matt was still the Whip. Matt was a very bright person. I had known him since we were teenagers from Ocean City, New Jersey, so, I didn't give him advice. But, a lot of young Legislators I did have a chance to try to pass on some of that which I learned from these masters. I didn't mention that during these years I had two children, which oftentimes people don't realize. They get so caught up in politics and politicians that they don't realize that there's another life that these people live just like everyone else, but my son was born in [19]68 – wait a minute; no.

HM: Don't get it wrong.

RB: Oh, dear. My son was born in [19]64. My daughter was born in [19]68. These are years you almost forget, but they were four years apart, but just getting home to spend time with them, and go to the events. I coached baseball and basketball. I never missed a practice, which was very, very difficult. He had no idea what I did to get there that night and, you know, leaving the Floor, hopping in the car, flying down the Turnpike at some outrageous speed to get to a kids' basketball practice or baseball practice, but it was very

important to me at the time, and, and it was also a lot of fun. I would get home at night sometimes from here, and you're dead tired because we worked crazy hours, and your meal schedule is always off, so you didn't sleep well. It wasn't a, it wasn't a normal life on a working day. I would get home at night dead tired and he'd be waiting for me with the basketball, because he was a really good basketball player, and he'd want me to play with him, or he'd have the baseballs out, and I would throw to him – we lived on a golf course – and I would throw them, I'd pitch to him, and he would hit them. My daughter was a gymnast, so there wasn't much I could do with her, frankly, (*laugh*) but drive her. She would have to go to Reading every day to study gymnastics, and she was a national gymnast, not international, but she was really good. So, she trained, trained, trained, and I would try and drive her as much as I could just to be with her, and they both turned out beautifully and both really solid people right now today.

HM: Well, you mentioned –

RB: Thanks to their mother. (*laugh*)

HM: (*laugh*) Well, you mentioned the challenges of being here in Harrisburg and the strain it put on the home and then having, like you mentioned before, picketers come to your home. What was that?

RB: Well, that, it was a result of a tactic, and it's still used today, and it's a most unfortunate tactic. It just infuriated me. One of the reasons I wanted to become

Governor, we haven't even gotten into that yet, was to change these things and to show that you can exercise power properly. You don't have to resort to tactics to get people to do things. Ideas should control government and politics, not power and not money and not, so on. Now, I certainly exercised power at certain times. In some ways, perhaps, I shouldn't have, but in general, we tried to persuade people through ideas. Well, the tactic in this instance was that Shapp couldn't get his budget passed, Governor Shapp, so he held hostage the poor people in the state, the welfare recipients, and I offered, and our Caucus offered, and we were in the majority, to pass that portion of his budget, and in fact, we did so, as I recall, that funded, fully funded all public welfare programs. Everything; one hundred percent. He refused to accept it because I said, and I gave so many speeches on this, "This isn't what we're arguing about. We're not arguing about people who can't help themselves. They deserve our support, and they have it. We want to give people who are needy more, not less." Well, he said, "Either all or nothing. Either you give me the entire budget, or nothing. I'm not going to accept piecemeal passage of a budget." I understand that concept, but I just thought it was cruel at the same time, so what they did then, and I think they still do, busloads of people would arrive in Harrisburg who were desperate and desperately in need of governmental support, and they were lead to believe that we weren't willing to give it to them, and I being the Leader, and one of the focal points of disagreement was subject to picketing. It was very unfortunate. I remember a meeting that during this – I think it was the [19]73 budget impasse – that all the welfare workers, the organization, whatever, I think they were, they were either Unionized or Civil Service or whatever they were; didn't make any difference – they had an organization came to meet in my office with me, and there

were about twenty or thirty of them, and I had a fairly large office, but that was a lot of people to put into the office, and I had a big conference table and plenty of chairs and everything. So, we were sitting around, and it occurred to me, and I said, "I'm going to take a chance here." As a lawyer, you're taught never to ask a question to which you don't know the answer, in a trial circumstance. I said, "I'm going to take a chance." I didn't know the answer to this question, and there was one man that was really talking a lot and taking over, and he was a real loudmouth, and I took the chance of saying, "Where are you from?" He was from New York. He was brought in to rabble rouse – from The National Organization of Welfare Workers, whatever that was – and create this controversy, but he was doing nothing more than helping to pass a budget, which I didn't think should be passed, and ultimately, it was not passed, and, you know, we saved one tenth of 1 percent of the income tax for many, many years because that's how much the Governor wanted to raise the income tax, and we stopped it, but it had nothing to do with the welfare recipients, do you see? That was a tactic; cruel. I couldn't have lived with myself doing that, but that's the way it was done. It did not work. We stuck to our guns.

HM: I want to ask you a little bit about something we haven't touched on. Coming to Harrisburg for the first time and being Sworn-In, what were your initial thoughts?

RB: I was in awe. First of all, at the grandeur of the Capitol Building, and then, somewhat frightened that here I was in these hallowed halls. It's what you would expect for a – I mean, I wasn't, I wasn't totally naïve – I wasn't a naïve person. Granted, I was only twenty-seven, almost twenty-eight, but politically, I was naïve, and I was

intimidated, clearly. I remember being in the Governor's Office the first few times, in Governor Scranton's office, for different reasons, and I didn't know what to call him. I should have just called him Bill. That's his name, you know, but at the time I didn't think of it that way. As I got older, I would always refuse to call people "Governor" that I knew well, or "Senator." "Representative" they don't use. They call us by our first names, but U.S. Senators or Congressman or Governors. I mean, they're just people that I respect the office that they hold, and I respected most of them, but I think my quick reaction, answer to that question is I was intimidated. I got over it pretty quickly and began to introduce legislation and got into the process, the learning process, and it was a huge thrill. The first two terms were thrilling because Governor Scranton was an incredible Leader. We haven't seen anything like him since. I hope we do someday, but it was a time of change, the Sixties, nationally and certainly in Pennsylvania, and we tackled some very, very difficult issues during those first couple of years. You know, we reduced the number of school districts from twenty-five hundred to five hundred. Try doing that. Everybody thought their school district was just fine, and we thought that, collectively, that consolidation of these small school districts would produce better schools, and I think they did. We created community colleges. We created area vo[cational] tech[nical] schools. There were none of those at that time. We overhauled a lot of Codes and archaic – I remember one of the biggest fights was over unemployment compensation. It was a reform package. We did a whole number of things like overhauling unemployment comp[ensation] and again, workmen's comp[ensation] to create a better business climate because we realized that we were losing jobs rapidly to the south at that time, and that we needed to do a lot of things to encourage people to stay

here and to locate here. But, it was about every month he would present us with a new challenge, and it was very well-scripted and almost choreographed, so he didn't feed us everything at once and confuse us as Legislators, but he controlled the agenda. The Legislative agenda was controlled, and it still is, by the Executive, by the Governor, but he did it in a, just a very good way. Highways – I mean, we got involved in highway projects during that era that were historic for the times. The financing of projects became innovative, and we would just – honestly, it seems to me as looking back that it was about, you know, one issue a month that we could really digest, fully debate – I mean, it was spirited debate in those days. There wasn't, there wasn't – we began to open up the process during that time, and it was a lot of fun.

HM: What was your first office like in Harrisburg?

RB: Well, the first office before I got into the Leadership, there was no office, (*laugh*) as you know. There was a pool of secretaries to whom you would dictate at their desks, and they weren't assigned to you. There, maybe, were ten or fifteen secretaries, I would say, that could take shorthand. There were no Dictaphones even at that time. Electric typewriters were probably just beginning to be used. Forget about computers, you know, and so you would dictate, and, and the women could take – they were all women – and they could take shorthand, and you would answer your mail, and you would do whatever else you were doing. You'd go into the pool, but other than that, your desk was on the Floor of the House and, and wherever you could find space, in a conference room or whatever, but there wasn't much office space available to Legislators, and there was

virtually no staff. No research staff. You had to really do your own. Now, there was a group of people that would draft bills, the Legislative Reference Bureau, so when you had an idea, a concept, you would discuss it with someone who was a drafter, and they would draft the legislation to amend whatever existing law there was or create new law, and the Joint State Government Commission had already been formed, and that was a group of people who would do research and create research committees, but for the most part, you were on your own. It was just evolving into a more equal branch of government and becoming more of a full time position. There was a time, not much prior to my coming here, when the Legislature only met every other year, and that was changed, of course, and we became a, say, about an eight-month operation. We would take the summer off and come back in the fall and then – but, it was pretty solid, but today, it's – I think that we used to get up in numbers of bills in the two thousands. Today, they're in the five thousands. So, there are that many more bills introduced, which means there are that many more amendments, which means there are that many more committee meetings, which means there're that many more hearings because there's such a higher volume of business transacted than there was when I was here.

HM: I just can't get over you went from no office to Leadership.

RB: Yeah, and then, once you get into Leadership, of course, you have your own office, and then during that whole time, we began taking space from the Executive, really, in the Capitol and taking over space and saying, "We're going to control this space. If it requires law, we'll enact a law saying that we're going – and we'll override your veto,"

you know, in so many words. And, we began to collect space and Members began to have their own offices. There was always a Caucus Room for the minority and the majority, and that's a large room where you would meet virtually every day and discuss legislation and so on. You could always find a seat or a table in that room, but you had to do your own – you had to fend for yourself, so to speak.

HM: Well, what would you think – I'm looking at your long career, so – the most memorable pieces of legislation? You've talked about so many. What do you think would be the one biggest?

RB: Probably, probably the one that I never got, and that was the true reform of the budget process. I worked on that for about five years. It was whole package of bills to open up the process and to make the Legislature more of a partner in it, but I didn't get it. I got some of it, but I just, I couldn't get it all. At the time the Democrats controlled the Senate for one period of time, and the Governor was a Democrat. He didn't want what I was trying to do, so I was blocked there, and then we went into the minority the following Session, and I couldn't get what I wanted, but that, that was probably what I worked on the hardest. A significant piece of legislation which I was responsible for was the Municipalities Planning Code. As I look at that Code today, I wonder how we ever achieved it because I had – as I said, I had become a real estate lawyer, so I got to know a lot about zoning and land use, and every municipality, every classification of municipality, borough, first class township, second class township, city, third class city, and so on had their own zoning code, their own approach to land use, and I thought we

ought to consolidate the approach to land use so that all citizens were treated the same. These are the wanting to use their land or having their neighbors change the use of their land. Court decisions were crying for this concept at that time, because the courts were gradually moving into the vacuum created when townships, cities, and boroughs wouldn't properly give people their constitutional right of private property to use their land or would disagree with communities that didn't have a plan to properly develop. So, I convened a Joint State Government Commission group of people around the state who were very knowledgeable in land use; Law professors, lawyers, and others that really understood land use, and we wrote a new law for Pennsylvania. Now, that meant I had to get all those different classifications of municipalities, each of whom had an organization; First class township association, second class township association, the borough association, third class cities, and so on. I had to get them all to agree to give up what they had known as their power over land use and subscribe to this new concept, and we did it. As I look back, I wonder how, but at the time it was just what you did. You just fought through it, and you persevered and made it happen. I have a hard time, you know, recalling all of these things, but remember, most of the time I was in the Legislature, I was in the Leadership, which means I was involved in every major piece of legislation. I had to be by virtue of where I was, so that they weren't necessarily mine, my concepts, but I had to be involved in all of them, but I know I sponsored the first, the first ethics code in Pennsylvania, and I was the first sponsor of the Arts Council. What's it called now? I think it's still called that.

HM: It is.

RB: And, oh my goodness, I could go on and on and on, and I think the aid to victims of crime was my concept. I think there was one other state that had such a program that I borrowed through a prominent Philadelphia lawyer who suggested it, that we create a program to aid victims of crime. There was no such program. Today, it's part of our culture, but I sponsored that, but I was literally involved in everything, had to be.

HM: Since you were so involved in restructuring the House and some of the policy, some of the things that you're working on today, I think, are a carryover.

RB: Yeah, this has been interesting.

HM: Would you like to discuss some of that?

RB: Well, sure. Thirty years later since I last served in the House, my friend was elected Speaker, my old friend from those days, Dennis O'Brien [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1977-1980, 1983-present; Speaker, 2007-2088], and it was a fluke election in this year, [20]07, in that the Democrats elected a Republican as Speaker because there was a deadlock between the two Parties, and the two Parties' nominees, neither of which, neither of whom had a majority, so they compromised, and the Democrats, who have the majority in the State House, elected a Republican, and he asked if I would help him initially because we remained friends over the years, and I said, "Sure, I'll be glad to," knowing that this had never happened before, and it probably will

never happen again. And he said, "Well, the first thing I want to do," – this was the Friday after he was elected; I was in his office – "is I want to form a Commission. I want to call it the Speaker's Reform Commission, because we have got to come to grips with some of the problems that we're facing," which are a consequence of our rules on how the Legislature is being run by its own rules, has been distorted to such an extent that the rank-and-file Member didn't have the power that he should have, he or she – when I say "he" I mean, I mean both – in carrying out his sworn duties. So, we formed a Commission and appointed twelve Democrats and twelve Republicans and he asked me to be Special Counsel, which meant I was going to – I didn't do legal work. I'm beyond that, but I monitored the sessions and contributed as best I could. But, the interesting thing was for me to have this thirty-year gap. When I left Harrisburg, I went on to running businesses, and I wasn't intimately involved in politics anymore, and so there was this gap – I mean, I still had friends, and I still had association with politicians, but I wasn't involved, so I didn't see day in, day out how things had changed, and the contrast was incredible to me that things had evolved as they did, particularly in one area, and that was the Rules Committee. The Rules Committee, I guess, going back to the late Eighties, early Nineties, had become an all powerful committee in the State House where legislation was routinely sent to, to either bury it, change it, but control it, and the Rules Committee was controlled by the Leaders. So, once again, when I was discussing the budget, the Leaders had seized the situation and had become much more powerful than they should be. That had to be dismantled in my judgment, but it was not going to be easy to do. Now, the times were such that just like as I mentioned to you earlier in the Sixties with the turmoil in the country and the Seventies with Watergate, there are these

brief windows when even though people might want to object, they can't. They have to come to their senses and say, "This is wrong," and so we met for two months pretty solidly with this group of twenty-four evenly divided, wonderful group of people. I gained a lot of respect for the current crop of Legislators during this period, and we systematically went through all of our rules and made countless changes to try to return the government to the people through their Representatives by empowering individual Legislators, and it was a wonderful experience and I think a very productive one, and it will result over time in a better Legislature. It will take time, because these are some radical changes. We, in a sense, went back almost to where we were when I was here last, and secondly, the Speaker asked me to help him with his appointments. The prior Speaker, not being a friend of his, took all the files with him, took the hard drive with him, so he had no idea as to what the extent of his appointments were. Well, when I was in power here, I had maybe fifteen appointments as the Leader of the Republican Party, and the Democratic Leader had the same. Today, the Speaker had over two hundred appointments. Now, that told me, whether they were right or wrong, is immaterial. What it told me was that the Legislature, over those thirty years, had flexed its muscles and had become more than an equal branch of government because it had begun to enter into the Executive Branch by creating all kinds of oversight committees or insisting on membership in what heretofore were exclusively Executive positions. In every area of government; the environment, the judicial, every area of the Legislature had moved in to the Executive's prerogative. And then, I found to my dismay, that instead of becoming that full partner in the proper way of oversight – you can't argue too much with, you know, that system of checks and balances. The Legislature has to check the Executive,

the Executive checks the Legislature, they both check the Judiciary or Judicial Branch. They made a lot of appointments, I think, for the wrong reasons, and it's very clear when I had a chance to review them all that some of them were made for purely political purposes, without concern for whether the person so appointed belonged in a particular spot or whether there was a potential conflict. I think – I can prove some of it, I guess, but I don't want to make too bold an assertion – that some of these appointments were made so as to be able to extract political contributions, and that's a distortion of the argument that we, the Legislative Branch, has an obligation to oversee the Executive Branch. Okay, if that's what you're doing, then do that without regard to whether the people you're appointing have some basis upon your politics. Sure, they should be of the same Party. You don't appoint enemies to positions, but you should appoint people that, that really understand and care about a particular area, and I think it's been prostituted to a far greater extent than I ever dreamt I would find. So, I've had a very interesting time, and then the second round of our discussions covered my ethics legislation, so here I go back to my former self and I see this legislation that I said was inadequate because I didn't go far enough needing repair, needing an overhaul, really, and then I looked at the Ethics Committee that I had created, and that needed an overhaul. So, I had this very unique experience of having this separation by thirty years without participating in the evolution of change. The evolution of change is very gradual, but when you see it starkly contrasted, it was a great experience, and I think we've begun to create some reforms or a movement of reform that would be very positive. Reform doesn't happen just like that. We planted the seeds, and we've created some situations, and hopefully, there will be some more – for example, we recommended that the Open Records Law be radically

changed. We lag the rest of the country, in Pennsylvania in being closed. Our government is much more closed than any other state, and in the process of looking at that legislation, the existing legislation, and what it should be, in other words, people should have a right of access to their government except in certain personal circumstances and also security protections, we should have more of an openness. But, having gone through it, I recalled, or it was recalled for me by one of these former people that I had a hand in hiring as our research staff, that I sued Governor Shapp twice under this very law, and my reasons for suing was that he was hiding information from us that we should have access to, and I lost both lawsuits. And I lost because the law was inadequate, and we tried to change it, and we failed because there was just not enough support. Today, there is enough support to change it. So, I think it will be changed, and that's a good thing, but isn't that interesting?

HM: It's very interesting.

RB: You know, some thirty years earlier, I had faced this very problem that people are complaining about today. I sued him in Commonwealth Court, lost. Tried to make my point.

HM: I think in my, my business, history, people don't see how history repeats itself, and it's very cyclical.

RB: History. One of the young Legislators that was elected at the same time I was, was James Humes [State Legislator; Lycoming County, 1963-1964], and he was from Williamsport. He's still a very close friend. Just got a card from him. Celebrated his fiftieth wedding anniversary in the House of Lords. They were married in England, and they went back, and I couldn't go to the – but he sent me a card. He is a Churchill scholar and has written quite extensively about Churchill, biographies, biographical type things, and he tells the story all the time, and he mimics Churchill, and he's a big man, you know, and he wears vests like Churchill would, you know, and puts a cigar in his mouth, and I'm not going to try to mimic him, but when he met Churchill as a schoolboy, he went to school in England for high school, part of his high school, he met Winston Churchill, and he asked him for advice, and Churchill said, "Study history. Study history. Study history." That's all he said. And it made the point in my friend that he's become a historian of sorts and has become quite a writer. He wrote speeches for four Presidents, and he was elected with me. He was a couple months younger to his lament. He likes to say he was the youngest Member of the House, but he wasn't. I was. (*laugh*)

HM: (*laugh*) Well, so is the timing right now for a more aggressive Ethics Code?

RB: Without question. The times that we live in today are marked, in Pennsylvania at least, by what transpired in the last Session regarding the pay raise, and that will go down in our history, Pennsylvania history, as a major event. There have been pay raises for Legislators and for other government officials forever. Only the Legislature can raise the salaries of certain elected people and appointed people, certain ones, so it's always

happened, judges, everybody, but never to the extent that was attempted in the last Session and never with the public outcry as occurred. And that public outcry has become very significant in making this Legislature become much more relevant and much more in tune with the public. The method by which the raises took place, you know, early in the morning, like two o'clock in the morning or four o'clock in the morning, or whenever it was, in somewhat, not secret manner, but it was, but it was sprung upon the House and Senate by an amendment, as opposed to going through the normal process of legislation, and we did things like that at the time. I don't want to sound like we were purists because we certainly weren't in that sense, but never, never like this, and the public was outraged and, as a consequence, threw a lot of people out of office. So, you have about twenty-five percent of the Legislature having been replaced. You have people that are reform-minded and were sent here to reform directly that are here, and they will eventually be in control, and so the time is right. That's a huge block of people, and the Leaders, you know, the Leaders they see the way that wind's blowing, and they've become much more in tune with the times. So, I think that there's a really good feeling now regarding openness in government, which includes ethical behavior and Codes, and parameters that are set so people know what the rules are. They've got to be tightened.

HM: Will they tighten them enough?

RB: Well, I guess you'll never tighten them enough to catch that unscrupulous person. However, when caught, at least there is some remedy. Today, there's virtually no remedy for those who would prostitute the system, and they're – you know, it's a privilege to

serve in government. You know, it's a privilege to be invited, I always thought, to speak to groups. I mean, here you are just an ordinary person, and you're invited to address this large group of people or that group of very astute people. I always considered it a privilege to go to a school, talk to kids, or, you know, or their teachers or their parents and whatever, and when you lose that feeling that it's a privilege, you ought to get out. When you start thinking it's a right, that you're here by right, and you have the right to do whatever you want, things get, well, you get into trouble. Things get pretty bad, and a lot of people have suffered the consequences, either by being thrown out of office, or there have been a number of convictions on unscrupulous behavior, and that's not good. It just breaks everything down and people just don't have the respect they should have for government. It's somewhat of a stretch, but it affects the economy of a region or a state. If people don't have confidence in their government, they're not going to locate here, they're not going to expand here, they're not going to create jobs here. Kids who go to school here – and we have more colleges than any state in the union – aren't going to stay, because if they don't respect their government, among other things, and so it spills over into our society, and I think it's essential that we change.

HM: Well, what aspect of being a Legislator did you enjoy the most?

RB: Oh, dear. I think, early on, it was the recognition. Now, here I was just a young lawyer, as I keep saying, I was, you know, naïve to some, to some extent, I was suddenly accepted. I went from boy to man very quickly, and I recognized that. As I say, here I was invited to places that I otherwise would never have been invited to, and as a young

lawyer, that was very attractive because I wanted to get known so as to build my law practice, which I never did, because I became a politician, and then I got into business, which we haven't even touched yet. I don't know how long we have. Are we okay? So, the recognition and the recognition then poured into the knowledge that I could change things and literally did, participated, and in many cases led movements that changed people's lives. I mean, it was, I know it sounds dramatic, but it's true. The, you know, the ability to be at the eye of the storm and be involved in what was happening at that time was very attractive, and I don't think I ever got caught up in myself, beyond certain parameters. I mean, we all have egos, and I'm sure mine was served. I like to think that I recognized in my third term that I was not that important, that I got control of my ego in time, so things didn't go to my head, and I didn't start thinking I was more important than I really was. After all, all I was, was a State Legislator in a big state, but you can be made to feel more important than you really are. This is my point. Coming to that realization was actually a very enjoyable part of being a Legislator, because it was then that I really began to devote myself to doing good things, both locally and in Harrisburg, and we had, you know, we had a good deal of success. It was a wonderful era. I can't put my finger on specifics, but it was a growing up process and a maturing, maturation, and you know, you get into every aspect of life when you're in a legislative body. I don't care whether it's a city council or a township supervisor or a Legislature or Congress, you get involved in things that you otherwise would never be involved in, and it gives you tremendous confidence. It's no question in my mind that it served me very well throughout my life in that I was never intimidated by a circumstance that I was in because I, you know, I had been with important people most of my life, and so if I was running a

business and I had a major meeting with the President of a bank, he didn't intimidate me or a Mayor or a Governor as I was in New Jersey. I was head of the New Jersey Devils for four years, so I was involved in yet a different state where I didn't know anybody, but when I met Governor Kean [Thomas Kean, Governor of New Jersey, 1982-1990], I called him Tom, because that's his name, you know, and we had a really nice relationship. I didn't know him before. But if I hadn't had all these experiences, I'm not sure that I could have handled certain situations like I was able to do.

HM: Well, what aspect did you not like about being a Legislator?

RB: I think the hypocrisy that I would try to catch myself and train myself not to be hypocritical. That is, say one thing and mean another, you know, or hide how you really felt about something because it might not be popular, or I mean, I used to look for opportunities, particularly when I ran for higher office. You know, I ran in the Republican Primary in [19]78 and lost to Thornburgh [Richard Thornburgh, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1979-1987], but I used to look for opportunities to say, "I don't know." I mean, when you're asked questions, you know, you're in a forum of some sort, and politicians I always thought were so pompous, and they had an answer for everything, whether it was right or not, it didn't matter, they always had an answer. I would look for opportunities to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out," in response to a question. When I didn't know, you know, and I always thought that you made you more real. Made me more real to – I mean, I was being a politician at the time, I'm sure, but it was also being a little bit more honest with myself. But I think overdoing perks and riding in limousines

and all that sort of thing I think distorts **[End of Side B, Tape 1]** a person in political life, and I just never liked that. I never had a special license plate, you know, and I just tried not to do that. I mean, I did it somewhat naturally because of my background, as I said early on, with my family background. I just never considered myself to be a big deal, you know, and I've been very pleasantly reminded of some of those observations by others of those times, most recently with six women that I used to work with came to visit for lunch and told me things that I had forgotten about or gave their reactions to how I conducted myself, and it made me feel very good. And I'm sure I slipped up, and I'm sure I did things I shouldn't have done, but hopefully, it was at a very minimum.

HM: Well, you've talked about several aspects of your life after you left the House of Representatives. I don't know if you'd like to just begin with your – ?

RB: Well, I'll try to do it quickly because I've had so many rich experiences, none of which I would have happened I don't think if not for this fifteen year experience that I had in Harrisburg, and also running for Governor. Running for Governor was a major, major turnabout, because I had exposure to things that I never dreamt about before, and I ran for a year and a half because I was coming from the Legislature where, you know, Legislators don't get elected Governor, and I knew that, and that's why I resigned to make it very clear that I was serious about it, but I had to work really extra hard at getting known and getting appreciated. So, those experiences were fabulous, and from there I didn't have the hunger to go back and be a lawyer. It wasn't that it was too late, but I hadn't honed my skills like I would have if I had just been a lawyer, because I was really

doing two things, and my paramount job was my public job. It had to be, particularly as I grew into the Leadership. I mean, it had to come first. People were depending on me, you know? So, I looked at other opportunities. I became President of the Philadelphia Flyers, the hockey team, for four years, I had only seen one hockey game prior to that, and I had never run a business before, but I gravitated naturally toward it. I mentioned that I was responsible for developing the Legislative Staff and organizing the finances to make certain that we always had enough money to pay them from our appropriations. That didn't happen just by chance. I wanted to do it, and the others didn't, so by default it fell upon me, because I like to organize things. Running a business is, you know, is organizing things, and while sports was a bit of a different business – I love sports – from the business of politics or government, it was nevertheless similar. We had constituents; fans, you know. We had a budget, you know, we had to raise the money, you know, so it's not a whole lot different. From the Flyers I went to the New Jersey Devils, so four years at each. Then after that, I ran a large law firm in Philadelphia for five years, which I had never done before. I had run our small law firm, the business of the small law firm, not the practice of it, the business side of it, but Saul Ewing in Philadelphia hadn't had a person designated to run the business, and lawyers are not good at running their own business, and law firms – this law firm and others – were growing at this point in the Eighties, 1980's, to such an extent that they were becoming big businesses, you know, we were about a thirty-five to forty million dollar business, which at the time was large, and I had already run two other businesses, so I just applied what I had learned and developed on my own, the style that I developed on my own, and a lot of reading and studying and talking to others about running businesses. I ran the business of the law firm for five

years, and then I ran the Pennsylvania Convention Center from its inception for nine years in Philadelphia, and that again was, you know, we ran that like a business. It's a quasi public institution, but it's a business nevertheless that demands that you use principles of business in order to attract people to the city and also then to run the building and the business of conventions and large gatherings properly, so the people come back. And we had a wonderful time at all those. I mean, they were great experiences. I was very fortunate, but I was always in charge, and I suppose that goes all the way back to one of your first questions, you know? I think when I was elected captain of the Safety Patrol or some, some insignificant thing. Why me? I didn't ask for it, you know? (*laugh*) But, some people like those kinds of challenges, others don't, and I've always said that, you know, you have to have chiefs and Indians for anything to work well, and some people want to be chiefs and others don't want to be, and avoid it at any cost. I've always wanted to run what I was involved in, and I've made a lot of mistakes, I'm sure, but they were never of omission; they were always of commission. And I had a chance over the years in all these different spots where I've been to counsel younger people, and I would tell them of errors that I had made, and what those errors meant, and trying to get them to be aggressive and to be outgoing in their pursuit of their business aspect, whatever aspect of the business they were working on. I would like them to know that when you make decisions of action that you're going to take, make them incrementally so that if you make an error, the whole house doesn't fall down. Do you know what I mean? Or whatever it is that you're attempting to achieve isn't scuttled, that you still have an opportunity to recover from the wrong direction that you took, and some people can do that, others can't, and therefore, they just want to have a nice, quiet

life. The movie that depicts this so well, I think it's in the Sixties, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit.* Have you ever seen it? Rent it. *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. He was the President of the company, and the owner of the company, the entrepreneur, the aggressive, you know, go-go sort-of a guy was the contrast. The man in the gray flannel suit worked every day and did everything right, and he wore his nice suit and tie and so on and he would go home every night, have dinner with his family, and, you know. Whereas the entrepreneurial guy was out all night, and he was always conceiving new concepts and borrowing money, and so on and so forth, and at the end of the movie, they were sort of contrasting their level of happiness. I believe the entrepreneurial guy is dying or is sick or something, and there's your choice. Well, I try to be in the middle of those two. I didn't own any of these businesses that I ran, but I ran them as though I owned them. In other words, it was my money that I was spending, not the actual owner's money, and then you develop an approach from that basic concept that honors and respects those who create wealth in this country, the entrepreneurs, and yet, I could be very aggressive in wanting to improve the business and, and make it work. And, I've had a good time, and now I'm retired. (*laugh*) I'm a gardener.

HM: We do ask if you have advice for new Members, and I mean, that was a great piece of advice, but was there anything you'd like to add?

RB: Well, yeah. New Members, I would say, Get control of your ego soon. I don't expect you to have total control because it is overwhelming for a young person or a middle-aged person who's elected, anybody who's elected. All of a sudden, you're

showered with all this attention, but you've got to get control of your ego, and you've got to realize what your role is in the ever improving situation of, in this case, state government. It goes on without you. It's been here a long time before you were here, so you play your role every day, that you're given the privilege of performing. Being elected isn't that big a deal, and it's not that hard, but governing is very difficult, particularly if you don't understand what it is you can and cannot do. And so, I think that that's the most important thing. What really frightens me about today is that there's so much money involved in running for an election and which that money has to be raised. It's raised by a very few people who become the Leaders, because those for whom they raise the money are indebted to them, and they elect them to the Leadership positions, and this circle keeps going and getting worse in my judgment. And, I think a lot of their money that's spent on elections is wasted. I don't think you need to spend that much, that is currently the case, and when you see a Legislator representing sixty or eighty thousand people on television, that's very expensive. That's absurd. The television reaches a million people, and you're trying to represent sixty thousand. I think the number of pieces that I got in the last election, slick pieces in the mail that are very expensive as well, four-color, you know, glossy, saying nothing. I knew nothing more than I did before I got them about the people running because it's just, you know, these sound bytes almost. It's a waste of money, but shoe leather is well-spent money. Advertising. I advertised. I always had a brochure. I made sure it was distributed. I made sure it said something meaningful about who I was and what I thought, as opposed to who the other person is and how bad they are. You know, the negative campaigning, I think, generates a lot of this need for just huge amounts of money, and I think it's

distorting our system terribly, and I would advise people to try to work in any way to control political spending and in so doing reduce the reliance on money and increase the reliance on ideas. Ideas should control politics and government, not money. Now, the counterargument, of course, is, "I can't get my ideas across if I don't have money. The mass media's expensive," and, and so on and so forth. That's not true. You can, you can get an awful lot across to people. People are not dumb in public forums, in direct mail, in direct delivery of information, and you create an aura as to who you are that way, I think, just as well as spending these ungodly amounts of money. That really worries me. So, I think getting control of your ego is critical, and all that that means and then also controlling the amount of money that's required so you don't become obligated to the wrong people, and you do become obligated if you have any kind of a conscience.

HM: Well, on a happy –

RB: And enjoy every bit of it, because it's a privilege. Yeah.

HM: Do you have a favorite story or a fondest memory that you would like to share?

RB: I told you one of the nicest things, and I had a hard time telling that because it's sort of self-serving when Leroy Irvis couched me in terms that I'd like to be couched in as being, you know, a straight shooter in dealing – (*coughs*) Geez, I have so many. I don't know that I can give one. Nothing's striking me. I can remember a very interesting experience, but I'm not sure I want to put it on tape of – well, I was running for, for

Governor – I'm not going to tell the whole story because it's, but I'm going to tell as much as I – I was running, again, against Dick Thornburgh, and we were in Westmoreland County, just the two of us in front of a large group of basically Italian-Americans, and that's what I am, you know. (*laugh*) So, a young man stood up in the audience and said, "Mr. Thornburgh, I hear you don't like Italians," or something to that extent, and I thought, "Oh, boy, what do I do?" I didn't want to appear as though I had put him up to it because I didn't even know. I didn't even know who he was, and I don't even know to this day. I thought, "What do I do?" And Thornburgh was – we were responding to questions, one and then the other, and the other candidates that were running in that particular election weren't there. So, I took the microphone and I said, "I'll handle this one," and I'm sure he thought, "Oh, my goodness, what's he going to say?" Because we were not exactly the best of friends at the time. We were opponents, you know? And I took the microphone, and I really did what my father would have done. I said, "There is no need for that kind of a question in this campaign. It's inappropriate, and I don't want him to answer it. I'll answer it by saying that he is a fair man to all people," or something like that. I mean, you know, high-sounding phraseology, and I let it go at that, and I was very pleased that I did it that way, and I think that any instinct that I would have that would reflect kindly on my father and mother I considered to be highlights, and I had several of those that where, you know, what is your natural instinct? You don't know until you have it. In law school, Dick Rogers, who has just died a few months ago was a black guy that I had gone to high school with, and I was a senior, and he was a first-year law student, and we were in the dorms, and I said, "Dick, come on, let me show you where we go at night after studying." We went to this place that served

beer, just beer. It wasn't a, it wasn't a – it was just a beer and sandwich place. We had a lot of fun, and I said, "Come on, we'll go out and have a beer." This was in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1958, probably. They wouldn't serve him because he was African-American. What's my instinct? Well, we just got up and left. I didn't raise hell with the ownership. I was angry with them because it's so inappropriate. This is just as fine a guy as you'd ever meet, and when you grow up with all kinds of people, you have a hard time distinguishing what they are in the eyes of other people. Dick Rogers wasn't a black man to me. He was just a guy that I knew from high school days, and a really good, smart person. But, I was glad that my instinct was such that I got up and left, and he did too, and I went to his funeral recently and recalled this event with some people, and he taught me a lot that night. He taught me about myself that night. So, I think they're the kinds of experiences that you gain in life that are meaningful as opposed to a contrived bill signing, you know, a happy day. They were all happy, you know. We really had a good time, and we felt as though we were doing important things, and I think we were.

HM: How would you like to be remembered as far as your tenure goes?

RB: As a good guy. (*laugh*) A person who had time for everybody without regard to their station in life in the government, but without regard to their seniority or their power in among the public, and without regard to their station, you know, and their economic circumstances and just to be, to be fair. That's really what my father was. That's why he became the Grand Marshal of that parade. It didn't just happen. He had to really prove himself from the humblest of beginnings. Well, why should I be any different, you

know? So, I'd like to be remembered as humble, okay person, who would do right by others. I think that says it all.

HM: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Butera. That was all I had as far as questions.

RB: Thank you. I mean, (*laugh*) I talked an awful lot.

HM: That's all right.

RB: I think for an hour and a half or more.

HM: That's fine. Thank you very much.

RB: Okay, thank you.