

PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable Joe Conti (R)

Bucks County

143rd Legislative District

1993-1997

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY: Heidi Mays, House Archivist
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Transcribed by: Nathan J. Robinson

Heidi Mays (HM): Good Morning.

The Honorable Joe Conti (JC): Good morning, how are you?

HM: I'm good, thank you. I'm here today with the Honorable Joe Conti, who has served the 143rd Legislative District in Bucks County in his House term, which was from 1993 to 1997, and he is now currently a State Senator, and he serves the 10th District, and he has been there from 1997 to the year 2006. Thank you for being here with me today.

JC: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here.

HM: I wanted to begin by asking you to describe your childhood and your family life and how that affected your future career as a public servant.

JC: I was born and raised in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, where I still live, which is the county seat of Bucks County. And, it was a Norman Rockwell kind of childhood. It was wonderful. The county, during my childhood, had a lot more farms than it does now. It is pretty well developed, but it was a great place to grow up. But, my family ran the restaurant in town. It was a pretty well-known restaurant. My Italian grandparents came from Italy and started the restaurant in 1945. My father took it over in [19]65 and made it into one of the finest restaurants in the country. My father actually became President of the National Restaurant Association in the early eighties, so it gives you some idea; it was a pretty good restaurant. We sold it in [19]95, and the second restaurant was sold in

[19]99, but, in other words, I came from a restaurant background, and it was very well known throughout the county. So, when it came time for me to get into public service, I had a very unique advantage of having very high name-id[entification] because everyone would go to Conti's for their birthdays, for their weddings, for their – it was a big restaurant, a couple hundred seats, and it was very well-known. So, that was a tremendous advantage to begin public service, which, for me, began in 1984.

HM: Did you come from a political family?

JC: Yes, and no—mostly, no. My parents were registered Independents, except for a time in the early [19]60s when my father tried to run, as a Democrat, for school board. [He] lost the first time; won the second time, which was unheard of, because it was all Republicans in those days. [He] only served a year or two, because then the school district then consolidated into the current Central Bucks School District. So, some of the directors of the individual schools went off in the consolidation effort. But, basically, we were – because of the business – we had Republicans come, we had Democrats come for their celebrations, so we were kind of non-partisan. I began in 1984, through the appointment process for Doylestown Township Supervisor, and at the time was a registered Independent, when I got appointed. And then turned Republican, mostly because it was a four-to-one voter registration edge if you were a Republican (*laugh*), and I think we'd only had one Democratic office-holder in the whole history of Doylestown Township, so I became a Republican after getting appointed as an Independent.

HM: Very interesting. So, when do you think your political aspirations started?

JC: My political aspirations really started in junior high school. I went to Unami Junior High School in Chalfont, part of the Central Bucks School District. I went to Central Bucks West. We used to be legendarily well known for our football teams, but that's pretty much over now. But, we went to Washington, DC for a three-day trip when I was in ninth grade, and that's really when I kind of got the bug for public service. When I got to high school, I played basketball, and, while I did well in studies, I didn't do well enough to go to Princeton, where I wanted to go for Government Service or Public Administration, and I went to Penn State and went into the family business instead. So, I really had desires at a young age to serve the public, put it on hold, and then got involved later.

HM: Well, what can you tell me about your career before coming to the house?

JC: [I] ran the family restaurant, was very involved – started at the age of twelve as a busboy – and went to Penn State. Took a lot of the hotel and restaurant courses that were there, graduated in [19]76, went right into the family business. My father, who was – is – a legendary restaurateur, retired now, was kind of the artist, if you will. He did the food and that kind of stuff, and he almost immediately turned over to me the business end of it. So, I would buy the insurance and provide the health insurance, which was, actually, you know, an interesting part of what formulates your positions and things, was—we were offering full major medical coverage to restaurant employees in the [19]70s, which was

unheard of. I mean, even today, if you go to a Bennigan's [Restaurant] or a [T.G.I] Friday's [Restaurant], you know, it's kind of hard to get full major medical, and my father thought that was an important thing to do. So, I was in charge of all of that: pension plans, profit sharing plans, that kind of stuff. And, then, you know, as you do in the family business, seated the people when they came in, and took care of everything. I did most of the hiring and firing and Human Resources. The Community Outreach was involved with the Chamber, which, once again, helped me when it was time to get politically active. But, just a hometown boy who ran the hometown restaurant that was lucky enough that it was very successful. It was great preparation for public service, and I may be one of the few public servants, if you will, that public service was easier than the restaurant – or, than my private life. Most people find the demands of public service to be more difficult than what they were doing before. For me, it was not more difficult, and perhaps, maybe even easier than a family business at two locations, that was open seven days a week.

HM: Well, you talked about being appointed Doylestown Township Supervisor. And then – what was that like, and what happened from there?

JC: You know, that may be my favorite government service, if you want to know. [It was] nine and three quarter years. It was a three-member board when I got appointed, the two prior people couldn't get along and the third person kept resigning, and I happened to know them both and was lucky enough to get appointed. But, shortly after that, we went to five members. They had decided to go to five members, as you are able to do with a

second-class township. It was a growth community; I think we had about ten thousand people when I started, and almost a decade later, we were at fourteen thousand [people]. So, we were involved in watching the farms become housing developments, which was tough. But, I loved it. I didn't realize how quickly you could get things done at the local level, compared to how long it takes to get things done here in Harrisburg. So, we preserved a lot of park land. We have an award-winning park, called the Central Park, that was something we did. We were also lucky enough that, when the school district adopted the earned income tax, we were able to take our property tax millage from like twenty-six down to two or three, which gave me the ability to say that I lowered taxes eight years in a row or something when I finally ran for the House. But, that was a great experience. First of all, Pennsylvania is the land of local government still, so it was good to understand that. But, I figured, if we had twenty-five or thirty or forty employees total, I negotiated a couple of police contracts through binding arbitration, and it was a very, very good governmental experience. In some respects, non-partisan, if you know what I mean; we were all Republicans, probably, registration-wise, in office, for the time I was there. So, it was more people issues, if you will, as opposed to, you know, Republican and Democrat issues. But, I think we received pretty good reviews by the public, and it's also very personal, you know. And when you are representing the community that you grew up with, I was more nervous my first Doylestown Township Supervisor's election, than any other election I ever had, because if you get rejected by your neighbors, it really hurts. You know, as the District grows, you can always say, "Oh, those people in Newtown or those folks in Yardley didn't understand me." (*laugh*) There is a rationale,

if you will. But, I remember like yesterday how nervous I was election night my first Township Supervisor's election.

HM: Well, tell me about some of your other elected positions before you came to the House.

JC: Well, it really – in addition to the Doylestown Township Supervisor position, the County Commissioners had me do several things for them: the first was, Chair of the Affordable Housing Task Force Study they did, which was really well done. Commissioners Mark Schweiker [Pennsylvania Governor, 2001-2003] and Andy Warren; Mark Schweiker, later Governor, Andy Warren, later District Administrator for PennDOT, and I got to be Chairman of that Task Force because I couldn't make that first meeting. So, the eighteen or twenty people there on the Task Force nominated me for Chairman, and that was a great experience. Then, I spent five years on the Bucks County Planning Commission, by appointment of the Commissioners, which was great. [I] chaired it, I believe, three of the five years. Then, we redid the county master plan, which is a big deal for County Government. It only happens every ten or twenty years. It should probably happen more often. I don't think they've redone it even since we did it last time. But, so they were the two other venues I had – I was elected Republican Committeeman three times while I was a Supervisor, so I got to come to State Committee. That was in a very interesting time, when we had the Tom Ridge [Pennsylvania Governor, 1995-2001], Ernie Preate [PA Attorney General, 1989-1995], Mike Fisher [D. Michael Fisher; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1975-1980;

State Senator, 1981-1996; PA Attorney General, 1997-2003; Federal Judge, US Court of Appeals 3rd Circuit, 2003-present] Barbara Hafer [PA Auditor General, 1989-1997; PA Treasurer, 1997-2005] endorsement, and that was great experience, to see how things worked at State Committee and that endorsement process. So, I think they're the – what I did in the ten years preparing for the House.

HM: Well, can you tell me about your first venture running for the House of Representatives?

JC: Yeah, running for the House was a product of a good friend and mentor, I spoke to him this morning, actually, (*laugh*) Jim Greenwood [James Greenwood; State Representative, Bucks County, 1981-1986; State Senator, 1987-1993; US Congressman, 1993-2004] – was State Rep[resentative] and then State Senator, and ran for Congress. And, in something of an upset, in a way, he beat a gentleman named Pete Kostmayer [US Congressman, Pennsylvania, 1977-1992], who was our Congressman. And, when Jim Greenwood moved from the State Senate to Congress, the State Rep[resentative] in the 143rd, Dave Heckler [David Heckler; State Representative, Bucks County, 1987-1993, State Senator, 1993-1997], moved up, and then it was a vacancy, and so I ran in the Special Election of [19]93. I had had so much experience running for State Committee and getting the endorsement of our County Party – which is an interesting thing to digress a little bit on; the Bucks County Republican Committee is one of the last that is a real organized Party that endorses. You virtually can't win without their endorsement. Probably, Delaware County and Bucks, because Montgomery is weak, and a little

Chester, Allegheny, to a lesser degree. But, there aren't many of the old style Parties left. But, I had 'labored in the vineyards,' as they say, in that county Party, so when the vacancy occurred, I didn't have any opposition for the endorsement. So, I got endorsed for that, ran in November of [19]93, a really good election. I had a Democrat opponent and had a Green Party opponent. We had some good debates, and then, you know, made it to here, and was Sworn-In on the thirtieth anniversary of JFK's [John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 35th President of the United States, 1961-1963] assassination; November 22, 1993. Speaker Bill DeWeese [H. William DeWeese; State Representative, Fayette, Greene and Washington Counties, 1976-present; Speaker of the House, 1993-1994] and Majority Leader Matt Ryan [Matthew J. Ryan; State Representative, Delaware County, 1963-2003; Speaker of the House, 1981-1982 and 1995-2003], which was a great day.

HM: Can you tell me how you got started? Who helped you get started? Who helped you with your first election to the House?

JC: Well, as I said, the Bucks County Republican Committee was so strong; I never had a campaign committee other than the elected committee people of the County. Isn't that interesting? You probably don't have many people sitting here who say that. I would have a chairman and a treasurer – although, actually, my treasurer was a committeeman, too, now that I think about it. But, so, I had a couple of people almost more in honorary positions that would do it, but I really depended on the county committee to staff the polls and run everything. Someone who I know you've talked to, Representative Roy Reinard [State Representative, Bucks County, 1983-2002] was really my mentor. In

1987, the Party Chairman asked me to consider being County Commissioner. Then I went through what we call our ‘screening process,’ and made a lot of mistakes and didn’t make it. And Roy, at that time, said to me – and I had known Roy from the restaurant; his parents were good customers in the restaurant – Roy came up to me after I withdrew, and said, “You know, Joe, stick around. Something is going to happen, and, you know, we’d like to have you part of the Party.” And, I ran for State Committee two or three times, which kept me involved, and lo and behold, I got involved. So, Roy Reinard was a great mentor, great friend, to this day, along with Roy Cornell [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1979-2004]. A similar situation: [I] knew Roy Cornell from the restaurant, coming in, and the Cornell family is very prominent just over the county line in Montgomery County, about ten miles from Doylestown. But, Roy Reinard and Roy Cornell, particularly Roy Reinard, were my mentors when I got here, and, in some respects, for the first year or two I just did what they told me (*laugh*). Remember, I was a Special Election, so I didn’t have a class with me. LeAnna Washington [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1995-2005; State Senator, 2005-present], who is now a State Senator, was in the Special Election, so we got Sworn-In together, but she was a Democrat. So, I didn’t have any formal orientation, didn’t develop a bond, if you will, with an incoming class like a lot of them do. So, I really depended on Roy.

HM: But, I think you shared an office with Sam Smith [Samuel Smith; State Representative, Armstrong, Indiana and Jefferson Counties, 1987-present]?

JC: I did.

HM: So, that's a good—

JC: Well, as it turned out, that's providence, right? Another 'Pollyanna' part of my story; Dave Heckler was my predecessor, and he and Sam were sharing an office on the third floor, right in the middle – I forget the room number up there – and, so when Dave left, Matt Ryan said, “Joe, we'd like you just to take the office there.” I said, “That would be great!” And, Sam Smith really was invaluable to me, taught me so much. Our desks were literally next to each other, maybe a little space to walk in between, and then our secretaries were on the other side of screens, there. But, there was four of us in that one office – it's, frankly, smaller than this room. And, Sam was really a great help, so it was wonderful to watch him proceed through Leadership over the last couple years and be so successful. And I think – and, of course, you might know better than I – I think we were the last two to, literally, share an office.

HM: I think you were.

JC: They have now the suites, and there's separate divisions, if you will, but we were in the same room there.

HM: I'd like to jump back a little bit to campaigning. Did you like to campaign?

JC: I do. I've been in nineteen elections in twenty-three years. I love the campaign. I am the worst fund-raiser I know. [I] do not enjoy fundraising. [That] is a major factor in why I'm retiring, actually, because the cost of campaigns has just gotten crazy. But, I was able to have very low-cost, debate-oriented campaigns with opponents. I would say – I'm trying to remember. I don't think I spent more than ten or fifteen thousand dollars in a House race. Some, I spent as low as a thousand or two, because there was three House runs, and I did not break fifty thousand for a Senate run. One, I think, was—probably, my Special [Election] in the Senate was about twenty-five, and then next one was less, and then another one was about twenty-five. So, very low cost – but, I love campaigning. I think it's important. I think you're a better Representative when you go out and listen and you debate the issues. And, I probably was one of the ones, at the urging of Reinard and Cornell, that, in some respects, never stopped campaigning because I would hold the town meetings and do the outreach. So, in some respects, town meetings and the kind of things that you do once you're elected are just a different kind of campaign, if you will. But, I really enjoyed campaigning. I would not have wanted to spend – my successor in the Senate is going to spend over a million dollars for a seat that just four years ago, I didn't spend twenty-five thousand for. So, I'm not comfortable with the fund-raising part of it, but I love campaigns.

HM: Could you tell me a little bit about the District whenever you served?

JC: Well, the House District, when I served – it was a little different than it is today, after the census in 2000, and redistricting. But, it was predominantly a Doylestown seat

with Buckingham, Solberry, New Hope, and those kinds of areas. It was a great District to represent. The registration was about two to one Republican, as I recall, back then, but, more importantly, it was just – they were the bedroom communities for Philadelphia. The upper end of the District is actually only an hour and ten minutes from New York City, so we did have some New York influence, if you will, in the upper end of the District. And, I have to remember we're talking about the House Seat and not the Senate Seat.

HM: I'll ask you about your Senate Seat here in a second.

JC: Yeah. And for me, it was very easy, being a Township Supervisor in the largest township in the District, and, having the restaurant, I mean, as I said, I was very fortunate to have very good name id[entification], know a lot of people, and it was a great way to represent people: to literally walk down the streets of Doylestown, have people come up and say, "This is what we think," and feel comfortable doing it.

HM: Okay. Now what can you tell me about your Senate Seat?

JC: Well, the Senate Seat, well, once again, is dramatically different than it was when I first was elected. While there's currently four Senators in Bucks County, there really was only two nine or ten years ago—nine years ago, when I came in. There was really – Tommy Tomlinson [Robert M. Tomlinson; State Representative, Bucks County, 1991-1994; State Senator, 1995-present] had the lower half and I had the upper half of Bucks

County. Stewart Greenleaf [State Representative, Montgomery County, 1977-1978; State Senator, 1979-present] a little on the side. And, we, in essence, went like this.

HM: *(laugh)*

JC: So, there was a lot of Democrats in the lower part, and I picked up half the Democrats. So, now it's a very different seat than when I got elected. When I got elected, it was really almost the same demographics as my House Seat. And now, the current 10th District is different; there's one hundred thousand people in lower Bucks; the old Fairless [Works] Steel Site, which is a wonderful revitalization effort down there. But, it's totally different, and I got involved in all kinds of new issues, which I found invigorating over the last five or six years. But, the initial Senate Seat was very similar to the 143rd House Seat.

HM: Was there anything that you think made that District unique?

JC: You know, the uniqueness of it is just the flavor of life there. We have history that goes back to the 1600's. We have a lot of long-time residents. We now have a lot of new residents, but they – we embrace history. We embrace arts. We embrace culture, and we're blessed that by and large, it's a fairly well-off District. They don't need much from government at any level. So, if the local government provides police protection and the school board educates the kids and the state government helps out, then passes the enabling laws and the federal government, you know, keeps us safe. There's not a third

class city that has all the problems that are involved in a third class city in the county. There's certainly aren't the issues that there are in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, so it really is a lovely community. It has changed. I mean, there's more pavement. It used to be more rural than it is now – more residents. I think Bucks County, in my lifetime, probably almost doubled, probably from three hundred thousand to six hundred thousand [residents]. Bucks County is bigger than two or three states. So, it's different now. But, it was a wonderful District to represent. Just the climate currently in Harrisburg is different, and I guess, I use the term 'unpleasant' sometimes, with some of the mistakes that we've made, but also the mood of the state in the center and western part of the state which, really never got to the southeast. We didn't have the anti-pay raise and the negative feelings about the State Legislature in the southeast that there is across the rest of the state. So, it's a very interesting District.

HM: You talked about your first Swearing-In, since it was for a Special Election, and how do you think during – maybe the second one, with all the – being Sworn-In as a class, as a group?

JC: Well, the first one was so interesting for me because—while LeAnne and I had our hands on the Bible and we were going like this, I see Speaker DeWeese look down at my father and go, “Hi, Walt.” And, I didn't know who Bill DeWeese was from Greene County, back in those days. And, here it turned out that Governor Thornburgh [Richard Thornburgh; Pennsylvania Governor, 1979-1987] had appointed my father, DeWeese, Joe Pitts [Joseph Pitts; State Representative, Chester County, 1973-1996; US

Congressman, 1997-present], Franco Harris¹, and I think it was Pittenger [John Pittenger; State Representative, Lancaster County, 1965-1966 and 1969-1970; Pennsylvania Secretary of Education, 1972-1977] – I forget who the fifth was – and they started the Keystone State Games in the seventies or something, years before. And, through that, I developed a fond friendship with Bill DeWeese, and we had dinner many times, and any time I can break bread with Speaker DeWeese, it's a lot of fun. So, that was a very special day. The next Swearing-In was interesting. That was when a Representative by the name of Tom Stish [State Representative, Luzerne County, 1989-1996] switched, so that was – a lot of the wonderful, ceremonial aspects of a Swearing-In day were (*laugh*) put on hold in front all our family and friends. God, I think we were delayed four or five hours while they were fighting over it. I forget the specifics of it, but that was interesting. In fact, one of the interesting experiences for me in the House was I spent the first year in the minority, which was an interesting experience. I forget what the number was. And then, we went 102-101 with the Stish switch². We went into the majority, and then, of course, I've been in the majority ever since here. But, there's a lot of people I would be close to – almost exactly thirteen years here in Harrisburg – there's a lot of people elected after me as Republicans who have never been in the minority and don't understand what that's all about. So, but, that was my second Swearing-In, and then my third Swearing-In was a very pleasant (*laugh*), normal kind of ceremonial day, with Speaker Ryan, of course, who had the chair at that point, but yeah, just the Tom Stish switch was interesting.

¹ Professional Football player; played for the Pittsburgh Steelers, 1972-1983 and the Seattle Seahawks, 1983-1984; inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, 1990.

² Stish, voted in as a Democrat in the 1994 election, decided to switch Party affiliation to the Republican Party for the 1995-1996 session.

HM: Now, how about the Senate Swearing-Ins?

JC: Well, the Senate Swearing-In, my Special [Election] in the Senate was an incredible experience because I left the House on November 22, exactly four years later in [19]97, and I had fifty or seventy-five of my family and friends seated in the well of the House. I was the only one leaving that day, so I got to give my farewell address, which was very emotional for me because I love the House, and then my family and I walked across the building, you know, to the Senate Chamber, and I was the only one Sworn-In there. And, Governor Ridge and Lieutenant Governor Schweiker, who is my good friend from Bucks County, were there. That was a very unique experience for me. I was very lucky to be able to go through that. So, that was a wonderful Swearing-In. Then the next two Senate Swearing-Ins were the kind of normal, ceremonial things.

HM: Well, you've touched on some of the things I usually ask now about mentors and things, so, how about, maybe, technology? How has technology changed?

JC: Oh, my goodness. In the ten or thirteen years I've been here, it's a completely different experience now. We didn't have Email. We didn't have Web sites. So, I actually came in – you know, somebody would send you a letter saying, "I need help with this." Then we would send a letter out, "Thank you for your letter. We're going to help you." And then we would send a response, and say, "Here's the response," hopefully favorable. Then, we'd send a third letter saying, "We hope you are happy with our

service,” all that kind of mail. And, we did all that kind of thing, and had the town meetings all the time, that I call ‘invited town meetings.’ When I was a House Member, I could invite every registered voter to a town meeting, and over the course of two years, they would come. Now, what I mean by that is, we would probably invite, I think in those days it was about a thousand voters, and we would get a hundred or a hundred and twenty to show up, which was a wonderful event. When I moved to the Senate, I could only invite the ‘frequent voters,’ if you will, and could never get through the whole District; the 240,000 versus 58,000 people. But, we continued to try to do that. But, the last six months, especially after the pay raise debacle, we really learned about technology. This General Assembly was not ready for the blogs, the Internet and all the things that happened in the pay raise debacle, and I was a bit of a guinea pig in the Senate. We have outstanding Web sites in the Senate – I know the House does, too – but, we’re learning that we’re going to have to use our Web sites very proactively. So, I started to do some bill introductions on the Web, started to talk to reporters a little less, have them Email questions and answer them on the Web where we can control what is printed. So, I think that the technology change in my time here has been tremendous, and I think the General Assembly’s just on the eve of really catching on what technology can do. So, it will be exciting to see how the Pennsylvania General Assembly uses the technology to their advantage to get out the message of the good things that get done here. Because, if you depend on the press, with the instability of the press right now, you would think nothing good happens here, and, of course, so much good does happen here, so.

HM: A lot of your colleagues have talked about the press and the relationship with the media and, since you said you respond via Email, that is certainly one way that you will not be misquoted.

JC: Yes.

HM: So –

JC: Exactly right. You are controlling your message. When we did the pay raise, I was one of the ones who went out and defended it, went to the editorial boards, and, you know, they would sit there and nod their heads with seven-eighths of what you said, and then, of course the editorial in the story the next day would be on the one-eighth of what – you know. And so, I painfully learned that we'd better control our message better, but, you know, I never – my first month, no, three months after I was the Doylestown Township Supervisor, we approved the police contract, and it was a two to one vote, and the story was on the one 'No' and not the two of us that were 'Yes,' so I went in to see the editor, and he explained that, "controversy sells newspapers," and got into all that kind of stuff. I never minded being criticized in the press. I went for office. I am elected. It's fair enough that they can say what they want about me, and, by and large, until the last year, I think the press was fair. What's happened now is: the instability has raised to a level that I think they're unfair, but, more importantly, they bring your family into it, and that's what's not right. They can say whatever they want about me; that's fair game. But when they start bringing wives, children, parents, grandmothers in, and try to

make all kinds of – you know, not every controversial issue is corruption, like they try to make it. But, it's really bringing the family in, and I felt that if I would have continued in public service, that my family would have been brought in more and more into the news stories, and I was not going to do that. It's not fair to them. Particularly, my kids have a right to lead full and active lives, and I want to be helpful to them, and, unfortunately, retirement was the best way to keep them out of harm's way. But, we'll see. I think if we learn how to use technology, we'll be able to compete with the incivility of only the print media, by the way, in southeastern PA. The radio, even talk show radio and TV, have been rather fair and haven't been the vitriolic nature it is out west. And I think it's clear: people believe TV, they believe a lot of radio, and they really are pretty skeptical of what they read in the newspaper, so the challenge is – for the newspapers is, in a way they have the same challenge we have in the General Assembly, which is to restore the esteem of the Institution, but we here in the General Assembly, I think would be wise to use the technology, radio and TV, to our benefit because that's what the public seems to embrace more. So, video, via Emails, where you are controlling your message to your constituents, is the future.

HM: Good point.

JC: I think.

HM: Yeah, good point. What about the cameras on the House Floor?

JC: Well, the cameras were in before I got there, so that was not new for me. The cameras on the House Floor certainly lengthened the debate. I also had an unusual situation that PCN [Pennsylvania Cable Network] and the coverage of the Floors did not come into the southeast Pennsylvania until very recently, so, maybe for the first eight or nine years that I was in office, my constituents could not see me talk on the House or Senate Floor. We do have it now, so it's different, but it certainly lengthens debate. But, I think there's a rich tradition of Floor debate in the House that I think is very good. I always enjoyed it. Now, maybe at the four year point when I went to the Senate where there's virtually no floor debates – such a different experience – is different. But, I remember Representative Dave Richardson [David P. Richardson; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1973-1995] would sometimes read on the House Floor when he was upset with things, and we're all elected, and when you start to control the Democratic process, that's a slippery slope. And Speaker Ryan and Speaker DeWeese and those kind of folks do not want to control the ability for elected officials to get up and—so, I guess now they may control just a touch the budgetary process, but, other than that, it's still pretty open, and I think that's a great House tradition that I hope they continue.

HM: I know the House has laptops. Does the Senate have laptops on the House Floor – the Senate Floor?

JC: I was elected the new Caucus Chairman less than a year ago and they are moving towards that. There are some problems with the wiring of the Senate floor, but I think you're going to see them go wi-fi [wireless fidelity] eventually and have the ability of

members to take a laptop to the Floor. I don't think you're going to see fifty laptops on every Senate desk, but I think that capability will come in, in the near future.

HM: Well, you've talked about some of the people that you've served with. I would like to know what your relationship was like with Dave Heckler, Jim Greenwood, and Chuck McIlhinney [Charles T. McIlhinney; State Representative, Bucks County, 1998-2006; State Senator, 2007-present]? Because you do just watch that Bucks County train (*laugh*), I guess.

JC: Yeah. Well, Jim Greenwood was all of our mentor in a way; really, a wonderful public servant. Jim Greenwood and I have that kind of a relationship where I may not talk to him for two months, and then an issue will come up and either we are in a meeting together or we get on the phone, and we get to consensus in about forty-two seconds or less and so that was a nice thing to have. But, I really respected the job he did. I think there is a genuineness to the elected officials in the 143rd. We don't necessarily – well, we certainly didn't do surveys in our day, and we don't poll to see what the people feel like. We kind-of instinctively got to the position of the majority quickly and easily, and then we enjoyed hearing, perhaps, the minority that didn't agree, if you will. So, it was a good experience, and Dave Heckler, who is now President Judge of the County is a great mentor and friend. A former District Attorney who I ran with so many times for office, Allen Rubenstein; also a Judge. And, Dave and Allen and I – it's my responsibility to get us together every three to six months to have lunch. Jim, when he was in Washington as a Congressman couldn't ever make it, and, of course, now, as President of the BIO

[Biotechnology Industry Organization], he's even busier. So, I've stayed close to Dave. Both Jim and Dave were on my goodbye videos in the Senate, and Chuck and I have really a much stronger relationship than people know. Once again, we're a little different in our styles, but our ultimate votes are ninety-nine percent of the time the same. And, we enjoyed the differences of our styles. Chuck is pretty hard-hitting. He likes to get in there and fight out it, and I think he teasingly calls me 'the Diplomat,' but I wish I was a little more of an infighter, you know, if I could criticize myself a little bit. So, we were a formidable team. Chuck is going to be a great State Senator, and I was very pleased to have him as my State Representative. And, he has the benefit of youth. He's getting involved at a nice age where he should have a very long career here, hopefully.

HM: And what can you tell me about the rest of the Bucks Delegation?

JC: Well, you know, the Bucks County Delegation, prior to us getting here, was people like Ed Burns [State Representative, Bucks County, 1973-1990] and 'Pop-Pop' Wright [James L. Wright, Jr.; State Representative, 1965-1990], Matt's [Matthew Wright; State Representative, Bucks County, 1991-2006] father, and Ben Wilson [State Representative, Bucks County, 1967-1990], who was a legendary curmudgeon, and a friend of my family from a Penn State connection. In fact, he and my father owned a plane once together and Ben was one of those—while he ran for office as a Republican, I think – I think he was the deciding vote for Speaker Irvis [K. Leroy Irvis; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1988; Speaker of the House, 1977-1978, 1983-1988] one time. You know, he was very independent. There is a little bit of an independent streak amongst all of us

in Bucks County, particularly in the 143rd. And then, I served with – you know, there is not a finer Representative than Dave Steil [David Steil; State Representative, Bucks County, 1993-2008], who is still in office. Tommy Tomlinson was in when I – he's now in the Senate. Jean Wilson [State Representative, Bucks County, 1988-1992], Ben's widow, followed. But, those wonderful people to serve with. And, we all – as, once again, we embraced our differences. I don't know if that makes sense, but one specialized in welfare issues, one in education, one in – and we all enjoyed working together. A lot of that is because, with the County Republican Committee, in particular, we all ran for office together – we all knew each other very well. It was not something like we just met in Harrisburg and we'd sit and try to figure out something, and we sat together on the floor, which is a little unique. Not every delegation sits together like the Bucks County Delegation does in the front. And then, the two Democrats that we've had historically, Tony Melio [Anthony J. Melio; State Representative, Bucks County, 1987-present] and Tom Corrigan [Thomas Corrigan; State Representative, Bucks County, 1987-2006], are wonderful, particularly Tom Corrigan. He and I went – as I mentioned, we switched our Senate Seats, so Tom Corrigan and I worked closely together on that lower part of my Senate Seat, but, very good Delegation.

HM: Is there camaraderie in the House?

JC: Oh, I think there is much more camaraderie in the House than there is in the Senate. There's different levels: there's a regional camaraderie – for us, it's the County, and then there is a Republican camaraderie. Now, perhaps, when I was there in [19]93 to [19]97,

the camaraderie was even greater, because we went from a minority to a majority. We elected Tom Ridge as Governor. So, it was a – and watching John Perzel [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1979-present; Speaker of the House, 2003-2006] grow as a leader was wonderful. I can't comment too much on the last couple of years in the House, but I think there is a little, perhaps, less camaraderie because there are some ideological differences within the Republican Caucus that didn't, frankly, exist in the mid- to late-nineties. So, I think we were more of a team. And, we were working with our Governor. I can make a case that the second term of Tom Ridge was almost all enabled by John Perzel. I mean, he was very important in the House, and we were proud of that. So, when I was in the House, there was tremendous 'esprit d' corps,' as they say. That may be a little different now, but –

HM: I was going to ask you, did you promote camaraderie in any way, by bringing people together?

JC: Well, thank you. Maybe, *(laugh)* what's the Groucho Marx line? "Somebody water that plant."

HM: *(laugh)*

JC: I think that was one of my strengths was, I love people. I love to tease, say I'm a bartender by birth. I think I began by getting, certainly, the Bucks County delegation

together because they were mostly free agents until I got here and we all got together, and it worked well half the time, anyway.

HM: *(laugh)*

JC: And then, I – with that State Committee experience I had, I kind of understood a lot of the people running for Attorney General, DA [District Attorney], perhaps more than even some of the existing legislators when I came in, so I really—I hope I was of help in bringing the team together. I think Chuck probably filled that role after me because he was very strongly involved in our County Party and, so, yeah, I hope I helped bring it together.

HM: I like the caricature in your office. I was thinking of that, in particular, with that question.

JC: Yeah.

HM: Have you been a mentor to anybody, do you think? Maybe Chuck?

JC: Well, I think Chuck, yeah. I've had a very strong relationship with the newer Senators: people elected with me and after me. I was a Special [Election], so, after me – and, it was very nice last week, in the farewells on the Senate Floor; the things that were said publicly in our film were nice and ceremonial and all that, but there was a lot of

private things said in Caucus, and, to me, privately even in our final evening session, where I guess I did end up being a mentor to some of the newer Senators and, in fact, to the new leaders elected in the Senate. I think I'd be bold enough to say I was definitely involved in mentoring them. That's a question for reflection, actually.

HM: Yeah, it is. Can you talk about what it was like with your committee work in the House? You served on an awful lot of committees in a short period of time. *(laugh)*

JC: I did.

HM: Yeah.

JC: Well, my committee work in the House, was, actually, I should tell – I'm going to try to tell as many Matt Ryan stories as I can because he was, literally, my hero. But, when I came into the Special [Election] and was going through the little orientation, that half-day, I was taken into the Speaker's office and Matt said – Oh, I guess he was still the Majority Leader, now that I think about it – and he, Matt, said, "Joe, I've been able to get you Local Government," which, of course, is where you want to manage growth and do those kinds of things. You know, for ten years as a Supervisor, trying to manage growth, I had really about had it –

HM: *(laugh)*

JC: – with managing growth, and I said to Matt, I said, “Matt, I’d really, you know,” and he just knew; he got it. I just said, “Matt, I just kind-of, I just,” “I understand.”

And, I didn’t get on Local Government for a while, anyway, and then I eventually did serve, but the most important thing I did in the House was serve on the House Appropriations Committee. And, I was just sharing with some of the new Senate leaders that I think every freshman should serve on the Appropriations Committee. It’s very sought-after, so with the seniority system we have, it’s tough to get on it, in that regard, as a freshman, but that’s where you learn about State Government. That two or three week Appropriation Hearing season in March or whenever it turns out to be is really when you learn about State Government. And, I was able to get on Appropriation with the help of some of the senior Bucks County Members, and it was a great experience.

The other experience that was fun was being on the Liquor Control Committee because being a licensee and having two restaurants, I kind of got those issues, and was very involved in negotiating, well, what didn’t happen with the Ridge administration and the privatization of the State Stores. When I got to the Senate and took over that Liquor Control Committee, I was part of the modernization of the current system, so it’s been an interesting experience. But, when I think of committees in the House, I have to mention Karl Boyes [State Representative, Erie County, 1981-2003]. Karl Boyes was the best Chairman I ever served under. Karl has moved on to a caucus in the next life and I miss him desperately, but he empowered every member of his committee, either to make you subcommittee Chair, he’d say, “Joe, you take this issue.” And, he was the model, in my mind, of how to bring together a committee – it was the Finance Committee, I believe,

when I was in the House – and he was really the best Committee Chair I ever served under.

HM: So, why do you think that Pennsylvania has not privatized its liquor sales? (*laugh*)

JC: Well, there is a rich tradition of being opposed to alcohol consumption. I mean, Governor Pinchot [Gifford, Pennsylvania Governor, 1923-1927 and 1931-1935] started the Liquor Control System in the twenties and thirties. That, combined with, of course, the Union folks who have the jobs – there just hasn't been the need for it, and now – in [19]93 and [19]94, when I was a House Member, I would probably get fifty to a hundred calls a year, you know, "I can't get my Chardonnay." "Why don't they handle my vodka?" And all that. And, I could tell you in the last five years, I haven't gotten a single phone call about the Pennsylvania State Stores – I'm sorry, 'Wine and Spirit Shops' (*laugh*) See? This is why I'm retiring; I'm a dinosaur before my time, here.

HM: (*laugh*)

JC: Because, they've just improved so much, so there just isn't the need. And, there is a lot of virtues to the system. Number one is we have less underage drinking problems than a lot of states. We have, perhaps, better driving fatality figures than a lot of other states, particularly, of our size when you control the availability of alcohol a little bit. Plus, it does contribute roughly 250 million [dollars] to our General Fund. It's a billion

dollar business that throws off a twenty-five percent profit, which is really, rather good. And so, right now, there just isn't the need for it.

HM: How would you compare your House Committee work to your Senate Committee work?

JC: The House Committees were so much more fun, and the Committee work, I think, was actually more interesting and better for two reasons: number one, the House Committees have standing staff that stay with the committees, which I think is a good thing. But, the other thing, that I think sometimes people overlook is, the House Committees met more, but, more importantly, traveled more. I mean, I went to every – the only part of the state I haven't been to is Erie. I mean, I've been to every part of this state – usually with a House Committee is what took me there – to get out and listen to the People of Pennsylvania and hear their opinions. The Senate Committees do not meet as often, they are very Chairman-driven, the Members don't have quite the influence as they do in the House, and they don't travel near enough. And, then, some of the other venues we have, like the Majority and Minority Policy Committee, which do a nice job in the House – that's another level of committee work you can do – the Senate has a culture where the Majority Policy Committee can not go anywhere without the approval of the standing Committee Chair on the issue. So, when I was Majority Policy Committee Chairman for five years, if I wanted to have a tax reform hearing in Allentown, Chairman Jane Earll [State Senator, Erie County, 1997-present] of Finance had to approve us going, and, candidly, they really didn't approve. They wanted to keep control of the issue. So,

dramatically different committee work between the House and the Senate and, once again, I think the House model is better. **[END OF SIDE A]**

HM: What legislation do you feel was your most important? Maybe, issues or specific legislation in your House term?

JC: Well, being the in the House only four years, I think it was only two or three bills I got done in the House, and they certainly weren't memorable, and we're not going to take up any tape. *(laugh)* I think one was a school crossing guard.

HM: Yeah.

JC: Another was accountants' education, you know, and those kinds of things. In the Senate, most of my work has been with the Liquor Control Committee: modernization of the State Stores. [I'm] very proud of the ethnic intimidation law we passed, which I think was very important. I've become, I feel, even stronger than ever about promoting civil rights and preserving our civil liberties, and I think the Hate Crime Legislation we were able to get through the Senate was important. Then there's a number of things I also got done in the Senate that were kind of a direct result of having some wonderful staff people. Vicki Wilken, my general counsel, and Kirsten Kenny; my policy people were kind-of good. They were from the Ridge administration. They were very strong on some of the judicial issues, and so there was a couple of things I was able to get done in the Senate, mostly through their expertise and work. But, probably – certainly, the Hate

Crime Legislation and anything relating to the modernization of the State Store System would have been what I did the most of.

HM: What do you think is the key—how do you think Legislation gets passed? What can you tell people—how to do it? (*laugh*)

JC: Well, first of all, Legislation doesn't get passed.

HM: Okay.

JC: I mean, it's really the best way to put it. I worked five years on updating the student medical exam issue, and got it to the House here in the final days, and it didn't get done. That was mostly because it was an education code bill and you know how hard they are to do. But, there's as much luck as there is skill in getting a bill done. As a House Member, it's really difficult. They do try to give every freshman or non-chairman, if you will, a pop at a bill or two occasionally in the House, which I think is good, but it's very hard. I mean, there's people that have been in the minority in the House for ten years who have never got a bill passed, and that's not to be criticized; that's just the way it goes. The Senate, being a smaller body and becoming a Chairman so much quicker, you can get bills passed. But, jeez, you know, it has to take anywhere from two to five years to pass the simplest of bills. So, it's very hard. If you are a civil libertarian, as I think I am in my heart, then you're living in a good state because it takes a long time for Government to get into your life with the passage of a bill. But when you want to do

something like ban handheld cell phones in cars, like I've been trying to do since [19]99, with no success, it can be very daunting, and difficult and frustrating. But, getting bills passed from a House perspective is really difficult.

HM: That's my next question. How frustrating is it? And, what do you do with your frustrations whenever you're trying to get really good ideas passed?

JC: Well, it's interesting; my frustration level as a House Member was not much because I was only there for four years and nobody really, in the first year or two as a House Member really has the expectation of getting a lot of bills or any bill passed. So, I did not leave the House of Representatives frustrated that I didn't get a lot of bills passed. Now, when I got to the Senate, it's tremendously frustrating, but it's a product of, I think, the things that matter to me: public safety issues, things like hand-held cell phones and hate crimes and student medical exams and – they tend to be things that appeal to sixty to seventy percent of the state, but, unfortunately, they only appeal to twenty or thirty percent of the Republican Caucus of the Senate. So, it's hard to get my legislation through the Senate Republican Caucus. When it hits the Senate Floor, it gets thirty-five or forty votes rather easily, so that my frustration in the Senate was having my own Caucus not embrace a lot of the initiatives that mean a lot to the people in the southeast. But, I think that that just summarizes the, frustration is too strong a word; it is what it is.

HM: Right.

JC: You know.

HM: Do you think that your issues changed whenever you were first elected to the House to the time we're talking now?

JC: Yeah, I think so. I think Senator Jake Corman [State Senator, 1999-present] has this great line where he says, "I talk left and vote right," in the sense of liberal and conservative. I think I was a bit more moderate or conservative, if you will, in particular, on some of the business issues when I came into the House. [I] did not have a lot of organized labor in my House Seat. [I] learned a lot about organized labor in the ten years I've been here, and, of course, my new Senate Seat has a lot of organized labor in it. So, I probably took a step to the left (*laugh*) as I've been here, which is probably frightening for some of my, you know, fellow colleagues, who have always thought I was pretty liberal to begin with, but, as I mentioned earlier, the one thing that I wear on my sleeve is the importance of civil rights and the public safety issues. If you believe in less government, then where do you really need it? And that is in the protection and welfare of the constituents, and also, giving everybody an equal chance to succeed in Pennsylvania. And, it's been difficult to watch my Republican Party demagogue some issues; gay marriage, immigration, things like that, that I don't think we represent near the mainstream part of southeastern PA anyway on it, which is reason number twelve why I decided to retire.

HM: (*laugh*) What do you think the hardest issue you ever had to face as a legislator was?

JC: Well, I think the hate crime debate was certainly the hardest. Gaming was very difficult. Once again, the same profile on the Senate, where I believe there was only eight or nine of us out of thirty who voted for gaming. So, almost any issue—those two would be the most interesting. Welfare reform in the House was hard. In fact, I'll tell you a Roy Cornell story; Roy Cornell was chairman of Health and Welfare, and we were going to the House Floor to do the Tom Ridge Welfare Reform, and, you know, we vote electronically, and Cornell was right above or below Conti up there, you know. And, we're in Caucus, and we're going to do welfare reform. And we're that, 'esprit de corps,' we're the Ridge Republicans, we're going to go out and do welfare reform, and I go to the House Floor, and there's some debate, and the vote goes up, and the Chairman of Health and Welfare, Cornell, votes against welfare reform. I'm sitting down there with all of my colleagues in the front of the House and I'm saying, "What's Roy doing?" You know? And Matt's up there going, "Have all the Members voted? Have all the Members – ?" and I go from green to red; boom. I go, "No." I said, "Cornell's got to know what he's doing." Boom; just blind faith in Roy Cornell. [It] ended up being, I think, one of the best votes I ever made because there were some issues relating to big city hospitals, and we did a better job when we did it a month or two later. But, that's a little-known – and, you know, there's something in that story, you know, that's maybe not a story I'd tell at my town meeting (*laugh*) in front of constituents, but it does say something about the, I think, the quality of the people that I served with, the trust you would put in each

other. So, welfare reform in the House—all the Ridge issues were tough: the stadiums, welfare reform, worker's comp[ensation]. You can go right down the list. But, I think, welfare reform was the toughest, and in the Senate, it certainly was gaming and the hate crime bill.

HM: What do you think the hardest issue is before the Legislature right now?

JC: The necessary reform of how they do business; more transparency. They have a big challenge for them. I put together a little reform agenda for my Senate colleagues for the future. We've already done two or three of them. But, I think we just have to – the public wants to be able to have access to what we do. The courts are agreeing. So, the strong control of leadership is going to have to be broken, and what I mean by leadership, I'm talking about the one or two top people. I'm not talking about, you know, committee Chairs; I'm talking about the Majority Leader, Minority Leader, the Speaker of the House, the President Pro Tempore, those – there's five or six people that have an extraordinary amount of control of the agenda and of the money, and that's going to have to change. And, interestingly enough, with the elections that just took place, the only Caucus to have all new leaders is the Senate Republicans, so they may actually be leading the reform. Because, if one Caucus breaks and does the reform, the other three are going to have to follow. I mean, they aren't going to be able to say, you know, "that modernization effort and that transparency they're offering is not good (*laugh*)," you know, they're going to have to jump on board. So, I don't think that the challenges are as

great policy and legislation-wise as they are reform and process-wise, and that will be the challenge. I think it's going to take two to five years to get through that.

HM: One of the subjects that you just mentioned, lobbyist registration reform in the House. What kind of relationship have you had with lobbyists?

JC: I, well, first of all, I like lobbyists. I like government relations people. They are people kind of people. They're an important resource. In this very room, in my first year as a State Representative, I filmed a TV show with two lobbyists because I wanted my (*laugh*) constituents to see what lobbyists were and what they did. So, by and large, I've had a very positive experience. I'm all for all the registration—the Senate has always had in place lobby reform and lobby disclosure, I should say, and those kind of things. We have a unique problem in that regard in the state where the lawyer-lobbyist gets way too much of a benefit or whatever (*laugh*) or a lack of transparency compared to the others. That's a constitutional question in most cases, and the courts are very protective of their fellow lawyers who happen to be lobbyists. But, I don't think the lobbying community minds, in the final analysis, the registration and the transparency that we're going to ask of them in the future.

HM: You talked about having a TV show. Who were some of your guests on your show?

JC: When I came into the house in [19]93, the legislators who were doing TV shows did the “canned show” as I call it, where the House always was the lead in this. They’d put together a great twenty or twenty-five minute show, and you’d start, “Hi, I’m Representative Joe Conti,” at the beginning, and, “Thanks for watching. I’m Representative Conti.” Well, it became clear to me that if Monday night it was Representative Steil’s show and Tuesday night was Representative Wilson’s show and Wednesday night it was Representative Conti’s show, that they were all the same show. And, so I said, “Can I do my own?” And, I did, and I’m giving you the copies, which they may have here, if not, of the forty-eight or fifty shows I did. But, predominantly, it was a great way for a back-bench House Member to meet some people in State Government, because I would have Cabinet Secretaries, in particular, is who I would have a lot of. And, my typical show would be, maybe the Secretary of Transportation with the Chairman of the Transportation Committee and myself. And three people can fill twenty-eight minutes in very short order, as you know. So, that was pretty much the model of my show. Then when I got to the Senate, since we’re fewer Members, and you can do some of these kinds of things a bit easier over there. I actually film shows in Bucks County. In fact, I did a whole series of travel shows, meaning, you know, the hospitality and tourism business in Bucks County and where to go, and where to stay, and where to eat and things like that. Or examples of it, I should say. Not where, but examples of it. Which, that was kind of fun. But, my House shows were predominantly with Government—Governor office people. So, you know, a newly elected State Representative, believe it or not, has a hard time getting the Secretary of Revenue on the phone. But, if you call him and say, “Will you do a TV show with me?” they come

running over. I haven't really figured out why yet, but they always did, and it was fun. So, that was great.

HM: What aspect of your job as a Legislator have you enjoyed the most?

JC: The District duties are the most pleasant for me, being a hometown boy, and I love every Rotary Club and chicken dinner and going to those kinds of things, I really liked, and campaigning, as we talked about earlier. The Harrisburg experience, I really loved being in the House because it was hurly burly. It was physical. I don't know how to explain it. Not personal, but I don't think it was—I don't know, it was more of a team effort, I guess, and a certain part of that appeals to me. Now, the Senate is a dramatically different chamber. It's more personal. When I was in the House, to be 102 or 105 members, staff was in Caucus, and the Caucuses, by-and-large, there wasn't the compelling drama, if you will, that there is on a day-to-day basis in the Senate because in the Senate, the twenty-nine or thirty Republicans get in a room and the twenty or twenty-one Democrats get in a room with virtually no staff, maybe one lawyer, and no staff. And we – it's a much more personal experience. "Senator, how do you think about this in the northeast?" So, it's really different. But, a huge part of my heart will always be in the House. And then, another reason is, we haven't really talked about Matt Ryan yet. I mean, Matt Ryan, to me, was just, you know, the classy, dignified Leader that we so desperately need now in Harrisburg, and I think we have felt his loss tremendously in the last couple of years. I mean the Matt Ryan stories – there's not enough time today to tell them all, but Matt did something with me that I will never forget. And then, there's even

a kind of serendipity end of it at his funeral – but, when we did one of the pay raises, back in [19]96 or whenever it was, it only passed by one or two votes in the House, and Representative Fichter [John W. Fichter; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1993-2006] and I were the only two freshmen to vote for it. And, in Caucus, Matt was looking for votes and sitting at the top, and Matt didn't come to Caucus all the time, so when he came to Caucus, it was important. And, I never talked in Caucus; I was a back-bencher. So, for this, I knew I was going to make this vote, and Matt wanted to know who was where, and I stood up, and I said, "Matt, I'm going to make this vote, but I'm going to need you to help me defend this in my District because," and he just went, "Thank you, Joe." We went up, we made the vote, and I came back to my office, and there on my desk was a press release: "Speaker Ryan lauds Representative Conti for vote," and all that kind of detail, which was delightful. But, more importantly, the next day, I was sitting on the House Floor, and Roger Nick, his Chief of Staff, came down to me and said, "Joe, Matt would like you take the Chair today." And, I was temporary Pro-Tem[pore]. And, that's the kind of dignified leadership. He didn't slap me on my back and say, "This is all because of your vote, Joe. Thanks so much." He just knew; he had the touch. He had the touch. And, he knew our districts better than we did. Now, I did notice when I went to his memorial service, funeral service, that we had very similar districts. His part of Delaware County was a lot like Doylestown. But, we were in line, and there was—forming to go into the church, and there was hundreds of us in line to march in, and the [Philadelphia] *Inquirer* reporter, who I didn't know, came up to me and asked me for a comment on Matt Ryan, and it was the comment they used in the story in the *Inquirer* the next day. I have a copy – I'm cleaning out my office today, and I found

all that, but – Speaker Ryan’s funeral mass is on my desk. I mean, I keep it there because he’s my inspiration, and because he was my kind of Leader.

HM: Wow. What a great story. Thank you for sharing that. What do you think you will be very glad to be done with as part of your job? What do you think you’re looking forward to turning away from?

JC: You know, as we’re filming this, I’m not exactly sure what I’m doing. I think I’m going to be involved in governmental issues in the future, whether it’s with state government formally, or whether it’s in the private sector. I am a fierce supporter of the way we do business in Pennsylvania in a bipartisan fashion. The strength of our budgeting process and—there’s a lot more good that takes place in this building than the public knows. It’s funny when you retire and you go through your life and try to figure out what you want to do in the future, I kind of thought I’d go in this direction, and here I am sitting here thinking that I may get into more public relations and do those kind of things, but I think I will still always being involved in government in some way because I love it, and I also teach at [University of] Penn[sylvania]. I teach a course at Penn, ‘From Governor Pinchot to Today’, and I am going to continue to do that and that should keep me fresh and active and all that on the governmental affairs stuff. But, Pennsylvania has a right to be proud of the way we do business here, particularly in the fiscal responsibility. You know, we don’t have deficits at the state level. I know you’re not allowed to constitutionally, but we take very seriously the obligation of running business fiscally efficient and fiscally sound. So, hopefully I’ll find a niche in the future.

HM: I'm looking for a comment that I had from Mr. Greenwood, and, of course, I can't find it right now.

JC: That's alright.

HM: So, give me just one second.

JC: Sure.

HM: Okay. Jim Greenwood describes you as a fiscal conservative and a social moderate. I think that's pretty much what you've been saying the entire time. What would you say about him?

JC: Same thing (*laugh*).

HM: (*laugh*)

JC: I think I've gotten to the point where I don't like the terms 'liberal' and 'conservative.' I think you will burn out of those terms. I think what we really are is fiscally responsible. When we determine we need government, which, government is the last resort, then we want to run it as efficiently and effectively as we can. That's the Greenwood/Heckler/Conti mode of – so, I think we're fiscally responsible, and socially,

we're progressive. But, as I said, we really believe in civil rights, and I don't know if that goes back to the history of Bucks County being one of the three first counties of the state and all that kind of stuff, and being able to have history in the – I always tease my western colleagues that something in the 1880's is, you know, historic to them, and we're knocking down buildings. *(laugh)* No, I'm just teasing, but we go back to the 1680's and 1700's. So, I think that we're moderate or progressive on the social issues and fiscally responsible, and we will, and, as I say, we just get to that naturally. I just have been watching the Republican Party – I think my ultimate criticism of the Republican Party lately is it's become too contrived. They'll do a survey and see that immigration matters to a certain part of the United States, and all of the sudden, in Pennsylvania, we're introducing immigration bills. And I think, "What's that all about?" I mean, there's no reason to do that. So, there's a natural representation – Jim Greenwood, I think, was a natural Representative. He had a great background in the Newtown area in Council Rock, did work for the county, did social work. I mean, there is somebody who cares about—and, you know, you ask how I got involved in this. I shared this story with Jim, actually, not so long ago, about another big influence on me was in sixth grade. When I was in sixth grade, twelve years old, my mother took us to Bristol, Pennsylvania, for a summer every day to help Latin American kids learn to speak English in Project Head Start. And, that was a very compelling experience, and I kind of got the bug going to help people there. And, I think that's a Greenwood/Heckler kind of story. Where, I remember like yesterday leaving that final day with all the wonderful children that we had helped so that they would understand English when they started first grade. And, then, actually, was able to become part, with Senator Rhoades [James Rhoades; State

Senator, 1981-2009] pushing, to finally get Pennsylvanians to give money to Head Start. Head Start was funded only by the Federal Government, and it was just a few years ago that Pennsylvania started to put some money, in addition to the federal money, into Head Start. So, that's very nice of Jim Greenwood to be that complimentary.

HM: You've shared several really great stories already. Do you have a fondest story that you would like to tell of your tenure here?

JC: The fondest stories I can't tell (*laugh*) because they were – I'm trying to think of a more comical one. There were so many funny things that happened in the House because you have more characters involved and more, you know, and, Ron Marsico [Ronald Marsico; State Representative, Dauphin County, 1989-present] is a dear friend of mine and we had some great times. So, Roy Reinard and Marsico and Cornell, and we had a real crew of people that did—you kind of have to, at some point, you have to giggle your way through a little bit. I mean, if you take it, you know, too seriously, you can, you know, lose your marbles, and I was fortunate to have those kinds of people around me. But, I can't think of a funny story that I could—the things I remember, in the House are Tony the barber and Buster the shoeshine guy and to be able to go back and some of those all-night sessions, see the guys playing cards, and we didn't have that in the Senate. So, so many funny things would take place there. Bill DeWeese – I have so many fond memories of him because he would get up and give a speech and use all those big words and I'd always walk over to him afterwards and say, "Bill, I didn't understand that one," (*laugh*) he would laugh because I never could understand half the stuff he was saying.

But, it was just – it was a wonderful experience, the four years I was there and, as I said, for the reasons I articulated earlier, a little different. And, probably good to be a Republican Legislator in the time I was there because of the ‘esprit de corps’ we had. But, as I say, the couple of stories that I can think of, I just don’t think I could tell you.
(*laugh*)

HM: (*laugh*) Okay. Well, how would you like to be remembered?

JC: Oh, just as a bartender by birth who was privileged to be here for twelve or thirteen years and, you know, tried to help some people. [I have] tremendous respect for the institution as taught me by Matt Ryan. And Bob Jubelirer [Robert C. Jubelirer; State Senator, Bedford, Blair, Fulton, Huntingdon, Mifflin and Somerset Counties, 1975-2006] and Bob Mellow [Robert J. Mellow; State Senator, 1971-2010] have tremendous respect for the institution; and DeWeese. I mean, I will defend this institution, no matter what I read in the papers, until my dying day; wonderful people, great staff, particularly, the legal counsel we receive is nonpareil across the country. But, just that I embraced the tradition that was here, hopefully was able to allow that tradition to continue, because there are a lot of folks and forces out there that want to break down the tradition of what goes on here. But, I think I could see the reform with the respect of the tradition of the institution, and that will be the challenge for the future. And, you know, I’m young enough that these new leaders can call me for a little advice on the side and then all that. And just continuing and, I think, also, the ability to listen. My favorite part of a town meeting, and my staff would always go crazy with this; my favorite part of a town

meeting would be, you know, you're in it for about an hour and a half, and you're impressing all the people with how much you know and all that, but my favorite part was, when somebody would ask a question, I would just say, "You know, I don't know, but I'll get back to you on that." So, the idea that everybody's opinion is important, and to try to bring that here in your representation is the challenge. Knowing when to lead and when to represent, I mean, that's one you never really quite figure out. And, we always bail out on the side of representation. I've decided at the end of my career to step out and promoting civil rights, you know, to lead on those issues because I feel comfortable doing it. And, maybe, that's my mentorship that I've left to some of the future Members, is the tradition of the institution and knowing when to lead and when to represent and hopefully a little less judgmental demagoguery of issues in the future. That's not necessary.

HM: Well, that's my last question: after 23 years of public service, what advice would you have for newly elected officials?

JC: Listen. Expose yourself. One of my criticisms of some of the newly elected people at all levels, particularly in the county of Bucks, is to get elected and then almost hide or only go to friendly turf. The best experiences I had were, many times – we had a very contentious road issue, and I went to some meetings that were two or three hundred to one against me because I was for the road and they weren't and all that. You know, you have to do that. I mean, you have to make people feel that you're listening to them and that you're representing them and the campaign's your way to do that, and the town meetings are, and, you have to really genuinely believe that. If you're going to come out

here, you know, 275 days a year, it's not going to work. You know, you've got to be here when you're in session, and maybe a couple of extra days to keep things running here, but get in the District, listen, and expose yourself to your constituents because they respect that more than anything. I think the last election and some of the results we saw – those that did that were successful and those that didn't – it's easy to become insulated and then isolated, particularly when you're a Leader. So, you have to work very, very hard to continue to get out, listen, and that's my advice to the future ones.

HM: Thank you, Senator, for being a part of this project.

JC: Thank you. This is a wonderful thing you're doing and I applaud you in continuing the great traditions of the House of Representatives of Pennsylvania.

HM: Thank you.

JC: Sure.