PENNSYLVANIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BIPARTISAN MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH:

The Honorable David Sweet (D)

48th District

Washington County

1977-1988

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July 19, 2011

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Jesse Teitelbaum (JT): Good morning.

The Honorable David Sweet (DS): Hello, Jesse. How are you?

JT: I'm well, thank you.

DS: Good.

JT: I'm sitting here with David Sweet, who represented the 48th District, a Democrat from Washington County, from 1977 to 1988. Thank you for being with me.

DS: Well, thank you for having me. It's great to be able to memorialize some of the memories and the things that happened over the years while I was in the Legislature, and I'm not sure, like many things, I'm not sure anyone will ever view this or read it, but it's probably good to have it all on the record. It's great.

JT: Absolutely, absolutely. What I'd like to do is start out just by asking you some questions about your early life.

DS: Sure.

JT: Tell me about your childhood, where you grew up, your family, and some of your early education.

DS: Well, I grew up in Washington, Pennsylvania, which is a little town. It was about 20 thousand then – it's probably not much more than 12 or 13 thousand now –25 miles southwest of Pittsburgh.

JT: Okay.

DS: And Washington – Little Washington to some people because people would drive through – Route 40 was the old national pike, and the interstate was actually built when I was a very small child that went around Washington, Pennsylvania, but many people knew of Washington, Pennsylvania, because they had to slog right through the main street of the town, as you did many towns before the interstate highway system, and it was Little Washington, but it was a good little town. My family got there because my parental – or, excuse me – my paternal grandfather taught history at Washington and Jefferson College. He came from teaching in Bowdoin College in Maine. It was a kind of a small town, Western Pennsylvania atmosphere, heavy on sports, and it was a good town to grow up in. It was a pretty much a very mixed community in terms of socioeconomic status, racial, just almost in every way, which was really a good background –

JT: Sure.

DS: – for, for later life.

JT: Tell me about your educational background.

DS: Well, I went to Washington High School, a public school there in Washington. I went to the University of Pennsylvania, then, in Philadelphia, and was a history major at Penn. [I was] involved in some various activities, and then I got a Master's degree at the University of Chicago, the year after, in an urban studies program and worked for a few years teaching in the State system. I taught at IUP [Indiana University of Pennsylvania] for a while, and I was also in a couple of jobs, one in the criminal justice planning area (then there was a lot of Federal anti-crime money flying around in the [19]70s), and I worked for a thing then-called the Governor's Justice Commission, that's now still in existence, called the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

JT: Right, right. What do you think were your first instances in politics?

DS: Well, it was sort of in the gene pool.

JT: Okay.

DS: My grandfather, who I mentioned, while never serving in public office, was very active in the Democratic Party in Washington County, even before the New Deal when there weren't as many Democrats. In the days before the New Deal, the coal miners and the steel workers came to vote, and they voted the way the bosses told them they had to vote. After the union movement and after the New Deal, the county shifted completely Democratic, but he was a more probably

of a patrician reformer-type Democrat; served as a delegate in the 1936 Democratic National Convention. But really, more in the "family business" was my father, who also was a delegate to a National Convention in 1952. He ran for mayor of the little city of Washington and lost but later headed up a reform movement in the Democratic Party, was elected judge in 1963, served as a judge for 20 years in Washington County and was very well-known, somewhat controversial. He had a major case that got almost world-wide media attention; it was the murder of Jock Yablonski, who was a United Mine Worker Leader who challenged the leadership in the UMW and who was assassinated, really, by the top leadership of what was then a very corrupt union.

JT: Sure.

DS: And no longer, certainly, so my father was very well-known. So, the last name Sweet was a pretty well-known name in the legal and political circles of Washington County, and I decided to run for the Legislature in 1976.

JT: Okay. Do you think, with your father and grandfather, those were the influences, then, that led you to become a Democrat?

DS: Well, I think so, yeah. I mean, and most people – I've read polls on this subject, as a matter of fact – most people tend to register to vote, even if philosophically they end up changing gears a little bit, they tend to register to vote the way their family was, and so I became a Democrat, I think, because of the atmosphere, as well as the gene pool.

JT: Sure.

DS: But later on, I think, you know, a lot of it was gradually developed views and cared about issues that were really had a better, more fertile environment in the Democratic Party.

JT: What led you to then eventually run for the House as opposed to other offices?

DS: Well, I think it was in a more appropriate job for a younger person at the time. Politics was an older person's game in those days. I mean, my father was elected judge in his mid-40s, and it was thought to be shocking that such a young man would be elected judge. So, from the county commissioners and district attorneys and so forth, were all 50s, 60s.

JT: Right.

DS: The Legislature tended to attract – when there was an opening, which wasn't very often – tended to attract, sometimes, younger candidates; people on their way up. The job didn't pay a whole lot in those days. I think it paid 15 thousand dollars when I first was elected, but there was an open seat, and I took a shot.

JT: The –

DS: I did have, I have to admit, the last name Sweet was very helpful, and I also had a kind of a built-in political organization in that area, just because I had been involved to some extent, in my father's campaigns and in other people's campaigns.

JT: Right, right. Do you remember your first campaign, and did you enjoy it?

DS: Oh, yeah. I remember it. I enjoyed parts of it. It was a very close election. I won by about 500 votes in the Democratic Primary, and it was a hard-fought election. I had two opponents, both who came from the more populated parts of the district, and one was a very articulate woman named Patricia Beharry, who actually ran against me two other times after that (and I managed to prevail each of those times, with a little better margins each time), and another fellow named John Defilippo, who was a councilman in Canonsburg, which was the hotbed of Democratic Party activity in those days.

JT: What kind of campaigning did you do? Door to door, or mainly, phone calls, mailings?

DS: Door to door, personally. There was a lot more political organization in those days, and you really did have, kind-of, you had workers in communities. They actually went out and worked. They didn't just –

JT: Right.

DS: – get paid and go to the barroom that day. It was sort of the end of that period. I think that some of the old-timers thought that it went on clear into the [19]80s and [19]90s, but it pretty much faded away. But, up until into the late [19]70s and maybe early [19]80s, in Washington County, at least, there was still – you had to put a team in the field. And, quite frankly, you had to raise money to pay them. You had volunteers, but many of them were paid workers, and they actually delivered votes. So, it was a different sort of organizational challenge than perhaps candidates have today, except in a very few parts of Pennsylvania. On the other hand, the door to dooring was effective then and still is effective, and State Rep[resentative] districts are small enough that your own personal effort still makes a difference.

JT: Did you find as the, the campaigns went on that it got easier?

DS: Oh, yeah. I mean, it gets easier in every way, really. You're better known. It's much easier to raise money. You're less likely to get a really strong challenge. And Washington County was really a hotbed of political activity in those days, but I think after the third election I was pretty much unopposed after that.

JT: The 48th District tended to be Democrat –

DS: Yeah, right.

JT: – in history, so during the General Elections, were you pretty confident?

DS: Yeah, the General Election was, I mean, your schedule didn't change that much. When you run for office every two years and you serve in the General Assembly, you're active in your community, and you're going to a lot of events, and you're doing things all the time, but yeah, the fall election really was less stressful. You ended up going more to rallies and helping some of the statewide or even the national candidates, and you didn't have to worry about yourself and your own election as much.

JT: J. Barry Stout [State Representative, Washington County, 1971-1976; State Senator, 1977-2010] was the, the Member prior to you.

DS: Right, right.

JT: And then he left to run for the Senate. Did you have a good relationship with him at the time when you were first starting to come around, and did you get some support from his team?

DS: Actually, we didn't have a very good relationship at the beginning. Not because there was any personal problem, but it was a question of political factions.

JT: Okay.

DS: I mean, the Democratic Party was divided into at least two and maybe more factions at that time, and the people who had been identified for years with my father, with later, Congressman Austin Murphy [State Representative, Washington County, 1959-1970; State Senator, 1971-

1976; U.S. Representative, 1977-1995], a guy who was a County Commissioner, Max Morgan, and others, were thought of as sort-of one faction. There was a County Chairman named Mike Hanna, but not to be confused with the current Minority Whip [Michael K. Hanna, Sr.; State Representative, Clinton County, 1991-present] of the House. This Mike Hanna from Washington County is now deceased. He was an old-time party boss. I can say "corrupt" because he was later implicated in some very serious offenses – ended up dying in the Allegheny County Jail. Hanna had the regular Party operation, and the Legislators, the incumbent Legislators at the time – and they certainly weren't in any way involved in his corruption –

JT: Sure.

DS: But Barry Stout, a fellow named A.J. DeMedio [State Representative, Washington County, 1967-1982], another fellow named Jack Brunner [State Representative, Washington County, 1965-1980], the latter two are deceased, they were all part of the Democratic regular Party, and so were not particularly sympathetic to my campaign.

JT: Okay.

DS: But it was more because of Mike Hanna.

JT: Got it, got it. Later in life, you had decided to run for other offices, State Treasurer.

DS: Yeah.

JT: And then you, you had contemplated running for Attorney General. Was campaigning different than running for the House versus running for other office?

DS: Yeah. Statewide office is very different. I mean, your own personal efforts don't mean as much, quite frankly.

JT: Sure.

DS: I mean, your personal efforts are geared towards fundraising, media interviews and appearances, and editorial boards and those kinds of discussions, and sort of rounding up some support from political leaders. But day-to-day, hour-to-hour, you're not really in the retail business of getting votes, except maybe towards the end, and you have a hard time saying to yourself, "Gee, if I stand at that mall for two hours, is it really going to make any difference?" So, it's very different, and the row office races that you mentioned, like State Treasurer or Attorney General, whatever, are very different than Governor and Senator races, which I never ran for, but I was Ed Rendell's [Governor of Pennsylvania, 2003-2010] campaign manager in 2002, and so I got a pretty healthy feel for what that's like.

JT: Sure.

DS: And that's a whole different – I mean, we're talking, you know, from being in the A League and being able to hit, maybe, a fastball, to AAA where you do have to hit a curveball, you know, the majors, but they're different challenges.

JT: Right.

DS: And while the experience at the retail level, I think, is always very helpful, it's just a different kind-of skill sets –

JT: Okay.

DS: – required at the top, and also, the financial requirements are significant.

JT: I'm sure, I'm sure. Thank you. Tell me about the district, the 48th District, specifically, not just in geography but, but the people, too.

DS: Well, it was a very mixed kind of district, which I liked. It actually got redrawn to some extent, and it sort of cut some of the diversity. But I think once, and I got quoted in the paper, and I probably wished I hadn't, but I said, "The 48th District, there's some people that drink their martinis very dry. There are others who drink shots and beers, and then there's a big rural area where they don't drink at all." There was a part of the district that was really suburban Pittsburgh, just south of Upper St. Clair and Mt. Lebanon and relatively affluent South Hills part of Allegheny County. Peters Township is what I'm referring to. But, as the district – and it

swung down through – touched on the Monongahela River – but swung down through the eastern part of the county that was pretty heavily in coal mining. A lot of people who lived in it were, were steelworkers, worked in the mills or worked in the big transformer plant that was in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, which was an old industrial town, and then it swung out; it had three of the four corners of the county, even though there were four Legislators. Three of the four corners of the county were in this district. It swung out into the really rural –

JT: Okay.

DS: – western part of the county, which is really almost more like Greene County or like rural West Virginia, so it was a real diverse group of people –

JT: Okay.

DS: – that I represented, and I actually, I really liked the diversity and the differences.

JT: Because of the diverse population, then, did the constituent issues – were they also diverse, as well, or were there some issues that were specific to your district?

DS: There weren't many things that were specific to the district, unless they were really specific to the county.

JT: Okay.

DS: I mean, there were sometimes Washington County issues that would have been uniform in their application –

JT: Right.

DS: – around the district, but aside from that, there weren't. I mean, for example, I mean, today, in Harrisburg, there's an argument about privatizing the Liquor Control Board. In the [19]80s, Dick Thornburgh [Governor of Pennsylvania, 1979-1987] proposed to privatize the liquor system. In my suburban area that I mentioned where the people drank the martinis very dry, there was some interest in that because there were wine connoisseurs and there were people who wanted better choice, and people who traveled more and been to other places, and so forth. So, that was a little bit of a hot issue there with people supporting Governor Thornburgh.

JT: Okay.

DS: The rest of the district really didn't matter much. I mean, in the little coal mining towns there was a store.

JT: Right.

DS: People could get what they wanted. Most of the people didn't sit and drink at home anyway. They went to, to bars and clubs.

JT: Okay.

DS: And then, in that big rural part of the district, they could have cared less. In fact, they wanted as little distribution of alcohol as possible. So, in that kind of issue, or even in economic issues, there were very disparate views on certain subjects.

JT: Sure, right. Now getting into your House service, do you remember your first Swearing-In Ceremony and some of the feelings that came over you when you first arrived here at the Capitol?

DS: Yeah, yeah. I remember it was a bigger deal than I thought it was going to be, the whole Swearing-In. It also, and they still that way tend to focus on the Speaker and the Speaker's ascension to the role. Herb Fineman [Herbert; State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1955-1978; Speaker of the House, 1969-1972 and 1975-1977] was the Speaker then, and it was maybe the second or third, fourth term. I mean, he'd had a series of terms –

JT: That's right.

DS: – which was somewhat unusual, I think. As my memory is, and I've just been told this because I wasn't around, but in prior years, decades, that the tradition had been, that people rose up into the leadership. They became Majority Leader, they were Majority Leader, maybe, for a

long time, but they were only Speaker, usually, a term, maybe two terms at the most, and then they retired.

JT: Right.

DS: Or they shifted off; they dropped out of the Speakership and shifted off to a minor leadership post and let somebody else move in. Fineman held on until he had his own problems with the criminal justice system that we may talk about a little bit, but it was very different. The biggest memory I have, though, was there was a caucus leadership election, and I had gotten a phone call from Bill Lincoln [J. William; State Representative, Fayette County, 1973-1980; State Senator, 1979-1994], who was a House Member then, later Senator, later Chairman of the Democratic Party from Fayette County, asking me to vote for a certain guy, who was his friend.

JT: Sure.

DS: And no one else had talked to me at all about it, and so I said, "Oh, sure, Bill, I mean, he sounds like a capable individual." I don't even remember which caucus office it was. Well, I never heard another word about this caucus election, except I started to get letters from various people, including, it turned out, Jack Brunner [John L; State Representative, Washington County, 1965-1980], who was in my own county, and even though he and I weren't politically that close, I had to call Bill Lincoln and say, "Look, if Jack Brunner runs, I have to vote for him."

JT: Sure.

DS: "He's from my county." Sure, that was understood. I arrive in Harrisburg, have not heard another word about this, and the then-Whip, later Majority Leader and Speaker, Jim Manderino [James J.; State Representative, Westmoreland County, 1967-1990; Speaker of the House, 1989] ambles over to me – and he was also from Western Pennsylvania, really, right across the river from my district in Westmoreland County – and said, "The Speaker would like you to vote for a fellow named Jim Goodman [James; State Representative, Schuylkill County, 1965-1980]," who later became a good friend of mine. Jim later served as head of both the Turnpike Commission and the Liquor Control Board. He's from up in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and I said, "Well, gee, Jim, I'm sorry. I already promised Billy Lincoln that I would vote for his friend," and Manderino just sort of looked at me, and said, "You've got a lot to learn here, kid," and then sort of turned around and huffed and stormed away. Later, at the vote – and in those days the Caucus elections were public, I mean, in the sense they were in the Caucus Room. They were not public in that sense, but they were in the Caucus Room, but you didn't fill out a secret ballot. You had to stand up, and when they called the roll – by the time they got to 'Sw,' the Leader's guy had won, my guy had no chance, but I still voted for him because I promised Bill Lincoln I'd vote for him, and Manderino, I remember, he still looked at me and shook his head. [*laugh*] He and I had a very up and down relationship the whole time after that.

JT: I was just going to say, "Did your relationship get better after that?"

DS: Well, it didn't get better; it got worse that year, because of two things that happened – my segue, maybe, into those two things – one, Herb Fineman, who I have to tell you, was one, and

he is still alive, but Herb Fineman was one of the most articulate, intelligent men in politics I've ever seen, but Herb Fineman got indicted for obstruction of justice and some other offenses. It was probably in – I'm not going to remember exactly, April or May of that year of 1977. And it was a huge thing because Fineman really was the intellectual and politically driving force in the House at the time. Fineman gets indicted, and the Republicans move that he should step down as Speaker, not resign from the House, but step down as Speaker until the matter was settled.

JT: Right.

DS: Until he was tried or he pled or whatever, and I was among, maybe, 10 Democrats who voted with the Republicans to have Fineman step down, because I just felt that nobody was asking him to give up his office but just to stand aside while the criminal justice matters were handled. And the history, if you look back, and in this period of the late [19]70s was at the end of the Shapp [Milton J. Shapp, Governor of Pennsylvania, 1971-1979] Administration. Many good things were done in the Shapp Administration, but there was also a huge stench of corruption here in Harrisburg and also around the state, a lot of it unfortunately connected to the Democratic Party, and I was a young reformer; I wasn't too anxious to be all wrapped into that.

JT: Right.

DS: So, Fineman wins that vote, because he actually got some Republicans to support him to make up for the Democrats he lost, but it wasn't a month later he voluntarily stepped down. Then later – and Jim Manderino was his Whip and was not happy with me over that – later, we

had a long budget fight in 1977 that wasn't ultimately resolved until November or December, but I was among 10 or 11 or 12 Democrats that wasn't voting for the spending program and wanted it cut back. The Leaders would not negotiate. They said, "We're pounding this through," and they finally did, although they did it without having sufficient revenues to pay for the nonpreferreds, the Pitts, Penn States, and so forth. See, things never change in Harrisburg. We just had that last, what, a month ago?

JT: That's right.

DS: But, the moral of this whole story – in fact, I later voted for the tax increase to pay the bill that others who voted for the spending wouldn't –

JT: Right.

DS: – vote for, but through all of that, Jim Manderino was not very happy with me.

JT: Okay.

DS: Now, later, I was involved in a lot of, certainly in the early [19]80s during the recession, the Democratic Party's various proposals to rejuvenate the economy. And on a lot of other issues he and I were on the same wavelength, and I got to be better and better in terms of relationship with him, but we were never bosom buddies.

JT: Speaking of relationships, then.

DS: Yeah.

JT: Is there anyone in particular that, that you not necessarily latched on to, but maybe saw as a, as someone who could be a good friend in the House and a comrade in arms and stuck with while you were there?

DS: In the House there were a number of people that I became pretty close with. I will first of all mention in those days they had a freshman orientation –

JT: Okay.

DS: – that was not partisan; it was both Parties. So, I made very good friends with new Republican Members as well as new Democratic Members, which they don't do today, I don't believe, and if they do, the friendships don't last very long. But, I got to know people then that I was friends with and dealt with on a professional basis for the next 20, 25 years.

JT: Nice.

DS: The person that I was probably closest to through that period of time was a fellow named Joe Hoeffel [Joseph M., III; State Representative, 1977-1984; U.S. Representative, 1999-2004] who was a House Member from Montgomery County. He's now a County Commissioner. Joe's

been clear to the U.S. Congress. We tease now that Washington County is pretty much – it's at least 50-50, and to some extent it's voted Republican in the last few years. It had been a stronghold of the Democratic Party. Joe, from Montgomery County, which was rocked-rib Republican, the heart of the Republican organization in the southeast in those days, now votes Democrat. But, there was Joe Hoeffel. There was a fellow named Tom Michlovic [Thomas; State Representative, 1979-2002] from Allegheny County. Bill Wachob [William; State Representative, 1979-1984] from Elk County. Bob O'Donnell [Robert; State Representative, 1973-1994; Speaker of the House, 1990-1993] who was from Philadelphia, later became Speaker. There was a group of us who hung out together some and talked, and a very diverse group in terms, just geographically, as I've described. Allen Kukovich [State Representative, 1977-1996; State Senator, 1997-2004] from Westmoreland County. There was sort of a group of people that were younger in those days, and we did a lot of things together and had a lot of fun.

JT: Wonderful. Your early office at the House; did you have a solo office, or did you share?

DS: No, we were up in a big room up in the top floor, no windows, just desks, and in fact, I was there not a month ago – I hadn't been up in that area in twenty years – and I had a meeting with two staff members from the House Democratic Caucus, and their offices were back there, much nicer than it was in 1977, although still no window.

JT: Nice. And you all had to share, then, a lot of the items in the room, secretaries.

DS: Oh, yeah. I shared the secretary with another Member. In fact, I ran into her yesterday. I hadn't seen her in 10 years, and she's ready to retire. She was only 18 when we started, but yeah, I shared a secretary with another Member at the time.

JT: Now, at this time in, in the 1970s, it was, it was the beginning of what we know today as district offices.

DS: Yeah.

JT: Did you have a district office?

DS: Yeah, I did. Not then, probably not till the late [19]70s, early [19]80s, but I ended up with a young reporter from one of the local newspapers, and he ended up working in the district office, not only through the rest of my tenure, but also for a fellow named Tony Colaizzo [Anthony; State Representative, 1991-1998], who came after me. He worked for him for 10 years, and then later, it got a little bigger. There were two people there full time when I left, which was actually pretty large for those days. Now, they're pretty well-staffed, I think, but in those days, two full-time people was actually, you know, a pretty good-sized district office.

JT: Did you eventually have more than one district office?

DS: No.

JT: I know some Members who have a larger district –

DS: What I did, because I did have a fairly large geographic area, was I had office hours in borough buildings. I had at least three that I would go to, you know, once a week or once every two weeks. I'd be there for two hours or whatever. And we advertised it in the newsletters that were sent out and the like, so people could come and see their Legislator and talk directly to you about something. I had my briefcase full of work and I would sit there and if people showed up, fine. If they didn't, they didn't. But, it was providing access.

JT: Right.

DS: And I did it in public buildings and the borough halls, so it didn't really cost anything.

JT: Okay. That was actually my next question; in terms of getting in touch with and keeping in touch with the constituents, did you provide newsletters?

DS: Yeah, yeah.

JT: Regular press releases and so on?

DS: Yeah, I was pretty active in all of that. Although in those days, I mean, you send out a news release –

JT: Sure.

DS: – you called up reporters, in terms of the media side of things. There were local radio stations; you could get on the radio fairly easily. From where I was, television was pretty difficult. I mean, in a major metropolitan market. It was pretty – you had to do something either really good or really outrageous to get on Pittsburgh television if you were a State House Member.

JT: Oh, wow. How was your relationship with the media, both in your district and here in Harrisburg?

DS: I would have to say pretty good. The relationship out in the district was good, but I worked at it. I mean, I also helped the reporters. I mean, it's not an easy job, and down here, I think I had a pretty good relationship with the reporters, both because educationally, culturally, even socially a little bit good, certainly, age and generationally, I was much more, you know, in tune with them than many of the Members were.

JT: Right.

DS: And in those days, the reporters sat down in the front, right off from the Speaker's podium, and oftentimes, the reporters were 22, 23, 24 years old. There were two kinds; there were the old, seasoned veterans who sort of sat there, were kind of cynical, "Oh, gee, we've seen this before. What time do the races start?" And then there were young people who were really gung-

ho, but didn't have a clue as to what was going on or why. I mean, they had a hard time even understanding the basic processes, let alone what was really going on behind the scenes, just because, I mean – no fault of their own –

JT: Sure.

DS: – they were just out of college. Now, there were more in those days, I think, than there are today. The media has cut back pretty heavily. I think there were more reporters. I don't know that there's more or less coverage, because with all the changes in technology, there's, you know, real time with the internet now.

JT: Yeah, in fact, that's my next question is with all these advances in technology, and the access almost is so immediate anymore, on the House Floor, for example, they all have laptops so that they can communicate with staff and constituents and the public immediately. The Sessions are all televised now.

DS: Yeah.

JT: There's PCN [Pennsylvania Cable Network], which runs all kinds of interviews, and now we have the Open Records Law. Do you have an opinion with, with such the ease in access the public has, or do you think that's a good thing, or do you think that there should still be some behind closed doors items that the public doesn't necessarily need to have the access to right away?

DS: Well, what goes on today is fine. I mean, it is what it is. The internet and the world of real-time, instantaneous knowledge, and the transparency of all this is there, and you can rail about it if you want, but that's the way life is today. There's always going to be the need for human beings to get behind closed doors, or at least in a semi-rational environment where they're not grandstanding, to try to resolve problems. I mean, the tension is that the public wants problems solved, but they also don't want to think that their Legislator is compromising their principles. Well, sometimes, those run – there's a tension there. We're seeing it in Washington, D.C. today over this debt ceiling debate where, I'm sure if you put every legislative leader in both parties under truth serum, they'd tell you, "Oh, yeah, it'll be a debacle if we don't resolve this problem," but getting the ability to do it in today's world is more difficult, but it's a challenge that people have to meet. I don't know that the public is any better informed, because to some extent, they're inundated with so much more information. On the other hand, there are people who watch this stuff. I used to argue, again, when I was campaign manager – fast forward to the 2002 campaign –I used to argue with Ed Rendell sometimes. He'd come back, and he'd be a little irritated that he'd go to an event and only PCN was there because Ed was kind of used – as mayor of Philadelphia – he got used to seeing a lot of TV cameras and lights. I'd say to him, "Well, no, Ed, you would ride 100 miles to go speak to a crowd of a couple hundred people, right?" "Yeah, sure." I said, "Well, I can assure you, even if the thing airs at three o'clock in the morning, there are going to be more than 200 people watching it." I mean, it just –

JT: Sure.

DS: In those days, I'd run into lots of people who watched PCN and watched what goes on. I mean, maybe what's a little better today on that score is that they cover more. It used to be they were just on the Floor of the House. The activity on the Floor of the House tends to be the most boring and the least significant activity that the legislative body engages in. They now cover hearings and press events and all of these things where I think there's probably more information actually gained by the viewing public.

JT: When you first started, how were committees selected for you? Were, were they selected for you, or did you get to decide which committees you would like to serve?

DS: We didn't get to decide. You got to ask. And you told the Speaker's staff, this is what you'd like to – or if you were in the minority, the minority leader – "These are the committees I'd like to serve on," and they would assign you, and sometimes, you'd get the committees you wanted. Sometimes, you'd only get one of the three you wanted. It just varied, and seniority was a big part of it in those days.

JT: Sure. During the course of your tenure, you served on, on various committees: Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Insurance, Judiciary. Did you have a favorite committee or one that you were looking forward to serving on?

DS: Well, the two that I was probably most active in were the Judiciary Committee earlier in the [19]80s, and then, really, my last term, when I was Chairman of the Local Government Committee. The Agriculture Committee I wasn't particularly – farming was a big deal in

Washington County, so I got on the Agriculture Committee for a while, but as one farmer Member of the committee told me, he said, "Boy, you don't know a harrow from a furrow." [*laugh*] I admitted that he was right, but agriculture was important to my district.

JT: Sure.

DS: I was on a variety of committees. I know you mentioned Consumer Affairs. I was on Insurance, but I would say the activity on the Judiciary Committee and the Local Government Committee were the important things. I served on the Appropriations Committee, which was important, but not for the reasons people think. In those days, at least, if you were on the Appropriations Committee, that didn't mean you had much to do with the budget. I mean, the budget was really pretty much decided by the Chairman, the Leader, the top staff people, but being on that committee gave you access to the Appropriations Committee staff, which was, in those days, by far the most professional, well-educated, seasoned and skilled. If you were just a rank-and-file Member in the Democratic Caucus, the House Appropriations Committee staff really wouldn't respond much to you.

JT: Oh, okay.

DS: But if you were a member of the committee, they did things for you.

JT: Right.

DS: And so, they could be very helpful in certain kinds of legislative endeavors.

JT: Would you say that a lot more work was done through committees, then, as opposed to, say, on the House Floor?

DS: I think so. I mean, I do a little bit of lobbying now, but I'm not so involved that I really know the details of how everything works in the House these days. It appears to me, though, that the committees are not as active in a detailed way regarding legislation, maybe, as they once were.

JT: Yeah, I think currently there's probably about 23, 24, 25 standing committees that all meet on a regular basis.

DS: Right, right.

JT: Getting into some issues, then, that, that you were involved in; would you say that there was a particular issue that, that was a recurring theme each Session that was important to you, whether it was something that you wanted to talk about in committees or on House Floors or even just with your constituents?

DS: I don't know that there was any one thing that was a constant over the 12 years, because as we talk about them, you'll find I was sort of all over the lot with a variety of things. I was concerned when I first came, and continued to be concerned right up to the last minute of the last

hour, with Pennsylvania's taxing structure, particularly its local tax structure – and I'm sure we'll talk about that a little bit in a minute. But that, I mean, was a theme throughout that we did rely way too much on the property tax to fund elementary and secondary education, and still do, quite frankly, although there's been a lot of work done over the period, not only when I was there, but a lot more since I left. Although, quite frankly, I'm not sure the work that's done has been all that good, quite frankly, because in the midst of squeezing the school boards to force them not to increase property taxes, the tradeoff for that should have been more state investment, and, at least in the Rendell Administration, there was, but it was hard fought, and now we're turning the other direction in Harrisburg. But that was a recurring theme.

JT: In fact, you even were still heavily involved with that even after you left the House under Casey [Robert P. Casey, Sr.; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995] and then, you know, with Rendell as well.

DS: Right. Well, I was the sponsor of the Casey local tax reform plan, which got passed and actually passed the Senate, passed both chambers, the last night I was in the Legislature, November 30 of 1988.

JT: Right.

DS: And it passed the Senate at about a minute to 12, and I physically carried the bill back from the Senate to the House to have the Speaker sign it, because the Senate was controlled by the Republicans, although we had some Republican votes to get the bill passed, but I didn't want

some, you know, Republican patronage page employee to get lost with this important paperwork, but that attention to detail, I suppose –

JT: It helps, yeah.

DS: – I learned over the course of the period I served. But, there were a lot of – I mean, in the Judiciary Committee, which I got involved in pretty early on in the [19]80s, I mean, it was very involved in crime victims legislation, and in fact, a place where I got to know Ed Rendell, then, was really working very hard on two things: crime victims legislation – the legislation I sponsored set up the Crime Victims Compensation System and the board that exists. That was done, and the thing that wasn't done, that's still on the agenda for people, really two things: one is merit selection for appellate court judges (I think the electoral process is a bad thing for those judges because people don't really focus on those elections), and the other thing that's still a serious problem, and this was something I worked on after I was in the Legislature with Governor Casey, was prison overcrowding.

JT: Okay.

DS: But with Rendell, I knew Ed Rendell because I went to college with his wife, Midge [Judge, United States District Court, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1994-1997; Judge, United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, 1997- present]. I met Ed pretty early on, but he became District Attorney in Philadelphia, and he was very active and involved in the crime victims movement and then also in the merit selection for appellate court judges. So, those were

early things in the Judiciary Committee that I was involved in. And then, the other thing in the early [19]80s, and the staffing for this was mostly done in the Appropriations Committee, were a series of things involved in economic development, because we were in the midst of the recession of the early [19]80s. Southwestern Pennsylvania was particularly hard hit. I mean, there were literally people marching in the streets. The recession of the early [19]80s was a pretty significant hit out there in Western Pennsylvania, and we lost manufacturing jobs that never came back.

JT: Sure.

DS: And coal mining jobs that never came back for various reasons. And just a footnote regarding my legislative district, old legislative district; it's a very different place today. Thousands of people worked in steel mills in Washington County in those days. There's not one today. There were thousands of people who worked in coal mines in those days, and there are very few of those left, and that's translated not just in terms of the economy; it's translated in terms of the sociocultural environment of the place, and it also has changed the politics to the extent that those big unions, I mean, in my day, the United Steel Workers and United Mine Workers were major political forces, and the public employee unions, the PSEA [Pennsylvania State Education Association] for the teachers and AFSCME [American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees] for the state employees, were important, but less so. The mine workers and the steel workers, except to the extent that there are widows out there who still vote based on the mailing they get from the union –

JT: Sure.

DS: – are not nearly as significant politically as they were in the [19]80s.

JT: Right. It kind of sounds like a lot of your issues that were important to you were somewhat constituent-based. I know a number of Members would have a combination of issues that were brought up to them by the constituents and members of their district and others that were just personal to them.

DS: Yeah.

JT: It sounds like that you did have a lot that were important to, to specifically your district.

DS: Yeah, well, I think that the two kind of merged. I mean, one of the nice things about – and I used to talk to my father about this a little bit – one of the nice things about being a Legislator is that you could pick and choose –

JT: Right.

DS: – issues to be involved in. Now, sometimes, you had something that you just had to be involved in because of the local political scene.

JT: Sure.

DS: The Canonsburg General Hospital was going to close down – it was the big hospital in this community – I mean, you had to get involved in that. On the other hand, a lot of these issues, you did pick and choose. I didn't have to get involved in crime victims legislation, for example. It didn't emanate from something that happened in Washington County.

JT: Okay.

DS: A judge, just to finish the point, doesn't get to pick.

JT: Right.

DS: Unless you're on the Supreme Court, you don't get to pick the cases you deal with. I mean, they come to you, and you deal with them, and we used to talk about the fact that that was a somewhat different professional challenge.

JT: In the early [19]80s, specifically in 1982, you had been involved in with, or had interest in, some reapportionment issues that wanted to include some wording as it related to United States Congressional Districts and U.S. House and Senate Districts. Do you happen to remember if there was something that was going on at the time that, that this needed to be addressed? And if not, was it just something that, that interested you in general? And now that we're, I guess this would be 20 years later, there's still even more talk of some reapportionment throughout the

State of Pennsylvania, and if you have an opinion on should there be more or is reapportionment an extremely important thing in Pennsylvania now?

DS: Well, it's been crucial in Pennsylvania for all these decades because we keep losing population, vis a vis, other states, and so we lose Congressional representation. What it ends up meaning in the political world is you have these huge, mostly behind the scenes, battles – very personal. There's no veneer, even, of public policy or of anything else. It's all personal and ambition and so forth, and it gets pretty ugly. And I'm not sure how you would do it better, but I can remember, I mean, the Congressional redistricting battle we were involved in 1980 just was awful, I mean, in terms of what happened, but that probably emanated out of my experience just through that redistricting. One issue, by the way, we were talking about district issues or county or regional issues, I mean, one of the things I got very involved in that emanated out of the district and its needs was highway funding, and the need to have a fairer way to distribute highway maintenance money. It's hard to believe, I guess, for people now, but in 1978, [19]79, [19]80, the biggest issue in Western Pennsylvania, this was a little bit before the recession hit, was the horrible state of the roads. I mean, potholes all over the place. I mean, it was just miserable. And when I looked into it and other people sort of getting behind the scenes, I mean, there was a problem of corruption, inefficiency, waste, in PennDOT [Pennsylvania Department of Transportation]. In those days, PennDOT had 21 thousand employees. Today, it has 12 [thousand]. If there's one lasting change that happened that I witnessed in the State Capitol over the years, it was the changes in PennDOT, mostly started, I have to give them credit, by Dick Thornburgh and his Secretary of Transportation, Tom Larsen. And then the Secretaries, both Democrat and Republican, and the Governors after that who stuck to professionalizing PennDOT

and didn't turn it back to the patronage-ridden mess that it had been when I first arrived in Harrisburg. The thing I did, and I'm sort of proud of this, was that when we looked into – I mean, aside from the patronage and the fact that a third of the people couldn't do a day's work, and so forth and so on, I mean, those were documented things – the money, the way the money was distributed was sort of at the whim of the Governor and the Secretary of Transportation and the various deals they made with Legislators and so forth, to get votes, some not even related to transportation. In those days, we didn't distribute and allocate school funding based on political deals; there was a formula. Now, was the formula driven to a degree by politics? Of course, and when there's budget negotiations, people play with the formula. But there was no formula; it was just pure pork to be doled out however they saw it. Well, Thornburgh and Larsen wanted a gas tax increase because they needed money; they literally needed the money to help fix the roads. The Democrats were in the majority in the House, and this is someplace where I worked closely with two people you've mentioned, Jim Manderino and Barry Stout. Manderino was the Majority Leader by that time of the House, and Barry Stout was the Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee. Working with them politically, we ended up putting together a bloc of votes of Southwestern Members, and Philadelphia Members who wanted more money for SEPTA [Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority], that we used to negotiate with Governor Thornburgh and his people regarding the tax increase, and, and we voted for an increase in the gas tax, but in exchange, we got a formula that allocated the highway maintenance money based on an objective criteria of having engineers go out and look at the roads. I mean, there were other states that had these things. And so, all of a sudden Allegheny County got the most highway maintenance money and Westmoreland was second and

Washington was third, but it was a blend of good research, good public policy analysis, and hardball politics.

JT: Sure.

DS: People would sort of abhor the latter, "Oh, you guys making some backroom deal and holding tax votes up to," but we walked off the Floor of the House that day, Democrats and Republicans, feeling that we had really accomplished something, which, quite frankly, we did, because for the long haul, the money was allocated more fairly, and there was a bipartisan sort of coalition created, then, that extended for quite a long time that maintained Pennsylvania's efforts in transportation. It's fallen by the wayside recently, but it was something I was pretty heavily involved in.

JT: Is that kind of the system, then that you would have used to, to get some of the economic development into your district as well?

DS: Well, I was involved, this was a little bit later in the [19]80s, in the what really became the creation of, what now exists, called the Pennsylvania Economic Development Finance Authority, which allocates a lot of the economic development funding. It was kind of ironic at the beginning of the, sort of in the Thornburgh years and then the beginning of the Casey years. Governor Casey had this big, huge program – well, Manderino had one, while Thornburgh was still Governor – of economic development and couldn't really get it off the ground because the Republicans wouldn't support it. When Casey was elected, he had House Bill 1, which was a

big, huge economic development program. The creation of what's now PEDFA [Pennsylvania Economic Development Financing Authority], and some other tax exempt bond tools and so forth, was something I sponsored, and it was House Bill 2. It was part of the House Democrats package. House Bill 1 never passed, but House Bill 2 did, and because it wasn't quite as sweeping, number one, but number two, I ended up negotiating a lot of that with the Senate Republicans myself.

JT: Sure.

DS: And so, there were these kinds of things that I've found as long as you didn't get right in the middle of what Governors and Majority Leaders and Speakers and President Pro Tempores were dealing with, if you worked on the, kind of the outs, the, the fringes of important issues –

JT: Sure.

DS: – you really could get something meaningful done.

JT: Right, in fact that was going to be one of my questions was, was it difficult to work with Leadership seniority to try to get a lot of your legislation pushed, especially early on?

DS: Well, that's a place, particularly with this economic development effort, and the, maybe, probably even the highway funding effort, where because I did get on the Appropriations Committee, it was helpful. From a substantive point of view, I know Jim Manderino would call

those staff people and say, "Okay, this legislation Sweet's working on, is it ready to go, and is it okay?" And they'd say, "Oh, yeah, yeah, we've worked on it, and its fine." So, there was some of that that was helpful, and you also had to learn what was important to the Leader and how you could help him and, maybe more importantly, most of the time, how you could stay out of the way. There were certain issues that the Leaders just, they were either really very, very important, or they were just very, very political, and your participation was not really welcome. Takes a while to learn that, but I think I did, and so was able to do that. Then clear to the end of my tenure when I was Chairman of the Local Government Committee, Governor Casey decided he wanted to launch an effort in the local tax reform area and move away from the overreliance on the property tax, and I was Chairman of the committee, and so I became the logical person to sponsor it, and then later, when it was a Conference Committee that really wrote the bill, the Majority Leader who, I think Manderino at the time didn't think this was really going to happen, but I got to be Chairman of that Conference Committee –

JT: Sure.

DS: – and play a role there, but again, that issue was vitally important. It was more important to the Governor. Governor Casey really wanted it. As I said, Jim Manderino, I think he just thought, you know, "This is a really tough sell."

JT: Sure.

DS: And he didn't personally get involved in it, but in fact, Bob O'Donnell and I were the two House Democratic conferees and worked on it. Bob, more on the Philadelphia end, and me on the tax structure for the rest of the state.

JT: Okay. Any particular bills you already mentioned that you were proud of, but can any others come to mind that were particularly strong for you and that became enacted that you were quite proud of?

DS: One of the things – well, there were a couple. I've mentioned House Bill 2, which became PEDFA. I sponsored also in that last year when I was Chairman of the Local Government Committee, what was then called the Distressed Municipalities Act, which has been amended a couple of times but is now the Act 47 that, certainly in Harrisburg, everybody's been talking about because that's the process one goes through when you're a distressed municipality. At the time, the focus was more on small towns in Western Pennsylvania. But since then, cities as large as Pittsburgh have gone through the, the Act 47 process, and so that was, that was one that was particularly important to me. There were smaller things. I sponsored a bill that became law that allows government employees to participate in deferred compensation plans –

JT: Okay.

DS: – that they heretofore had not been allowed to participate in, so over and above their pension, they could take money, after tax money, and have it invested, and some people have

done that, and you know, given the way the world is going now with the defined benefit pension plans under great stress, they're glad they have that other nest egg.

JT: Sure.

DS: So, there was that. I also, at the end of the, again, that last year, sponsored pretty major changes in the municipalities planning code that were enacted. Now, the municipalities planning code gets changed every couple years, but we did a major rewrite of it in that last two year period as well.

JT: Wonderful. You had about 17 bills that were enacted into law.

DS: Oh, I didn't know what the number was.

JT: Yeah, 17.

DS: Yeah, really? That's probably a pretty good batting average for 12 years.

JT: Oh, I'll say; absolutely. What kind of feeling do you get when, when you finally realize that one of your bills that you sponsor becomes legislation?

DS: It's a good feeling and most of them were done through compromise.

JT: Okay.

DS: I mean, the local tax reform, because it was a Governor's initiative, was a big partisan battle, but the highway funding, even, was a big battle in a way, but then it got compromised. But most of the bills, I would bet without knowing what the list is even, I'll bet most of them ended up passing by pretty overwhelming margins, because most do. Because what happens is, you know, you try to understand what the objections are, if there are objections, you try to work things out. There are very few things in the State Legislature's business that are matters of conscience. There are a few.

JT: Sure.

DS: But not many. And if people could figure out a way to, sometimes hold – I think it's more their ego, in check, than their conscience – if they could hold their ego in check a little bit, I think it'd be more helpful. I think the Leaders, I mean, Jim Manderino, who was the Leader most of the time I was there, even though he had this image of being this strong, tyrant, dominating person, and he could be that way, he – by the same token, like I said, I learned to sort of stay out of his way in terms of some of the very crucial issues – he learned to stay out of individuals' way, too. Even though I mentioned all these young guys, we were a colossal pain in his rear end, but I think he was smart enough to know that the way to work with us was to give us a little bit of slack.

JT: Yeah.

DS: And that there were good things that we could get done just with a little, you know, well, the reins didn't have to be taut. I have a feeling the last few years from my observation that the reins are actually tighter; that the Leaders are too worried about the Members going off on the road, off the reservation somewhere. And, in fact, most of these issues don't have to be big partisan issues, and as I say, I'll bet of those 17, three-fourths of them passed fairly overwhelmingly because all of the objections got negotiated out along the way. And the other thing is you have to be fairly persistent because thousands of bills get introduced at the beginning of every Session, and maybe, what, 20, 30, 40, well, maybe more than that, a few hundred become law, which is a good thing, because God knows the system can only digest so much. But it's keeping after it and working it through the entire process is important as well.

JT: Absolutely. Was there an average Session day when you were on the Floor?

DS: I don't think so. Days were very different. Now, the House had a lot more debate than the Senate. Important business always got done fairly late at night, as opposed – now they've got some rules that prohibit both amendments by surprise, and they have an 11 o'clock rule, and all those. I don't know that many important pieces of legislation passed before 11 o'clock when I was there – but some days were very short on the Floor of the House, and some days were very long. Not sure there was a typical day.

JT: While you were in Session – not necessarily in Session – in office, we had talked about it briefly over the, you know, the various questions, but the division down the aisle on either side, was it solid, or was there a lot of overlapping?

DS: I think there was more overlapping than there is today. There were certain votes that were considered political votes. Oftentimes, the Leaders, particularly, would have, on procedural matters, would say, you know, "I need this vote," or, "We're not going to let this bill come up today and I have my reasons." There weren't that many of those, but that came up, but I think it just was a little looser. I mean, there were some bills that would come out that there'd be a split vote. Maybe, you know, you'd pass the bill with 70 Democrats and 35 Republicans, 40 Republicans.

JT: Sure.

DS: I don't see too much of that anymore. It's either pure partisan, or its unanimous. They don't seem to have that many that break out any other way.

JT: How was the camaraderie off the Floor? You had mentioned earlier a few Members that you pretty much stuck with, but what about off the Floor, the camaraderie among the Members both sides of the aisle?

DS: Well, it's interesting because I ask people occasionally, "Gee, is it really different today, or does it just seem different to me," as a sort of nostalgia rather than really knowing what's going

on? Because I'm not – I don't move in that, I sort of, as I said, I do some lobbying work and some other work, but I don't do what I call, "the night shift," in Harrisburg very often. I'm not on the dinner and later circuit, so I'm not as familiar with the camaraderie after work as maybe others who just are on the scene are. But I'm told, and from what little bits I see, that there's really less of the camaraderie than there was. I think some of that maybe's a good thing. People drink less, and that's probably good, but I think there's also, Members are here a little bit longer during the week, and I think more have tended to have bought their own houses or have apartments with two other people, and then go back. I think they have longer voting days, and there's a little less, probably, desire, then, to be out at night much. There's still a pretty active dinner scene and afterward in Harrisburg with Legislators, but I get the impression there's less camaraderie and friendship and fun. I mean, we used to have softball games, and we used to have a basketball league, and we did a lot of those sorts of things that I don't believe they do anymore, and I'm sure there's not the bipartisan camaraderie that there was. I mean, it was not unusual to, I mean, if we were going to go out to dinner, we didn't just ask Democrats or something.

JT: Right.

DS: It just was – and then, you know, you'd have a hot debate with somebody and then have a drink with them. I mean, I can remember going hammer and tong with Jeff Piccola [State Representative, Dauphin County, 1977-1996; State Senator, 1995-present] one afternoon on Judiciary Committee business on the Floor of the House, and then we walked off the Floor arm-in-arm because we'd had a good debate, and we'd had fun, as well as doing what we thought was

something important and something about which both of us had a lot of passion. I think a lot of that's been lost, a lot of that's been lost, and I think that's too bad because that's one of the high points and one of the fun things about serving in a legislative body.

JT: Sure. During your term that you were in office, did you see any major changes in the House while you were there, in terms of procedure?

DS: I think it, it was starting to change – well, it changed – I kind of came at the end of one period and then left just when things were starting to change in another. I mean, when I first came, they were just digesting, for a period that had gone on for maybe four or six years, Herb Fineman's professionalization of the House staff and particularly, Appropriations staff. Prior to that time, the Legislature pretty much was at the Governor's and the Budget Secretary's mercy as far as, "These are the numbers."

JT: Sure.

DS: "This is what this costs. This is the analysis. These are the public policy issues," and Fineman changed that for the good, and that was really just getting digested by the system when I first came. The people were a lot different, too. I mean, when I first came, the Members seemed, maybe it was just because I was young, but they seemed to be older. There were more practicing lawyers, practicing real estate agents, people with businesses. It was far less, if you want to say, professional. It certainly wasn't – I don't know that I even want to use the word full-time – it wasn't people's exclusive occupation –

JT: Right.

DS: – for probably most of the Members, certainly more than half, and anybody over the age of about 35 had another business, had another activity. By the time I left, that was changing. Probably I mean there were very few practicing lawyers when I left. I always practiced a little bit of law. I taught some part time. I always thought it was important to have a little something else going on, not only for the economic value, but just so you had some other perception of what life was like than just being in this political cocoon. So, I think at the end there, there was more of the exclusive employment, and what I think that's come to mean is it's harder for people to make a tough vote, because the mortgage payment is on the line, and if you lose the next election…It was the only job I ever had that paid in advance. You got paid for the month at the beginning of the month. The problem with that is that if you lose the election in November too, you've already received your last pay check.

JT: Right.

DS: And there were a lot of people who were heavily focused on that.

JT: [*laugh*] I'm sure.

DS: So, I think it's more a change in the composition of the Membership and their outlook and their economic place in life. The procedure's changed a lot, not so much while I was there, but

again, just as I was leaving there was more of a notion of there need to be some reforms. I think we got rid of smoking on the Floor when I was –

JT: Oh, okay.

DS: They still smoked on the Floor maybe right up till the end. Maybe it didn't change till after I left, but it was right around that period of time. Yeah, the House Floor was pretty –

JT: Smokey, then? [*laugh*]

DS: [*laugh*] It was pretty smoky in those days.

JT: I'm sure.

DS: So that, that's at least both a cosmetic but also a health change –

JT: There you go.

DS: – that was perhaps important.

JT: Would you say there was a particular piece of legislation that was the most important while you were in office? Not necessarily one that you were involved in, but between [19]77 and [19]88, do you think there was a one that really stands to mind?

DS: Well, there were, I mean, because there were a lot of fiscal fights, and the transportation issue that I mentioned earlier where Thornburgh and Manderino and others managed to work something out was incredibly important. Governor Casey's local tax reform at the end would have been important, except it got defeated by the voters in the Constitutional referendum. Probably from a long term perspective, one of the important things was the pension legislation that dealt with the municipal pension plans. I mean, they're in trouble now, but if those plans, there was reform legislation that was passed, probably mid-[19]80s. I wasn't that involved with the issue, probably it had as much long-term significance as others. I mean, we had a lot of – several tax fights up and down –

JT: Right.

DS: – that don't end up amounting to much at the end of the day. One of the things that we had votes on, not repeatedly, but at least several times while I was a Member that probably created the most emotion were votes on abortion.

JT: Okay.

DS: That hasn't been, really, a big legislative issue since that time. In fact, I'm sure there are Members who've been here a certain number of years who never had to vote on the issue. But, that was always a very difficult and emotional, because that is one of the few issues where you really are looking at your conscience and you're looking at your own religious values and

everything else. One thing that's changed in people's views, and I haven't had to reflect on it enough to know how I would vote today, but one of the votes that was always overwhelming but certainly was as important was capital punishment, and we voted on capital punishment several times while I was in the Legislature, as well. The public mood, I think, has changed pretty significantly on that issue, and I'm sure the vote wouldn't be 180-20 today, but I mean, if you looked at the issues for which you might meet your maker, those are probably the ones that will be tough ones to discuss.

JT: Sure, yeah, absolutely. Did you have a role with, or at least a relationship with, lobbyists during the time you were in office?

DS: Yeah, yeah. I knew, you know, lots of lobbyists. There were good ones, and there were bad ones, and there were honest ones, and there were corrupt ones. I had a good relationship with probably most of them. I wasn't one to – I mean, quite frankly, the four or five guys I mentioned at the end of the day, we would rather have gone out and, you know, done something physical, some exercise and get a beer and a hamburger than go out with some lobbyist to spend three hours, and, you know, you eat shrimp cocktail and a steak. We just weren't – that wasn't what we were interested in doing at the time, so I didn't spend a whole lot of time in the evening camaraderie with lobbyists, but I had them in the office all the time. They represented, you know, major interests in the State and in my county, and most of them were pretty square and pretty decent, and I think most of them wanted to be honest and decent, and I'm not sure the system always allowed that for many of them.

JT: Sure.

DS: I think some people crossed the line because they weren't strong enough not to.

JT: In your later terms did you see yourself becoming a mentor to some of the new Members coming in?

DS: You know, it's interesting; I never did, partly because I was never older than anybody. I mean, because I think, as I mentioned, maybe, before we were on the air, when I left the Legislature, I was 39, so the Members who came in weren't, with a few exceptions, weren't, younger than me. Many of them were older than I was, just chronologically, so actually, well, I did have – I'll mention two people, though. Neither one of them I would say were mentees, if that's a word, but it was just interesting in the dynamic I discussed. One was a guy named Karl Boyes [State Representative, 1981-2002], Republican from Erie, who served for a long time here. Karl Boyes, when I worked for the, what's now the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, was my boss's boss's boss. I mean, I was four layers down from Karl Boyes. He was the Deputy Director of the whole operation, and I was this, like, lowest guy on the professional rung, and he knew who I was but didn't pay any real attention to me. Well, Karl became a freshman Member when I think I had three terms, maybe, and on Swearing-In Day, I went over to his seat over to the Republican side, and I said, "Oh, welcome, Karl. I want you to know the tide has turned. I have six years; you don't have any. I'm in the majority; you're in the minority," and we always had a great relationship, [*laugh*] but it was kind of funny how that

table turned, and even though, you know, he was in his 50s, and I was in my 30s then, I was senior to him.

JT: Yeah, absolutely.

DS: The other guy I mentioned the other way, Tom McCall [Thomas J.; State Representative, Carbon County, 1975-1981] sat next to me. Tom McCall died, had a heart attack while we were – this was probably mid, mid-[19]80's – and his son, Keith McCall [State Representative, Carbon County, 1982-2010; Speaker of the House, 2009-2010] –

JT: That's right.

DS: – became the Member from that district and sat next to me right in that same seat, and of course, Keith was about 22, then, 23, 24. I mean, he was very young, and Keith and I were friends. I wouldn't say I was his mentor, but we were pretty friendly. But the last point on that is that I was maybe an unknowing mentor to some people, because I do from time to time have Members that come up to me, some that are still current Members, and say, "You know, I learned this from you, or that from you, or something happened, and you told me this." So, at least I left a little bit of residual good will and maybe the knowledge of something with a number of them, and often, they're a surprise. I mean, Joe Markosek [Joseph; State Representative, Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties, 1983-present] mentioned something to me the other day, and he's currently the, you know, House Democratic Chair of Appropriations from Allegheny

County, and it was something about, "I learned that from you back in," and I had no idea what he was talking about.

JT: Makes you feel good, though, right?

DS: Yeah, yes, since it was a good thing.

JT: Yeah. What led you to leave the House?

DS: Well, part of it – I usually facetiously say my retirement from public life was involuntary to the extent I decided to run for State Treasurer and lost. I got involved, sort of, in the mid-[19]80s – I mean, I was young and I was ambitious, but it was also tempered by the fact I got married in 1984, and I was, well, I thought I was still pretty young. I was 36 years old –

JT: Right.

DS: – which is older than most people when they get married, and we, we had our first child. My son, Andrew, was born in [19]87. He was one year old when I left; he's now 24 [*laugh*]. So, I was ambitious, but it was tempered by my observation and my just knowing the reality of it, that this was not a good life for a family, the back-and-forth, and the back-and-forth isn't even so bad, it's when in either place, your time is limited and so forth. And so, I just felt that I wanted to stay in public life, but I didn't want to be in the legislative kind of job. I think at one point, perhaps, before I had gotten married, it would have been nice if a Congressional seat opened up

in my area, but it didn't. So, I really started to lean towards other public offices, perhaps, that where you could be in public life, but it wasn't the constituent demand day-to-day. And so, I initially explored running for Lieutenant Governor in 1986. And that – it was kind of a funny experience – I was sitting at a dinner and a couple people told me this person was going to run for Lieutenant Governor, and this was in 1985. I had always thought, "Oh, I'm too young, and I'm too, you know, not enough experience." Well, when I was hearing this list of names, I thought, "Well, wait a minute, I, you know, I have a better record than that person, and I've done this. I've done that," and so it was all of a sudden, "Well, if that's the field." The two leading candidates for Governor, (because I think I mentioned at the beginning these names will recur as we just talk about my career, and they were not really mentors, but they were people that I was always kind of thinking maybe the phrase, maybe I was their junior partner on some things, or I was their associate), but Ed Rendell in 1986 and Bob Casey were the two Democratic candidates for Governor, and my position was, "Gee, I fit with either one of them. One's from Philadelphia. One's from Scranton. They have certain skill sets. I've been in the Legislature; not them," (well, Bob Casey was in the Senate for a term). You know, "I'm from Western Pennsylvania," you know, and so forth, and so I was out, along with a number of other people, you know, peddling my wares. Lieutenant Governor's kind of a hard office to run for, because while – and we really should change it – you run separately, which is not really the way it should be, but it's the way it is. So, on the one hand, you have to put together a campaign, but on the other hand, you can't really raise any significant money. Nobody really cares. It's just a very awkward thing to run for, so you're sort of auditioning with the gubernatorial candidates.

JT: Right.

DS: And my view was, I didn't come from Allegheny County. I wasn't going to be able to just get a naturally big vote, so I needed to, sort of, team up with either Casey or Rendell (or it would be perfect if they would have been if they both said, "Oh, Sweet, he's a great guy," you know, but that was very unlikely to occur). So, I was out peddling my wares for that office. As it turned out, I mean, there were four candidates, basically. There was Tom Flaherty [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1975-1978; member, Pittsburgh City Council, 1983-1984; Controller, City of Pittsburgh, 1985-2005; judge, Court of Common Pleas, 2007-present]. Obviously that was a golden name, even though he wasn't related to the Flaherty's. There was Mark Singel [State Senator, 1981-1987; Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, 1987-1995], who became the Lieutenant Governor. There was Dwight Evans [State Representative, Philadelphia County, 1981-present] of Philadelphia, the Appropriations Chair, and myself, and there were other people floating around, and then there were other names of people, because Casey, at least, had announced that he was going to pick somebody, and he wanted the Democratic State Committee to endorse him. Well, I got to the finals of the Casey pick. There are various stories as to what happened. Governor Casey's even written a little bit about it in his book. I was interviewed, I mean, I remember being in a hotel suite with Governor Casey and James Carville [campaign consultant, author, restaurateur, talk show host]. The two of them were the interviewing committee, and because – now, James Carville in those days was nobody –

JT: Right.

DS: – to speak of. I mean, if Casey had lost, James Carville would probably still be back in Louisiana trying to practice divorce law. But, I mean, the Casey win that year in [19]86 was what really started him, and then, of course, the Wofford [Harris; President, Bryn Mawr College, 1970-1978; PA Secretary of Labor and Industry, 1987-1991; U.S. Senator, Pennsylvania, 1991-1995; CEO, Corporation for National Service (AmeriCorps), 1995-2001] win later in [19]92, and then, he got with Clinton and so forth.

JT: Right.

DS: But the big hang up for Governor Casey was that we had different positions on the abortion issue, which for him, of course, was, you know, the lodestar.

JT: Right.

DS: And I remember discussing it with him, and I said, "Well, you know, Bill Scranton [PA Lt. Governor, 1979-1987]," who was his opponent, I said, "is pro-choice, and yet, he picked Mike Fisher [D. Michael; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1975-1980; State Senator, 1981-1996; PA State Attorney General, 1997-2003; judge, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, 2003-present], who is a right to life." I mean, those terms aren't always very accurate, but essentially, and I said, "The Democratic Party" – now, the Democratic Party in those days wasn't as pro-choice as it's become, and certainly, Governor Casey is a leader in Pennsylvania, and there just were a lot of Democrats who were on both sides of the issue.

JT: Right.

DS: And I said the ticket ought to reflect that. Well, the day of the decision, I was told that the staff vote was pretty overwhelmingly for me, but there was really only one vote, and Bob Casey picked Mark Singel, and he says in his book – he doesn't say it's because of that, but he talks about me in one way, and then, he talks about Mark as a pro-life, you know, Legislator and so forth, so he picked Singel. Rendell didn't want to team up with anybody, because Dwight Evans was in the race. He didn't want to undercut his Philadelphia situation. As it turned out, Casey beat Rendell fairly easily in that primary, and that went on. I withdrew. I didn't actually run then, because when I looked around, I thought, "Well, I got a Flaherty, who's the big name. Casey's picked Singel. Where's my support? Dwight Evans is a young, progressive guy in Philadelphia." I mean, there was no votes to go chase, but after that experience, I mean, I was still somewhat interested in statewide politics, and actually, Governor Casey came to me the next year and asked if I would run for State Treasurer.

JT: Okay.

DS: Which I mistakenly agreed to, because Catherine Baker Knoll [PA State Treasurer, 1989-1997; Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, 2003-2008] is just too tough.

JT: Yeah.

DS: I mean, she beat me in every county except Washington, Greene, and Fayette. At least I won at home.

JT: There you go.

DS: But that race turned out to be a woman from Allegheny County with a somewhat known name and three guys, and even though I was – I mean, I learned from that experience that the endorsement in the Democratic State Committee is not worth much, at least it wasn't worth anything much for me, and I've since seen others, but it's a distinguished group. I've welcomed several people into that group. Mark Singel – no, Mark's the only one who – Mark actually defeated Catherine for Governor in 1994 in the primary, but Catherine's defeated Jack Wagner [Pittsburgh City Council, 1984-1994; State Senator, Allegheny County, 1994-2004; PA State Auditor General, 2005-present], Allen Kukovich, I mean, I've welcomed several other people into the club. She's beaten some pretty good people.

JT: And then you had also looked into Attorney General as well.

DS: Yeah but that was back, that was that Treasurer time. Quite frankly, I would rather have run for Attorney General, but the new Governor said, "If you want to run for something, it should be Treasurer."

JT: Yeah. What was Victory 88? And is that still – or was that a short?

DS: Well, that was just one of those joint campaign efforts –

JT: Okay.

DS: – with the national and state and local tickets. The Federal law changes every two or four years as far as how you do all these things, but that was a vehicle in the [19]88 Election, because I did get involved in the fall helping Dukakis [Michael Dukakis, Massachusetts State Representative, 1962-1970; Governor of Massachusetts, 1975-1979 and 1983-1991].

JT: Okay.

DS: And actually, later mayor Tom Murphy [State Representative, Allegheny County, 1979-1993; Mayor of Pittsburgh, 1994-2006] from Pittsburgh. He and I were pretty actively involved in that.

JT: What have you been doing since you left the House?

DS: Well, I joined a law firm, Pepper Hamilton, when I left the House. I was with Pepper for, well, until 2007. I switched law firms and went with Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney, sort of same work, different flag. Did a lot of public finance work, some state administrative law type work. People had problems with various State Departments, and as I said before, I do a little bit of legislative lobbying that's come and gone depending on what else I've been doing, but I've been pretty actively involved in that effort, and being a parent – I really didn't have throughout

the [19]90s much political involvement at all, but then, as I've mentioned, I got involved with Rendell's campaign in early 2000.

JT: So you stay interested in, in statewide government?

DS: Yeah.

JT: State politics?

DS: Yeah, yeah, but from a greater and greater distance. At least in today's turmoil, not a bad vantage point to be. There's a lot of tough problems and not a whole lot of, in my mind, you know, goodwill in terms of solving them.

JT: Do you have a fondest memory of your time in the House or a story that comes to mind when someone asks you about your time?

DS: Well, the one that comes to mind, just because it's kind of funny is at the end, the very last minute, this notion – because the local tax reform bill had – maybe it's fondest because it's just the most recent, but it's November 30 of [19]88. I was the sponsor of the bill. We passed the bill in the House. It couldn't get through the Senate, and quite frankly, what we had negotiated was with then Majority Leader Jack Stauffer [State Representative, Chester County, 1965-1970; State Senator, 1970-1988], who was just a prince of a guy. He just died a few years ago. It was a Senator from Chester County and was the Senate Majority Leader for some time, even though

we happened to – he truly had a passion about reforming the local tax structure in the system, and this was his one shot at it. He'd tried and tried with schools. He'd had legislation for 25 years, and Casey's interest in it and so forth sparked him into action. We passed a bill in the House – well, we didn't actually – I'm not sure quite of the sequence, but we negotiated, it was principally myself and some staff with Jack Stauffer and his staff, and we negotiated a final product, me always checking back, of course, with Manderino and with Casey. Well, four days before the end of the Session, Stauffer called me and said, "I can't get it done. There are just too many people in the Republican Caucus against it." He said, "The vast majority's against it." Quite frankly, all the objections were political. They didn't want to give Casey this big victory in his first year, and, "I'm sorry. I just can't get it done," and I said, "Well, Jack, you know, we'll have to do what we have to do," and so forth. Well, what we had to do is I called a Conference Committee. We had a big grandstanding sort of event, and we voted, and of course, you have to get two votes from each Chamber.

JT: Right.

DS: We had three votes from the House, because – talk about bipartisanship; Sam Hayes [Samuel E., Jr.; State Representative, Blair, Center and Huntingdon Counties, 1971-1992; Secretary, PA Department of Agriculture, 1997-2003], who was the Republican member of the Conference Committee, voted for the bill, even though I told him beforehand. I said, "Sam, this is principally a media event."

JT: Yeah.

DS: He says, "No, I'm all for it, and I'll vote for it, and I'll be able to get other Members to vote for it." Anyway, we, we couldn't get – so, we took a Senate bill, and we amended it all into that anyway, and we passed the bill, and we got 45, 50 Republican votes. The bill went over to the Senate. This is the last day now of the Session. Phone rings on the Floor of the House. Manderino calls me over, and he says, "Jack Stauffer's on the line. He wants to talk to both of us," and so we've got, like, a two-way, and Jack said, "You have four votes in the Senate from the Republican Caucus for whatever you need, procedurally, whatever, to get this done." Now, that was the happy part. The sad part was he said, "I don't have the stomach for this. I can't – this is my last night." He was retiring, and he said, "I'm going home." He just wasn't – because here, it was kind of the culmination of so many things he was interested in doing, and yet his own caucus was rejecting it, and it was an odd group. I mean, odd in the sense of, the four votes were Jack Stauffer, John Shumaker [State Senator, 1983-1996] from Dauphin County from here, Doyle Corman [State Senator, 1977-1998] from Penn State who was Chairman of the Local Government Committee and was very involved in all these issues, and Jim Greenwood [James; State Representative, Bucks County, 1981-1986; State Senator, 1987-1992; U.S. Representative, 1993-2005] from Bucks County, who later went on to Congress, and they did, they voted, there were procedure votes. Well, anyway, I'd been involved in other business on the House Floor, and the Senate was taking this up at like 11 o'clock. Now, at midnight – it's all these games now. At midnight, constitutionally, the Session is over.

JT: Right.

DS: Midnight, November 30, and I go over, because I was a little worried. I said, "You know, the Senate Democrats, even then, hadn't been in charge for quite a while," and just wanted to see what was going on. Well, I went over, and I remember huddling in the back with Ed Zemprelli [Edward; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1963-1968; State Senator, 1969-1988] who was then the Democratic Leader. Mark Singel was in the Chair; he was the Lieutenant Governor. Bob Mellow [State Senator, 1971-2010] was the Leader, and I remember, we called Roy Afflerbach [State Representative, Lehigh County, 1983-1986; State Senator, 1987-1998; mayor, city of Allentown, 2002-2006] back, because he was the first one that would be announced in the roll call, and the Republicans had pretty much exhausted their procedural roadblocks, although Bob Jubelirer [Robert; State Senator, 1975-2006; President Pro Tempore, 1985-1992 and 1995-2006; acting Lieutenant Governor, 2001-2003] and Joe Loeper [Joseph; State Senator, 1979-2000] were trying every trick that they could come up with, and they were in charge. They were the next guys in the Leadership, because Stauffer left, but Stauffer left his proxy – the Senate rules then allowed that – and we had these four votes, so combined with the Democrats, we had the working majority, and Zemprelli got back in the old routine – he had been the Majority Leader – and he got back his routine, and he was making the right motions, and we were voting them down, boom, boom, boom, but the Republicans were pretty cagey and Steve MacNett was then still their legal advisor, and the question was, then, were they going to be able to run the clock out?

JT: Yeah.

DS: And we finally said, "No, we're not going to let them do that. That Zemprelli's going to make a motion to call up the bill."

JT: Right.

DS: And Afflerbach was to immediately jump up and just scream, "Yes!" And Singel was then going to rule that he could hear no further objections, that nothing was in the order but the taking of the roll, and the roll had already commenced, so they went through the vote. We won the vote and I stood in the back of the Floor of the Senate, and I mentioned, I think, way, way when we started this discussion about taking the bill over to the Senate.

JT: Yeah.

DS: Singel gaveled the bill passed – and we had arranged this; I said, "Don't give the bill to the clerks. Sign the damn thing, and give it to Bob Mellow," who was the Leader – and Mellow ran about halfway back on the Floor and threw the stack, this bill at me. I caught it and went running over to the House Floor. It was like five of 12. Now, if I had been a really good politician, what I would have done would have been have my staff arrange to have the media and photographers and TV cameras. [*laugh*] This is why I never really made it in the big time, because I didn't do that.

JT: That's right.

DS: If I'd really been clever, that's what I would have done. You know, it would have been more important to stop for 30 seconds and get a little photo op[portunity], but I didn't do that. So, I went running over to the House Floor, and guys are all just sitting around sort of waiting like, "What's going to happen at the end?" And I came running in waving this bill and went up to the Speaker's Podium and said, "Here's the bill, Leroy." Leroy Irvis [K. Leroy; State Representative, Allegheny County, 1959-1990; Speaker of the House, 1977-1978 and 1983-1988] was the Speaker then, and I said, "You got to sign this."

JT: Now.

DS: Yeah, and he signed it, and it was delivered, then, to the Governor right from there.

JT: That's great.

DS: And so, that was a pretty, pretty happy moment at that point. That was the last moment.

JT: Yeah, exactly.

DS: And the funny – I still remember, too. We walked into Governor Casey's office, and he was on the phone, and he got up, and he had unbuttoned his jacket. It was sort of like this, and I forget who was it was standing next to me – I think it was Mike McLaughlin, who was the Chief of Staff for Ed Zemprelli at the time – and said, "Boy, you know, Governor Casey's really letting it loose. He's really informal here after midnight," because he had unbuttoned his jacket, and he

got up, and cheap champagne was drunk by many, and it was a quite a moment. Now, politics being what it is, four months later the thing went down in flames in a referendum of the voters, defeated by a campaign that totally mischaracterized what it's supposed to do, but I learned a lot of lessons out of that. It's one of the problems with – I mean, I sympathized with Obama and the debate over health care; when you have a 120 page bill to defend and the other guys can just say whatever they want to say for sound bytes, it's tough to win.

JT: Yeah.

DS: It's tough to win.

JT: I'm sure.

DS: In the media. Sorry for such a long answer to such a short question.

JT: That was – I would like more, please. What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the Legislature today?

DS: Well, I mean, I think the biggest substantive challenge is to figure out the proper role of state government and to fund it.

JT: Okay.

DS: People have got to quit talking, sort of, one game and playing another. I mean, we're in a situation where – see, state government – if we could step back once – state government is sort of a counter-cyclical enterprise, and by that, I mean when times are bad, state government has to spend money.

JT: Right.

DS: Now, you cannot like that, and you can demagogue it all you want, but it's the fact. I mean, there are more people on unemployment. There are more people who utilize Medicaid. Things get really bad that more people go to prison. I mean, all of the things that State government does, most of them, at least, have greater demands when times are bad, and it's not even a question of – I mean, in Washington they can fight about whether it's a right time to have a tax cut and the economy and this and that. At the state government level, you got to pay the bill.

JT: Right.

DS: And I think there are too many people who just want to turn a blind eye to the reality of that and say, "Well, we can't, you know, do anything about taxes or fees or," this, that, and the other thing. That's a disconnect, I mean, now, their argument, the other side of that argument is, "Here's how much money we have, so we have to bring spending into line with the revenues," you know, and you can take that position, but the problem is you've got built in needs, and you have built in statutes that say you have to do this. So, I think people have got to get on, and it's not just Republicans. I mean, there are a lot of Democrats that now have bought in to this notion

that never can state government increase revenues in any way. It'll be interesting to see what happens. The Transportation Commission that Governor Corbett appointed just came out with a report yesterday where they talk about lifting a cap on the taxes. Not raising taxes but lifting the cap on what a certain tax will generate and raising fees, registration fees, and doing some other things. It'll be interesting to see whether, you know, in the transportation area, people take a different tack than they've taken so far, but I think their challenge is very similar to the challenge in Washington, D.C. today, which is to somehow get past this huge partisan divide that's developed.

JT: Right.

DS: And figure out a way to actually, you know, deal with people's problems, and that's not going to be easy. I mean, people are having inroads. I mean, it's not unique to Pennsylvania, and in fact, even though, you know, in a matter of certain political philosophy, I'm not real happy with the direction things have gone the last six months, Pennsylvania hasn't been as bad as Wisconsin or Ohio or Minnesota, where they've been shut down. Some others have been huge problems.

JT: Yeah. How would you like your tenure in office to be remembered?

DS: Substantive, accomplished some real objectives that had long-term benefit, and was a good guy to work with.

JT: Good enough. Is there anything in particular during your time in the House that we didn't cover that you would like to share?

DS: Let me just think for one second. I mean, I think in our way we've covered most of it. The only thing, the additional thing, to mention is an issue that I was involved in while I was in the Legislature and then later involved, which was the prisons; our corrections system. And I sort of came by this, I worked in a, you know, state prison, the state prison in Pittsburgh one summer while I was in college. Learn a lot in three months in prison, even if you're only working there. [*laugh*] Our corrections – first of all, corrections is one of the only enterprises of state government that's labor intensive. I mean, I mentioned this before; we have all these demands, unemployment comp[ensation], schools and health care and whatever. Those are all, kind of, checkbooks, you know. Money comes in; money goes out. Corrections is a people business. I mean, there's thousands of guards and lots of other staff. There's 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There's no holidays at the state prison system. It's really expensive. I was appointed to Chair a commission by Governor Casey, oh, maybe two years after I was – oh, no, it was later than that. It was probably – it was early [19]90s; [19]91, [19]92, [19]93. It was really a terrific group of people; former Governor Leader [State Senator, 1951-1954; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1955-1959], former Lieutenant Governor Ernie Kline [State Senator, 1965-1971; Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania, 1971-1979], there were union officials, there was a lawyer., there were construction people, there was a professor from Villanova. And we were charged with trying to come up with a way to sort of curb the dramatic rise in corrections spending because some things are no different 20 years later. I mean, the thing that was eating – the Pac-Man that was eating – the budget in the early [19]90s, aside from the impact of the recession, there was a

recession then, too, but not quite as great as what we recently suffered, the Pac-Man was corrections and Medicaid, even then. I have the feeling that Governor Casey and his staff, when they set up this commission, they thought we were going to count the paper clips and figure out a better way to buy this, and we could save a few bucks on food. Well, we were out of control, I mean, because we started to look at the real fundamentals, and the fundamentals, quite frankly, were that Pennsylvania, I mean, life, even in those days, life tended to mean life, and more than 10 percent of the population were life, oh, and many of them were over 50 years of age. We were spending, you know, just lots of money holding all those people and probably didn't have to. The most important thing, though, were the mandatory minimum sentence for drug offenses that started – I can say not on my watch on the Judiciary Committee – It started in the late [19]80s and into the [19]90s, and you had a huge influx – and it has gone on since – huge influx of people going into the state prison system basically for drug offenses, and there just has to be another way to deal with that problem, and we've made some suggestions and so forth on that score, as well. We tried very hard to get Governor Casey to make this his legacy issue at the end, and I remember lunch at the Governor's Residence with Governor Leader and Ernie Kline and myself with just Governor Casey. We had to work like hell to get that lunch, because the staff didn't want any of this. They were like, "Oh, my gosh, these guys are out of control. We have to" – so we had a lunch, and this was – oh, you wouldn't remember, but you can read, I mean, Governor Casey's health was very bad throughout – but, you know, he darn near died, several times – he was recuperating, and this was towards the end of his term, and when he had come back after Mark Singel had been Acting Governor for a while, and we tried to convince him, you know, "Governor, this is your last six months. This is something you can have a lasting impact," but he actually got off on some other things. But you could read that report from

1990's, and it's still the same today. And there have been some work done. Stew Greenleaf [Stewart; State Representative, Montgomery County, 1977-1978; State Senator, 1979-present] in the Senate, particularly, has tried to do some things. He's accomplished some good work, and the Rendell Administration works around the edges, but what really happened was the, just the bad luck of the 1994 election.

JT: Yeah.

DS: And so, Governor Ridge [Thomas J. Ridge, U.S. Representative, 1983-1995; Governor of Pennsylvania, 1995-2001; Director, Office of Homeland Security, 2001-2003; Secretary of Homeland Security, Cabinet of President George W. Bush, 2003-2005] was hamstrung for – I mean, even if he'd wanted to do anything, I don't know what he would have wanted to do, but with that Mudman[1], the parole violator, and so forth, and what happened during the campaign and the political impact, and the, the pressure just became greater and greater for tougher sentencing. There's nothing wrong with sending really dangerous people to prison for long periods of time.

JT: Right.

DS: But to do what we were doing and have continued to do is just one way to spend a huge amount of money for very little gain.

[1] Robert "Mudman" Simon, Warlocks motorcycle gang member, convicted murderer of Police Sgt. Ippolito "Lee" Gonzalez in 1995, his girlfriend in 1982, and another inmate.

JT: Sure.

DS: And that's, that's an area that people still have a lot to work on, but I worked pretty hard on that after the election, but, or, excuse me, after my time in office, but one more failed venture. Governor Casey's chief of staff, Jim Brown, said to me, "See, Sweet, every time we get involved with you on some big issue, we seem to lose." [*laugh*]

JT: But memorable, right, yeah.

DS: Yeah, yeah.

JT: What advice would you give to someone who is contemplating running for public office?

DS: Well, you know, that's a hard question because, I mean, my first, and not just glib reaction is reconsider. I mean, it's just a very difficult environment, and the culture and the general situation in Pennsylvania and United States today is so negative that it's hard to recommend to somebody you really like, that they go into that life, and I hate to say that. It bothers me to say that. I got involved, partly, I mentioned my family, but I can remember Robert F. Kennedy [Attorney General of the United States, 1961-1964; U.S. Senator, New York, 1965-1968] talking about politics being an honorable profession, and it needs to be and should be an honorable profession. It's hard to look somebody in the eye, though, and recommend to them today that they go into that, knowing what you know about the meat grinder that's out there, and that the chances of really getting something important done are pretty thin in this current environment.

For example, when I was in the Legislature, and I'd go into a big room full of people – you're at an, you know, Elks Club dinner – you look around the room, and you'd see the four or five people that were going to give you grief about something, and you'd say, "Well, do I want to go over and talk to Jesse now and get it out of the way, or do I do it later?" By the time I was leaving, half the room would be people who wanted to give you grief about something, and now, I think everybody wants to give someone grief. There's just a very negative – I mean, I'm not talking just about the partisan divide, which is a problem – but there's just a very, very negative attitude. I mean, Americans have always been skeptical, cynical, derogatory about people in public life, but I think it's worse now than it was 20 or 30 years ago and maybe more so. It could just be, again, you know, nostalgia or something, but I don't think so. I mean, I think it is fundamentally different and difficult. Now, if someone wants to do it, I think they need to go in with their eyes open, that it's going to be tough in that way. We need good people to get into it because, unfortunately, we don't get enough, but it's not just a problem with the political system; it's the culture has turned very negative. For example, to try to convince a good lawyer to go run for judge? I mean, Judge's salaries have been pretty well frozen, and they get small percentage increments. I mean, for, for a person who has gone, you know, through college, through law school, the kind of quality lawyer that you'd want to be a judge can make so much more on the outside and have, in some some ways an easier life. Now, they don't have to deal with clients; that's always fun. But, it's just, the Legislature's not going to get a pay raise, probably in our lifetime, you know. It's going to be a long time before the pay or the benefits or anything are any better there. So, I'm afraid that what I would really tell a young person is probably go out and be successful somewhere else first.

JT: Okay.

DS: And then if you have both the economic, fundamental and base covered, and you had some good life experiences, then you probably have something to add and then a contribution to be made. I think it's probably better to do it that way than do it the way I did it. That you're young, and that's how you come up, although terrific for me, but I hate to see good, bright young people get sort of chewed up in a system that's not very positive at the moment.

JT: Would you ever run again?

DS: No. [*laugh*]

JT: Already decided.

DS: Well, I wouldn't have any – there's somebody once said to me – in fact, this played over at the time when I was trying to decide whether to run again when I was in the Legislature – there's a difference in life between 10 years' experience and one year's experience repeated 10 times. You get to a point in many careers where all you're doing is having the same one year repeated. I've already done that one year.

JT: Mr. Sweet, I want to thank you very much –

DS: Thank you, Jesse.

JT: – for giving me your time today and to answer some of the questions and showing some insight into life in the House of Representatives, so thank you very much.

DS: Well, thank you. I enjoyed it. It was good to be here.